



# RUSSIAN CELLO CONCERTOS

Tchaikovsky • Rimsky-Korsakov • Glazunov

Li-Wei Qin, Cello

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice

Michael Halász

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# RUSSIAN CELLO CONCERTOS

<b>Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky</b> (1840–1893) <b>Variations on a Rococo Theme in A major, Op. 33</b> (1877) (arr. Wilhelm Fitzenhagen)			<b>18:29</b>
1	Moderato quasi andante – Tema: Moderato semplice		2:29
2	Variation I: Tempo del tema		0:53
3	Variation II: Tempo del tema		1:15
4	Variation III: Andante sostenuto		3:33
5	Variation IV: Andante grazioso		1:54
6	Variation V: Allegro moderato		3:46
7	Variation VI: Andante		2:33
8	Variation VII e coda: Allegro vivo		2:05
<b>Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov</b> (1844–1908) <b>Serenade, Op. 37</b> (1893)			<b>3:53</b>
9	Allegretto		
<b>Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov</b> (1865–1936) <b>Concerto ballata in C major, Op. 108</b> (1931)			<b>20:26</b>
10	Allegro comodo		
<b>Deux Morceaux, Op. 20</b> (1887–88)			<b>9:26</b>
11	I. Mélodie: Moderato		6:38
12	II. Sérénade espagnole: Allegretto		2:48
<b>Chant du ménestrel in F sharp minor, Op. 71</b> (1900)			<b>3:49</b>
13	Lento		
<b>Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky</b> <b>Pezzo capriccioso in B minor, Op. 62</b> (1887)			<b>6:44</b>
14	Andante con moto		
<b>String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11</b> (1871)			<b>6:48</b>
15	II. Andante cantabile (version for cello and string orchestra)		

## Russian Cello Concertos

Tchaikovsky · Rimsky-Korsakov · Glazunov

**Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893)  
**Variations on a Rococo Theme in A major, Op. 33**  
**Pezzo capriccioso in B minor, Op. 62**  
**Andante cantabile from String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11**

The year 1876 was not the most successful in Tchaikovsky's career. He had spent ten years teaching at the Conservatory in Moscow, after completing his own studies at the comparable institution in St Petersburg. His first three symphonies and first piano concerto had been completed and performed, and he enjoyed already a considerable reputation at home and abroad. Nevertheless, his *Romeo and Juliet* had been hissed by an audience in Vienna, where the critic Eduard Hanslick had expressed an unfavourable opinion, as later he did of the *Violin Concerto*. At the same time the opera *Vakula the Smith* had not proved a popular success. Tchaikovsky's own health was uncertain, while social pressures were leading him into the disastrous contemplation of marriage, as an answer to problems posed by his own homosexuality.

The autumn brought the composition of the symphonic poem *Francesca da Rimini*, a drama of forbidden love based on an episode in Dante's *Inferno*, but this was followed, towards the end of the year, by a very different work, the *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, presumably commissioned by his Conservatory colleague, the German cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen. The work, couched largely in the composer's own idiom, expresses his admiration for Mozart and is modestly scored for an 18th-century orchestra, with pairs of woodwind instruments, horns and the usual complement of strings.

The *Variations*, to the composer's dismay, were revised and re-ordered by Fitzenhagen, although in the end he allowed the revision to stand. A brief introduction is followed by the solo cello statement of the theme. The first variation is in triplet rhythm, while the soloist shares

the second variation with the orchestra. The third variation, marked *Andante sostenuto*, changes the mood and key, restored in the fourth *Andante grazioso* variation. In the fifth the cello enjoys a more decorative role, while the flute maintains the theme. A cadenza leads to the sixth variation, in D minor, and the seventh, with its opportunities for technical brilliance.

Fitzenhagen had been the cellist in the first performances of Tchaikovsky's three string quartets, the first of which was composed and performed for the first time in March 1871. Tchaikovsky seems to have arranged the slow movement for cello and string orchestra at about the time he was working on the *Pezzo capriccioso* and the transcription of the *Nocturne* from *Six Morceaux, Op. 19*, of 1873 for cello and small orchestra. The cause of this particular activity seems to have been his association during a visit to Paris with the young Russian cellist Anatoly Brandukov, a pupil of Fitzenhagen, whom Tchaikovsky found very charming. He dedicated to him the *Pezzo capriccioso*, and Anatoliy Brandukov gave the first Russian performance of the work, not, as its title might imply, a *scherzo*, but music of a more Romantic cast, in Moscow on 7 December 1889.

**Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov** (1844–1908)  
**Serenade, Op. 37**

Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov originally intended a naval career, following the example of his elder brother. He showed some musical ability even as a very small child, but at the age of 14 entered the Naval Cadet College in St Petersburg in pursuit of a more immediately attractive ambition. It was in 1861, the year before he completed his course at the Naval College, that Rimsky-Korsakov met Balakirev, a musician who was to become an important influence on him, as he was on the young army officers Mussorgsky and Cui, who already formed part of his circle, later joined by Borodin. The meeting had a far-reaching effect on Rimsky-Korsakov's career. He

became, however, increasingly aware of the technical deficiencies of his fellow-nationalist composers, but was able, in time, to provide the Russian nationalist composers with a necessary degree of professionalism. In 1871 he took a position as professor of instrumentation and composition at St Petersburg Conservatory and the following year resigned his commission in the navy, to become a civilian Inspector of Naval Bands, a position created for him through personal and family influence.

Rimsky-Korsakov's subsequent career was a distinguished one. Understanding the need for a sure command of compositional techniques, harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, he set to work to make good these defects in his own musical formation with remarkable success. This led him, as the only real professional of the nationalist group dominated by Balakirev, to undertake the completion and, often, the orchestration of works left unfinished by other composers of the new Russian school, from whom he had gradually grown apart. Rimsky-Korsakov was involved in the disturbances of 1905, when he sided with the Conservatory students, joining with some colleagues in a public demand for political reform, an action that brought his dismissal from the institution, to which he was able to return when his pupil and friend Glazunov became director the following year. He died in 1908.

Rimsky-Korsakov spent part of the summer of 1893 in Yalta, for a time in the vain hope that this might bring about an improvement in his daughter Masha's health. As he was returning to take up again some of his duties in St Petersburg, news came that Masha had died. For Russian music the year was to be an ominous one, with the sudden death of Tchaikovsky in the early winter. Among Rimsky-Korsakov's compositions of the year was his *Serenade* for cello and piano, a subject for discussion among the composers' friends and disciples in December, as we learn from the reminiscences of the diarist Vasily Vasilyevich Yastrebtsev (V.V. Yastrebtsev, *Reminiscences of Rimsky-Korsakov*, ed. and tr. Florence Jonas, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985). In Yalta Rimsky-Korsakov had passed the time by accompanying his cellist son, Andrey, and his son Vladimir, a violinist.

The *Serenade* was later effectively arranged by the composer for cello and orchestra.

**Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov (1865–1936)**  
**Concerto ballata in C major, Op. 108**  
**Chant du ménestrel in F sharp minor, Op. 71**  
**Deux Morceaux, Op. 20**

Glazunov belonged to a generation of Russian composers that was able to benefit from more professional standards of compositional technique, absorbing and helping to create a synthesis of the national, that might sometimes be expressed crudely enough, and the technique of the conservatories, that might sometimes seem facile. Glazunov worked closely with Rimsky-Korsakov, to whom Balakirev, his mother's teacher, had recommended him, and played an important part in the education of a new generation of Russian composers such as Shostakovich.

Alexander Konstantinovich 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 and hence Rimsky-Korsakov. By the age of 16 he had finished the first of his nine symphonies, which was performed under the direction of Balakirev, whose influence is perceptible in the work. 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 and travelled to Moscow to hear Rimsky-Korsakov conduct a second performance there. He 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 nationalist composers. Glazunov became part of Belyayev's 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 seems to have cooled. Rimsky-Korsakov's wife

was later to remark on Glazunov's admiration for Tchaikovsky and Brahms, suspecting in this the influence of Taneyev and of the critic Laroche, champion of Tchaikovsky and a strong opponent of the nationalists, a man described by Rimsky-Korsakov as the Russian equivalent of Hanslick in Vienna, a comparison that, from him, was not entirely complimentary.

Glazunov, however, remained a colleague and friend of Rimsky-Korsakov, and demonstrated this after the political disturbance of 1905, when the latter had signed 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 an institution that, in the aftermath, had now won a measure of autonomy. Glazunov remained director of the Conservatory until 1930.

It says much for the esteem in which Glazunov was held that he was able to steer the Conservatory through years of great hardship, difficulty and political turmoil, fortified in his task, it seems, by the illicit supply of vodka provided for him by the father of Shostakovich, then a student there. Emaciated through the years of privation after the Revolution, he eventually assumed a more substantial appearance again, compared by the English press to a retired tea-planter or a prosperous bank-manager, with his rimless glasses and gold watch-chain. His appearance was in accordance with his musical tastes. He found fault with Stravinsky's ear and could not abide the music of Richard Strauss, while the student Prokofiev seems to have shocked him with the discords of his *Scythian Suite*. His own music continued the tradition of Tchaikovsky and to this extent seemed an

anachronism in an age when composers were indulging in experiments of all kinds.

Glazunov left Russia in 1928 in order to attend the Schubert celebrations in Vienna. Thereafter he remained abroad, with a busy round of engagements as a conductor, finally settling in Paris in 1932 until his death four years later. The *Concerto ballata* was written in 1931, three years before his *Saxophone Concerto*, and is dedicated to Pablo Casals. It is introduced by the cello alone, leading the narrative until a passage of orchestral excitement intervenes, with an Elgarian melody of descending sequences for the soloist, echoed by the orchestra in some agitation. Elements of the opening are followed by an A flat major passage marked *Tranquillo*, followed by an *Adagio, quasi ballata*, as the tale unwinds. A C minor cadenza allows the cello to continue the story, finally in terms of great simplicity, before another, longer cadenza. There follows an *Allegro marciale*, then an *Allegretto scherzando*, which breaks off. The final section follows, with an air of defiant optimism, its final section accompanied by the cello in continued double-stopping, ending a work of sure and skilled craftsmanship.

The *Chant du ménestrel* was written in 1900, a poignant minstrel's song, with a change of mood in the central section, before the woodwind returns with the first melody. The *Deux Morceaux* are still earlier, dating from 1887 and 1888. The *Mélodie* is delicately orchestrated, always giving due prominence to the cello melody line. The *Sérénade espagnole* makes use of a harp and plucked strings in its orchestration, an accomplished Russian evocation of Spain, perhaps a recollection of Glazunov's visit to that country with Belyayev in 1884.

**Keith Anderson**

## Li-Wei Qin



Li-Wei Qin is one of the most renowned Chinese cellists of his generation. After achieving great success at the eleventh Tchaikovsky International Competition where he was awarded the Silver Medal, Qin has since won First Prize in the prestigious 2001 Naumburg Competition in New York. Two times soloist at the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall, Qin has performed with many of the world's great orchestras including the BBC orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Prague Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic and the Sydney Symphony, among many others. Leading conductors with whom he has worked include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Marek Janowski, Jaap van Zweden, Jiří Bělohlávek, Yu Long, Lü Jia, Machello Viotti and Yehudi Menuhin. In recital and chamber music, Qin has appeared at several festivals collaborating with musicians such as Daniel Hope, Nabuko Imai, Mischa Maisky, David Finckel and Peter Frankel, to name a few. Qin plays a 1780 Joseph Guaragnini cello, generously loaned by Dr and Mrs Wilson Goh. Li-Wei Qin is currently a professor of cello at the YST Conservatorium, National University of Singapore.

[www.liweicello.com](http://www.liweicello.com)

## Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice



Photo: František Renza

The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, founded in 1969, is one of the Czech Republic's top orchestras. With a repertoire that includes a large number of compositions from the Baroque era to contemporary music, including many crossover and multi-genre projects, the orchestra is valued for its stylistic interpretation and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound. It often performs at the Czech Republic's most important festivals and at many important venues in Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Salzburg Festspielhaus, the Herkulesaal and Gasteig in Munich, the Musikverein in Vienna, the Brucknerhaus in Linz, the Meistersingerhalle in Nuremberg, and many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has played in Japan and has toured extensively around America. The orchestra has collaborated with many leading conductors, including Jiří Bělohlávek, Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons, and soloists including Lazar Berman, Ivan Moravec, Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Pavel Šporcl, Gabriela Demeterová, Ángel Romero, Helen Donath and Dagmar Pecková, among others. [www.kfpar.cz](http://www.kfpar.cz)

## Michael Halász



Michael Halász's first engagement as a conductor was at the Munich Gärtnerplatztheater where, between 1972 and 1975, he directed all operetta productions. In 1975 he moved to Frankfurt to work as principal *Kapellmeister* with Christoph von Dohnányi and here he conducted the most important works of the operatic repertoire. Many engagements as a guest conductor followed and in 1977 Dohnányi took him to the Staatsoper in Hamburg as principal Kapellmeister. From 1978 to 1991 he was general musical director of the Hagen Opera House and in 1991 he took up the post of resident conductor at the Vienna State Opera for 20 years. Michael Halász's recordings for Naxos include ballets by Tchaikovsky, operatic excerpts of Wagner, symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert and Mahler, Rossini's overtures, three volumes of Liszt's symphonic poems (the latter described by the *Penguin Guide* as 'one of the most successful collections of Liszt's symphonic poems to have emerged in recent years'), *Fidelio* (8.660070-71), *Don Giovanni* (8.660080-82), *Le nozze di Figaro* (8.660102-04), *Die Zauberflöte* (8.660030-31), and a pioneering recording of Schreker's opera *Der ferne Klang* (8.660074-75). He has also recorded Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* and *Orfeo* (8.550766), Richard Strauss's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (8.553379), Rubinstein's *Don Quixote* (8.555394) and, for Marco Polo, ballet music by Rubinstein (8.220451) and Schmidt's *Symphony No. 1* (8.223119).

Russian composers have made a significant contribution to the repertoire of music for cello and orchestra. Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, deftly scored for an 18th-century orchestra, reveals his admiration for Mozart whereas the *Pezzo capriccioso* is full of ripe charm. In the year of Tchaikovsky's death, Rimsky-Korsakov composed the attractive *Serenade, Op. 37* and his student, Glazunov, both absorbed and continued the great Romantic lineage with his own sonorous and beautiful *Concerto ballata*, the poignant *Chant du ménestrel*, and the Iberian evocations of the *Sérénade espagnole* from *Deux Morceaux*.

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- [1]–[8] Variations on a Rococo Theme in A major, Op. 33 (1877)**  
(arr. Wilhelm Fitzenhagen) **18:29**

**Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)**

- [9] Serenade, Op. 37 (1893)** **3:53**

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**[11]–[12] Deux Morceaux, Op. 20 (1887–88)** **9:26**  
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**Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky**

- [14] Pezzo capriccioso in B minor, Op. 62 (1887)** **6:44**  
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(version for cello and string orchestra) (1871) **6:48**

**Li-Wei Qin, Cello**

**Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice**

**Michael Halász**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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