



The programs of the Hexagon Ensemble for 2019-2020

6HEXAGON
ensemble
Five winds and piano

Russians between heaven & earth



Mikhail Ippolitov Ivanov



Nikolaj Rimsky Korsakov



Sergei Rachmaninoff



Modest Mussorgski

The members of the Hexagon Ensemble have a strong affinity with the Russian repertoire. Years ago, this resulted in the acclaimed CD 'The Russian Connection'. More recently – in 2014, 2015 and 2017 – the Hexagon Ensemble toured in the Russian Federation, including the Republic of Bashkortostan. The program Russians between heaven & earth consists of works by Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Modest Mussorgsky.

Program

Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1872-1956)

An evening in Georgia (1926)

flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-piano

Nikolaj Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Quintet in B flat major opus posth. (1876)

-Allegro con brio

-Andante

-Rondo, allegretto

flute-clarinet-bassoon-French horn-piano

Intermission

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

From the Chrysostomos liturgy opus 31: Dostojno jest (1910) Arr. Christiaan Boers

flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn

Modest Mussorgski (1836-1881)

Paintings at an exhibition (1874) Arr. Kees Olthuis

flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn-piano

Program notes

One single Russian tradition spanning over two generations of Russian composers

The **Quintet in B flat major** by **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov** still fully fits the context of the 'little father Tsar's' Russia.

The same applies to Mussorgsky's masterpiece *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Rachmaninoff's *Dostojno Jest*. Off all the pieces in the program, only Ippolitov-Ivanov's piece was composed later, in the first decades of the Soviet Union. Rimsky-Korsakov's body of work can be categorized into different periods. Before 1873, he mostly focused on writing music for symphonic orchestras. But around 1873 he also started composing an impressive set of operas. The five years that separate these two periods resulted only in a small number of works for solo piano, a string quintet and the quintet that has been included in this program.

The opening movement kicks off spectacularly with a powerful, rhythmic sound that immediately catches the listener's attention. This is followed by a second, more flowing theme. The middle movement starts off with a solo by the French horn, which is then taken over by the other wind players. Halfway the slow movement we hear a fugato by the wind players. Just like most fugues written in that era for the piano, Rimsky-Korsakov might have

wanted to show off his craftsmanship as a composer here. He was in any case satisfied to such an extent with these passages, that he specifically mentioned them in his memoirs. The Rondo, then, is so playful that it reminds the listener of the first movement of the piece. Each of the musicians – except the bassoon player – is offered the chance to shine in a solo, each of which is separated by arpeggios from the piano.

During the time in which Rimsky-Korsakov worked on the quintet, he also published two collections of Russian folk songs. Folkloristic colours would become one of the most striking characteristics of his work. And it was just in the period that he was working on this piece, that Rimsky-Korsakov first taught composition to **Mikhael Ippolitov-Ivanov**. After his studies, Ippolitov-Ivanov spent some time in what is today called the Republic of Georgia, where he deepened his knowledge of folk music. **An Evening in Georgia** is a work full of typical Russian melancholy, invoked by the memory of a beautiful summer evening. This melancholy is beautifully expressed in the oboe solo, supported by the other instruments. Halfway into the work, the atmosphere is livened by a dansant element reminiscent of Borodin or Rimsky-Korsakoff. After this, a sense of calm returns and the oboe solo continues.

The Russian orthodox religion describes the **Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom** as ‘transcending time and worldliness’. All of the pieces from the liturgy – whether they be exuberant or more modest – have been ascribed a symbolic value. John Chrysostom lived in the fourth/fifth century and is one of the most prominent saints of the Russian Orthodox Church. **Sergei Rachmaninoff’s** liturgy clearly mirrors the style of orthodox church music. Despite this, the Russian orthodox church rejected this impressive work, which made it fall into desuetude. Only decades later it was reconstructed on the basis of archival pieces and vocal parts from a monastery in, remarkably, New York. Досто́йно е́сть (Dostojno est) is part of a Eucharistic prayer, in which the concept of ‘dignity’ plays a role in all sorts of ways. ‘It is truly right to bless you, Theotokos, ever blessed, most pure, and Mother of our God’: here the praising of the Theotokos is central. The ‘Dostojno es’t beautifully comes to life in this special arrangement for the five wind players of the Hexagon Ensemble by Hexagon’s horn player Christiaan Boers.

Modest Mussorgsky wrote **Pictures at an Exhibition** – consisting of 16 pieces for piano – as he was inspired by a visit on June 23rd 1874 to an exhibition of works by the painter Viktor Hartmann. This exhibition was put together by Hartmann’s friends after his untimely death in 1873. Mussorgsky, too, had been a good friend of Hartmann’s. Together with his group of friends, they had strived towards creating purely Russian art, free of western influences. The Hexagon Ensemble plays this classic work in an arrangement made by the Dutch composer Kees Olthuis. For this arrangement Olthuis used the original piano version of the work, rather than the famous orchestration by Maurice Ravel.

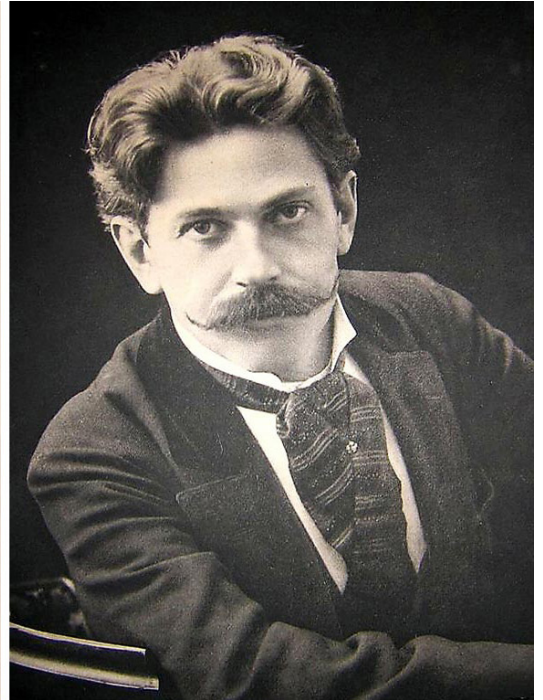
Hexagon & Romanticism



Ernst Pauer



Johannes Brahms



Ludwig Thuille

In this new program, the six members of the Hexagon Ensemble pay homage to two near-forgotten composers and combine their works with that of the well-known master composer Johannes Brahms. Many composers – such as Brahms – seem to have written music for eternity. Others, in contrast, have come to be forgotten over the years. They have disappeared into the mist of the past. This is not always justified, however, because many of these composers were hugely popular within their own times. And, once looking at their dusted-off manuscripts, we realize that their music deserves to be heard today as well.

Program

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Variations on a theme by Joseph Haydn op. 56a (1873) Arr. David Walter
flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn-piano

Ernst Pauer (1826-1905)

Quintet opus 44 in F major (1856)

-allegro con brio

-Minuetto

-adagio

-allegro

oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn-piano

Pauze

Ludwig Thuille (1861-1907)

Sextet opus 6 in B flat major (1889)

-allegro moderato

-larghetto

-Gavotte: andante, quasi allegretto

-Finale: vivace

flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn-piano

Program notes

Over ten years ago, the Hexagon Ensemble discovered the music of **Ernst Pauer**. Born in 1826 in Vienna, he became particularly popular in London. Because he had had a formative education as a pianist (studying with no one less than Franz Xaver Mozart, the son of the 'great' Mozart), a career as pianist seemed obvious. From 1861 onwards, Pauer gave cycles of concerts in London, in which he gave overviews of the history of music written for the piano, while also publishing books on the piano himself.

In the imposing Crystal Palace (built for the 1851 Great Exhibition), Pauer performed numerous times not only works for others but also pieces written by himself. Would he have joined there the performance of his 1856 **Quintet in F major**, the work which the Hexagon Ensemble has included in this program. Pauer must have been a very virtuosic pianist, because the piano score in this particular Quintet is challenging and recalls memories of Beethoven and Hummel. With this soloistic but also connective piano score, which beautifully mingles with that of the wind instruments, we can rightly speak of a forgotten 'gem'. His Quintet opus 44 was recorded on the Hexagon cd *The British Connection*.

And then we have **Ludwig Thuille** who, like Pauer, was an Austrian composer. But was born thirty-five years later. Perhaps the former was more famous than the latter, but still...He was a footnote in the biography of his childhood friend Richard Strauss, whom he already befriended in the 1870s. Within his own time, Thuille was a well-appreciated composer. He received his first musical education from his father but, considering his considerable talent, he quickly ended up with Joseph Rheinberger as a teacher, after which he became in Munich one of the founders of the neue Münchner Schule. Composers such as Ernest Bloch and Walter Braunfels were among Thuille's students. Thuille died rather unexpectedly in 1907. He had, by then, however written an influential book about the theory of harmony with Rudolf Louis, which would be used until long after his death.

The musical development in his body of work – from traditional to a more free form – is clearly audible in his 1889 **Sextet opus 6 in B flat major**. Thuille wrote to his friend Richard Strauss about the origins of the work as well as how he wrestled with its advancement. When his opus 6 was finally ready, Strauss took care of the premiere, while Thuille played the piano score. The audience reacted enthusiastically, which was not in the least due to the energetic and optimistic character of the music. The absolutely brilliant finale must have given the composer a sense that with this Sextet he had clearly paved a new path for his music. This is, by the way, also a work that the Hexagon Ensemble has recorded on the cd *The German Connection*.

With the giant **Johannes Brahms**, we have arrived at his masterly **Variations on a theme by Joseph Haydn**. In this work we hear Brahms' great appreciation of the variation-form. In his symphonies and chamber music, this composer, born in 1833, was the most prominent successor of Beethoven. The aforementioned Variations on the famous "Chorale Sint Antoni" Opus 56a, however, was originally not a piece of chamber music, but an orchestral work – although Brahms did also write a version of it for two pianos.

Notably, after much thorough research, it emerged later that the theme on which it is based was not actually by Haydn. For a long time, then, it was attributed to Ignaz Pleyel – which turned out to be incorrect too. However it may be: Brahms has, with this Opus 56a, written beautifully for wind instruments. Because of this, the arrangement for the Hexagon Ensemble is almost an orchestral experience. This arrangement is written by David Walter.

Mozart & other child prodigies



The members of the Hexagon Ensemble always look for cooperation with others. This can be with actors, painters and dancers, but also with fellow musicians. In this program, the Hexagon Ensemble is expanded with four string players in a surprising classical/romantic program, in which well known repertoire is combined with a selection of lesser known works that clearly should be better known. Let yourself be surprised!

Program

Mili Aleksejevitsj Balakirev (1837-1910)

Octet opus 3 (1855/1856)

- Allegro molto

violin-violoncello-cello-double bass-flute-oboe-French horn-piano

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901)

Nonet opus 139 in E flat major (1884)

- Allegro

- Menuetto

- Adagio molto

- Finale. Allegro

violin-violoncello-cello-double bass -flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn

Pauze

Max Christian Friedrich Bruch (1838-1920)

From: Acht Stücke opus 83 (1910)

- Rumänische Melodie

- Nocturne

clarinet-violoncello-piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto no. 24 in c minor KV 491 (1786) Arr. Christiaan Boers

- Allegro

- Larghetto

- Allegretto

piano solo-violoncello 1-violoncello 2-violoncello-cello-double bass- flute-oboe-clarinet-bassoon-French horn

Frank Peters – piano
Jelena Ristic – violin 1
Albert Adams – violin 2
Mikhail Zemtsov - viola
Carla Schrijner - cello
Rien Wisse - double bass
Wout van den Berg – flute
Bram Kreeftmeijer – oboe
Arno van Houtert – clarinet
Marieke Stordiau – bassoon
Christiaan Boers – French horn

Program notes

Mili Balakirev studied composition with Mikhail Glinka. Partly inspired by Glinka's opera's based on Russian themes, Balakirev strived to establish his own 'Russian school', ridden entirely of its European influences. He did this together with likeminded colleagues such as Moussorgsky, Rimski-Korsakov, Borodin and Cui – together described as 'the Mighty Handful'. These days, Balakirev is particularly remembered for being the founder of Russian's national academy for composition. Aside from many works for piano, he only wrote one piece of chamber music. And that one piece is included in this program: Balakirev's **Octet for wind players, string players and piano opus 3**, of which only the first movement has survived. In this allegro molto, Balakirev trust the wind and string players with the most melodic material – with beautiful solo's for almost all instruments – while the pianist is occupied with a very virtuous piece reminiscent of Chopin.

On the basis of the ambitious nature of the first movement – the only one that survived – the complete work must have been of symphonic proportions. His teacher Glinka was extremely enthusiastic about this work by the young Balakirev.



In the history of classical music not many nonets have been written, but within this genre the **Nonet opus 129** by **Josef Rheinburger** is considered unequivocally to the very finest one. Liechtenstein-born Rheinburger spent most of his life in Munich, where he worked as organ player and choir director. As teacher of composition he was affiliated for over forty years with the then Royal Conservatory of the Bayerish capital. Here he was part of the 'Munchener Schule', which included amongst others Ludwig Thuille.

Rheinburger's nonet consists of four movement. The opening is strongly reminiscent of Beethoven. The second movement refers to an Eighteenth century Menuet. The adagio, then, forms the focal point of the whole work with its beautiful and expressive melodies en harmonies. The finale is full of lively and crafted melodies and seems to bear a strong resemblance to the style of Felix Mendelssohn.

The German composer **Max Bruch** was the son of a civil servant in Cologne. His mother gave him his first lessons in music, which led him to premiering his first symphony when he was only fourteen years old. After his studies at the conservatory, he became a celebrated conductor in Germany and Liverpool. Bruch composed his **Acht Stücke opus 83** for his son Max Felix, an excellent clarinet player. The work originates in 1910 in Berlin, during a time in which many composers where searching for new directions. But Bruch wrote these minitatures in a completely romantic idiom, utilizing a refined instrumentation and lyrical, singing melodies. He found his inspiration for this work particularly in the *Märchenbilder en Märchenerzählungen* written by Robert Schumann. All eight pieces have a programmatic character and each tell their own story. Of the total *Acht Stücke* this program includes two, the *Rumänische Melodie* and the *Nocturne*.



Mozart composed his **Piano Concerto No. 24 KV 491** in the winter of 1785-1786 and finished it on 24th March 1786, three weeks after the completion of his Piano Concerto No. 23. The work premiered in early April 1786 in the Burgtheater in Vienna. The three-movement Piano Concerto KV 491 is one of the two piano concertos that Mozart wrote in a minor key. While Mozart's concertante music usually is written in major, the pieces that he is most renowned for are those written in minor. The minor keys of these works usually have a kind of tension, which, despite the conventions of a concerto, breathe the atmosphere

of theatre and opera. This applies not only to his Symphony in G Major KV 550, but also for the Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor. This concert, with a remarkably finetuned score for the woodwind players, betrays not only Mozart's

fine instinct for theatre, but also his affinity with Bach and Händel. Other great composers, especially Ludwig van Beethoven and Johannes Brahms, were great admirers of this beautiful concert by Mozart. Mozart's piece is played in this program in an arrangement made especially for Hexagon by horn player Christiaan Boers.