

DOLCI BY THE BAY CONCERT NO. 19

Ted Rust, oboe; Viva Knight, piano

Vocalise (1912)

Romance (1868) — Valse Sentimentale (1882)

Variations on a Theme of Glinka (1878)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

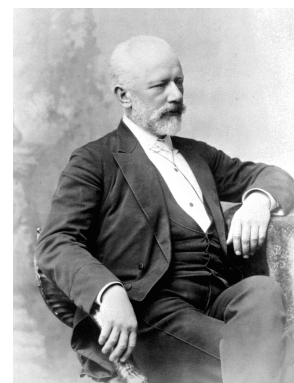
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

These four pieces span a time of wrenching change during the last two generations of Tsarist rule in Russia. After Russia's 1856 defeat in the Crimean War, Tsar Alexander II had freed the Russian serfs, reformed land ownership, promoted universal education and the arts and reorganized the military, resulting in a half-century economic boom that ended in world war and revolution. Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 and his son Alexander III's regime (1881-1894) became so repressive that the Revolution seemed inevitable by the time of Rachmaninoff's 1912 *Vocalise*.

The earliest of these pieces, Tchaikovsky's elegant *Romance*, shows his mastery of musical craft and his respect for both the European and Asian roots of his Russian Romantic style. In his later *Valse Sentimentale*, he employs larger expressive shifts of volume, articulation and tempo, yet always within the bounds of his personal elegance and exquisite taste.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, born to wealth, also inherited an intensely Russian musical style that had been distilled by Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky from folk sources and the operas of Glinka. Rachmaninoff established his career in Russia as a virtuoso pianist and a fine composer. By 1912, though, Rachmaninoff had resigned his prestigious job as conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre and was spending most of his time outside Russia in Europe and America. Nevertheless he continued to compose for the instruments available to him, mainly piano and voice, and produced a beautiful set of Fourteen Songs, the last of which is this *Vocalise*, a song without words.

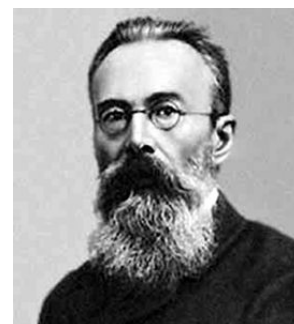
Rimsky-Korsakov composed this set of variations for oboe and wind band while serving as a naval officer in charge of military bands. The "*Theme of Glinka*" is a traditional Russian song predating Glinka by more than a century and still popular today. 1878 was a time in which the progressive Tsar Alexander II had just changed the Russian military from a career basis to a system of short-term service, requiring energetic recruitment of soldiers from all walks of life. This music could be regarded as a naval recruitment poster, evoking both the call of Mother Russia, and the pleasures of peace that might follow a term of well-paid military service.



Tchaikovsky



Rachmaninoff



Rimsky-Korsakov

NEXT WEEK: ANDRIESEN AND MOZART