

# LYAPUNOV

Sergei Mikhailovich  
(1859-1924)

Sergei Lyapunov, a gifted Russian composer, was the last major torch bearer of Balakirev, arriving in St. Petersburg in 1885 and thereafter constantly associated with Balakirev until the death of the latter in 1910.

Lyapunov was born on 18th. November, 1859 in Yaroslavl, an ancient town said to have been founded by Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054), two hundred and fifty kilometres north east of Moscow. The appearance of the town, especially seen from the Volga, is very picturesque.<sup>1</sup> Lyapunov's domestic environment was brilliant, the family cultured and highly gifted. His father, Mikhail Vasilievich (1820-1868), a mathematician and astronomer worked at the observatory at Kazan University, and latterly moved to Yaroslavl, where he was appointed head of the Demidovsky Institute. Of Lyapunov's two brothers, Alexander (1857-1918) rose to the pinnacle of fame as a mathematician and Boris (1862-1943), a philologist, was admitted to the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.<sup>2</sup>

Lyapunov's musical aptitude was fostered by his mother, Sof'ya Alexandrovna, (née Shipilov) who, although only an amateur pianist, was competent in the classics (her repertoire included Hummel's A minor piano concerto, op.85). In Lyapunov's words, 'She, in general, manifested a greater interest in music and knowledge in musical literature than was usual at that time among music lovers.' In 1870, after Mikhail Lyapunov's death the family moved to Nizhny-Novgorod, so that the sons might benefit from its educational facilities. At Nizhny-Novgorod, the birthplace of Balakirev in 1837, Lyapunov was enrolled into a branch class of the Russian Musical Society.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1870s, Sof'ya Alexandrovna died, at a time when all three sons were entering upon the final phases of their education. Very severely deprived financially, but for the help from the Shipilov family, this remarkable trio displayed great tenacity in establishing themselves in their respective professions.<sup>4</sup>

Thanks to Nikolai Rubinstein, Lyapunov entered Moscow Conservatoire as a student in 1878. Benefiting greatly from his contact with Karl Klindworth (1830-1916), Nikolai Albertovich Hubert (1840-1888) and Paul Pabst (1854-1897).<sup>5</sup> But though his training in Moscow led to his exposure to music and methods of that school, including those of Tchaikovsky and S.I.Taneyev, he was attracted increasingly by Balakirev, Borodin, Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, not at that time well known in Moscow and whose significance he had already come to realize when still in Nizhny-Novgorod.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, although graduating with gold medals in the spring of 1883<sup>7</sup>, he declined a teaching post offered by Albrecht<sup>8</sup>, according to Stasov, in Kiev<sup>9</sup>. For his sights were already aimed at St. Petersburg, and at the end of 1883 or the beginning of 1884 he met Balakirev<sup>10</sup>, and other members of the group including Stasov, who hoped for much. In so doing he came to spurn the material security of a teaching post in Moscow (and, anathematic to Lyapunov, a German flavoured Academy) for a more precarious existence in St. Petersburg<sup>11</sup>.

On 11th. March, 1885, Lyapunov's first orchestral work, since leaving the Conservatoire, the highly acclaimed Overture in C sharp minor, was performed in St. Petersburg at a Free School Concert, Balakirev conducting. It was well received, Afterwards, Lyapunov decided to reconstitute his work as the 'Ballade', Op.2.<sup>12</sup> Balakirev, characteristically, produced emendations which, though appreciatively received by Lyapunov, were not adopted by him<sup>13</sup>.

The final move came in the autumn of 1885<sup>14</sup>, the intervening two years since his graduation having been occupied by military service and ordering his domestic affairs. Illness also contributed to the delay<sup>15</sup>. His determination to work with Balakirev, instead of the developing Belaieff/Rimsky-Korsakov grouping, may be seen as the happiest stroke of good fortune to light up the thorny path of that embattled, embittered 'Supremo' of the original 'Moguchaya Kuchka', as he saw his authority eroded and, partly through his own intransigence, he himself increasingly isolated.

Lyapunov's arrival at St. Petersburg came four years after the Free School had been resuscitated and Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov had assumed control of music as Director and Assistant Director respectively of the Imperial Chapel in 1883<sup>16</sup>. His arrival also coincided with the founding by M.P.Belaieff of his publishing house. At this outset of