



# Thames Youth Orchestra

conductor  
Simon Ferris

## Concert

Saturday January 12th 2008  
7.30pm

Kingston Parish Church  
Market Place, Kingston upon Thames



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# *Programme*

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) - Lieutenant Kijé Suite op.60**

**Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) - Suite from The Firebird (1919)**

*Interval (20 minutes)*

**Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) - Scheherazade**

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) – Lieutenant Kijé Suite op.60**

*I Kijé's Birth*

*II Romance*

*III Kijé's Wedding*

*IV Troika*

*V Kijé's Burial*

*Lieutenant Kijé* dates from the years immediately preceding Prokofiev's return to the Soviet Union in 1936, after seventeen years of self-imposed exile. The commission for the film score was one of a number of gestures on the part of the Soviet state, constituting a sort of unofficial negotiation with the composer over his return. Prokofiev was temperamentally sympathetic to the goals of the Revolution, if privately sceptical of its methods and direction, but his overriding concerns were aesthetic: did Soviet Russia represent a fruitful environment in which he could work?

By the time of *Lieutenant Kijé*, it seemed more and more that the answer was yes, and that his own aesthetic was beginning (coincidentally) to converge with that of the state. From the late 1920s through the early 1930s Prokofiev had been consciously working towards a greater simplicity of style. Even in his most shockingly discordant works there is a consistent tension between superficial features of trenchant modernism (violent discord, pounding rhythms) and more traditional underlying musical values (tuneful melody and clear formal structure prominent among them); but the tension, after the early twenties, chiefly began to resolve itself in the direct of the later, and by the early thirties he began to see how this might mesh with (or hide under the nose of?) the tenets of socialist realism. How he might, in other words, be at once a Soviet composer and a composer of integrity.

The film (1933) was based upon a short story written by Yury Tynyanov in 1927. Prokofiev arranged the film music into a suite the following year, substantially reworking it so that it might stand alone. It mirrors the drift of the plot more or less exactly. The Tsar, Paul I, mishears, in despatches, "parootchiki je" ("the lieutenants, however") for "Parootchik Kijé".

To contradict the Tsar is a capital offence, so a paper Lieutenant Kijé is enlisted, married, and finally killed off.

The farcical nature of the plot finds its counterpart in Prokofiev's light touch. The movements run as follows: *Kijé's Birth*, a splicing of whimsical tattoo (fife and drum) and hollow fanfare; *Romance*, which ironically hands the yearning theme to, by turns, the double bass and a dance band saxophone; *Kijé's Wedding* and its drunken rustic dance; *Troika*, where a sort of tongue-in-cheek homage to confectionery Russian nationalism nearly comes off the rails; and finally *Kijé's Burial*, with its mock-solemn funeral march drawing together themes from earlier movements. This last movement, in fact, illustrates the way in which Prokofiev was able to generate superficial complexity from underlying simplicities – the themes of the *Romance* and the *Kijé's Wedding* are laid one over the other in different and unrelated keys to generate a ghostly pastiche; and yet those keys in themselves are well-defined tonalities. A strong aural dislocation ensues (appropriately emblematic, perhaps, of the surreal uncentredness of the events in Kijé's life) and while it is resolvable into known simple elements, by the same token, nothing is ever quite as straightforward as it seems.

Three years after the film première Prokofiev finally returned home with his family. He had been persuaded that he would continue to enjoy many of the privileges of his life in the West. He was given an apartment in Moscow and a car, and was allowed to tour freely in Western Europe. But he had returned as Stalin's great purges, and with them the climate of fear and repression, were gathering momentum. His passport was withheld on a technicality and never returned. One version of the remains of his career is that he was trapped into writing cantatas celebrating Stalin's birthday and the glories of the Soviet Union. Certainly, the odd world of *Lieutenant Kijé*, its faintly nightmarish burlesque where nothing is altogether quite right, might have caused Prokofiev to reflect, in later life, if not while he was writing it, on the capacity of certain regimes to generate fictions which flatter their vanity, sooth their ire, and, ultimately, mean nothing.

## **Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) – Suite from *The Firebird* (1919)**

*I Introduction*

*II Prelude and dance of the firebird*

*III Dance: à la Ronde*

*IV Infernal Dance*

*V Berceuse*

*VI Final Hymn*

Rimsky-Korsakov hated the ballet, and so when his *Scheherazade* was premièred by the *Ballet Russes* in Paris just a fortnight before the first performance of *The Firebird*, his widow wrote an open letter of protest to Diaghilev. And yet it was these two men, Rimsky-Korsakov and Diaghilev, who launched Stravinsky on his way to international acclaim.

Stravinsky had been a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov in Saint Petersburg for a number of years. Rimsky-Korsakov, by now the pre-eminent grandee of Russian music, had established around himself a coterie of admirers and favoured pupils who would meet regularly to discuss new music or attend performances and rehearsals. It was at such gatherings that Stravinsky's music was first performed, and his association with the older man continued until Rimsky's death in 1908.

Yet Diaghilev, through a mixture of good fortune and acumen, had liberated Stravinsky from the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and the somewhat airless and conservative intellectual and musical life of Saint Petersburg, and in that sense *The Firebird*, with its immense debt to the music and teaching of Rimsky-Korsakov and the individual brilliance of its execution, can be seen as a masterpiece in the exact sense of a summation, a farewell, and a beginning, bringing Stravinsky into the heart of a social and musical milieu in twentieth century Paris that was to provide the context in which he would become, in some ways and for a while, the standard bearer for uncompromising modernism.

For his second, 1910, season of the *Ballet Russes* in Paris, Diaghilev wished to include a setting of the Russian fairy tale of the Firebird, and had initially commissioned his old teacher Liadov with the score. But Liadov, famously indolent, or so the story goes, had only got round to laying in a quantity of manuscript paper when, after a year, the work fell due; so the commission was hawked around until it fell in the way of the almost unknown Stravinsky, fourth or fifth in line, in December 1909. The score was ready by April the following year.

The première in June 1910 made Stravinsky famous overnight, yet he was not without misgivings. Among Diaghilev's many qualities was a shrewd eye for the main chance, and his promotion of a Russian fairy tale set to a Russian score (in the brilliant manner of Rimsky-Korsakov's most brilliant Russianism) danced by Russian dancers to Russian choreography, was more than a little calculated. Stravinsky recalled later that "the words 'for Russian export' seemed to be stamped everywhere, both on the stage and in the music."

His misgivings passed of course, once he had really made his mark (he conducted it over a thousand times by his own calculation, and numbered it amongst his favourite works), but they were nonetheless perceptive. For all its apparent newness, Rimsky-Korsakov would have recognized and approved, among other things, the theatrical gesture of associating highly chromatic writing with evil or magic (dance of the Firebird/ Kashchei) and diatonic writing with nobler human aspirations (Prince Ivan/ awakening of Kashchei's victims), and the use of the still mysterious-sounding octatonic scale – both key elements in his own patented fantastic style.

The scenario for the ballet is also recognisably nineteenth century in construction (and content), with its divisions into traditional numbers and groupings. Prince Ivan, lost in the forest while hunting, wanders into a magical garden (*Introduction*) rescues the Firebird from a trap (*Prelude and Dance of the Firebird*) and is subsequently led by the Firebird to the

castle of Kashchei where he encounters thirteen beautiful and enthralled princesses (*Scherzo: Dance of the Princesses*), and the various knights who have tried to rescue them and been turned to stone by Kashchei for their trouble. Kashchei appears with his infernal hordes and captures the Prince (*Infernal Dance*). But with the help of the Firebird Ivan is able to escape and smash the magic egg which is the source of Kashchei's power, release the princesses and their knights (*Berceuse*), and sweep off the most beautiful for himself (*Final Hymn*).

*Interval (20 minutes)*

### **Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) – Scheherazade**

*I The sea and Sinbad's ship*

*II The story of the Kalendar Prince*

*III The young prince and the young princess*

*IV The festival in Baghdad*

The *Thousand and One Nights*, which has been extant in oral culture in one form or another since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, arrived in Europe through the French translations of Antoine Galland in 1704. The translations were from the Arabic, but the collection subsumes at least two other distinct story-telling traditions – Indian and Persian – and much of the colour and detail of the stories seems to derive as much from the Ottoman Court as from the Caliphates. Moreover, while the central frame of the story-telling princess (Scheherazade) telling her tales night after night to stay the murderous vengeance of her Sultan-husband goes back to the earliest sources, many of the most familiar tales, for example Ali Baba and Aladdin, seem to have been interpolated by Galland on his own authority.

Given that Russia's nineteenth century imperialist drive was, on the one hand, towards Central Asia (where both Persia and Afghanistan came to be contended buffer states with British India) and, on the other, towards the failing Ottoman Empire, the pot pourri orientalism of Galland's *Thousand and One Nights* and its descendants would appear to be a natural vehicle for the emergent Russian nationalism with which Rimsky-Korsakov is so often associated.

But while the young Rimsky-Korsakov had been regarded as the most conspicuously talented of that group of militant musical Nationalists dubbed, enthusiastically, the mighty handful (the others being Mussorgsky, Cui, Balakirev and Borodin), who had seen themselves as entrusted with the excavation of a specifically Russian voice from the sedimenta of European cultural influence, by the time of the composition of *Scheherazade* in 1888, its composer was explicitly denying that any such musical nationalism was possible.

And in fact *Scheherazade* runs in a line from the tone-poems of Liszt, a composer to whom Rimsky-Korsakov was happy to acknowledge a large debt, and whose influence was at the heart of Rimsky's fantastic style, in his use, for example, of the hexachord (a subset of the

exotic-sounding octatonic scale) and third-related triads. Similarly, as with Liszt's tone poems, the programmatic nature of the work can be overstated. Rimsky-Korsakov originally gave the four movements titles, but subsequently suppressed these. He regarded, he said, all music as essentially programmatic, and *Scheherazade* as merely situated along this continuum, suggesting that the titles of the four movements were intended to "direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path my own fancy travelled."

Accordingly, while the work opens with a statement of themes associated with the Sultan (brass over strings) and Scheherazade weaving her stories (solo violin), both themes undergo many subtle alterations during the four movements, not so much to the themes themselves as to the accompanying orchestration, so altering their nature and function. Moreover, the themes of the Sultan and Scheherazade are audibly related one to the other, and provide the seed for many of the themes of the separate movements, as if both teller and listener are gradually subsumed into the tales themselves.

Diaghilev, from a later, perhaps more cynical generation, used *Scheherazade* for one of the pieces at the second season of the *Ballet Russes* in Paris in 1910, well-aware that Russian music was appealingly exotic to Western ears. But the opulence and brilliance of the orchestration, on which he was in large part trading, represented for Rimsky-Korsakov a move away from the sparser textures of Glinka and Balakirev, in part fuelled by his recent contact with the music of Richard Wagner (he stole, for example, the idea of supporting *forte* strings in the first movement with *pianissimo* trombones) and in part self-directed: his early career had been predicated on his brilliant natural gift for orchestration, a skill which would in turn influence Debussy and Ravel, among others. Diaghilev, in other words, was banking Russian music's self-perception as something exotic, a perception in part created by Rimsky-Korsakov's own determinedly private trajectory as a European composer.

programme notes © John Ferris, 2008

## **Simon Ferris, conductor**

Simon Ferris read music and was organ scholar at King's College London. As an undergraduate he pursued additional instrumental and musicianship studies with Bernard Oram at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and, after graduation, received composition tuition and encouragement from Geoffrey Bush.

A skilled and experienced jazz musician, Simon's wide-ranging professional career now embraces an array of genres and disciplines, encompassing performing, composing, arranging, writing, conducting and teaching.

Simon is currently Composer in Residence at Tiffin School, and Musician in Residence at the Tiffin Girls' School.

# Thames Youth Orchestra

Music Director – Simon Ferris

Executive Director – Rebecca Lacey

Orchestra Manager & Upper Strings Coach – Joanna Korzinek

Lower Strings Coach – Pippa Hyde

Brass Coach – Ian Stott

Percussion Coach – Ben Porter

Librarian – Mayuko Tanno

Administrator – James Andrewes

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Mrs Karen Megranahan  
Irene and Howard Mallinson  
Mrs Mary Reid  
Mrs Catriona Rogers  
Mrs Brigid Whitman

For further details, or to apply for membership, please contact the Executive Director Rebecca Lacey: [rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rebecca.lacey@blueyonder.co.uk)

# Thames Youth Orchestra

So Yeon Kim, leader

## *First Violins*

So Yeon Kim\*  
Max Liefkes  
Rachel Bruce  
Sam Berrow  
Georgina Jackman  
Josh Donaldson-Colls  
Eli Lee  
Anna Selig  
Aashraya Shankar

## *Second Violins*

Eunyoung Kim\*  
David Mogilner  
Pradeep Kannan  
Olivia Johnson  
Cheryl Pilbeam  
Imogen Dodds  
Sian Davies  
Amy Sibley  
Daniel D'Souza

## *Violas*

Tillie Dilworth\*  
Eleanor Figueiredo  
Matt Appleyard  
Alexi Ayliff-Vellianitis

## *Cellos*

Toby Perkins\*  
Miriam Figueiredo  
Jonathan Bruce  
Isabella Hatfield  
Miles Dilworth

Jonah Park  
Tom Davies

Fred Mikardo-Greaves  
Eunyoung Lee

## *Bass*

Marianne Schofield\*  
James Andrewes

## *Flutes*

Nicky Chalk\*  
Mayuko Tanno\*  
Sem Lee  
Lydia Dance  
Lawrence Thain (piccolo)

## *Oboes*

Catherine Hancock  
Olivia Kenyon  
Emma Price

## *Clarinets*

Georgina Feary\*  
Ben Ingledew  
Tom Nichols

## *Bassoons*

Isabel White  
Alison White

## *Horns*

Catie Igoe\*  
Clara Hardingham  
Ben Davies  
Emma Walker

## *Trumpets*

Max Fagandini\*  
Imogen Hancock  
Bryony Watson  
Matt Parker

## *Trombones*

Hatty Martin\*  
Henry Affonso  
Peter DeVilliers

## *Timpani*

Will Lewis-Smith

## *Percussion*

Piers Thompson  
Hugo Fagandini  
Millie Davies  
Piers Thompson

## *Harp*

Danielle Megrannahan

## *Piano/Celeste*

Kerem Hassan

\*principal