

# PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

MUSSORGSKY-RAVEL

THOMAS SCHIPPERS  
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC



facsimile of original LP cover art

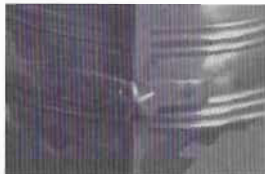
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PROKOFIEV:  
ALEXANDER NEVSKY

Lili CHOOKASIAN, CONTRALTO  
THE WESTMINSTER CHOIR  
WARREN MARTIN, DIRECTOR

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC  
THOMAS SCHIPPERS



**SERGEI PROKOFIEV** (1891–1953)

*ALEXANDER NEVSKY* Cantata, Op. 78 (1938)

(lyrics by Vladimir Lugovsky and Sergei Prokofiev)

- |   |                                 |       |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Russia under the Mongolian Yoke | 3'29  |
| 2 | Song about Alexander Nevsky     | 3'16  |
| 3 | The Crusaders in Pskov          | 7'26  |
| 4 | Arise, Ye Russian People        | 2'23  |
| 5 | The Battle on Ice               | 12'52 |
| 6 | Field of the Dead               | 6'48  |
| 7 | Alexander's Entry Into Pskov    | 4'37  |

Lili Chookasian, Contralto  
The Westminster Choir (Warren Martin, *Director*)



**MODEST MUSSORGSKY** (1839–1881)

*PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION* (1874)

(Orchestration by Maurice Ravel (1922))

- |    |                                      |      |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 8  | Promenade                            | 1'44 |
| 9  | Gnomus                               | 2'34 |
| 10 | Promenade                            | 0'55 |
| 11 | The Old Castle                       | 4'37 |
| 12 | Promenade                            | 0'34 |
| 13 | Tuileries                            | 0'58 |
| 14 | Bydlo 2'41                           |      |
| 15 | Promenade                            | 0'47 |
| 16 | Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells | 1'12 |
| 17 | Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle       | 2'21 |
| 18 | Limoges, the Market Place            | 1'24 |
| 19 | Catacombs (Roman Sepulchre)          | 2'13 |
| 20 | <i>Con mortuis in lingua mortua</i>  | 2'01 |
| 21 | The Hut on Fowls' Legs               | 3'23 |
| 22 | The Great Gate at Kiev               | 5'45 |

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

THOMAS SCHIPPERS, *Conductor*

PROKOFIEV: *ALEXANDER NEVSKY*

Original Producer: John McClure

Recorded at Manhattan Center, New York City, on February 18, 1961.

Originally released in January 1962

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MUSSORGSKY: *PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*

Original Producer: John McClure

Recorded at Manhattan Center, New York City, on January 11, 1965.

Originally released in December 1969

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Sound Mix Engineer: Richard King

DSD Authoring Engineer: Woody Pornpitaksuk

Total Time: 74'07

This SACD utilizes Sony's DIRECT STREAM DIGITAL™ (DSD) System and SBM Direct.

Prokofiev Cover Photo: Henry Parker

Mussorgsky Cover Photos: Robert Cato

Package Design: Lisa Sparagano

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## In the dark days before the outbreak of World War II, Prokofiev

was delighted to be invited by the film director, Sergei Eisenstein, to compose the music for a new film, *Alexander Nevsky*.

One of the almost legendary heroes of the Russian Middle Ages, Grand Duke Alexander (1220–1263) won the honorific name Nevsky from a notable victory against an invading Swedish army on the banks of the River Neva in 1240. Two years later, he defeated the invading Teutonic Knights in a famous battle on the ice of Lake Chud (later called Peipus). Tradition later represented him as having given his whole life for Russia and the Orthodox faith.

Apparently *Alexander Nevsky* was a real collaboration between director and composer. Instead of Prokofiev being given the finished film to set to music, he was given individual scenes as they were completed. At times the roles were reversed and Eisenstein adjusted the action of the film to fit the rhythm or the melodic cut of passages already composed.

The film was shown for the first time on December 1, 1938, with great success. Almost immediately Prokofiev embarked on a cantata in seven movements, based entirely on the film score. Prokofiev emphasizes the clash of Russian and Teuton by means of contrasting musical styles. He gives the Teutonic invaders heavy, mechanical rhythms, strong dissonances (including polytonality) and harsh timbres of heavy brass.

The Russians are portrayed by the warmer color of the strings, more consonant harmonies, and melodies in a folk style.

I. The first movement, *Russia under the Mongolian Yoke*, is an orchestral prelude depicting the mood of the film's opening scenes as prescribed by Eisenstein: "Woeful traces of the ravages wrought on Russia by the Mongols – heaps of human bones, swords, rusty lances. Fields overgrown with weeds and ruins of burned villages."

II. *Song about Alexander Nevsky*. The chorus recalls the battle that won Alexander the surname of Nevsky. The opening choral phrase will return again in the last movement as a theme of triumph.

Yes, 'twas on the River it occurred,  
On the Neva's stream, on the waters deep,  
There we slew our foes' pick of fighting men,  
Pick of fighting men, army of the Swedes.  
Ah, how we did fight, how we routed them!  
Yes, we smashed their ships of war to kindling wood.  
In the fight our red blood was freely shed  
For our great land, our native Russian land, Hey!  
Where the broad-axe swung was an open street.  
Through their ranks ran a lane where the spear was thrust.  
We mowed down the Swedes, the invading troops;  
Just like feather-grass, grown on desert soil.

We shall never yield native Russian land,  
They who march on Russia, shall be put to death.  
Rise against the foe, Russian land arise!  
Rise to arms, arise, great town Novgorod!

III. *The Crusaders in Pskov*. A grim Latin chant is intended to portray the hypocritical righteousness and the warlike spirit of the crusading Teutonic Knights:

Peregrinus expectavi  
Pedes meos in cymbalis.

Between phrases of the chorus, four horns and two trombones blare out an "invasion theme," which we will hear again during *The Battle on Ice*.

IV. *Arise, Ye Russian People*. In this call to battle, Prokofiev attempted to fuse choral traditions of Russian folk music and nineteenth-century Russian opera.

Arise, ye Russian people  
Arise to arms, ye Russian folk,  
In battle just, in fight to death.  
Arise ye people, free and brave,  
Defend our fair, our native land.  
To living warriors, high esteem,  
Immortal fame to warriors slain.  
For native home, for Russian soil,

In battle just, in fight to death.  
In our Russia great, in our native Russia  
No foe shall live. Native Mother Russ!  
No foe shall march across Russian land,  
No foreign troops shall Russia raid.  
Unseen the ways to Russia are,  
No foe shall ravage Russian fields.

V. *The Battle on Ice*. String tremolos portray the morning mist over the frozen lake. From offstage a single muted trombone sounds the "invasion motive" from the third movement. The Teutons are approaching as their Latin chant is heard again. The Russians are represented by phrases from the fourth movement, *Arise, Ye Russian People*, and a lively new theme in D major. The clashing themes rise to a clamorous, dissonant climax.

VI. *Field of the Dead*. This is the mournful song of a Russian girl searching for her lover on the field of battle.

I shall go across the snow-clad field.  
I shall fly above the field of death.  
One lies quiet where sabers mangled him.  
Here lies one impaled by an arrow shaft.  
From their wounds warm, red blood like rain was shed  
On our native soil, on our Russian fields.  
He who fell for Russia in noble death  
Shall be blessed by my kiss on his dead eyes.  
And to him, brave lad, who remained alive,

I shall be a true wife, and a loving friend.  
I'll not be wed to a handsome man:  
Earthly charm and beauty fast fade and die.  
I'll be wed to the man who's brave.  
Hark ye, warriors brave, lion-hearted men.

VII. *Alexander's Entry into Pskov*. This movement opens and closes with the simple melody that opened the second movement, *Song about Alexander Nevsky*. The remainder of the finale is based almost entirely on the Russian themes heard earlier.

In a great campaign Russia went to war.  
Russia put down the hostile troops.  
In our native land foemen shall not live.  
Foes who come shall be put to death.  
Celebrate and sing, native mother Russia!  
In our native land foemen shall not live.  
Foemen shall never see Russian towns and fields.  
They who march on Russia shall be put to death.  
To a fête in triumph all of Russia came.  
Celebrate and sing our Motherland.

EDWARD DOWNES  
(from *New York Philharmonic program notes*;  
edited and reprinted from the original LP)

*Pictures at an Exhibition* was inspired by and is named after a memorial showing of sketches and drawings by Victor Alexandrovich Hartmann that was held by the St. Petersburg Society of Architects in the fall of 1874. (Hartmann, who had died in the previous year at the age of thirty-nine, had been a close friend of Mussorgsky's and had shared the composer's strong nationalistic ideals.)

The suite begins with an introduction, *Promenade*, that is intended to suggest the composer walking from picture to picture. The *Promenade* theme returns in varied forms throughout the work, binding the movements together, connecting the "pictures."

*Gnomus* is a musical picture of a leaping hunchback and was inspired by a design for a carved wooden nutcracker like that which gave its name to Tchaikovsky's ballet.

In *The Old Castle*, a troubadour (saxophone solo) sings a serenade before an old castle in Italy. *Tuileries* is a fast, lively sketch of children playing in the famous gardens in Paris. *Bydlo* is the Polish word for cattle. Hartmann's picture represented a Polish oxcart rumbling down a muddy road. In Ravel's orchestration, the music starts at a great distance, passes before one's inner vision in the increasingly loud music with its tenor-tuba solo and rumbles off into the distance. *Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells* is a pecking, cheeping little scherzo inspired by a sketch for a child's ballet costume.

Hartmann, like most Jews, enjoyed a Jewish joke. With *Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle*, he had drawn a caricature of two Polish Jews, one rich, the other poor, on a street corner in the ghetto of the town of Sandomir. *Limoges, the Market Place*, represents market women gossiping in the square before a cathedral which Hartmann particularly admired.

*Catacombs (Roman Sepulchre)* was inspired by a drawing of the catacombs of Paris and leads without pause to a sad restatement of the *Promenade* theme, here titled, in a queer mixture of Italian and Latin, *Con mortuis in lingua mortua* (With the Dead in a Dead Language). The meaning of this section seems to be that Hartmann's picture of the old Roman burial place has poignantly recalled to Mussorgsky the fact that his friend is dead.



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In *The Hut on Fowls' Legs*, Hartmann designed a clock in the form of Baba Yaga's hut. (Baba Yaga was a fabled Russian witch who lived in a hut that was set on chicken feet. She rode through the air in a mortar and pestle that she used to grind up human bones for food.) Mussorgsky's movement has much more to do with Baba Yaga's ride than with her hut. *The Great Gate at Kiev* was a ceremonial gateway that was never erected, but Hartmann's design for it caused much comment in Russian architectural circles. Mussorgsky uses it as a pretext for a grandiose processional scene, with the chanting of priests and the ringing of bells. Then, with a final reference to the *Promenade* theme, this great work comes to a thunderous close.



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Reprint of the original LP liner notes by  
ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN  
Music Critic,  
San Francisco Chronicle

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