

## KSO/Fliter Gala

*EIGHT RUSSIAN FOLKSONGS*, Op.58

Anatol Lyadov  
1855-1914

Born in St. Petersburg, Anatol Lyadov was the scion of a highly musical family. His grandfather had been a professional musician, three uncles were musicians, and his father was a conductor at the Maryinsky (later Kirov) Theatre. After studying with his father, Lyadov joined Rimsky-Korsakov's composition class at the St. Petersburg Conservatory but flunked out because of laziness. He was readmitted two years later and eventually emerged with a degree; in 1878 he was even appointed to the teaching staff of the Conservatory, soon becoming a full professor. Among his students was the young Sergey Prokofiev, who found him likable but dry and fastidiously pedantic. Initially, Lyadov's abilities were greatly appreciated, and he was appointed to a Commission set up by the Imperial Geographical Society to research into the folksongs of various regions of Russia.

But Lyadov's reputation for laziness – or perhaps his insecurity – dogged him all his life and his creative products were few and far between. He never completed a large-scale work. His contemporaries claimed that he seemed to have dedicated his life to indolence and was utterly without ambition either for himself or for his music. Feeling unappreciated, he became disillusioned and stopped composing altogether.

The *Eight Russian Folksongs* were composed in 1906. Lyadov retains the melodies basically unchanged, just embellishes them with lush orchestral background. In some, especially No. 4 and 5 Lyadov indulges in effective tone painting in imitation of a gnat and birds respectively.

1. Religious Chant. Moderato
2. Christmas Carol 'Kolyada'. Allegretto
3. Plaintive Song. Andante
4. Humorous Song 'I Danced With The Gnat'. Allegretto.
5. Legend Of The Birds. Allegretto
6. Cradle Song. Moderato
7. Round Dance. Allegro
8. Village Dance Song. Vivo

PIANO CONCERTO No.23 IN A MAJOR K.488

Wolfgang A. Mozart  
1756-1791

During the period between 1782 and 1786, Mozart completed no fewer than twelve piano concertos, many of them exploring new structural and harmonic territory. The A Major Concerto, one of his most popular, is not only a powerfully emotional work – especially the second movement – but is also of historical interest. One of three concertos he was to perform in

Vienna during the Lenten season of 1786, it was finished in March and was among the first of his works to make use of clarinets.

Preliminary sketches for this work exist, demonstrating – contrary to legend – that Mozart wasn't always composing on the fly. In fact, he kept notebooks containing musical ideas to be used at a later time, works in progress and even some brief sketches eventually abandoned altogether. About 320 fragments and sketches have survived, although clearly many more were discarded by Mozart himself and still more by his widow Constanze. Sketches for part of the first movement, a discarded second movement in D major and the Finale, reveal that this work was already under way in 1784, two years before its completion. This evidence also demonstrates that Mozart sometimes devoted great care in revising and polishing his music.

This Concerto belongs to a group of five that Mozart dedicated to his early patron Joseph Wenzeslaus von Fürstenberg, the reigning Prince of Donaueschingen in southwest Germany, a well known center for the promotion of new music to this day. In a letter to the Prince, Mozart reveals that these were works “for my own use and for a small group of music-loving friends...had never seen the light of day.”

The opening movement in the modified sonata form used for the classical concerto, comprises two lyrical principal themes – rather than the usual contrasting themes – separated by a more harmonically unstable bridge, plus a syncopated closing theme. The bulk of the movement involves the interplay of brief fragments of the themes presented during the exposition. The fairly simple cadenza is the only surviving solo cadenza Mozart wrote into a score. Usually, he either wrote out cadenzas separately or improvised them in performance. Generations of composers and pianists have taken advantage of the creative freedom allowed in the cadenza to supply their own.

The second movement is the only piece Mozart ever composed in f-sharp minor – and that in a concerto in a major key. While the mood is extremely intense, the orchestration is quite light; and it is probable that the piano part was originally embellished with improvised ornamentation. Those interested in the nature of such improvised embellishments should consult his earlier Concerto No. 9 “Jeunehomme,” K.271, in which Mozart wrote out elaborate ornamentation for the piano in the second movement.

The sprightly rondo of the Finale is a sharp contrast to the pathos of the preceding movement. It suggests a happy release from a dark night of the soul.

## PIANO CONCERTO No.2 IN F MINOR, Op.21

Frédéric Chopin  
1810-1849

The son of a French father and Polish mother, Frédéric Chopin was born and grew up in Poland; but after the collapse of the Polish revolution against Russia in 1831, he went into exile to France. He settled in Paris, which was then the center of Polish émigrés.

Chopin's chosen medium was the piano as a solo instrument. Although in his late teens he tried to combine the piano with the orchestra, creating the two piano concertos, the Variations Op.2, Fantasia Op.13, the Concert Rondo Op.14 and the Grand Polonaise Op.22, he was uncomfortable with the medium and after age 20 never again wrote for a large ensemble. In all these works, the orchestral scoring is so light that in the nineteenth century it was fashionable to re-orchestrate

and “improve” it. Be that as it may, Chopin probably intended the orchestra to serve as a delicate background for the soloist, especially since he himself was known to have had a rather light touch on the piano; heavy orchestration would have drowned him out.

The f minor Concerto, although listed as No. 2, was the first composed (1829-30) but the second published. It was premiered in March 1830 in Warsaw with the composer at the piano. As was so often the case with composers in the Romantic era, the inspiration for the Concerto came to Chopin as the result of unrequited love. The object of his ardor was a voice student at the Warsaw Conservatory. But by the time the Concerto was published six years later, he had long forgotten her and dedicated it instead to his pupil, Countess Delphine Potocka, a gifted singer and close friend.

Although Chopin has the reputation for “wearing his heart on his sleeve,” he was also gifted and innovative in his use of harmony and phrase structure. After opening the first movement with the conventional double exposition, in which both orchestra and soloist present the principal themes, the movement is dominated by a long development section that is almost serpentine in the way it slides in and out of new keys and deftly manipulates phrases and the themes themselves. In this regard, the Concerto foreshadows the composer’s future, even more adventurous writing.

The slow movement is intense and still lyrical, with the ornamentation of the main theme gradually becoming an integral part of it. With its seemingly endless, fluid lines, elaborate ornamentation and recitative-type passages, this movement has led scholars to compare Chopin with his Italian contemporary, *bel canto* style of opera composer Vincenzo Bellini, whom Chopin admired greatly.

The Finale is a rondo in which the third subject is in *mazurka* rhythm. The *mazurka* became one of Chopin’s signature rhythms, an expression of his nationalistic feeling. It originated as a Polish folk dance in triple meter from the Mazovia district near Warsaw. But *mazurka* became an umbrella name for a number of related dances: the fiery *mazurek*, the lively *oberek* or the slower and more sentimental *kujawiak*. All three dances originated from the older *polska*, a dance in which a strong accent falls on the second or third beat of the measure, accompanied by a tap of the heel.

The Concerto was received enthusiastically at the premiere, but Chopin had his doubts as to whether the audience actually understood it: “The first *allegro*...received, indeed, the reward of a ‘Bravo,’ but I believe this was given because the public wished to show that it understands and knows how to appreciate serious music. There are people enough in all countries who like to assume the air of connoisseurs!”

Program notes by:  
Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn  
Wordpros@mindspring.com  
www.wordprosmusic.com