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Tchaikovsky

Symphony no. 6

Borodin

Polovtsian Dances

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F E S T I V A L

O R C H E S T R A

*Iván
Fischer*

C Z E C H

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Iván Fischer & Budapest Festival Orchestra

Iván Fischer is the founder and Music Director of the Budapest Festival Orchestra, as well as the Music Director of the Konzerthaus and Konzerthausorchester Berlin. In recent years he has also gained a reputation as a composer, with his works being performed in the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, Germany and Austria. What is more, he has directed a number of successful opera productions.

The BFO's frequent worldwide tours and a series of critically acclaimed and fast selling records, released first by Philips Classics and later by Channel Classics, have contributed to Iván Fischer's reputation as one of the world's most high-profile music directors. Fischer has guest-conducted the Berlin Philharmonic more than ten times; every year he spends two weeks with Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; and as a conductor, he is also a frequent guest of the leading US symphonic orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra. As Music Director, he has led the Kent Opera and the Opéra National de Lyon, and was Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC. Many of his recordings have been awarded prestigious international prizes. He studied piano, violin, and later the cello and composition in Budapest, before continuing his education in Vienna where he studied Conducting under Hans Swarowsky.

Iván Fischer is a founder of the Hungarian Mahler Society and Patron of the British Kodály Academy. He has received the Golden Medal Award from the President of the Republic of Hungary, and the Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum for his services in promoting international cultural relations. The government of the French Republic made him Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 2006 he was honoured with the Kossuth Prize, Hungary's most prestigious arts award. In 2011 he received the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award, Hungary's Prima Primissima Prize and the Dutch Ovatie Prize. In 2013 he was accorded Honorary Membership to the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2015 he was presented with the Abu Dhabi Festival Award.

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Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno (photo: Pavel Nesvadba)

Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno | Petr Fiala – Director

The Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno has been established in 1990, and in spite of its brief history, it is already numbered among the best and most sought-after professional ensembles in Europe. The Choir focuses especially on the performance of oratorios and cantatas, and recently also on operatic repertoire of all periods. The ever-rising artistic level of the Choir finds reflection in its steadily increasing number of concert engagements, both in the Czech Republic and abroad (around 90 performances annually).

The Choir has been appearing with all Czech and many prominent international orchestras and conductors like Jiří Belohlávek, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Roger Norrington, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Kurt Masur. The Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno has recorded numerous CDs and is a regular guest at international festivals as well as being frequently performing on stages all around Europe.

The founder, artistic director and conductor of the choir is Petr Fiala, a graduate of the Brno Conservatory and the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts. Besides his activities as a teacher (at the Brno Conservatory) and composer (author of more than 180 compositions) he has been active also as a conductor for 30 years. The assistant of the choirmaster Petr Fiala is Jan Ocetek.

The activities of the Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno are made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Southern Moravia Region, Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and Statutory City of Brno.

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A Requiem for orchestra

When Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky stepped onto the stage in Saint Petersburg on 28 October 1893 to introduce his *Sixth Symphony* to the public, he was received with a roar of applause. Less than an hour later the astonished audience was left dumbfounded. How could a symphony begin so softly and end even softer? And what about the second movement, with its undanceable waltz, and the third one with its unstoppable march? Nine days after the premiere, Tchaikovsky died in a city ravaged by cholera.

Tchaikovsky himself considered the symphony to be the best he had ever written, and with it he said farewell to music, indeed to life itself. Rumours have never ceased to circulate about this unexpected end. For example, according to a controversial theory of the Russian musicologist Alexandra Orlova, the composer was forced to commit suicide. A secret council of honour is said to have sentenced Tchaikovsky thus because of a scandalous relationship with his young nephew; that he was reported to have died of cholera was no more than a pretence to conceal the true course of events. This theory has since been refuted. When the composer drunk a glass of unboiled water in the company of his brother Modest and nephew Vladimir Davidov, who warned him of the dangers, he replied "I am not afraid of cholera." Did he know what he was doing? Is this the import of the dark, deathly sound of the menacing bassoons at the beginning of the symphony? Was the *Pathétique* indeed his message of farewell? And especially the final movement, *Adagio*, with its downward pull, in which all that holds on to life is swallowed up as if by a morass? Depressions overshadowed not only Tchaikovsky's final years, but much of his life as well. Among the reasons for this was his homosexuality. In his younger years he was very nearly driven to suicide by an unhappy marriage, which was dissolved on medical advice. In his last symphony, the tragedy of the composer's life seems to be captured in music.

Although he is considered the most 'western' of all nineteenth-century Russian composers, Tchaikovsky hardly left any doubt as to his love for Mother Russia and her folk music. In a letter to his adored friend and maecenas, Nadezjda von Meck, he wrote in 1878: "As far as the Russian element in my music goes, it is foremost a matter of the melodic lines, akin to Russian song, and my harmonic style. From an early age I have been imbued with the incredible and enchanting



Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

charm of real Russian folk music (...) I am, in the truest sense of the word, a Russian.” Igor Stravinsky too ascribed a genuinely Russian feeling to Tchaikovsky, “even if his music does not sound specifically Russian for everyone”. His music lives by its wonderful melodic invention, woven into a classical formal context. All his works, including the famous *Sixth Symphony*, bear witness to the fact that Tchaikovsky felt himself to be a cosmopolitan too. He travelled greatly in Europe and orientated himself throughout his life on the classical heritage of Mozart and Beethoven.

The final year of Tchaikovsky’s life was one of restlessness. He conducted in Brussels and Odessa, received an honorary doctorate in Cambridge, and directed concerts in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. He wrote to his brother Modest that he was plagued by doubts about his creativity: “It seems as though my part is played out.” But his *Sixth Symphony* surely proves that his role was by no means ‘played out’? For had he not in the meantime created one of his most moving works? Tchaikovsky described his Sixth as a ‘programme symphony’. But that programme was to remain a mystery to all: “This programme is thoroughly subjective, and not seldom during my walks, while composing her (the symphony) in my thoughts, have I shed bitter tears. As regards form this symphony will offer much that is new; among other things, the finale will not be a noisy allegro, but on the contrary a very slow and extended adagio.” The symphony reveals autobiographical traits and evokes much of the atmosphere of a requiem. This appears from a commission from the Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, which Tchaikovsky declined: “It somewhat confuses me that my last symphony is imbued with a mood that closely approaches a requiem. I believe the symphony has come off very well, and I fear that I will start repeating myself if I straightaway commence another work of a similar character.”

Despite the cool reception of the *Sixth Symphony* on 28 October 1893 in Saint Petersburg (under Tchaikovsky’s direction), he was convinced that it was his best, if not the very best of all that he had written. Not until the day of the premiere did it gain its definitive title. Proposals such as ‘Programme Symphony’ and ‘Tragic Symphony’ had been rejected, and in the end the work went down in music history as the ‘Pathétique Symphony’, which was an idea of his brother Modest. The first motifs of the gloomy introduction refer to Beethoven’s celebrated ‘Pathétique’ sonata for the piano. The continuation of the first movement and the ensuing movements tell a stormy life story. Happier days are recalled by the nostalgic yet sometimes sunny sounds of the

dancing ‘Allegro con grazia’. After an ecstatic outburst of the full orchestra in the third movement, ‘Allegro molto vivace’, the work relapses in the final movement into the bleak mood of the beginning. No sparkling finale here, but a lament which dies away in the heartbeat of the double basses. In the ‘Pathétique’ Tchaikovsky’s entire life seems to have passed before his eyes. The audience may not have needed to know the underlying programme, yet his inner struggles and paradoxical emotions are clearly audible. As is the gloomy end.

Sounds of a tribe of the Russian steppes

Although seven years older than Tchaikovsky, Alexander Borodin found his way to classical music only later. As the illegitimate child of a Georgian prince, he studied to be a chemist, but through his contact with Musorgsky and Balakirev he became increasingly convinced of his real calling. He joined up with The Mighty Handful, as they were known, a small group of composer-propagators of ‘genuine’ Russian music: Balakirev, Musorgsky, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov. Besides Borodin’s successful career as a professor of chemistry, he created a highly personal musical oeuvre. It includes three symphonies, several chamber works – among them the much-loved *Second String Quartet* – some songs and piano pieces, but above all the opera *Prince Igor*. It should also be mentioned that his Third Symphony remained unfinished, as did *Prince Igor*. As a leading chemist, Borodin’s scientific work claimed most of his attention. Nonetheless he gained a place of repute in music history and on the international concert stage.

The truly Russian mood that Igor Stravinsky ascribed to Tchaikovsky is felt likewise, indeed perhaps even more so, in the music of Borodin. Not without reason did he commence work in 1869 on what was to become his best-known work, the opera *Prince Igor*. It is based on a historic occurrence from Russian history and dedicated to Michael Glinka, the father of Russian opera. It was not through lack of time alone that the work remained incomplete when Borodin died in 1887, for he also entertained doubts as to its dramatic content. The opera was completed by Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov. The former had already assisted Borodin with the orchestration of the *Polovtsian Dances*, which were premiered prior to completion of the opera. They underline what Glinka meant by a national music: like other parts of the opera they are



Alexander Borodin

based on folk tunes, which Borodin elevated to the concert stage. Besides the Polovtsian Dances, a suite from the opera – comprising the Overture, the Polovtsian Dances, the Chorus and Dance of the Polovtsian girls and the Polovtsian March – gained a place in orchestral repertoire. The dances offer a glimpse into the epic medieval story of Prince Igor, who resists the invasion of Polovtsian tribes and wages war against them, but is taken prisoner and thus becomes a witness to the wild dances of the Polovtsians in the distant Russian steppes.

Clemens Romijn
Translation: Stephen Taylor

Ein Requiem für Orchester

Als Peter Iljitsch Tschaikowsky am 28. Oktober 1893 in St. Petersburg das Podium betrat, um dem Publikum seine *Sechste Symphonie* vorzustellen, wurde er mit stürmischem Beifall empfangen. Eine Dreiviertelstunde später weiß das bestürzte Publikum nicht, wie es reagieren soll. Eine Symphonie, die flüsternd leise beginnt und noch leiser endet? Deren zweiter Satz aus einem nicht tanzbaren Walzer besteht, während der dritte ein unaufhaltbarer Marsch ist? Neun Tage nach der Uraufführung stirbt Tschaikowsky in einer Stadt, die von der Cholera heimgesucht wird.

Tschaikowsky selbst betrachtete die Symphonie als das Beste, das er je geschrieben hatte, und mit ihr nahm er Abschied von der Musik und vom Leben. Über dieses unerwartete Lebensende kursieren noch immer wilde Gerüchte. So soll Tschaikowsky gemäß einer umstrittenen Behauptung der russischen Musikwissenschaftlerin Alexandra Orlova zum Selbstmord gezwungen worden sein. Ein geheimer Ehrenrat habe ihn dazu verurteilt wegen eines schändlichen Verhältnisses mit seinem jungen Neffen. Dass Tschaikowsky an der Cholera gestorben sei, war nur ein Vorwand, der die Wahrheit verhüllen sollte. Diese Behauptung ist inzwischen entkräftet. Als Tschaikowsky in Gegenwart seines Bruders Modest und seines Neffen Vladimir Davidow ein Glas ungekochtes Wasser trank und die beiden ihn warnten, sagte er: "Ich habe keine Angst vor der Cholera." Wusste er, was er tat? Ist das die Bedeutung der düster drohenden Todesfagotte zu Beginn des Symphonie. War die Pathétique tatsächlich sein Abschiedsbrief? Und dann vor allem der letzte Satz, Adagio, mit seiner niederdrückenden Saugkraft, in dem alles, was noch ein bisschen leben will, wie von einem Sumpf verschlungen wird? Depressionen überschatten nicht nur Tschaikowskys letzte Jahre, sondern einen großen Teil seines Lebens. Einer der Gründe war seine Homosexualität. Eine unglückliche Ehe trieb ihn in jüngeren Jahren selbst fast zum Selbstmord. Sie wurde auf ärztliche Empfehlung geschieden. In seiner letzten Symphonie scheint die Tragik von Tschaikowskys Leben in Noten gefangen zu sein.

Auch wenn Tschaikowsky unter allen russischen Komponisten des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts als der 'westlichste' bezeichnet wird, galt seine größte Liebe doch seinem Mütterchen Russland und dessen Volksmusik. In einem Brief an seine verehrte Freundin und Gönnerin Nadjescha von Meck schrieb er 1878: "Was das russische Element in meiner Musik betrifft, so

handelt es sich vor allem um die mit dem russischen Lied verwandten melodischen Linien und die Harmonisierung in meinen Werken. Ich bin seit meiner Jugend durchdrungen vom unglaublichen, bezaubernden Charme von echter russischer Volksmusik (...) Ich bin im wahrsten Sinne des Begriffs ein Russe." Auch Igor Strawinsky schrieb Tschaikowsky ein wahrhaft russisches Empfinden zu, "auch wenn seine Musik nicht für jedermann spezifisch russisch klingt". Tschaikowskys Musik lebt von ihren wunderbaren melodischen Funden, eingewoben in einen klassischen formellen Kontext. Alle seine Werke, einschließlich seiner berühmten *Sechsten Symphonie*, bezeugen, dass der Komponist sich auch als Weltbürger verstand. Er reiste viel durch Europa und orientierte sich sein Leben lang am klassischen Erbe, der Musik von Mozart und Beethoven.

Tschaikowskys letztes Lebensjahr verlief ruhelos. Er dirigierte in Brüssel und Odessa, empfing in Cambridge ein Ehrendoktorat und leitete Konzerte in Moskau und St. Petersburg. Seinem Bruder Modest schrieb er, dass er von Zweifeln an seiner Kreativität gequält wurde: "Ich habe den Eindruck, dass meine Rolle zu Ende geht." Aber seine *Sechste Symphonie* beweist doch im Gegenteil, dass seine Rolle keinesfalls 'zu Ende' ging? Denn zwischen den einzelnen Akten war hier doch gerade sein ergreifendstes Werk entstanden? Tschaikowsky bezeichnete seine Sechste als 'Programmsymphonie'. Dennoch sollte dieses Programm für alle ein Rätsel bleiben: "Dieses Programm ist durch und durch subjektiv, und ich habe nicht selten während meiner Wanderungen, sie (die Symphonie) in Gedanken komponierend, bittere Tränen vergossen. Bezüglich der Form wird diese Symphonie viel Neues bieten; unter anderem wird das Finale kein lärmendes Allegro sein, sondern, im Gegenteil, ein sehr langgestrecktes Adagio." Die Symphonie zeigt autobiographische Züge und hat vieles mit einem Requiem gemeinsam. Das geht aus einem Auftrag des Großfürsten Konstantin Konstantinowitsch hervor, den Tschaikowsky ablehnte: "Mich stört ein wenig, dass meine letzte Symphonie von einer Stimmung durchdrungen ist, die einem Requiem sehr nahe kommt. Ich glaube, dass die Symphonie sehr gut gelungen ist, und ich befürchte, mich selbst zu wiederholen, wenn ich jetzt gleich an einem Werk mit einem ähnlichen Charakter beginnen würde."

Trotz des kühlen Empfangs der *Sechsten Symphonie* am 28. Oktober 1893 in St. Petersburg (unter seiner Leitung) war Tschaikowsky davon überzeugt, dass diese seine beste war, wenn nicht sein bestes Werk überhaupt. Erst am Tag der Uraufführung bekam sie ihren endgültigen Titel.

Zuerst waren Vorschläge wie 'Programm-Symphonie' und 'Tragische Symphonie' verworfen worden. Aber das Werk ging in die Musikgeschichte ein als 'Pathetische Symphonie', ein Vorschlag von Tschaikowskys Bruder Modest. Die ersten Motive der düsteren Einleitung erinnern an Beethovens berühmte Klaviersonate '*Pathétique*'. Die Folge des ersten Satzes und der weiteren Sätze berichten von einer stürmischen Lebensgeschichte. Wehmütige und zuweilen auch sonnige Klänge im tänzerischen '*Allegro con grazia*' erinnern an glücklichere Tage. Nach einem ekstatischen Ausbruch des ganzen Orchesters im dritten Satz, '*Allegro molto vivace*', kehrt die Symphonie im letzten Satz wieder in die anfängliche düstere Stimmung zurück. Am Ende kein wirbelndes Finale, sondern ein Klagelied, das mit den Tönen der Kontrabässe er stirbt, die den Herzschlag symbolisieren. Es scheint, als ob in der '*Pathétique*' Tschaikowskys ganzes Leben noch einmal an ihm vorüberzog. Das Publikum brauchte das zugrunde liegende Programm der Symphonie nicht zu kennen, dennoch sind das innere Ringen und die widersprüchlichen Gefühle deutlich hörbar. Und das düstere Ende.

Klänge eines russischen Steppenvolks

Obwohl er sieben Jahre älter als Tschaikowsky war, fand Alexander Borodin seinen Weg zur klassischen Musik erst später. Als uneheliches Kind eines georgischen Prinzen wurde er zum Chemiker ausgebildet, aber durch seine Kontakte zu Mussorgski und Balakirew wurde er sich seiner eigentlichen Berufung immer mehr bewusst. Er gehörte zum sogenannten Mächtigen Häuflein, zur Gruppe der komponierenden Förderer der 'echten' russischen Musik: Balakirew, Mussorgski, Cui und Rimski-Korsakow. Neben seiner erfolgreichen Laufbahn als Hochschuldozent in Chemie hinterließ Borodin ein sehr individuelles musikalisches Œuvre. Das besteht unter anderem aus drei Symphonien, einer Handvoll Kammermusik – darunter das sehr beliebte *Zweite Streichquartett* –, einer Anzahl von Liedern und Klavierstücken, vor allem aber aus der Oper *Fürst Igor*. Dabei ist noch zu erwähnen, dass seine *Dritte Symphonie* unvollendet blieb, ebenso wie *Fürst Igor*. Als führender Chemiker wurde Borodin vor allem von seiner wissenschaftlichen Arbeit beansprucht. Dennoch erwarb er sich auf dem internationalen Konzertpodium einen führenden Platz in der Musikgeschichte.

Das wahre russische Gefühl, das Igor Strawinsky Tschaikowsky zuerkannte, klingt auch, vielleicht sogar noch mehr, durch in Borodins Musik. Nicht ohne Grund hatte er 1869 an dem begonnen, was sein bekanntestes Werk werden sollte, der Oper *Fürst Igor*. Sie basiert auf einem historischen Ereignis aus der russischen Geschichte und ist Michael Glinka gewidmet, dem Vater der russischen Oper. Nicht nur Zeitmangel sorgte dafür, dass Borodin die Oper bei seinem Tod im Jahre 1887 unvollendet hinterließ, sondern wahrscheinlich auch der Umstand, dass er am dramatischen Inhalt zweifelte. Rimski-Korsakow und Alexander Glasunow vollendeten das Werk. Vorher hatte Rimski-Korsakow Borodin beim Orchestrieren der *Polowetzer Tänze* geholfen, die so schon vor der Vollendung der Oper ihre Konzertpremiere erleben. Diese Tänze unterstreichen, was Glinka unter einer nationalen Musik verstand. Sie basieren, ebenso wie mehrere Teile der Oper, auf Volksmelodien, die Borodin auf das Konzertpodium hob. Neben den Polowetzer Tänzen erhielt auch eine Suite aus der Oper, bestehend aus der Ouvertüre, den Polowetzer Tänzen, dem Chor und dem Tanz der Polowetzer Mädchen und dem Polowetzer Marsch, einen Platz im Orchesterrepertoire. Die Tänze bieten einen klingenden Einblick in die epische mittelalterliche Geschichte vom Prinzen Igor, der sich der Invasion von Polowetzer Stämmen widersetzt, gegen sie in den Kampf zieht, aber gefangen genommen und Zeuge der wilden Tänze der Polowetzer in den weiten russischen Steppen wird.

Clemens Romijn
Übersetzung: Erwin Peters

Un Requiem pour orchestre

Lorsque Piotr Ilitch Tchaïkovski fait son entrée sur scène le 28 octobre 1893 à Saint-Petersbourg pour présenter sa *Sixième symphonie* au public, il est accueilli par une ovation retentissante. Trois quart d'heure plus tard, son public abasourdi ne sait plus comment il doit réagir: Une symphonie qui commence dans le chuchotement et termine encore plus doucement? Dont le deuxième mouvement se compose d'une valse indansable et le troisième d'une marche irrésistible? Neuf jours après la création de l'œuvre, Tchaïkovski meurt dans une ville ravagée par le choléra.

Tchaïkovski considérait lui-même cette symphonie comme la meilleure qu'il n'ait jamais composée. Il a pris avec elle congé de la musique et de la vie. À propos de son décès inattendu, des rumeurs courent encore. Ainsi, selon une théorie controversée émise par la musicologue russe Alexandra Orlova, Tchaïkovski aurait été poussé au suicide. Un conseil d'honneur secret l'aurait condamné à cela suite à une relation scandaleuse qu'il aurait eu avec son jeune neveu. On aurait inventé que Tchaïkovski serait décédé du choléra afin de cacher les véritables circonstances de sa mort. Cette théorie est à présent infirmée. Lorsque Tchaïkovski, en présence de son frère Modest et de son neveu Vladimir Davidov, a bu un verre d'eau non bouillie malgré les avertissements des deux autres, il a répondu: 'Je n'ai pas peur du choléra'. Savait-il ce qu'il faisait? Est-ce le message transmis par les bassons sombres et menaçants au début de la symphonie? Sa Symphonie pathétique était-elle sa missive d'adieu? Et surtout, le mouvement final, Adagio, avec la force d'attraction descendante qu'elle exerce, dans lequel tout ce qui veut vivre encore un peu se voit englouti par un marécage? Des dépressions ont ombragé non seulement les dernières années mais aussi une grande partie de la vie de Tchaïkovski. Une des raisons de ces dernières était son homosexualité. Un mariage malheureux, dissolu plus tard sur avis médical, l'a presque poussé au suicide. C'est cet aspect tragique de la vie de Tchaïkovski qui semble exprimé en toutes notes dans sa dernière symphonie.

S'il est considéré comme le plus 'occidental' de tous les compositeurs russes du dix-neuvième siècle, Tchaïkovski n'a laissé place à aucun doute sur son amour pour sa patrie, la Russie, et la musique populaire russe. Dans une lettre à Nadejda von Meck, amie et mécène qu'il vénérât, il a écrit en 1878: 'En ce qui concerne les éléments russes dans ma musique, il s'agit principalement de l'harmonisation de mes œuvres et de lignes mélodiques apparentées avec

celles des chansons russes. J'ai été pénétré depuis toujours par le charme incroyable et ensorcelant de la véritable musique populaire russe (...) Je suis un Russe dans le sens le plus véridique du mot.' Igor Stravinski attribuait également à Tchaïkovski un véritable sentiment russe 'même si sa musique ne sonne pas de manière spécifiquement russe pour chacun'. La musique de Tchaïkovski vit de ses merveilleuses trouvailles mélodiques, tissées dans un contexte formel classique. Toutes ses œuvres, sa célèbre Sixième symphonie comprise, témoignent du fait que le compositeur se sentait aussi cosmopolite. Il a beaucoup voyagé à travers l'Europe et s'est orienté sa vie durant vers l'héritage classique, la musique de Mozart et de Beethoven.

La dernière année de la vie de Tchaïkovski a été agitée. Il a dirigé à Bruxelles, à Odessa, a reçu le grade de docteur d'honneur à Cambridge, et a dirigé des concerts à Moscou et Saint-Petersbourg. À son frère Modest, il s'est décrit comme tourmenté par des doutes sur sa créativité: 'C'est comme si je n'avais plus de rôle à jouer'. Mais sa *Sixième symphonie* ne prouve-t-elle pas qu'il n'avait encore aucunement posé toutes ses cartes? N'est-ce pas son œuvre la plus émouvante? Tchaïkovski qualifie sa Sixième symphonie de 'symphonie à programme'. Pourtant, son programme est resté pour tous une énigme: 'Ce programme est complètement subjectif, et il n'était pas rare, durant mes promenades, que je versasse des larmes amères tout en la composant intérieurement. En ce qui concerne la forme, cette symphonie offrira de nombreuses nouveautés; le finale ne sera notamment pas un allegro bruyant mais au contraire un adagio très longuement étiré.' La symphonie présente des caractéristiques autobiographiques et possède de nombreuses similitudes avec un requiem. C'est ce qui ressort d'une dédicace du grand-duc Constantin Constantinovitch déclinée par Tchaïkovski: 'On attend un peu que ma dernière symphonie soit imprégnée d'une atmosphère se rapprochant de celle d'un requiem. Je crois que la symphonie est très réussie et je crains de me répéter s'il me fallait commencer à travailler immédiatement à une œuvre d'un caractère semblable.'

Malgré l'accueil tiède réservé à sa *Sixième symphonie* le 28 octobre 1893 à Saint-Petersbourg (sous sa direction), Tchaïkovski était convaincu qu'il s'agissait de sa meilleure symphonie, voire de sa meilleure œuvre. L'œuvre n'a reçu son titre définitif que le jour de sa création. Des appellations telles que 'Symphonie à programme' et 'Symphonie tragique' avaient été repoussées. L'œuvre est finalement entrée dans l'histoire de la musique sous le nom de 'Symphonie pathétique', nom proposé par Modest, frère de Tchaïkovski. Les premiers motifs de l'introduction sombre font

référence à la célèbre *Sonate 'pathétique'* de Beethoven pour piano. La suite du premier mouvement et les mouvements suivants narrent l'histoire houleuse d'une vie. Dans l' 'Allegro con grazia' dansant, des sonorités mélancoliques, parfois aussi rayonnantes, rappellent des jours heureux. Après une explosion extatique de tout l'orchestre dans le troisième mouvement, 'Allegro molto vivace', la symphonie retrouve l'atmosphère sombre de son commencement. La fin n'est pas marquée par un finale tourbillonnant mais par une plainte qui s'éteint avec les sons de la contrebasse qui symbolise le battement du cœur. On dirait que dans sa 'Pathétique', Tchaïkovski passe en revue toute sa vie. Le public n'a pas besoin de connaître le programme de la symphonie: Ses luttes et sentiments contradictoires sont clairement audibles; sa fin est ténébreuse.

Sons de peuplades des steppes russes

Bien que sept ans plus âgé que Tchaïkovski, Alexandre Borodine a trouvé plus tardivement sa voie vers la musique. Enfant illégitime d'un prince géorgien, il a fait des études de chimie, mais ses contacts avec Moussorgski et Balakirev sont parvenus à le convaincre de sa véritable vocation. Avec Balakirev, Moussorgski, Cui et Rimski-Korsakov, il a fait partie du 'Puissant petit groupe', ou Groupe des Cinq, prônant une musique spécifiquement nationale. Parallèlement à sa belle carrière de Professeur de chimie à l'université, Borodine est l'auteur d'une œuvre musicale très personnelle. Elle comprend entre autres trois symphonies, une poignée de pièces de musique de chambre – dont un très populaire *Deuxième quatuor à cordes* –, un certain nombre de lieder, des pièces pour piano, mais surtout un opéra intitulé *Le prince Igor*. Chimiste de premier plan, Borodine a été très accaparé par son travail scientifique. Il a néanmoins su acquérir une place considérable dans l'histoire de la musique et sur la scène internationale.

Le véritable sentiment russe qu'Igor Stravinski a attribué à Tchaïkovski est peut-être encore plus présent dans la musique de Borodine. Ce n'est pas pour rien si celui-ci a commencé à travailler en 1869 à ce qui est devenu son œuvre la plus populaire, un opéra intitulé *Le prince Igor*. Cette œuvre, basée sur un élément historique de l'histoire de la Russie, a été dédiée à Mikhaïl Glinka, père de l'opéra russe. Le manque de temps n'a pas été la seule raison l'inachèvement du *Prince Igor* à l'heure du décès de Borodine en 1887. Ce dernier doutait probablement aussi de son

contenu dramatique. Rimski-Korsakov et Glasounov ont achevé l'œuvre. Plus tôt, Rimski-Korsakov avait assisté Borodine lors de l'orchestration de ses *Danses Polovtsiennes* créées avant l'achèvement de l'opéra. Ces danses soulignent ce que Glinka voulait dire quand il parlait de musique nationale. Comme plusieurs parties de l'opéra, elles sont basées sur des mélodies populaires que Borodine a ainsi portées jusqu'à la scène. Outre les Danses polovtsiennes, une suite extraite de son opéra – consistant en l'Ouverture, les danses polovtsiennes, le chœur et la danse des jeunes filles polovtsiennes, et la marche polovtsienne – s'est fait une place dans le répertoire pour orchestre. Les danses offrent un voyage sonore dans l'histoire épique médiévale de ce prince Igor qui résiste à l'invasion des tribus polovtsiennes, part en guerre contre elles, mais est fait prisonnier. Il est ainsi témoin des danses sauvages des polovtsiens dans les lointaines steppes russes.

Clemens Romijn

Traduction: Clémence Comte

Prince Igor: Choral Dance No.17 (Polovtsian Dances)

SLAVEWOMEN:

Fly on the wings of the wind
To our native land, dear song of ours,
There, where we have sung you at liberty,
Where we felt so free in singing you.
There, under the hot sky,
The air is full of bliss,
There to the sound of the sea
The mountains doze in the clouds;
There the sun shines so brightly,
Bathing the native mountains in light,
Splendid roses blossom in the valleys,
And nightingales sing in the green forests.
And sweet grapes grow.
You are free there, song,
Fly home

POLOVTSIANS

Sing songs of praise to the Khan! Sing!
Praise the power and valor of the Khan!
Praise the glorious Khan!
He is glorious, our Khan!
In the brilliance of his glory,
The Khan is equal to the sun!

There is none equal to the Khan in glory,
None!
The Khan female slaves praise the Khan,
Their Khan!

POLOVTSIANS

Sing songs of praise to the Khan! Sing!
Praised be his generosity, praised be his mercy!
Praise him!
To his enemies the Khan is merciless
He, our Khan!
Who may equal the Khan in glory, who?
In the brilliance of his glory,
He is equal to the sun!
Our Khan, Khan Konchak, is equal
In glory to his forefathers!
The terrible Khan Konchak is equal
In glory to his forefathers! Glorious is our
Khan Konchak!
Glory, glory!

ALL SLAVES:

Fly on the wings of the wind
To our native land, dear song of ours,

There, where we have sung you at liberty,
Where we felt so free in singing you.
There, under the hot sky,
The air is full of bliss,
There to the sound of the sea
The mountains doze in the clouds;
There the sun shines so brightly,
Bathing the native mountains in light,
Splendid roses blossom in the valleys,
And nightingales sing in the green forests.
And sweet grapes grow.
You are free there, song,
Fly home

POLOVTSIANS

Our Khan, Khan Konchak, is equal
In glory to his forefathers!
The grim Khan Konchak is equal
In glory to his forefathers!
Glory, glory to Khan Konchak!
Khan Konehak!
With your dancing entertain the Khan,
Dance to entertain the Khan, slaves!
Your Khan!
Dance to entertain the Khan, slaves!
Your Khan!
With your dancing entertain the Khan!
Entertain with dancing!
Our Khan Konchak!



CCS SA 25207 **Beethoven / Symphony no.7**

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE, sound & performance 5* • (...) *A spring-heeled conductor such as Iván Fischer was born for Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and this account with his Budapest Festival Orchestra is a bubbling delight. ... Fischer whips up tremendous excitement, but still gives us playing of shining finesse. Rossini, Weber and a lesser light, Wilms, offer novel fillers. (...) THE TIMES ONLINE*



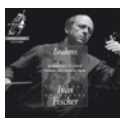
CCS SA 26109 **Mahler / Symphony no.4, with Miah Persson, soprano**

AUDIOPHILE EDITION 5* • Opus d'Or • VOLKSKRANT 5* • KLASSEK CENTRAAL Gouden Label • DE MORGEN 5* • RONDO (Finland) CD of the Month • SA-CD NET 5*, Performance/Recording 5* • Diapason d'Or • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • BBC MUSIC 5* • GRAMOPHONE Editors choice of the Month 'Fischer and his brilliant Budapest band give us Mahler with the personal Touch. What no one will deny is the amazing unanimity and precision of the playing here and the superlative quality of the sound engineering. This is just one of the countless imaginative touches on an exceptional hybrid SACD which must surely be an Awards candidate for 2009.' GRAMOPHONE



CCS SA 27708 **Rossini / Instrumental Music**

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE orchestra CD of the month • (...) *'The opening moments of this disc leave no doubt that it's going to be a enormous fun, and from a virtuoso orchestra with a superb conductor (...) Fischer has shown, in a wide repertoire, that he has deep understanding not only of the glittering surfaces of music we find here, but also of its deeper meanings. (...) Can Rossini have imagined any of this music would receive such impeccable performances?'* BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE



CCS SA 28309 **Brahms / Symphony no. 1 in C minor, Variations on a theme by Haydn**

CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • THE GUARDIAN 5* • FONOFORUM Empfehlung des Monats • IUISTER 10 • IRR (INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW) Outstanding • (...) *for anyone seeking an imaginative new performance (...) enthusiastically recommended. (...) Channel Classics has provided, as we've come to expect from this company, full-bodied sound with an excellent sense of space — especially on the surround tracks. A winner. FANFARE*



CCS SA 30010 **Dvórák / Symphony no. 7 in D minor; Suite in A major**

THE SUNDAY TIMES CD of the Week • Fischer maintains the momentum throughout, giving his woodwind soloists plenty of time to luxuriate in Dvorak's inexhaustible stream of melodic ideas, yet never driving the music THE SUNDAY TIMES



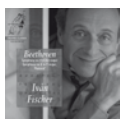
CCS SA 90110 **Dvórák / Symphony no. 8 in G major, op.88; Symphony no. 9 in E minor, op.95 'From the New World'**

licensed from Decca Music Group Limited, a division of Universal Music Group — orig. cat. no. 470 617-2 THE SUNDAY TIMES CD of the Week • (...) *the performance of the 'New World' sounds as fresh as when it was first released nine years ago(...)* THE SUNDAY TIMES



CCS SA 90210 **Dvórák / Slavonic Dances, op.46 & op.72**

Licensed from Decca Music Group Limited, a division of Universal Music Group— original cat. no. 464 601-2



CCS SA 30710 **Beethoven / Symphony no. 4 in B flat major op. 60, Symphony no 6 in F major op. 68 'Pastoral' (1806-1808)**

(...) *I give this disc five stars — it hits on all cylinders, and the performances are every bit the equal of the superb sound. You'll be hard pressed to find a more emotionally involving, yet technically perfect performance. Very highly recommended sound (...) AUDIOPHILE EDITION • (...) Every new recording project from Iván Fischer and his marvellous Budapest Festival Orchestra is the product of a combination of the conductor's profound musicianship and his sense of adventure. (...) SA-CD NET*



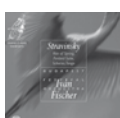
CCS SA 31111 **Franz Schubert / Symphony no. 9 ('Great') in C major [D 944], Five German Dances and Seven Trios with Coda [D89]**

AUDIOPHILE EDITION 5* • BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 5/5* • BBC RADIO 3 Disc of the Week • CLASSICAL-MUSIC.COM 5/5* • CLASSICS TODAY 9/9 • *You will not find a more loving impeccable performance of Schubert's masterpiece than this splendid reading. CLASSICAL CD REVIEW • (...) There may be other performances for some, but I think this will be on the top of anyone's list (...) The recording itself is outstanding (...) Excellent in every way. HIFI+*



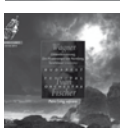
CCS SA 90311 **Bartók / Bluebeards Castle**

(...) *Iván Fischer has a sure sense not only of the music's shifting colours but also of their dramatic import (...) Fischer manages to keep the psychological intensity growing as we move from door to door. (...) superbly engineered recording (...) 'Outstanding' INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW*



CCS SA 32112 **Igor Stravinsky / Rite of Spring, Firebird Suite, Scherzo, Tango**

SA-CD NET 5/5* • THE SUNDAY TIMES CD of the Week • BBC RADIO 3's BUILDING A LIBRARY • KNACK (Belgium) 4* • CLASSICS TODAY 9/10 • STEREOPLAY: CD des Monats • IUISTER 10 • ONLY THE MUSIC Record of the Month • RONDO 5* • RIZZICATO Supersonic Award • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION Multichannel Disc of the Month 5* • (...) *This is one of the earliest, most pagan accounts of the ballet around... before you play it, warn the neighbours. (...) an ear-stretching interpretation THE TIMES*

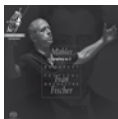


CCS SA 32713 **Richard Wagner / Götterdämmerung, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (excerpts), Siegfried-Idyll, Petra Lang, soprano**

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE sound & performance 5* • UK SPECIALIST CLASSICAL CHARTS #1 • SA-CD NET 4.5 / 5* • DAGBLAD DE LIMBURGER 5* • (...) *Thanks to Channel's superb recording we can relish the piquancy of the Budapest woodwind, the smoothness of the strings and especially the bite of the brass. (...) SA-CD-net*



CCS SA 33112 **Mahler / Symphony no.1 in D major**
 GRAMMY 2013 nomination • CLASSICS TODAY FRANCE 10/10 • PREIS DER DEUTSCHEN SCHALLPLATTEN-KRITIK • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION 5* • Multichannel Disc of the Month • KLARA 10 • MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL Download of the Month • Diapason d'Or • SACD-NET 4/5* • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • KLASSIK.COM 5/5* • MUSIQ3 CD of the Week • AUDIOSTREAM Best HD Albums of 2012 • (...) *The playing on this disc is so beautiful that it will take your breath away. (...) CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • (...) His conducting, full of tenderness and nostalgia, is one of the rare ones today to rejoin the roots of a Central European style that knows to go beyond the notes in order to invoke a lost paradise.* DIAPASON D'OR



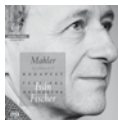
CCS SA 34213 **Mahler / Symphony no. 5 in C sharp minor (1902)**
 IOWA PUBLIC RADIO Best CD's of 2013 • AUDIOPHILE AUDITION 5/5* • ENJOY THE MUSIC 5* • SACD-NET 5/5* • KNACK 5* • KLASSIK.COM 5/5* • CBC RADIO Disc Of The Week • PAROOL 5* • MAHLER REVIEW 5* • (...) *better than any recording of the Fifth, including the Bernstein, Rattle and Abbado.* AUDIOPHILE AUDITION • (...) *This is a superbly well-played performance of Mahler's great symphony (...)* INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW



CCS SA 33714 **Bruckner / Symphony no. 7 in E major (1884)**
 'Pick of the Month's' Releases GRAMOPHONE • (...) *a superb performance (...)* AUDIOPHILE AUDITION • *The playing of the Budapest Festival Orchestra throughout is breathtaking (...)* SACD-NET 4.5/5*



CCS SA 33514 **Brahms / Symphony no. 2, Tragic & Academic Festival Overture**
 Diapason D'Or • (...) *intense freshness and lyricism from Fischer and his Budapest forces. (...)* THE GUARDIAN • (...) *In short, this is a disc with impressive performances so thoroughly prepared, expertly executed and superbly recorded that one could not reasonably ask for more. Unreservedly recommended.* CD-CHOICE



CCS SA 36115 **Mahler / Symphony no. 9**
 SACD-NET 5/5* • GRAMOPHONE Editors Choice • NRC 5* • CLASSICS TODAY 10/10 • OPUS HD d'Or • A very special class, a sonic dazzler (...) GRAMOPHONE • *For those who can't have too much of this masterpiece, Fischer is essential for further enlightenment. (...) BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 4/4* (...) a Mahler Ninth that's not to be missed.* CLASSICS TODAY 4/5*



CCS SA 35315 **Brahms / Symphony no.4, Hungarian Dances 3, 7 & 11**
 (...) *Intimacy on a grand scale (...)* *This is an orchestra whose players listen to each other intently. (...) Iván Fischer keeps the larger picture in focus.* BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE 5/5*

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Colophon

Production

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Producer

Hein Dekker

Recording engineers

Hein Dekker, Jared Sacks

Editing

Jared Sacks

Cover design

Ad van der Kouwe, Manifesta, Rotterdam

Cover photo

Marco Borggreve

Photo Choir

Pavel Nesvadba

Liner notes

Clemens Romijn, Iván Fischer

Recording location

Palace of Arts, Budapest

Recording date

January 2014

Technical information

Microphones

Bruel & Kjaer 4006, Schoeps

Digital converter

DSD Super Audio/Grimm Audio

Pyramix Editing/Merging Technologies

Speakers

Audio Lab, Holland

Amplifiers

van Medevoort, Holland

Mixing board

Rens Heijnis, custom design

Mastering Room

Speakers

Grimm LSi

Cable*

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*exclusive use of Van den Hul 3T cables

BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA
CZECH PHILHARMONIC CHOIR OF BRNO

Iván Fischer, conductor

Pjotr Iljich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Symphony No. 6 in B-Minor Op.74 'Pathétique' (1893)

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

Prince Igor: Choral Dance No. 17 (Polovtsian Dances)

Symphony No. 6 in B-Minor Op.74
'Pathétique' (1893)

1	Adagio-Allegro non troppo	18.28
2	Allegro con grazia	7.48
3	Allegro molto vivace	9.44
4	Adagio lamentoso	10.13

5	Prince Igor: Choral Dance No.17 (Polovtsian Dances)	11.49
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Total time	58.27
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