

## The Mighty Fistful – better known as the Mighty Handful

**Balakirev Mily** – (1837-1910) He was a pianist, conductor and composer, part-time School inspector.

**Borodin Alexander** – (1833 – 1887) he was a successful chemist (in Russia, they refer to one particular reaction – that of silver salts with carboxylic acids and halogens – as the ‘Borodin Reaction’) he devoted more and more of his time to his important scientific work, at the expense of his music.

**Cui Cesar** - (1835-1918) by profession an army officer (he rose to the rank of Engineer-General (comparable to a full general) of The Russian Imperial Army) and a teacher of fortifications

**Mussorgsky Modest** – (1839-1881) Born wealthy, he was initially intended for a military career but after meeting Balakirev he spent more time with music. He studied under Balakirev, but as his family income dwindled and he spent much of his time as a lowly civil servant, but sank into drunkenness and degradation. Much of his work was left unfinished, and some was completed by Rimsky Korsakov.

**Rimsky-Korsakov Nikolas** – (1844-1908) By profession a naval officer he also studied under Balakirev and was a teacher of Stravinsky.

- **Balakirev – Tamara**, today one of his best-known works, was the result of 15 years of thought, this is a colourful orchestral work that affected his fellow Russian composers, especially Rimsky-Korsakov. *Tamara* is considered by some to be Balakirev's greatest work as well as a touchstone of orientalism. Originally he intended to write a work modeled after Glinka. However, he was inspired by the poetry of Mikhail Lermontov about the seductress Tamara, who waylays travelers in her tower at the gorge of Daryal and allows them to savour a night of sensual delights before killing them and flinging their bodies into the River Terek. Balakirev evokes both the poem's setting of the mountains and gorges of the Caucasus and the angelic and demonically seductive power of the title character. The narrative employs a wide musical range, with the composer supplying great subtlety within a satisfying structure  
BBC Philharmonic conducted by Vassily Sinaisky
- **Borodin – String Quartet No.2**  
As with most things Borodin wrote, it is not short of tunes, something that proved a blessing when the writers of the musical *Kismet* came to use his music. The jaunty second movement provided them with ‘Baubles, Bangles and Beads’, while the third produced the show-stopping ‘This is My Beloved’.  
Played by the Borodin Quartet
- **Cui – Causerie Op40 No.6 (Gossip)**  
Primarily a lyrical composer he wrote several operas - this is one of his piano works. Played here by Josef Lhevinne from a recording made from an Ampico Piano Roll. The Ampico Player Piano was an advanced device that could reproduce the force with which the note was struck and the duration of the note instead of just the note. This enabled a faithful

reproduction of the music as it was played by famous pianists one of whom was Rachmaninov.

- **Mussorgsky – Khovanshchina Prelude** This is the prelude to his opera (completed like much of his other works by Rimsky Korsakov). The opera concerns the struggle between old & new Russia in the age of Peter the Great. This prelude captures the mood of dawn over Moscow. Khovanshchina deals with an episode in Russian history, first brought to the composer's attention by his friend the critic Vladimir Stasov. It concerns the rebellion of Prince Ivan Khovansky, the Old Believers, and the Muscovite Streltsy against the regent Sofia Alekseyevna and the two young Tsars Peter the Great and Ivan V, who were attempting to institute Westernizing reforms in Russia. Khovansky had helped to foment the Moscow Uprising of 1682, which resulted in Sofia becoming regent on behalf of her younger brother Ivan and half-brother Peter, who were crowned joint Tsars. In the fall of 1682 Prince Ivan Khovansky turned against Sofia. Supported by the Old Believers and the Streltsy, Khovansky — who supposedly wanted to install himself as the new regent — demanded the reversal of Patriarch Nikon's reforms. Sofia and her court were forced to flee Moscow. Eventually, Sofia managed to suppress the so-called Khovanshchina (Khovansky affair) with the help of the diplomat Fyodor Shaklovity, who succeeded Khovansky as leader of the Muscovite Streltsy. With the rebellion crushed, the Old Believers committed mass suicide (in the opera, at least). Moscow Classical Ensemble conducted by Oleg Resherkin.
- **Rimsky Korsakov – Concerto for Trombone & Military Band.** Written in 1877. It consists of three movements, the second and third movements conclude with cadenzas. It is often considered by trombonists to be the definitive trombone concerto. The classic recording is by Christian Lindberg and famously alters the cadenzas to include technical stunts such as multiphonics.