



# MUSSORGSKY

## Pictures at an Exhibition

Songs and Dances of Death • The Nursery  
(Orchestrated by Peter Breiner)



**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra**  
**Peter Breiner**

**NAXOS**

## Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

### **Pictures at an Exhibition • Songs and Dances of Death • The Nursery (orchestrated by Peter Breiner)**

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky was born in 1839, the fourth son of a land-owner. As a young officer he had musical ambitions and, without any training in composition, tried his hand at an opera and less demanding compositions for the entertainment of his friends. It was a meeting with the nationalist composer César Cui, an expert in military fortification, and with the composer Dargomizhsky, that led him to a more influential connection with Balakirev, self-appointed leader of the nationalists, and their polymath mentor, the immensely influential Vladimir Stasov, Mussorgsky's first biographer. It is of some interest to notice that Stasov at first found little good to say of Mussorgsky, whom he found lacking in ideas and a complete idiot, a judgement in which Balakirev concurred at the time and over the following years. Mussorgsky resigned his commission in the army in 1858. Following the emancipation of the serfs of 1861, which brought financial consequences for land-owners, Mussorgsky in 1863 took a position as a clerk in the Ministry of Communications, and continued intermittently in government employment. It was from this time onwards that he developed his own highly original musical ideas and language, and his deep interest in the people and history of Russia. In 1867 he left the civil service and attempted to earn a living from music, as a teacher and accompanist, but the following year he sought to solve his financial difficulties by taking a position in the government Forestry Department. Perhaps his greatest musical success came in 1874 with the performance of his historical opera *Boris Godunov*, a work to which critics, however, took general exception. His bouts of drinking finally forced him to abandon government service in 1880, after attempts by friends to protect his position. Others now offered him support, hoping that he might complete his operas *Sorochintsy Fair* and *Khovanshchina*, two tasks that, in the circumstances, were beyond him. He died



*MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:*

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

in March the following year, his death the result of epilepsy, induced by alcoholism. He left much unfinished, to be revised and edited by his colleague Rimsky-Korsakov, from whom Balakirev had recently advised him to take lessons in harmony. Rimsky-Korsakov, who had acquired his musical skills largely as an adult, after earlier service as a naval officer, was to revise and finish some of the works that Mussorgsky had failed to complete, and to perform the same service for the nationalist composer Borodin, introducing an element of musical sophistication that has not always proved welcome, as the nature of Mussorgsky's originality and genius has become more widely understood and appreciated.

*Pictures at an Exhibition* was written in 1874 as a set of piano pieces, a translation into music of paintings, designs, models and drawings by Mussorgsky's friend Victor Hartmann, who had died the year before. These piano pieces have been orchestrated by various composers, with the version by Maurice Ravel probably the best known. Peter Breiner has here orchestrated the pieces for an orchestra of piccolo, three flutes, alto flute, four oboes, cor anglais, four clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, and six percussion players, with bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, tam-tam, anvil, temple blocks, cabassa, tambourine, tubular bells, glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba, and vibraphone. The orchestra used also has piano, harp and celeste, with a string section of sixty players.

The exhibits are linked by a *Promenade*, as the visitor to the exhibition goes from exhibit to exhibit. The titles of the works are largely self-explanatory. *Gnomus* is a design for nutcrackers in the shape of a gnome; *The Old Castle* shows a troubadour singing outside the castle walls and the *Tuileries* depicts children at play and quarrelling, while nursemaids gossip, in the famous Paris gardens. *Bydlo* is a traditional Polish peasant ox-cart, with its creaking wooden wheels slowly turning; *Ballet of the Chickens in their Shells* shows designs for children's costumes, as described in the title, and *Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle*, the names of those portrayed being apparently the invention of the composer,



MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*



is a picture of two Jews, one rich, one poor, a present by Hartmann to the composer. In Limoges market-place old women gossip, discussing the fate of an escaped cow, and more trivial nonsense, while the Roman *Catacombs*, subtitled *Sepulchrum Romanum*, are lit by a flickering lamp, the skulls piled on either side beginning to glow in the light from within. This is linked to the eerie *With the Dead in the Language of the Dead*. The macabre continues with *The Hut on Fowl's Legs*, a clock in the form of the hut of the witch Baba Yaga, who crunches up children's bones and flies through the night on a pestle. The impressive conclusion offers a design for a triumphal gate in Kiev, to commemorate the escape of Tsar Alexander II from assassination in 1866. The music contrasts the massive structure with the sound of a solemn procession of chanting monks.

Mussorgsky wrote songs throughout his life, the first at the age of nineteen and the last in 1879. *Pesni i piyaski smerti* (Songs and Dances of Death) date from 1875, with the fourth song written in 1877. Based on a suggestion from Stasov and with texts by Arseny Golenischchev-Kutuzov, the songs reflect encounters with death. In the first, *Kolibel'naya* (Lullaby), dedicated to the veteran singer Anna Vorobyeva-Petrova, Death lulls to final sleep a child, dying in his mother's arms, and in the second, *Serenada*, dedicated to Glinka's sister, Death serenades a dying girl, claiming her as his own. In *Trepak*, dedicated to the bass Osip Petrov, Death dances with a drunken peasant, lured to die in the ice and snow. The fourth song, *Polkovodets* (The Field Marshal), dedicated to Kutuzov, presents a scene of battle, after which Death surveys the field, having conquered all. Peter Breiner's orchestral arrangement of the songs is scored for two flutes with piccolo, two oboes with cor anglais, two clarinets and a bass clarinet, two bassoons and a contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, triangle, tubular bells, glockenspiel, xylophone, harp, celesta, piano and a string section of fifty players.

For his orchestral arrangement of *The Nursery* Peter Breiner uses similar forces, with the



MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

addition of tambourine, marimba and vibraphone to the percussion section. Mussorgsky was good with children and the songs that make up *The Nursery* reflect this ability to enter a child's world on equal terms. The words, in prose, their rhythms and intonations reflected in the vocal line, are by the composer. The first song of the cycle, *S nyaney* (With Nurse), was written in 1868 and is dedicated to Dargomizhsky, described as 'the great teacher of musical truth'. A child begs his nurse to tell him stories of bogeymen, of a limping Tsar and a sneezing Tsaritsa; in the end, though, he would rather have a funny story. *V uglu* (In the Corner) has Nanny rebuking her charge for splashing ink over a sock and upsetting her knitting; the child rejects these accusations, claiming to have been good, while Nanny is being horrible. The song, with the following three of the series, was written in 1870. It is dedicated to Victor Hartmann. *Zhuk* (The Beetle), dedicated to Vladimir Stasov, has the boy telling Nanny about a beetle that appeared while he was playing and flew into him, and now lies on its back hardly moving; he puzzles over what has happened to it. *S kukloy* (With the Doll), dedicated to his niece and nephew Tanyushka and Goga, children of his brother Filaret, has the child, presumably a little girl, lulling a doll to sleep, with threats of bogeymen and speculation about the fine land of dreams. *Na son gryadushchiy* (Going to Sleep) is dedicated to his godson, César Cui's child Sasha. The little girl says her prayers, listing all those to be remembered, corrected finally to include herself, a sinner, to Nanny's final approval.

The last two songs of the set were written in 1872 and originally intended to form part of another group, *At the Dacha*. In *Kot Matros* (The Cat Sailor) the little girl searches for a sunshade and finally rescues their caged bullfinch from their cat, Sailor. *Poyekal na palochke* (On the Hobby Horse), originally described as 'An Episode from a Child's Life', is dedicated to Vladimir Stasov's brother Dimitri and his wife Polixena. The boy rides his wooden hobbyhorse, pretending to ride out for the day, urging his horse onward, only to hurt his foot and need his mother's consolation.

**Keith Anderson**



*MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:*

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

## Note on the Orchestration:

I was not trying to re-create Mussorgsky's orchestral sound in this recording, but actually to create a contemporary sound. I wanted to create it without using a lot of unusual sounds and to stay within the limits of the traditional symphony orchestra with a substantial expansion in woodwind and percussion. I tried to create a contemporary sound with unusual combinations and settings.

From the very beginning, the first *Promenade* combines alto flute, cor anglais and violins *divisi* in eight parts, with *martellato* violas. In places the piccolo doubling another solo woodwind at the octave and a fifth above creates an organ-like mixture effect, with the bassoon in *Il vecchio castello*. The possibility of setting the harmonies within one group of woodwind, thanks to the employment of four instruments in each group, creates also a lot of unusual sounds. Some solo passages were assigned to instruments that would not be really expected in that rôle — a trumpet solo in *Tuileries*, and a combination of trombones, four flutes and vibraphone in *Cum mortuis in lingua morta*.

There are a few things added to the score that were not in the piano version, such as horn glissandi in *Gnomus* and *Bydlo*, harp/ vibraphone figurations in *Gnomus*, piano/celesta figurations in *Il vecchio castello*, flute figures in *Samuel Goldberg und Schmuyle* and *La cabane sur des pattes de poule*. At the end a body of 104 musicians creates quite a spectacular *Great Gate of Kiev*.

The song cycles introduce a different problem — to replace the vocal line in a way to make it an organic part of the orchestration. Thanks to rather *recitativo* like vocal lines this was possible by dividing it almost always between several solo instruments. Wherever Mussorgsky has a nice long melody, however, I try to remain within a single colour to support it. There is a lovely violin solo in *Serenade* and cor anglais in *Trepak*.

**Peter Breiner**



MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

## Peter Breiner

CONDUCTOR • PIANIST ARRANGER • COMPOSER

Peter Breiner is one of the world's most recorded musicians, with over 180 CDs released and record numbers sold (1.5 million reached by 2008 alone), including both albums and online streams. A conductor, pianist, arranger and composer he has conducted, often doubling as a pianist, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Mozart Orchestra, the Hungarian State Radio Orchestra, the Nicolaus Esterházy Orchestra, Budapest, the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Capella Istropolitana, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra National de Lille, France, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, among many others.

Some of his most acclaimed recordings include *Beatles Go Baroque* [Naxos 8.555010] (over a quarter of a million CDs sold worldwide) and *Elvis Goes Baroque* [Naxos 8.990054] which, together with *Christmas Goes Baroque I* and *II* [Naxos 8.550301 and 8.550670], represents his commercially most successful Baroque arrangements. His arrangements of national anthems of all participating countries were used during the Olympic Games in Athens in



*MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:*

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

2004 and illegally in Beijing in 2008. He recorded his own arrangements of the anthems of the participating countries of the Rugby World Cup 2011, followed by a new ten CD set of the National Anthems of the World for Naxos to coincide with the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Most recently Peter Breiner has recorded two new albums for Naxos due for release in 2012 and 2013. They are his own arrangements of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, *Songs and Dances of Death* and *The Nursery*, featured on the present recording, and Tchaikovsky's *Operatic Suites* from *The Voyevoda* and *The Queen of Spades*. These recordings with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and conducted by him, are the subject of a new movie documentary entitled *Bask* due for release this October. Peter Breiner's own arrangements of Debussy's *Piano Preludes* have been released on Naxos 8.572584.

Currently under preparation is a huge Transmedia project consisting of audio recording, several interactive videos, and audience-involvement platforms. It is based on Peter Breiner's own 85 minute orchestral piece *Slovak Dances, Nasty and Nice*, which will be recorded by a world renowned orchestra, and pull together all the latest trends in technology and communication across the world today.

The world première recording for Naxos of Breiner's own arrangements of Janáček's *Six Operatic Suites* [Naxos 8.570555 and 56] with him conducting the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra earned tremendous acclaim, *Gramophone* declaring it a "splendid disc ... conducted with passion and sympathetic understanding." *The Chicago Tribune* added, "Breiner fills the void with beautifully crafted symphonic suites based on the music of *Jenůfa*."

Peter Breiner's compositions and arrangements have been played in concerts worldwide. Films that include his musical scores have enjoyed very wide international exposure, including *Anne of Green Gables*, Timothy Findley's *Piano Man's Daughter*, produced



MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*



by Whoopi Goldberg, and *The Magic Flute*. His music has been featured many times on the most popular TV shows, including the CBC television show *Wind at My Back* and *Seasons of Love*.

Future projects include a tour of *An Evening of Michel Legrand* across Germany and Europe combining Breiner's own arrangements of the music of Legrand and of Debussy; Valentines' Day programs in Hong Kong and the United States; further worldwide tours and concert programs of his acclaimed arrangements, collaborating with such esteemed artists and ensembles as Giora Feidmann, Gitanes Blondes, Takako Nishizaki and his trio Triango whose latest album was released in the fall of 2011.

Peter Breiner began to study the piano in early childhood (1961) and his exceptional artistry led to his early acceptance at the Conservatory in Košice in 1971. He studied piano with L. Kojanova and composition with J. Podprocky, as well as conducting and percussion. In 1975-1981 he studied composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava with Prof. Alexander Moyzes, one of the most significant figures in modern Slovak music. Peter Breiner lived in Toronto, Canada, from 1992 to 2007, when he moved to New York.

Proficient in seven languages, Breiner has hosted various TV and radio programs about music. In 1993 he was a co-host and music director of the most popular TV talk show in Slovakia, attracting over two million viewers in a country with a population of 5.5 million. He has his own column in one of Slovakia's most influential weekly newspapers, while his first book *Maple Leaves* came out in April 1998 and immediately became a No. 1 non-fiction national bestseller.



*MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:*

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*

## The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is the country's only professional full-size orchestra and one of the world's oldest national symphony orchestras, in existence since 1946. The orchestra is continually on the road, touring as many as a hundred symphonic concerts as well as dozens of dedicated concerts for children and small communities each year. While they present all their main programmes in Auckland and Wellington, they tour New Zealand extensively. In 2010, the NZSO completed the most prestigious and successful international tour in their history, appearing at Lucerne's KKL, Geneva's Victoria Hall, the Shanghai World Expo and Vienna's Musikverein. Earlier tours have featured concerts at the BBC Proms, the Snape Maltings in England and the Aichi World Expo in Japan. Led by Music Director Pietari Inkinen, the NZSO has won consistent praise in the press for its performances, both in concerts and recordings. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. More than one million CDs have been sold internationally in the past decade.



*MUSSORGSKY  
ORCH. PETER  
BREINER:*

*Pictures at an  
Exhibition*

*Songs and Dances of  
Death*

*The Nursery*





## THE 2xHD MASTERING PROCESS

This album was mastered using our 2xHD proprietary system. In order to achieve the most accurate reproduction of the original recording we tailor our process specifically for each project, using a selection from our pool of state-of-the-art audiophile components and connectors. The process begins with a transfer to analog from the original 24bits/96kHz, or 88.2 kHz resolution master, using cutting edge D/A converters. The analog signal is then sent through a hi-end tube pre-amplifier and (if needed) will be EQ'd before being recorded directly in DXD using the dCS905 A/D and the dCS Vivaldi Clock. All connections used in the process are made of OCC silver cable.

DSD and 192kHz/24Bit versions are separately generated, directly from the analog signal.

2xHD was created by producer/studio owner André Perry and audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme.

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*MUSSORGSKY ORCH. PETER BREINER:  
Pictures at an Exhibition  
Songs and Dances of Death  
The Nursery*

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2xHD Mastering: René Laflamme  
2xHD Executive Producer: André Perry

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