

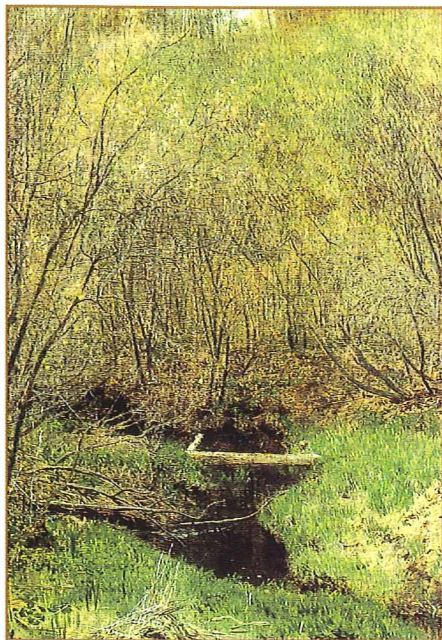


Orchestral Works • 8



DDD

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GLAZUNOV

The Seasons

Scènes de Ballet

Scène Dansante

Moscow Symphony

Orchestra

Alexander Anissimov

Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov (1865-1936)

The Seasons, Op. 67 • Scènes de Ballet, Op. 52 • Scène Dansante, Op. 81

Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov has not fared well at the hands of later critics, although in his own time he enjoyed considerable success. In 1905 he became Director of the St Petersburg Conservatory and was to retain that position through all the difficulties of the next 25 years, before leaving Russia to spend his final years in Paris. A composer of great facility, with a phenomenal musical memory, he worked closely with Rimsky-Korsakov, assisting him in that debt of honour he fulfilled in editing the music left by those other members of the *Mighty Handful*, Borodin and Mussorgsky. To immediate contemporaries he seemed to have brought about a synthesis between Russian music and the music of Western Europe, but to some Russian critics after the Revolution he seemed rather to epitomise the music of the bourgeoisie, an impression that may well have been fortified by his dress and appearance, compared by a contemporary English critic to those of a prosperous bank-manager.

Glazunov was born in St Petersburg in 1865, the son of a publisher and bookseller. As a child he showed considerable musical ability and in 1879 met Balakirev, from whom his mother had earlier sought theory lessons for herself, to be recommended instead to Rimsky-Korsakov. It was with the latter that Glazunov was to study and by the age of sixteen he had completed the first of his nine symphonies, which was performed in 1882 under the direction of Balakirev whose influence is apparent in the composition.

The relationship with Balakirev was not to continue. The rich timber-merchant Mitrofan Petrovich Belyayev had been present at the first performance of the symphony in St. Petersburg and travelled to Moscow to hear Rimsky-Korsakov conduct a second performance there. Belyayev attended the Moscow

rehearsals and his meeting with Rimsky-Korsakov was the beginning of a new informal association of Russian composers, perceived by Balakirev as a threat to his own position and influence as self-appointed mentor of the Russian Nationalists. Glazunov was to form part of this new circle, attending his Friday evenings with Rimsky-Korsakov, rather than Balakirev's Tuesday evening meetings.

In 1899 Glazunov joined the staff of the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, but by this time his admiration for his teacher seemed to have cooled. Rimsky-Korsakov's wife was later to remark on Glazunov's admiration for Tchaikovsky and Brahms, suspecting the influence of Taneyev, surely the only composer to set songs in Esperanto, and the important critic Laroche, champion of Tchaikovsky and staunch opponent of the Nationalists.

Glazunov remained a colleague and friend of Rimsky-Korsakov, and demonstrated this after the political disturbances of 1905. The latter had added his signature to a letter of protest at the suppression of some element of democracy in Russia and had openly sympathised with Conservatory students who had joined liberal protests against official policies. Rimsky-Korsakov was dismissed from the Conservatory, to be reinstated by Glazunov, elected Director of the Conservatory, which had won a certain degree of autonomy. Glazunov remained Director of the St Petersburg Conservatory until 1930.

It says much for the general esteem in which Glazunov was held that he was able to steer the Conservatory through years of extreme difficulty, both in the war and the subsequent political revolution, fortified, it seems, by illicit vodka procured by the good offices of the father of his student Dmitry Shostakovich,

but in other respects willing to share the physical hardships of the time, during the course of which he lost a great deal of weight.

In 1928 Glazunov left Russia to fulfill concert engagements abroad, finally making his home in Paris, where he died in 1936. These last years took him to a number of countries, where he conducted concerts of his own works. A *Daily Express* critic described his appearance at a concert in England in 1929: When I went to watch him conduct he drew his baton from a pigskin sheaf with his monogram in gold upon the cover. The general impression was that of a wealthy retired tea-planter. His skin is parchment-coloured, his glasses square-shaped and rimless, and a lot of gold watch-chain apparatus is spread about his starched white waistcoat.

Glazunov, in short, cut a respectable figure, matching the conservatism of his musical tastes. Richard Strauss's *Heldenleben* he found "disgusting", he alleged that Stravinsky had no ear, and he was known to dislike the music of Prokofiev, a difficult student at the Conservatory. His own music continued the tradition of Tchaikovsky in an age that ventured into more experimental territory, an apparent anachronism. In recent years it has proved increasingly possible to hear the music of Glazunov without the prejudices of an earlier generation.

The Seasons was written for the Russian Imperial Ballet and first produced at the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg in February 1900 with choreography by Marius Petipa. There is no particular story to the ballet, which offers a series of *tableaux*, one for each of the four seasons, set to music that seems to continue the tradition established in the three ballets of Tchaikovsky.

After a short introduction the curtain rises to show Winter surrounded by Frost, Ice, Hail and Snow, amid whirling snowflakes. For the first of these, Frost, there is a Polonaise, for Ice a dance played by violas and

clarinets, for Hail a *scherzo* and for Snow a waltz. The cold of winter is banished by two gnomes, who light a fire, preparing the temperature for the following scene.

Spring is ushered in by the harp and accompanied by the gentle Zephyr, Birds and Flowers. There is a dance for Roses, for Spring and for one of the Birds, all of whom depart as the summer sun grows hotter.

Summer is set in a cornfield, where Cornflowers and Poppies dance, with the Spirit of the Corn. The heat exhausts them, and as they rest a group of Naiads enter, to a Barcarolle, bringing the water that the flowers need. There is a dance for the Spirit of the Corn, accompanied by a clarinet solo and a *coda*, interrupted by an attempt by satyrs and fauns to carry off the Spirit, frustrated by the intervention of the Zephyr.

A wild Bacchic dance introduces Autumn. There are brief appearances by Winter, Spring, the Bird and the Zephyr, reminiscences of the year that is now passing. There is a dance for Summer, and then the Bacchanale resumes, to be brought to an end by multitudinous falling leaves. The stage grows dark and the final Apotheosis shows the stars, as they circle the Earth.

In December, 1894, the first Russian Symphony Concert in St. Petersburg was devoted to a memorial concert for Anton Rubinstein, an event that was ill attended. The second concert of the series included two new works, the suite from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Snegurochka* and Glazunov's suite *Scènes de ballet*, dedicated to the orchestra of the Russian Imperial Opera.

The music of the *Scènes de ballet* speaks for itself. The introductory *Préambule* is followed by a characteristically orchestrated dance for marionettes and a rhythmic *Mazurka*. The *Scherzino* is a more whimsical piece of writing, leading to a deeply romantic *Pas d'action*. The succeeding oriental dance explores thematic material familiar enough in Russian music of

the period, and the suite ends with a lyrical waltz and a final energetic *Polonaise*. The work is an example of Glazunov's skill in orchestration and his ability to capture the essence of the world of Russian ballet.

Glazunov wrote his *Scène dansante, Gadaniye i plyaska, Opus 81* (Fortune-telling and country dancing), in 1904. It is thoroughly Russian in spirit, with a principal theme in the first section that seems

essentially Russian and all too familiar in its contour. There follows a series of divertissements, a cheerful little dance, followed by an even more vigorous dance, in traditional mood. More delicate dances follow, but interrupted by the rhythms and melodic contours that may be associated with the busy opening scenes of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*.

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

The Moscow Symphony Orchestra was established in 1989 by the distinguished French conductor, Antonio de Almeida, who was closely associated with the orchestra until his death in 1997. Assembled from the most outstanding Moscow musicians, the orchestra has among its principal players prize-winners and laureates of international music competitions. Concert tours include the highly successful 1991 visit to Finland and England, where a collaboration with a rock band demonstrated the orchestra's readiness to experiment. Shortly after its formation the orchestra signed a long term recording contract for its wide repertoire to be released on the Marco Polo and Naxos labels. Its complete cycle of symphonies by Malipiero and Tournemire has brought international acclaim, with praise for its fine virtuoso playing.

Alexander Anissimov

After graduating from the St Petersburg Conservatory, Alexander Anissimov completed his studies at the Moscow Conservatory in 1972. He conducted for a number of years at the St Petersburg Maly Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, and in 1980 was appointed Chief Conductor of the Byelorussian Opera and Ballet Theatre in Minsk. He has combined this position with the post of Guest Conductor of the Kirov Opera and an active concert career has taken him to engagements throughout the former Soviet Union, Europe, the Far East and the Americas. In 1997 Alexander Anissimov was appointed Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, with which he had already recorded for Naxos a complete cycle of Rachmaninov Symphonies. He has also had a continuing association with the Moscow Symphony Orchestra with which he has contributed to the Naxos series of orchestral music by Glazunov.



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STEREO

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Alexander Konstantinovich

GLAZUNOV

(1865-1936)

Moscow Symphony Orchestra

Alexander Anissimov

DDD

Playing
Time
79:22

Scènes de Ballet, Op. 52

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1 | I Prélambule | 3:17 |
| 2 | II Marionnettes | 2:13 |
| 3 | III Mazurka | 4:09 |
| 4 | IV Scherzino | 1:29 |
| 5 | V Pas d'action | 5:43 |
| 6 | VI Danse Orientale | 2:40 |
| 7 | VII Valse | 4:26 |
| 8 | VIII Polonaise | 5:39 |

Scène Dansante, Op. 81

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 9 | I Andante sostenuto | 9:44 |
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The Seasons, Op. 67

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| 10 | I L'Hiver. Introduction | 2:25 |
| 11 | II 1er Tableau | 1:41 |
| 12 | III Variation I 'Le Givre' | 0:55 |
| 13 | IV Variation II 'La Glace' | 1:09 |
| 14 | V Variation III 'La Grêle' | 0:57 |
| 15 | VI Variation IV 'La Neige' | 3:31 |
| 16 | VII 2me Tableau. Le Printemps | 5:17 |
| 17 | VIII 3me Tableau. L'Été | 2:20 |
| 18 | IX Valse des Bluets et des Pavots | 1:40 |
| 19 | X Barcarolle | 2:59 |
| 20 | XI Variation | 1:15 |
| 21 | XII Coda | 3:59 |
| 22 | XIII 4me Tableau. L'Automne | 4:32 |
| 23 | XIV Petit Adagio | 4:37 |
| 24 | XV Allegro | 2:35 |

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