

Program Notes

by April L. Racana

Sun. October 22, The 897th Orchard Hall Subscription Concert

Mon. October 23, The 898th Suntory Hall Subscription Concert

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)

Kamarinskaya

Waltz-fantasia

Krakoviak from "A Life for the Czar (Ivan Susanin)"

Glinka is considered by many to be the father of Russian music given that his operas and orchestral works were based on Russian themes and ultimately became models for other compatriots to incorporate Russian folk music and folk tales into their works. Tchaikovsky even commented that "all of the Russian school of symphonic works is contained in Glinka's *Kamarinskaya*, just as the whole oak tree is in an acorn."

Kamarinskaya incorporates two folks songs which Glinka had encountered separately -- one a wedding song and the other a traditional dance tune. The composer himself described how he came to combine the two for this work: "By chance I discovered a relationship with the wedding song 'From behind the mountains', which I had heard in the country, and the folk dance tune '*Kamarinskaya*', which everyone knows. And suddenly my fantasy ran high; instead of a piano piece I wrote an orchestral piece called 'Wedding Tune and Dance Tune'."

The wedding song called *Izza-gor* opens the work as a kind of introduction which is then repeated and varied before leading into the dance tune. These two tunes alternate throughout the short work, with the dance tune repeated many dozens of times, each time a new variation, highlighting Glinka's creative abilities with orchestral timbres in various combinations and with shifting harmonies throughout.

Glinka's Valse-Fantaisie (*Waltz-fantasia*) was originally composed as a work for piano in 1839. The composer would create an orchestral arrangement for the work in 1845 which was premiered in Paris on a concert of his works conducted by Hector Berlioz, who later commented on this 'scherzo in waltz form' as having been 'warmly applauded by the glittering audience'. A revision was composed in 1856, with additional melodic lines inserted. With its alternating melancholic and passionate phrases, some scholars believe the work to be a reflection of the turmoil going on in Glinka's personal life at the time. Some even referred to the work as the 'Melancholy Waltz'.

Glinka's *Krakoviak* was composed for his opera "A Life for the Czar", which is based on the story of a Russian peasant, Ivan Susanin, who sacrificed himself to protect the Czar. In the Second Act a formal ball is held for the Polish forces who are confident of winning against

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