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GRIEG

PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1, OP. 46

BIZET

L'ARLÉSIENNE SUITE NO. 1

MUSSORGSKY

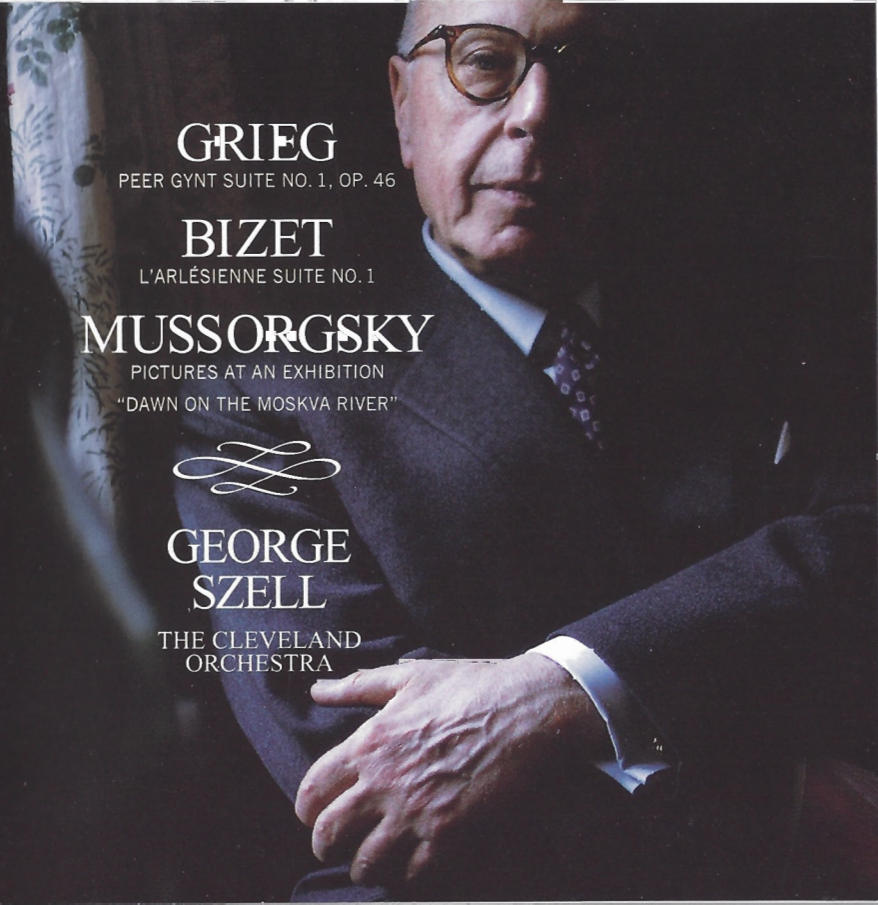
PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

"DAWN ON THE MOSKVA RIVER"



GEORGE  
SZELL

THE CLEVELAND  
ORCHESTRA



# GRIEG • BIZET • MUSSORGSKY

**EDVARD GRIEG** (1843–1907)

*PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1, OP. 46*

- |   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | I. Morning Mood                               | 4'13 |
| 2 | II. Ase's Death                               | 5'04 |
| 3 | III. Anitra's Dance                           | 2'33 |
| 4 | IV. Solvejg's Song (from Suite No. 2, Op. 55) | 5'16 |
| 5 | V. In the Hall of the Mountain King           | 2'24 |

*(Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, January 21, 1966.)*

**GEORGES BIZET** (1838–1875)

*L'ARLÉSIENNE SUITE NO. 1*

- |    |                                 |      |
|----|---------------------------------|------|
| 6  | I. Overture                     | 6'36 |
| 7  | II. Minuetto                    | 2'57 |
| 8  | III. Adagietto                  | 3'06 |
| 9  | IV. Carillon                    | 4'31 |
| 10 | V. Farandole (from Suite No. 2) | 3'18 |

*Originally released 1966 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.*

*(Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, March 25–26, 1966.)*

**MODEST MUSSORGSKY** (1839–1881)

*PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*

*(Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel)*

- |    |           |      |
|----|-----------|------|
| 11 | Promenade | 1'42 |
| 12 | Gnomus    | 2'18 |
| 13 | Promenade | 0'55 |

14	The Old Castle	4'30
15	Promenade	0'33
16	Tuileries	1'02
17	Bydlo	2'35
18	Promenade	0'38
19	Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells	1'10
20	Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle	2'10
21	Limoges, the Market Place Catacombs	1'24
22	Roman Sepulchre	1'42
23	Con mortuis in lingua mortua	1'39
24	The Hut on Fowls' Legs	3'20
25	The Great Gate at Kiev	5'27

*(Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, October 30, 1963.)*

26	"DAWN ON THE MOSKVA RIVER" from <i>KHOVANSCHINA</i>	4'55
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*(Recorded in Cleveland, Ohio, February 28-March 1, 1958.)*

Total Time: 76'24

The Cleveland Orchestra  
GEORGE SZELL

Consists of previously released material.

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# THE SUITE

The suite originated during the Baroque period (approximately 1600 to 1750) and was conceived principally as a series of dances grouped together in a traditional sequence. The modern suite, however, is a flexible affair, free to draw its material from the theater, the ballet stage, the motion picture – even television. Concert arrangements of highlights from a wide variety of musical scores now form a steady source of material for today's symphonic repertory.

Two of the world's favorite suites – and two which helped establish the pattern of the modern suite – come to us from the European stage of the latter part of the 19th century. Created from the incidental music to the theater pieces *L'Arlésienne* and *Peer Gynt*, they continue to hold their place in the concert hall, even though the plays which brought them to life are, if not totally forgotten, at least infrequently performed.

## GRIEG:

### *PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1, OP. 46*

At the request of Norway's greatest dramatist, Henrik Ibsen, Edvard Grieg was asked to supply incidental music for a revival of the playwright's poetic drama, *Peer Gynt*, written in 1867. At first, Grieg demurred, feeling that the subject of the play was not particularly attractive. But, as his wife later wrote, "the more he saturated his mind with the powerful poem, the more clearly he saw that he was the right man for a work of such witchery and so permeated with the Norwegian spirit."

*Peer Gynt* is a kind of forerunner of today's "anti-hero." He is a vain, impudent, boastful egoist and a chronic liar. He lives with his aged mother, the widow Ase,

who never fails to forgive his misdeeds. Peer elopes with Ingrid, another man's bride, on her wedding night, but abandons her the next day. He becomes an outlaw and embarks on a series of picaresque adventures. He meets the Troll King's daughter and is almost transformed into a gnome in order to inherit the Troll kingdom.

After escaping from the Trolls, he retires to a hut in the woods where he is joined by the gentle Solvejg, who loves him. But Peer deserts her, too, and returning to Ase, finds her on her deathbed. He smoothes his mother's way into the next world by telling her still another lie – that he is driving her by sleigh to a splendid feast in a great castle which lies west of the moon and east of the sun. Then he is off again, being entertained by an Arab chieftain and eloping with the Bedouin beauty, Anitra, who robs him and flees with his horse. At last, Peer returns home, an old, wasted man, to find true love and to die in the arms of the faithful Solvejg.

Grieg produced twenty-two pieces of incidental music for this play. They were scored for two pianos and performed this way in the theater. The first production took place in Christiania (now Oslo) in February, 1876, and it was such an outstanding success that it received thirty-five more performances during the year. Encouraged by the reception of his two-piano score, Grieg developed it into two orchestral suites, of which the first is now his most popular symphonic work.

The opening movement of the Suite No. 1 is a tone picture of morning in the Norwegian countryside. Echoes of cowbells and a mountain yodel form the background for a bucolic melody. "Ase's Death", a poignant elegy for muted strings, depicts the moment of Peer's return from his wanderings, only to find his mother on her deathbed. The third movement is the rhythmically exciting dance of Anitra, the daughter of the Bedouin chieftain. The haunting "Solvejg's Song" from the Suite No. 2, follows. "In the Hall of the Mountain King" records Peer's narrow escape from the snowy domain of the Trolls.

Late in his life, Grieg said of his music: "I wanted, as Ibsen expresses it in one of his last dramas, to build dwellings for men in which they might feel at home and happy." In these favorite suites, Grieg – as well as Bizet – created music with which generations of concertgoers have felt truly "at home and happy."

## BIZET:

### *L'ARLÉSIENNE* SUITE NO. 1

In 1872, the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris commissioned the thirty-four-year-old Georges Bizet to supply incidental music for a production of the play *L'Arlésienne* by the popular writer Alphonse Daudet. Bizet composed twenty-seven pieces of background music for this rustic drama, much to the annoyance of Daudet's friends who felt that the music might detract from the drama. The opposite proved to be true: Daudet's play is rarely presented, whereas Bizet's suites are frequently played in today's concert programs.

*L'Arlésienne* was a somberly complicated affair concerning the tribulations of two peasant brothers, Frédéri and Janet. Janet, the younger, is a case of arrested development. Frédéri, a highly emotional type, is in love with a girl from Arles who never appears in the play, even though she lends it its title. Frédéri learns that she is the mistress of a local badman and, distracted almost beyond reason, he agrees to marry a hometown girl who has long been in love with him. But just before his wedding day he commits suicide. The shock of his brother's death restores the mind of Janet, and he assumes his brother's place in the family hierarchy.

Bizet's musical contribution to this austere theater piece was not highly regarded by the critics. One even dismissed the score as "in no respect integral to the work." And the audience reacted to the music with such coughing, chattering and rustling, that Bizet complained to Daudet, "They're not even listening!"

Little of the drama's somberness is reflected in Bizet's delightful music. Taking his inspiration from ancient Basque dances and old French songs, Bizet created a score as vivid as the Provençal setting which served as background for the melodrama.

Late in 1872, Bizet selected four numbers from this incidental music and rescored them for full orchestra. The Suite No. 1 was presented at a Padeloup concert in Paris and was so enthusiastically received that the minuet movement had to be repeated. The Suite was performed again in 1873, twice in 1875, and yet again in 1876, and became Bizet's first substantial success. Together with his opera *Carmen*, the *L'Arlésienne* Suites have kept Bizet's name constantly before the musical public.

The Overture is a march tune based on an old French Christmas song. After a number of variations, the march tune is succeeded by a pastoral episode for saxophone solo and a dramatic melody for strings. The popular minuet which follows is vigorous and sharply accented, with a lyrical interlude for contrast. The Adagietto is a gentle melody for muted strings and is followed by a Carillon movement depicting a peasant celebration. The Farandole is the best-known movement of the second *L'Arlésienne* Suite, arranged by Bizet's friend, Ernest Guiraud, after the composer's death in 1875.

*Original liner notes by Chris Nelson, from LP MS 6877.*

# MUSSORGSKY: *PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*

Mussorgsky wrote his suite of piano pieces, *Tableaux d'une exposition*, in 1874. It was published in 1886. Ravel's orchestral transcription, made in the summer of 1922, was first performed on October 19, 1922, at a "Koussevitzky Concert" in Paris. The American première of the Ravel setting was at a concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Koussevitzky, conductor, on November 1, 1924.

On a Wednesday, "some day or other in June 1874," Mussorgsky wrote the following letter to his friend, the critic Stassov:

"My dear Generalissimo: Hartmann is boiling as Boris boiled – the sound and the idea hung in the air, and now I am gulping and overeating. I can hardly manage to scribble it all down on paper... I want to do it as quickly and steadily as possible. My physiognomy can be seen in the intermezzi. I consider it successful so far. I embrace you and I take it that you bless me – so give me your blessing! Musoryanin V(otre) S(erviteur)"

And the next morning brought the completed work with this inscription: "Dedicated to Vladimir Vasilyevich Stassov, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, M. Mussorgsky's souvenir of Victor Hartmann, 1874."

The opera *Boris Godunov* had been completed only a year (1872) before the composer's beloved friend, the architect and painter Victor Hartmann, died at the age of 39. The memorial exhibition of his watercolors, drawings and architectural designs, arranged in January of 1874, acted as an irresistible stimulus to Mussorgsky's creative impulse. Into a suite of ten pieces with intermezzi, he poured all his keen pictorial

sense and the wealth of his melodic, harmonic and rhythmic originality. Each of the pieces is an evocation of one of Hartmann's pictures, in musical terms of profound inventiveness and emotion.

Coloristically, the piano has its limitations. Here was music virtually crying out for the boundless resources of the modern symphony orchestra. In the early 1920's, Serge Koussevitzky asked Maurice Ravel to orchestrate the work, and gave the first performance of the new version in Paris on October 19, 1922, nearly fifty years after Hartmann's death. Although the music is still quite frequently performed in its original form, and from the hands of great pianists makes a striking effect, it is the transcription that has conquered the public on every continent. As the orchestral work, *Pictures* is the outstanding example in musical history of "collaboration" between two masters.

The melody that opens the work and connects the sections up to the fifth picture is called *Promenade*. As the composer said, it represents him walking through the gallery, and the odd 5/4 – 6/4 meter is not only typically Russian but may stand for the visitor's uneven and indecisive ambulation (his "physiognomy.")

**GNOMUS:** A grotesque figure of a little wooden nutcracker is seen in the first picture. The imaginary fits and starts, grunts and screeches of the child's toy depicted by Hartmann come vividly and a bit frighteningly to life.

**THE OLD CASTLE:** To have given the haunting melody to the alto saxophone is just one of the innumerable strokes of genius by the transcriber. "A medieval castle," Stassov wrote, "before which stands a singing troubadour." The song is interminably repeated above a droning bass, until at the close the troubadour seems to call out, "Did you hear me in there?"

**TUILERIES:** Children chat and argue, gaily and angrily, in the famous Parisian gardens. No promenade is required this time, since the next picture hangs right alongside.

**BYDLO:** The word means “cattle” in Polish. An old and battered oxcart plods along while the driver sings his mournful tune. The tenor tuba was the ideal instrumental choice.

**BALLET OF THE CHICKS IN THEIR SHELLS:** Here is something that even the finest-quality chicks can only do in a ballet – for which Hartmann’s sketch was designed.

**SAMUEL GOLDENBERG AND SCHMUYLE:** This is one of the most pointed and graphic caricatures in musical literature, realistically portraying an argument between two Polish Jews from the Ghetto of Sandomierz near Warsaw. Goldenberg’s “richly scored” theme, in full orchestral unison, pompously rejects the helpless pleadings of poor Schmuyle’s muted trumpet.

**LIMOGES – THE MARKET PLACE:** The gossip of the milling women at their marketing chores is animated and more than a little poisonous.

**CATACOMBS:** The movement is in two parts: a powerful, solemn introduction, subtitled “Roman Sepulchre,” and an ecclesiastical transformation of the *Promenade* theme. The composer called the latter “cum mortuis in lingua mortua” (“With the dead in a dead language”), and – in a note on the original manuscript – mused that Hartmann’s creative spirit led him toward the skulls, “which are illuminated gently from within.”

**THE HUT ON FOWL’S LEGS:** This is the old Russian legend of the witch Baba Yaga, who lives in a wildly spinning domicile. The artist’s drawing represented a large clock in the shape of Baba Yaga’s hut. Lillian Baldwin once suggested perceptively that, in the mysterious middle section, “under quivering flutes, the bassoons and contrabasses

make a sort of witches’ brew.” When the grim dance can get no wilder, the music suddenly veers off into a grand finale.

**THE GREAT GATE OF KIEV:** Hartmann had made several designs for an archway and stone entrance to the city of Kiev, with a belfry tower that would be crowned by a gigantic cupola in the form of a Slavic helmet with pointed peak. The grandiose theme, declaimed by the high trumpets of the brass choir, resembles the *Promenade* theme as well as a Russian hymn, and there is another solemn national chorale to be heard before the powerful climax with full orchestral forces and chiming bells.

“Life, wherever it is shown; truth, however bitter; speaking boldly, frankly, point-blank to men – that is my aim.... I am a realist in the higher sense – that is, my task is to portray the soul of man in all its profundity.” (Modest Mussorgsky)

*Original liner notes by Klaus G. Roy, from LP 1272.*

# MUSSORGSKY:

## *DAWN ON THE MOSKVA RIVER* (PRELUDE TO THE OPERA *KHOVANSCHINA*)

Like Borodin's *Prince Igor*, *Khovanshchina* was left unfinished, lying on the composer's work table between 1872 and 1880. Rimsky-Korsakov completed it; the first performance took place at St. Petersburg in November of 1886. The scoring of the Prelude calls for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, four horns, timpani, tam-tam (gong), harp, and strings.

The composer's biographer, Oscar von Rieseemann, tells us that the formidable, well-nigh unpronounceable name of this opera refers to a plot that the two Princes Khovansky had formed against the young Czar Peter (not yet "the Great"). "The final syllables are, in Russian, only a contemptuous suffix, like '-ery' in English." Informed of the plot, the Czar dismissed it with a shrug and the word "*Khovanshchina!*" He was thereby "giving orders to let the matter drop. The 'dropping' meant that the two Princes Khovansky, father and son, were publicly hanged; but otherwise the conspiracy had no further result, so far as the Russian Empire was concerned." It must be said that tradition is strong in Russia.

The opera opens in the quarters of the rebellious Streltsi. The Prelude, serving to set the scene and mood, was called "Dawn on the Moskva River" by the composer. Rieseemann explains the interesting design of this piece, five "melodic variations"

on a theme of markedly national character, as "a method of musical expression long familiar to the Russian people, through their popular songs... No two stanzas are usually sung alike... The song loses all rigidity and seems to be a living, breathing organism...." This prelude is an especially fine demonstration of such variation: "it is always the same landscape, somewhat melancholy and monotonous, that we see before us, and yet it seems constantly to change its appearance, in accordance with the changing light."

*Original liner notes by Klaus G. Roy, from LP 1002.*

# GRIEG • BIZET • MUSSORGSKY



- 1-5 **EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)**  
*PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1, OP. 46*
- 6-10 **GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)**  
*L'ARLÉSIENNE SUITE NO. 1*
- 11-25 **MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)**  
*PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*
- 26 "DAWN ON THE MOSKVA RIVER" from *KHOVANSCHINA*

The Cleveland Orchestra  
GEORGE SZELL



Consists of previously released material  
Original Producers: Paul Myers (Tracks 1-25), Howard H. Scott (Track 26)  
Recorded January 21, 1966 (Tracks 1-5); March 25-26, 1966 (Tracks 6-10);  
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