PICTURES
IAN HOLTHAM

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1 **Tchaikovsky** *Doumka* 8'17"

Schumann *Carnaval*
2 *Préambule* 1'58"
3 *Pierrot* 2'06"
4 *Arlequin* 1'02"
5 *Valse noble* 1'31"
6 *Eusebius* 1'32"
7 *Florestan* 0'52"
8 *Coquette* 1'14"
9 *Réplique/Sphinxes* 1'15"
10 *Papillons* 0'42"
11 *A.S.C.H - S.C.H.A*
  lettres dansantes 0'47"
12 *Chiarina* 0'59"
13 *Chopin* 0'58"
14 *Estrella* 0'25"
15 *Reconnaissance* 1'34"
16 *Pantalon et Columbine* 0'53"
17 *Valse allemande/Intermezzo:*
  Paganini 2'07"
18 *Aveu* 0'49"
19 *Promenade* 2'15"
20 *Pause* 0'17"
21 *Marche des Davidsbündler contre les*
  Philistins 3'13"

Mussorgsky : *Pictures at an Exhibition*
22 *Promenade* 1'33"
23 *The Gnome* 2'11"
24 *Promenade* 0'52"
25 *The Old Castle* 3'47"
26 *Promenade* 0'27"
27 *The Tuileries* 0'57"
28 *The Ox-Cart* (*Byldo*) 3'11"
29 *Promenade* 0'47"
30 *Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells* 1'03"
31 *Samuel Goldenburg and Schmuyle* 2'08"
32 *Promenade* 1'23"
33 *The Market Place in Limoges* 1'28"
34 *The Catacombs: con mortuis in lingua*
  mortua 3'41"
35 *The Hut on Fowl's Legs* 3'11"
36 *The Great Gate of Kiev* 4'41"

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Pictorialism, or the direct musical representation of a subject, is certainly not new in the nineteenth century. What is new is the combination of movements in the Romantic era such as Nationalism, Individualism and Realism that provided a unique context in which pictorialism could take on a new significance. These background forces varied throughout the century and amongst countries, but the resulting melting pot of ideas and ideals was essential to the creation of some of the most evocative compositions of the Romantic era. Early examples of Romantic pictorialism are prominent in the songs of Schubert and Schumann. Here the poetry provided a narrative basis for the musical representation, in which the pictorialism was readily associated with the events unfolding in the verses.

It is no accident that two of the best known instrumental examples of pictorialism are in the form of narratives: Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Schumann's *Carnaval*. Both compositions take the listener on a journey involving distinct events, with the narrative framework providing the setting for the extra musical representations.

Carnaval was, by Schumann's own admission, a *Maskentanz*, or masked-ball: a musical game of intrigue as well as a procession. The allusions in the music operate at different levels. At the obvious level, the procession of characters is marked by abrupt changes in the mood or style of the music, so that the people represented are matched by a suitable setting. It is interesting that Chopin and Paganini are portrayed through a stylistic homage to their music, indicating a different form of representation. At a deeper level, by his use of a given set of notes around which to base the composition, Schumann demonstrates his fondness for cryptic associations. Partly through his use of pictorialism, Schumann has come to epitomise the nineteenth-century notion of deep personal expression and individualism.

Mussorgsky stands out amongst Romantic composers as being heavily influenced by Realism and Naturalism. In particular, Mussorgsky sought to reproduce through music modes of emotions and even of speech. This obsessive striving for "scientific" representation left much of his music open to the charge of being awkwardly written, from both the technical and purely musical points of view. Whatever the case, *Pictures at an Exhibition* provides a brilliant example of the power of Mussorgsky's craft of representing emotions and personalities through imitation and musical gesture.

Under the influence of Nationalism, many nineteenth-century composers were drawn towards folk song; this is because folk music symbolised for many an essential national identity that was immediately recognisable. Folk music also came to represent, for some, an ideal and fundamental form of music. More often than not, these views on folk music were not due to any real understanding of the music or its origins, but rather to a certain type of nationalistic and artistic nostalgia.

As with many nineteenth-century composers, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky were all influenced in some form by folk music, the two Russian composers in particular. However, Mussorgsky's streak of Naturalism, lacking in his compatriot, guarantees a very different treatment of the idiom by the two. Tchaikovsky's Doumka, a "Russian rustic scene", was dedicated to the French virtuoso pianist Antoine Marmontel. It was intended to give its Parisian audiences a taste of Russian nationalistic music, and it did so in the familiar French concert format of a paraphrase or a set of contrasting variations. Tchaikovsky's use of folk music, so successful in his Ballets, is a testament to his skill in incorporating nationalistic elements into an overall style more indebted to western European forms. © Alan Davison

1 Tchaikovsky *Doumka*

Tchaikovsky's *Doumka* is subtitled "scène rustique russe" and that is exactly what it is. Written in 1885, relatively late in Tchaikovsky's compositional career, the piece is unfailingly Russian in character. The work is made up of short, highly characterised sections which are largely thematically unified. Yet the piece is full of tremendous contrasts and fluctuations, culminating in a brief bravura cadenza before the final sombre statement of the opening theme.

2–21 Schumann *Carnaval*

Carnaval is one the most beloved works in the piano repertoire. At the time it was written, Schumann was in love with a girl (named Ernestine but called Estrella in the work) who came from the town of Asch. As it happened, the letters of this town all represent notes in the German musical alphabet, the very same notes which are the only ones to correspond with the letters in Schumann's own name, where they occur in the order SCHA. Transcribing them into English : A is A, S or Es is E flat, C is C and H is B. Smitten both by love and this intriguing musical code, Schumann constructed virtually the entire thematic content of the work out of these four notes.

Many of the pieces relate directly to Schumann himself. *Eusebius* and *Florestan* were pen names Schumann used to portray his poetic and his stormy sides respectively. *Estrella* is Ernestine, and the intense girl in *Chiarina* is Clara von Wiek who eventually became Schumann's wife. *Papillons* suggests a set of earlier compositions by Schumann while *Sphinxes*, often not performed, presents riddles based solely on permutations of the four notes. The four notes appear in dancing guise in *A.S.C.H - S.C.H.A lettres dansantes*. Great contemporaries are recalled in *Chopin*, which is a quite remarkable imitation, and *Paganini*, in which the pianist's hands operate like a violinist's bow. Schumann was particularly fond of the characters from the Italian Commedia dell'Arte, and characters from it appear in *Pierrot*,

Arlequin and *Pantalon et Columbine*.

The overall setting of the work is part carnival, part masked-ball, the mood of which is established by the opening *Préambule*. Dances are sporadically heard: *Valse noble* and *Valse allemande*. A flirt appears in *Coquette* and receives the appropriate reply in *Réplique*. The joy and passion of reunion is heard in *Reconnaissance*, while a sadder aspect of these emotions is confessed in *Aveu*. The infectious melodies of the *Promenade* lead to a turbulent *Pause*, and then the whole company seems to gather for the march of the league of David against the musical philistines; the latter being characterised by an overblown waltz melody, appropriately called "The Grandfather's Dance", before they are thoroughly routed.

Carnaval is a work of absolute mastery. Schumann derives a whole world of material from a four note idea. There could be no more sustained and convincing example of the progressive triumph of Schumann's imaginary band of artists.

Mussorgsky :
Pictures at an Exhibition

Modest Mussorgsky's masterpiece, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, was written eleven years before Tchaikovsky's *Doumka*. The painter, Victor Hartmann, who died in 1873, was a close friend of Mussorgsky. A year after his death a special exhibition of his works was held and this prompted Mussorgsky to compose musical responses to some

of the pictures. The result was this magnificent cycle of ten pieces with connecting interludes. It is probably most straightforward to follow the cycle step by step, just like a visitor to this musical exhibition.

22 *Promenade*
These interludes represent not just the act of walking but an emotional condition: now purposeful, now eager; at times aimless or dreamy.
23 *The Gnome*
A depiction of a gnome and his awkward gait.
24 *Promenade*
25 *The Old Castle*
A troubadour sings before a medieval castle.
26 *Promenade*
27 *The Tuileries*
A crowd of children and nurses populate the gardens.
28 *The Ox-Cart*
A driver steers his Polish cart (*Byldo*) which has huge wheels and is drawn by oxen.
29 *Promenade*
30 *Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells*
Newborn chicks dance as they leave their shells.
31 *Samuel Goldenburg and Schmuyle*
A portrait of two Polish Jews: one rich, ponderous and successful; the other, the pleading of a beggar, poor and suffering.
32 *Promenade*
33 *The Market Place in Limoges*
Women haggle over the goods.

34 *The Catacombs: con mortuis in lingua mortua*
The Parisian catacombs lead to a meditation "with the dead in the language of the dead" in which skulls are lit from within.
35 *The Hut on Fowl's Legs*
This is Baba Yaga's hut. In Russian Mythology, Baba Yaga was a witch whose hut was built in the shape of a clock and stood on chicken legs. This enabled the hut to turn and face newcomers so that Baba Yaga could catch and devour them.
36 *The Great Gate of Kiev*
The gate is in the massive old Russian style and has a cupola shaped like a helmet. It stands in memory of the great Russian heroes of the past.

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Ian Holtham is Lecturer in Piano at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne. He had specialist musical training from an early age and travelled to Europe on scholarship in his teens where he was based for over a decade. He is a student of Géza Anda, Geoffrey Parsons, Enrique Barenboim and Peter Feuchtwanger whose assistant he was for nearly five years in London. He also studied composition and conducting at the Guildhall School of Music. He made his South Bank and Wigmore Hall débuts before he was twenty and has performed throughout Australia, England, Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, France, Austria, Hungary, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Korea.

Ian Holtham has broadcast regularly with the ABC since the late seventies, and is a constant performer here and overseas, returning frequently to Europe and Asia for concert and masterclass tours. He has a vast and varied repertoire which, excluding works for solo piano, contains well over forty piano concertos. He holds honours degrees in Music from Durham University, and in Arts from Melbourne University where he also gained his PhD, and has an extensive array of international performance qualifications.

As well as his busy schedule of performing and teaching, he is on the Council of Directors of the Australian Music Examinations Board in Victoria, and has adjudicated innumerable awards in Australia and abroad. Ian Holtham has published a book on piano technique and has released a number of solo CDs.

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