

RUSSIAN SOUL



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- [1] **The Rush Light** (Russian Folk Song) arr. Sergei Aslamazian (3:31)
- [2] **Méditation** • P. Tchaikovsky, arr. Glazunov •
from "Souvenir d'un lieu cher" (8:51) *
- [3] **Folk Song** • R. Glière, arr. I. Mortensen •
from "12 Easy Pieces" Op. 45 (2:58)
- [4] **Andante** • A. Scriabin (3:41)
- [5] **Nocturne** • D. Shostakovich (3:35)
- [6] **Sérénade Mélancolique**, Op. 26 • Tchaikovsky (8:48) *
- [7] **Elegie** • Tchaikovsky • from Serenade for Strings, Op. 48 (8:41)
- [8] **Miniature** • A. Gedike, arr. S. Aslamazian • Op. 8 No. 2 (3:29)
- [9] **Mélodie** • Tchaikovsky, arr. Glazunov •
from "Souvenir d'un lieu cher" (3:41) *
- [10] **Tears** • M. Mussorgsky, arr. N. Sokolov (4:03)
- [11] **Andante Cantabile** • Tchaikovsky • arr. Tchaikovsky
from String Quartet No. 1 (7:21)
- [12] **Chorus of the Peasants** • A. Borodin, arr. L. Gosman
from "Prince Igor" (3:45)
- [13] **Melodrama** • Tchaikovsky (4:16)

Moscow Chamber Orchestra
Constantine Orbelian, conductor
* Corey Cerovsek, violin

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 66:41

*Dedicated to my mother,
Vera Voznesenskaya Orbelian
who has given me tremendous love,
comfort, happiness, strength — and
shown me life through her beautiful
Russian soul.
C.O.*

Ask any music lover to name a few of the most obvious traits of Russian music, and you'll immediately get an answer: "emotionally intense, melodically rich, often dark in sound and melancholic in mood." It is such music that you are about to hear, even though the 13 compositions recorded by the Moscow Chamber Orchestra embrace more than half a century of Russian art music and many more years of Russian folk tradition. Some of these pieces were written by composers of great international fame (Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Shostakovich), some by those not so popular in the Western world (Scriabin, Glière), and some by those who are virtually unknown outside of Russia (Gedike). Some compositions are long-standing popular favorites (Tchaikovsky's *Méditation* or *Élégie* from the *Serenade for Strings*), others (although written by the same composer) are new to non-Russian listeners (for instance, *Melodrama* from Tchaikovsky's incidental music for "The Snow Maiden" — a play by

Alexander Ostrovsky produced by Moscow's Maly Dramatic Theater in the 1870s). Nevertheless, the notion that all of these works belong to the same musical tradition is quite clear. So let's take a look at how that tradition was formed and why it is distinguished by the features just mentioned.

When ancient Kievan Rus adopted Christianity in its Byzantine form in the year 988, it inherited the Byzantine liturgy together with a system of melodic modes, learned from Greek monks and sung in unison by male choruses without instrumental accompaniment. Church singers came from peasant families, so gradually Byzantine tunes absorbed elements of ancient Slavic folk songs. Thereafter the unique Znamenny [známeniy] chant (very sophisticated and rich melodies for church singing) was born.

The 17th century brought more influence from the West via Poland and the Ukraine and introduced elements of Western polyphony and harmonization to Russian church music, which was then the only professional music in the country.

The absence of instrumental accompaniment in church music put a larger emphasis on the singing melody and its expressiveness, and the expressiveness and meaningful symbolism of the music were particularly significant in Russian liturgy. It is important to remember that the Church in Russia was more strongly isolated from the events of the outside world than was the Western Church; the liturgy with its splendor, mysticism and loftiness represented the Divine and produced a strong contrast with everyday life. Christianity in its Russian-Orthodox form focused on the highly spiritual, the heavenly beautiful and mysterious on one hand and on the suffering, compassion and deepest penance on the other, and these features seriously influenced the Russian mentality. Not by chance are the words 'soul' (*dushá*, in Russian) and 'spirit' (*dukh*) and their numerous forms among the most important and widely used both in religious texts and in Russian classical literature, poetry, lyrics and everyday speech.

The 18th century became a turning point for Russian music: reforms of

Peter the Great helped to transform Russia from a theocratic society into a powerful European country with a quickly-developing urban secular culture. European dances and songs as well as choral and later operatic music of Western European masters (especially Italians, some of whom served for years as court composers in Russia) became part of Russian life, and Russian folk and church music continued to absorb foreign rhythms, motifs and harmonies.

The 17th and 18th centuries are marked by the birth of the two most important genres of Russian folk song: so called *protyazhnaya* (drawling song, pronounced as pro-'tya-zhna-ya) in the 17th century and *urban song* in the 18th. The *protyazhnaya* usually spoke of loneliness, unhappiness, separation from the beloved one. Dark melancholy was its prevailing mood. The most interesting element of *protyazhnaya* was the melody itself — long, tortuous, slow, like Russian rivers, it did not have the support of any instrumental sound, but often was sung by several voices, producing usually three lines, which did not duplicate or imitate each other but

rather went off the main course in separate directions only to come back together later. There were few words but many notes — the music as the main expression of emotion was more important than the sense and logic of the verses. There is a fine example of such a song here — *Luchinushka* (*Rush Light* or *Little Torch*). Such a torch — small and weak — usually lighted a peasant's hut and was a best friend and confidant of a woman, knitting or weaving during long winter nights. Alexander Borodin in his *Chorus of the Peasants* (from the last act of his opera "Prince Igor") beautifully captured the main tone and style of Russian *prot'yazhnaya*. This style lies also at the core of Glière's piece **Folk Song**.

Urban song was more westernized (as was urban life itself), and was usually sung to the accompaniment of various instruments, which helped to "insert" European harmony into its musical language. It inherited, of course, many elements from *prot'yazhnaya* and other genres of folk songs; sometimes urban song was an "urbanized" version of the old ones, but unlike *prot'yazhnaya* it was met-

rically organized. A perfect example of it can be found in Tchaikovsky's famous *Andante cantabile* from the String Quartet #1, which brought tears to Leo Tolstoy's eyes. The main theme of this lyrical masterpiece is actually the melody of a Russian urban song.

Both genres had common traits: mostly meditative and melancholic in mood, a concentration on inner feelings, and a rich breadth of melody. Both genres became cornerstones of Russian classical music of the 19th century, and urban song was a direct predecessor of Russian art song (or, as Russians call it, *romance*). Russian composers frequently used folk tunes or typical elements of Russian folklore in their compositions (especially those of the "Mighty Five" — for example Borodin and Mussorgsky). Since the very end of the 18th century there have been several attempts to write down, harmonize, and publish all kinds of folk songs, which existed before in oral form. One of these songbooks was done by Tchaikovsky, whose music of all genres had the strongest connection to Russian urban and art song. The same "vocabulary of inflections" contin-

ued to be widely used in the 20th century even though the content of the compositions drastically changed. For instance, the melody of Shostakovich's *Nocturne* (from the music for the film "Ovod," which means 'gadfly') shows a direct connection to the intonations of Russian art song of the 19th century. The same is true for Scriabin's *Andante*, which is one of his earlier compositions.

During the last decades of the 19th century another important and unique feature of Russian art developed: psychological realism. Its embodiment in the art of music are the compositions of Tchaikovsky. As Leon Botstein writes, "Tchaikovsky's triumph, in fact, was his expression of a disarmingly affective and direct form of psychological realism, using instrumental music The issue of emotional mood is central to Tchaikovsky — his ability to evoke identifiable feelings as if there were a psychological program." The music became an unparalleled authentic mirror of internal workings of one's being. And this feature, inherited by succeeding generations of Russian composers, makes this music universal

and dear to the hearts of people of different backgrounds and national roots.

A brief reference section about the composers represented on this CD

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887) — celebrated Russian composer and chemistry scholar, graduate and later professor of the St. Petersburg Academy of Medicine, and member of the "Mighty Five" (a historically important group of Russian composers whose goal was to write and promote an authentically Russian music based on folk traditions and subjects taken from Russian life, history, legends and fairy tales). Borodin wrote three symphonies, two string quartets, two operas and nearly two dozen beautiful art songs. He is best known to Western audiences for his music from the opera "Prince Igor," especially the *Polovtsian Dances* from its second act. Beautiful melodies from the opera were used in the popular American musical "Kismet."

Alexander Gedike (1875-1957) — composer, organist, pianist and teacher;

winner of the Rubinstein competition for best composition (Vienna, 1900); author of three operas, three symphonies, concertos for various instruments, numerous pieces for piano and chamber ensembles; and professor of the Moscow conservatory beginning in 1909.

Reinhold Glière (1875-1956) — prolific composer with a rather conservative style based on Russian classical tradition, and conductor. After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory, Glière gave private lessons to Prokofiev and, beginning in 1913, became professor, then director, of the Kiev Conservatory. In 1927, he introduced the first officially acclaimed Soviet ballet — “The Red Poppy.” His other works include two operas based on Azerbaijani and Tadjik folk tunes and legends, three symphonies including the monumental “Ilya Murometz” (a Russian epic hero), and such popular works as the ballet “The Bronze Horseman” (after a Pushkin poem) and the Concerto for Soprano and Orchestra.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) — great Russian composer and member of the “Mighty Five,” Mussorgsky was a fierce advocate of nationalism and “truth in music — no matter how salty it is,” both in expressing the inner life of the human soul and in depicting historical events. Born into a Russian aristocratic family, he rejected his inheritance. He was educated as an officer, but resigned after just a few years of military service and devoted himself to music. He never received a systematic professional music education. His most famous compositions are “Pictures at an Exhibition” (for piano, known also in orchestral versions) and two operas, both based on important events in Russian history and real facts and figures: “Boris Godunov” and “Khovanshchina.”

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) — great Russian composer, pianist, innovator, who brought Russian music to the threshold of polytonality and atonality and developed a highly individual and extremely expressive musical style, a combination of post-romanticism, sym-

bolism and mystical philosophy, with which he was preoccupied. He graduated from Moscow Conservatory and from 1898 taught there for five years. He then devoted himself entirely to composition. For five years he lived in Switzerland, and in 1906-1907 toured the United States. He composed three symphonies, numerous piano compositions (sonatas, preludes, poems, etc.), orchestral pieces (among them — “Le poème de l’extase,” which premiered in 1908 in New York, and “Prometheus,” which included a part for specially constructed color organ), and a piano concerto. His music was promoted by such outstanding conductors as Serge Koussevitsky, Henry Wood, Vasiliy Safonov and Arthur Nikisch.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) — great Russian composer, whose creative output (15 symphonies, two operas, 15 quartets, instrumental concertos and other compositions) stand as the most eloquent and truly artistic record of the “Soviet Era” and the inner life of people during this period, which included the early years of Bolshevik Russia, Stalin’s

terror, World War II and Krushchev’s thaw. His work can also be seen as one of the most profound reflections on the absurdity and tragedy of human life. Born in St. Petersburg, Shostakovich graduated from the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) conservatory as a composer and pianist, and represented Russia (together with four other pianists) at the Chopin International Competition in 1927. Soon after, he abandoned the career of concert pianist, though he often performed his own works. He also taught at the Leningrad conservatory. He experienced the loss of close friends during Stalin’s terror and — twice (in 1934 and 1948) — suffered sharp attacks from official critics inspired by the government, which resulted in the blacklisting of his music.

Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) — great Russian composer, born in Votkinsk (northeastern part of European Russia), graduated from St. Petersburg School of Jurisprudence, but soon decided to devote his life to music. Tchaikovsky graduated from the first Russian conservatory (established in St.

Petersburg in 1862) thus becoming the first Russian-born and Russian-trained professional composer. He taught in the newly-opened Moscow conservatory (1866-1877), then spent a lot of time abroad, writing music and conducting. One of his last and most memorable visits was to the United States (1891) where he conducted at Carnegie Hall during its opening ceremonies and was greeted with admiration. In the '80s and '90s he achieved enormous international popularity and also official acclaim and support from the Russian Imperial House. He wrote in virtually all genres (from piano pieces and songs for children to music for the Orthodox Liturgy), and in each left some masterpieces, but his major achievements and innovations

came in the spheres of opera and ballet, and in the symphonic form. Among his many popular compositions are the six symphonies, the operas "Eugene Onegin" and "Queen of Spades," the first piano concerto, violin concerto and Serenade for Strings, and all three of his ballets — "Swan Lake," "Sleeping Beauty" and "The Nutcracker."

Maya Pritsker

Maya Pritsker — musicologist, music critic, writer and lecturer; born and studied in Moscow, Russia, has lived in New York since 1981. She works as the cultural editor and critic for the Novoye Russkoye Slovo (a Russian-American daily published in New York since 1910), lectures in American universities and at Lincoln Center, and writes for various American cultural institutions.

"The Russians are great musicians primarily because of the great emotion and vitality they convey.... They bring us the magical and wonderful... an aura of luminous sound... such grace and elegance... absolute unanimity of understanding... a heady experience... Orbelian seemed able at times to make a small gesture to his musicians and a miracle would happen."

— Greenwich (CT) Times

One of the world's great chamber orchestras, the **Moscow Chamber Orchestra** was created in 1956 by renowned conductor and violist Rudolph Barshai. From their first concert it became obvious that this was an ensemble of the highest artistic and professional standard. Invitations to tour abroad soon brought the MCO to Europe and America where the orchestra had one triumph after another. Since then the orchestra has been performing at sold-out concerts throughout the world. *The New York Times* wrote: "What we heard was the peak of perfection... our expectations were so far exceeded that one was left open-mouthed in admiration."

Mstislav Rostropovich, Sviatoslav Richter and Vladimir Spivakov are among the renowned soloists who have toured with the MCO. The orchestra's recordings have won prizes, and some have become collectors' items. The most important Russian composers have written works specifically for the MCO. Dmitri Shostakovich entrusted the first performance of his 14th Symphony to the orchestra and said,

"This must be the greatest chamber orchestra in the world."

In 1991, the appointment of the brilliant American pianist and conductor **Constantine Orbelian** as Music Director of the MCO marked a breakthrough in Russian-American cultural relations. Orbelian is the first American to become music director of an ensemble in Russia. He made his debut as a pianist with the San Francisco Symphony, and has appeared with the Symphony Orchestras of Boston and Detroit, the Moscow State Symphony, Scottish National and Helsinki Radio Symphony Orchestras. His recordings have won international acclaim, including "Best Concerto of the Year" award in the United Kingdom for his recording of The Khachaturian Piano Concerto with Neeme Järvi and the Scottish National Orchestra. Under Orbelian's direction, the MCO performed at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the United Nations in San Francisco and has made yearly tours to France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Japan and Korea. Always a welcome guest in the major musical cap-

itals, with 80 concerts per year abroad as well as 40 in their native country, the MCO continues to capture the imagination and hearts of audiences.

With over a dozen years of performing on the world's classical music stages, violinist **Corey Cerovsek** has matured into a musician known for his dramatic performances, clear sound and stylistic flexibility. At age 25, Corey has appeared with conductors such as Mehta, Dutoit, Litton, Pinnock, Comissiona, Tilson Thomas, Davis and Jarvi, to name a few. He has performed with the orchestras of Philadelphia, San Francisco, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Buffalo, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Houston, San Antonio, and internationally, with the Israel Philharmonic, Prague Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Residentie Orkest of the Hague, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Bournemouth Symphony, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Toronto Symphony and National Arts Centre Orchestra, among others. In recital, Corey has performed throughout the United States and Canada. He performs regular-

ly at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Other recital credits include Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theatre and the Frick Collection in New York, SUNY Purchase, the Place des Artes in Montreal, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra "Debut Series," and the Spoleto Festival in Charleston and in Italy. He has toured Australia, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Netherlands.


Born in 1972 in Vancouver, Canada, Corey graduated at age 12 from the University of Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music. That same year, he was accepted by Josef Gingold as a student and enrolled at Indiana University, where he received bachelor's degrees in mathematics and music at age 15, master's in both at 16, and completed his doctoral course work in mathematics and music at age 18.

Corey Cerovsek plays the "ex *Wieniawski*" violin, made by Joseph Guarneri del Gesù of Cremona, c. 1742. His first solo disc for Delos features music of Wieniawski (DE 3231). He is also featured on Delos' *Mozart Adagios* (DE 3243).

"What we heard was the peak of perfection... our expectations were so far exceeded that one was left open-mouthed in admiration." — The New York Times

"The true sign of a virtuoso orchestra is its ability to perform as a real ensemble, with 'one voice'.... The MCO proved to be just such a group... a marvel — as close to perfection as any group of humans is likely to achieve." — Eric, PA Daily Times

ALSO FEATURING THE ARTISTS ON THIS RECORDING:

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Recording Producer: Ramiro Belgardt
Recording Engineer: John Eargle
Associate Engineer: Jeff Mee
Editing: Chris Landen
Production Associate: Phyllis Bernard

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20-bit Digital Processing: Apogee AD-8000
Digital Editing: Sonic Solutions
Monitor Loudspeakers
Recording: Genelec 1030A
Postproduction: JBL 250Ti

Microphones: Sennheiser MKH-20, Sanken CU-41,
AKG C480, Neumann KM series
Console: Soundcraft K1

Creative Direction: Harry Pack, Tri-Arts and Associates
Graphics: Mark Evans

Corey Cerovsek plays the Wieniawski del Gesù violin.
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C I T A T I O N



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