

RUSSIAN CHAMBER PHILHARMONIC ST PETERSBURG

Juri Gilbo, conductor
Michel Gershwin, violin

8pm St Peter's Parish Church, Oundle

Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky, Op.35a

Anton Arensky (1861-1906)

Anton Arensky was a star pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov at the St Petersburg Conservatory and later taught Scriabin and Rachmaninov at the Moscow Conservatory before becoming Director of the Imperial Chapel in St Petersburg. He retired from this position in 1901, spending his remaining time as a pianist, conductor and composer, and died of tuberculosis, drinking and gambling having already undermined his health. Tchaikovsky was the greatest influence on Arensky's compositions. Indeed, Rimsky-Korsakov said, 'In his youth Arensky did not escape some influence from me; later the influence came from Tchaikovsky. He will quickly be forgotten.' The perception that he lacked a distinctive personal style contributed to the long-term neglect of his music. However, although not original, Arensky could produce lyrical and distinctive music, and some of his pieces have continued to occupy a corner of the modern repertoire. Especially popular are these variations for string orchestra, composed in 1894, which originally formed the slow movement of his second string quartet. The theme used is one of Tchaikovsky's most popular songs, 'Legend', otherwise known as the carol 'The Crown of Roses'.

Nocturne

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

The illegitimate son of a Georgian prince and his mistress, Borodin was born in St Petersburg and reared in comfortable circumstances. As a schoolboy he learned to play the piano, flute and cello and began composing. As a teenager, Borodin also began to study chemistry, starting with experiments in making fireworks but progressing quickly towards a passion for science that rivalled – indeed, ultimately exceeded – his passion for music. He pursued his studies at the Medico-Surgical Academy, becoming a Professor there in 1864. Due to his work in chemistry and his wife's poor health, Borodin was not as prolific a composer as many of his contemporaries – hence his description of himself as a 'Sunday composer'. Unlike the other members of the group of composers



Juri Gilbo

known as 'The Five' he was particularly fond of playing and composing chamber music. This famous 'Nocturne' is from the second of his two string quartets, in D major, written in 1881 as a present for his wife Ekaterina. The love between husband and wife is reflected in the lyrical duet between the violin and cello. Together with other compositions by Borodin, this piece was adapted for the 1953 musical 'Kismet', and the following year Borodin was posthumously awarded a Tony Award for the show.

Georgian Dances

Sulkhan Tsintsadze (1925-1991)

Tsintsadze was one of Georgia's leading composers, notable for his synthesis of his country's folk music with the idioms of twentieth-century European composers. He began his career as a cellist, initially at the Tbilisi Conservatory in Georgia, and then went on to study cello and composition at the Moscow Conservatory, returning to Tbilisi to teach. His wide-ranging oeuvre contains examples of almost every possible category of musical output: operas, ballets, symphonies, instrumental concerti, choral works and chamber music. Of particular significance are his eleven string quartets which give clear expression to his love for Georgian national themes. He also composed arrangements of Georgian folk melodies. These Dances transport the listener to Georgia with its wonderful, starkly contrasting landscapes and centuries-old traditions. The humoresque 'Indi Mindi' has its roots in the province of Guria in southwestern Georgia; 'Mzchemsuri' is a shepherd's song from the Caucasus; 'Suliko' the most celebrated Georgian chanson of the nineteenth century; 'Satchidao' should be understood as the accompaniment for traditional Georgian wrestling matches; finally, 'Zoli Gamididgulta' gives expression to a dance from western Georgia.

Interval

Sextet in D minor, Op.70 ('Souvenir de Florence')

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Allegro con spirito – Adagio cantabile e con moto – Allegretto moderato – Allegro vivace

Tchaikovsky's lifetime fell within the period of particular cultural affinity between his home city St Petersburg, the Tsarist capital, and Italy. In the 19th century the city's educated middle classes took to foreign travel, Italy being the most popular destination, particularly Florence. Tchaikovsky himself made several visits to Florence, and, following a long stay there to complete 'The Queen of Spades', wrote this piece in 1890 for the St Petersburg Chamber Music Society. He told his patron, Mme von Meck, 'I wrote it with the greatest enthusiasm and without the slightest effort.' It has been observed that the final movement, in particular, is

orchestrally conceived, rather than in the style of chamber music, and the work is often performed by string orchestras; many believe it to be more effective in that format. The work opens boldly and is followed in the Adagio by a moving duet for violin and cello. In the last two movements, the third, with its sharp dynamic contrasts, and the final movement, an energetic fugue, Tchaikovsky reflects distinctly Russian folk melodies and rhythms.

Violist, conductor and composer **Juri Gilbo** was born in St Petersburg in 1968 and began his musical life with violin lessons at the age of four. He entered the St Petersburg Conservatory and subsequently studied with the celebrated German violist Tabea Zimmermann at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Juri studied conducting and artistic direction with Luigi Sagrestano and made his conducting debut in 1997. Since then his concerts have taken him to the USA, Europe, Brazil, Japan, China, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey and Dubai. In 1998, Juri took over the position of musical director of the Russian Chamber Philharmonic St Petersburg; he currently lives in Frankfurt am Main.

The **Russian Chamber Philharmonic St Petersburg** was founded in 1990 by graduates of the St Petersburg Conservatory. The extraordinarily broad range of its repertoire, from baroque to modern, has made it one of the most sought-after chamber orchestras of Europe. Its much admired virtuosity and particular sound quality has led to regular performances with international stars such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Igor Oistrakh, Andrei Gavrilov, Elena Bashkistrova and Sergei Nakariakov. They have also toured frequently to major European centres and renowned concert halls including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Bayreuth Opera House, Teatro Real Madrid, the Leipzig Gewandhaus and the Alte Oper Frankfurt, as well as to many international festivals. The orchestra has also recently appeared to great acclaim with the opera and ballet soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, and the Maryinsky Theatre, St Petersburg.

Refreshments available before the concert and during the interval.

The concert ends at approximately 10pm.

Sponsors: Richard and Jean Winfrey

