
KSO
KENSINGTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
57th SEASON

KENSINGTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Russell Keable *conductor*
Alan Tuckwood *leader*

Berlioz	Overture: Benvenuto Cellini
Berg	Three Pieces for Orchestra
Interval – 20 minutes	
Stravinsky	The Firebird

Monday 15 October 2012, 7.30pm
St. John's, Smith Square

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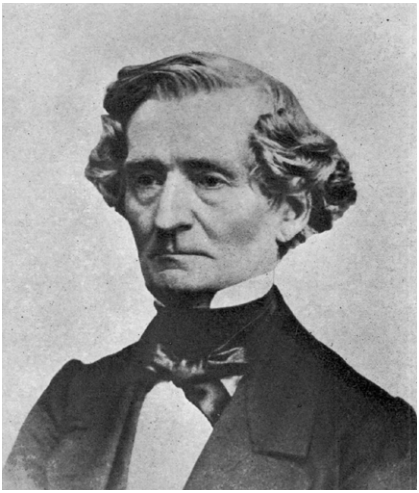
HECTOR BERLIOZ 1803–1869

Overture: Benvenuto Cellini



Hector Berlioz

Berlioz claimed to despise Italian music, but the 15 months he spent in the country in the early 1830s proved a source of inspiration throughout the rest of the decade. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Harold in Italy* and his first opera *Benvenuto Cellini* all drew to some extent on his experiences of Italy.

His trip was a consequence of his finally winning the prestigious Prix de Rome at his third attempt in 1830. Learning from his previous entries, he had composed a cantata in a deliberately tame style so as not to annoy the judges. He felt ashamed of the piece, and later destroyed it. Despite his aversion to its music, Italy itself proved highly amiable. The prize money also came as a welcome relief at a time when he was struggling to make ends meet. Unfortunately, by 1836 when he was hard at work on *Benvenuto Cellini* and most needed financial security, the money had run out. He was therefore forced to take up a second career as a critic, a role which, despite his considerable talent for it, he loathed.

The opera is based—very loosely—on the memoirs of the eponymous sixteenth-century sculptor and goldsmith. Cellini was a colourful character, whose life also encompassed painting, music, a period soldiering and accusations of philandering with both sexes. Berlioz identified with the idea of artist as hero that Cellini propagates in his writing. While highly entertaining, not to say scandalous, Cellini's memoirs are arguably not greatly suited to dramatic adaptation. This might partly explain why the opera's first performance at the Paris Opera in 1838 was an unmitigated disaster.

It cannot have helped that even before its première the opera was subject to derision and hosility, not least from its cast. The principal tenor abandoned his part after three performances, which the Opéra took as confirmation of its failure. Berlioz wrote to the Director, "Sir, I have the honour to announce to you that I *withdraw my opera Benvenuto*. I am absolutely convinced that you will receive this with pleasure. I have the honour, sir, to be your devoted servant, H. Berlioz."

Revising it many years later for revival in 1852 did little to make it more popular. It was performed at Covent Garden in front of Queen Victoria, and was as unsuccessful as at its first staging. It remains a rarity in opera houses today, although its ebullient overture has found more success as a concert piece.

ALBAN BERG 1885–1935

Three Pieces for Orchestra

I. Präludium (Prelude)
II. Reigen (Rounds)
III. Marsch (March)

Alban Berg

Alban Berg was born into a comfortable middle-class Viennese family, the third of four children. His unremarkably happy childhood was thrown into disarray after his father died in 1900. This loss was hugely traumatic for Berg. Within months he had an attack of asthma, a complaint from which he would then suffer for the rest of his life. His schoolwork suffered; he failed his exams and was forced to repeat his sixth year, and would later also have to repeat his seventh. Most scandalously, he had an affair with the family's kitchen maid, which resulted in an illegitimate daughter. The eventual collapse of this relationship was the primary motivation for a suicide attempt in the autumn of 1903.

As a child Berg's main passion had been for literature, but in the wake of his father's death he became interested more in music. He had been given piano lessons by his governess, and from 1901 he composed songs and piano duets for his family. He evidently had talent, and so in 1904 his brother and sister answered a newspaper advertisement for composition classes. Unknown to Berg, they took copies of some of his songs to the teacher, Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg was impressed with what he saw and accepted Berg as a pupil, refusing to charge a fee in view of the family circumstances. Berg quickly became devoted to him. He studied with him until Schoenberg abruptly left Vienna in 1911, and continued to seek his advice and approval thereafter.

The relationship was not an easy one. Berg increasingly regarded Schoenberg as something of a surrogate father figure, whose approval he craved and whose criticism was devastating. Schoenberg for his part felt no compunction about lecturing his pupil on matters of morality as well as music. As well as absorbing Schoenberg's compositional ideas, Berg also inherited to an extent his teacher's moral views, in particular his ambivalence towards Viennese society. Schoenberg, along with many artists, saw the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a corrupt and decadent realm that preferred oppression of its subjects to social reform. The Expressionist movement to which Schoenberg was allied was in part a reaction to the lack of opportunity for political expression. It explored extremes of personal crisis in art, fuelled amongst other things by the new ideas of the subconscious that Sigmund Freud was developing.

In 1913 Berg visited Schoenberg in Berlin. The trip was a happy one until the last day, when Berg showed his former teacher the two pieces he had written since Schoenberg's departure from

Vienna. Schoenberg vehemently criticised them, before proceeding to lecture Berg on what he saw as his lack of self-discipline. In a letter to Schoenberg written after his return home, Berg revealed how much to heart he had taken the criticism: "I have to thank you for your *reproof* as for *everything* I have received from you, knowing well that it was meant for *my own* good. I don't need to tell you that the great pain it has caused me, is proof of the fact that I have heeded your criticism."

Schoenberg had suggested that for his next composition Berg should consider an orchestral suite for orchestra, and Berg resolved that he would attempt such a project. This was the starting point for his *Three Pieces for Orchestra*. This origin is visible in the titles of the pieces (*Prelude*, *Rounds*, *March*), but the final work that Berg produced moves way beyond the scope of what might be expected of the original idea. Berg dedicated the *Three Pieces for Orchestra* to Schoenberg as a present for his 40th birthday in 1914; in the event, only the first and last pieces were finished in time, the middle movement not being completed until 1915. Berg's friend and fellow pupil of Schoenberg, Anton Webern conducted the first two pieces in 1923, but it was not until 1930 that the work was heard in full.

Apart from Schoenberg, the influence of Gustav Mahler looms large in Berg's style. After Mahler's death in 1911 Berg briefly considered writing a symphony, and some of the ideas from that aborted project ended up as part of the *Präludium*. This piece, materialising uncertainly from nothing, carries clear echoes of the opening movement of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, which had made an enormous impression on Berg at its posthumous première in 1912 in Vienna. Like Mahler, Berg's *Präludium* rouses itself repeatedly to increasingly intense climaxes, but eventually retreats back into the fog from which emerged. In a nod to Schoenberg's concept of "developing variation", ideas from this movement are then reconstituted and transformed to provide the themes for the second.

The title *Reigen* is usually translated as "Round Dance", but in pre-war Vienna would have had less folksy associations: it was a term used in salon music for a sequence of dance tunes, generally a hodgepodge of popular hits. In a nod to this, the movement evokes Waltzes and Ländler, sometimes overtly but often through a distorting mist (perhaps the band has had one too many). *Reigen* may also refer to the notorious, and at the time banned, play of that name by Arthur Schnitzler. The play has ten scenes featuring a chain of couples: a prostitute and a soldier, then the soldier and a maid, and so on until the prostitute appears again with a count in the final scene to complete the circle. Berg owned a copy, and its tone chimes well with his own ambivalence towards Vienna, and the often sardonic character of this movement.

The final *Marsch* also begins with material reworked from the previous piece, as well as reintroducing a number of ideas from the *Präludium*. This is music of astonishing and overwhelming complexity, that makes the most of the sheer brute force that can be harnessed by a large orchestra. The sheer density of ideas and textures eventually causes everything to collapse in on itself, leaving a desolate landscape and a hint of something sinister before a final outburst by the brass. Weeks after Berg completed this movement, Europe was engulfed in war.

IGOR STRAVINSKY 1882–1971

The Firebird (complete ballet)

Introduction—Kashchey's enchanted garden—The Firebird appears, pursued by Ivan Tsarevich—Dance of the Firebird—Ivan Tsarevich captures the Firebird—The Firebird's entreaty—The appearance of the thirteen enchanted princesses—The princesses' game with the golden apples—The sudden appearance of Ivan Tsarevich—Round Dance of the princesses—Dawn; Ivan Tsarevich enters Kashchey's palace—The sound of enchanted bells; monsters appear, Kashchey's guard, and take Ivan Tsarevich prisoner—The arrival of Kashchey the Immortal—Kashchey's dialogue with Ivan Tsarevich—The princesses intercede—The appearance of the Firebird—Kashchey's followers dance under the Firebird's spell—Infernal Dance of Kashchey's subjects—Lullaby (the Firebird)—Kashchey awakes—Death of Kashchey—Kashchey's spells are broken; his palace disappears; the stone knights return to life; joy reigns

Igor Stravinsky

The origins of the *Ballets Russes* lie in a late nineteenth century Russian artistic movement known as *Mir iskusstva* (*The World of Art*). This was a group of students that congregated around the artist Alexandre Benois in 1898. A year later they set up a magazine, also called *Mir iskusstva*, the editorship of which was taken up by Sergei Diaghilev. Like the Pre-Raphaelites in England, *Mir iskusstva* dedicated itself to the opposition of what its members saw as the decadence of industrial society, and sought to preserve and restore Russian folk-culture. Few Westerners would ever see a copy of this magazine; nevertheless it would prove a pivotal influence on European art in the early twentieth century. In 1907 and 1908 Benois and his cohorts presented programmes of Russian nationalist opera and ballet in Paris. These proved highly successful, and in 1909 the group returned, now formally established as the *Ballets Russes*. By this time Diaghilev had taken charge of the project. The next few years would see the growth of a phenomenally successful company whose influence is still felt today.

With an artist such as Benois designing, and the choreographer Mikhail Fokine directing the dancers, the *Ballets Russes* offered productions that combined the exoticism of Russian folk traditions with a revolutionary approach to design and choreography. However, where the productions lacked a certain fizz was in the music. Although Diaghilev managed to commission such eminent French composers as Debussy and Ravel, most of the Russian music represented was in the form of what the company secretary Walter Nouvel archly described as "*salades russes*." These compilations of old orchestral and ballet repertoire paled in comparison to what was

being achieved in the other elements of the shows. The lack of vital new Russian music did not pass unnoticed in the press, and so Diaghilev, Benois and Fokine determined to find a composer who could produce something special. They concocted the most Russian scenario they could think of. This combined elements of several Russian folk tales: the Firebird, the demon king Kashchey the Immortal and the archetypal hero Prince Ivan Tsarevich. This sort of conflation will be recognised by anyone familar with the 1940s horror films churned out by Universal Studios featuring the likes of Dracula versus Frankenstein versus the Wolf Man.

The tale begins as Prince Ivan Tsarevich enters the magical kingdom of Kashchey the Immortal. In its gardens he sees the Firebird, whom he chases and catches. The Firebird agrees to help Ivan Tsarevich in exchange for its freedom. Thirteen princesses appear, and play a game of catch with golden apples. Ivan Tsarevich falls in love with one of them. As dawn breaks, Ivan Tsarevich enters Kashchey's castle, determined to marry the princess. He talks with Kashchey but the two soon argue. The princesses try to intervene, but Kashchey sends his demonic entourage after the prince. The Firebird appears and bewitches Kashchey and his creatures, making them dance a wild, infernal dance. They then fall asleep. The Firebird tells Ivan Tsarevich that Kashchey's soul is contained within a giant egg; if this is destroyed he will die. Kashchey awakes, but Ivan Tsarevich breaks the egg and the demon king is killed. With Kashchey dead, all the magical creatures and the palace disappear. All Kashchey's prisoners, including the princesses, awake and celebrate his defeat.

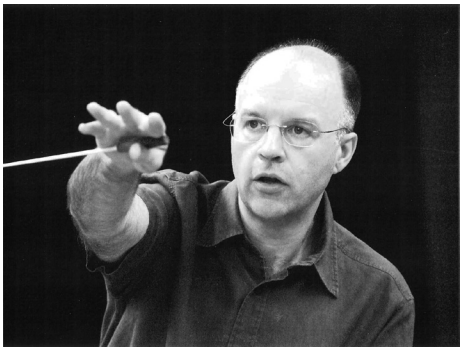
Diaghilev initially hoped that his house composer Nikolai Tcherepnin would compose the ballet. Why this never happened is something of a mystery. Tcherepnin was prone to mood swings, and Benois later claimed that he was simply becoming less keen on writing for the ballet. However, it is also quite possible that he declined after he had a falling out with Fokine. In any event, Tcherepnin resigned from the company, and so Diaghilev's thoughts turned to other composers. He approached Anatoly Lyadov about the commission, but although Lyadov apparently initially expressed interest, nothing came of this. By now things were becoming urgent, and so Diaghilev decided to take a chance. For the 1909 production *Les Sylphides*, Diaghilev had commissioned a number of young composers to arrange piano pieces of Chopin. One of these had made a particular impression, not only for the distinctiveness of his work, but also his rapid work rate: Igor Stravinsky.

The break came at just the right time for Stravinsky. As a student he had actually studied law, but was promising enough as a composer that Rimsky-Korsakov agreed to take him as a pupil anyway. As his studies progressed however, he found that his teacher became less enamoured of him as his style became more influenced by Scriabin and Glazunov, both of whom Rimsky-Korsakov considered unacceptably modern.

Stravinsky's music for *The Firebird* is nowadays usually heard in one of the suites that he later concocted for concert performance. His complete original score is however an astonishing tour de force of orchestral writing. His influences are here not yet fully absorbed, but such dramatic music as the buildup to the climactic *Infernal Dance of Kashchey* are as exciting as anything he retained for the later suites; it is often in these little-heard passages that can be heard the first stirrings of the musical revolution that would erupt in *The Rite of Spring*.

BIOGRAPHIES

Russell Keable *conductor*



Russell Keable has established a reputation as one of the UK's most exciting musicians. As a conductor he has been praised in the national and international press: "Keable and his orchestra did magnificently," wrote the *Guardian*; "one of the most memorable evenings at the South Bank for many a month," said the *Musical Times*.

He performs with orchestras and choirs throughout the British Isles, has conducted in Prague and Paris (concerts filmed by French and British television) and recently made his debut with the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra in Dubai.

As a champion of the music of Erich Korngold he has received particular praise: the British première of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* was hailed as a triumph, and research in Los Angeles led to a world première of music from Korngold's film score for *The Sea Hawk*.

Keable was trained at Nottingham and London Universities; he studied conducting at London's Royal College of Music with Norman Del Mar, and later with George Hurst. For nearly 30 years he has been associated with Kensington Symphony Orchestra, one of the UK's finest non-professional orchestras, with whom he has led first performances of works by many British composers (including Peter Maxwell Davies, John Woolrich, Robin Holloway, David Matthews, Joby Talbot and John McCabe). He has also made recordings of two symphonies by Robert Simpson, and a Beethoven CD was released in New York.

Russell Keable is recognized as a dynamic lecturer and workshop leader. He has the rare skill of being able to communicate vividly with audiences of any age (from school children to music students, adult groups and international business conferences). Over five years he developed a special relationship with the Schidlof Quartet, with whom he established an exciting and innovative education programme. He holds the post of Director of Conducting at the University of Surrey.

Keable is also in demand as a composer and arranger. He has written works for many British ensembles, and his opera *Burning Waters*, commissioned by the Buxton Festival as part of their millennium celebration, was premièred in July 2000. He has also composed music for the mime artist Didier Danthois to use working in prisons and special needs schools.

Kensington Symphony Orchestra

In its 57th year Kensington Symphony Orchestra enjoys an enviable reputation as one of the finest amateur orchestras in the UK. Its founding premise—to provide students and amateurs with an opportunity to perform concerts at the highest possible level—continues to be at the heart of its mission. It regularly attracts the best non-professional players from around London.

It seems extraordinary that KSO has had only two principal conductors—the founder, Leslie Head, and the current incumbent, Russell Keable. The dedication, enthusiasm and passion of these two musicians has indelibly shaped KSO's image, giving it a distinctive repertoire which undoubtedly sets it apart from other groups. Its continued commitment to the performance of the most challenging works in the canon is allied to a hunger for new music, lost masterpieces, overlooked film scores and those quirky corners of the repertoire that few others dare touch.

Revivals and premières, in particular, have peppered the programming from the very beginning. In the early days there were world premières of works by Arnold Bax and Havergal Brian, and British premières of works by Nielsen, Schoenberg, Sibelius and Bruckner (the original version of the Ninth Symphony). When Russell Keable arrived in 1983, he promised to maintain the distinctive flavour of KSO. As well as the major works of Mahler, Strauss, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, Keable has aired a number of unusual works as well as delivering some significant musical landmarks—the London première of Dvořák's opera *Dimitrij* and the British première of Korngold's operatic masterpiece, *Die tote Stadt* (which the *Evening Standard* praised as "a feast of brilliant playing"). In January 2004, KSO, along with the London Oriana Choir, performed a revival of Walford Davies's oratorio *Everyman*, which is now available on the Dutton label.

Photo © Sim Canetty-Clarke

New music has continued to be the life-blood of KSO. An impressive roster of contemporary composers has been represented in KSO's progressive programmes, including Judith Weir, Benedict Mason, John Woolrich, Joby Talbot and Peter Maxwell Davies. Two exciting collaborations with the BBC Concert Orchestra have been highlights: Bob Chilcott's *Tandem* and the première of Errollyn Wallen's lively romp around the subject of speed dating, *Spirit Symphony*, at the Royal Festival Hall, both of which were broadcast on BBC Radio 3. In December 2005, *Spirit Symphony* was awarded the Radio 3 Listeners' Award at the British Composer Awards. Russell Keable has also written music for the orchestra, particularly for its education projects, which have seen members of the orchestra working with schools from the inner London area.

In 2006 KSO marked its 50th anniversary. The celebrations started with a ball at the Radisson Hotel, Portman Square in honour of the occasion, attended by many of those involved with the orchestra over the previous 50 years. The public celebration took the form of a concert at London's Barbican in October. A packed house saw the orchestra perform an extended suite from Korngold's score *The Sea Hawk*, Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2, with established KSO collaborator Nikolai Demidenko, and Prokofiev's cantata *Alexander Nevsky*, with the London Oriana Choir.

KSO has an honourable pedigree in raising funds for charitable concerns. Its very first concert was given in aid of the Hungarian Relief Fund, and since then the orchestra has supported the Jacqueline du Pré Memorial Fund, the Royal Brompton Hospital Paediatric Unit, Trinity Hospice, Field Lane, Shape London and the IPOP music school. In recent years it has developed links with the Kampala Symphony Orchestra and Music School under its KSO^2 programme, providing training, fundraising and instruments in partnership with charity Musequality.

The reputation of the orchestra is reflected in the quality of international artists who regularly appear with KSO. In recent seasons soloists have included Nikolai Demidenko, Leon McCawley, Jack Liebeck and Richard Watkins, and the orchestra has worked with guest conductors including Andrew Gourlay and Nicholas Collon. All have enjoyed the immediate, enthusiastic but thoroughly professional approach of these amateur musicians.

Without the support of its sponsors, its Friends scheme and especially its audiences, KSO could not continue to go from strength to strength and maintain its traditions of challenging programmes and exceptionally high standards of performance. Thank you for your support.

If you would like to receive news of our forthcoming concerts by email, please join our mailing list. Just send a message to jo.johnson@kso.org.uk and we'll do our best to keep you informed.

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The KSO Endowment Trust

An Endowment Trust has been established by Kensington Symphony Orchestra in order to enhance the orchestra's ability to achieve its charitable objectives in the long term.

The Trust will manage a capital fund derived from donations and legacies. Each year, the Trustees will make grants from its income to assist important KSO projects and activities, such as commissioning new music, which would be impossible to finance relying on concert funds alone.

Our aim is to raise at least £100,000 over the first ten years. We would be pleased to hear from individuals or organisations who would like to donate any sum, large or small, and would also be keen to talk to anyone who might consider recognising KSO's work in their will.

For further information, please email **trust@kso.org.uk** or telephone Neil Ritson on 07887 987711.

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Jo Johnson
Jason Weir
Susan Knight
Claire Maugham
Claire Dovey
Sarah Keighley-Elstub
Sarah Hackett
Matthew Hickman
Helen Waites
Taro Visser
Videl Bar-Kar
Heather Bingham
Helen Turnell
Sabina Wagstyl
Louise Ringrose

Second Violin
David Pievsky
Juliette Barker
David Nagle
Adrian Gordon
Bronwen Fisher
Danielle Dawson
Jeremy Bradshaw
Kathleen Rule
Judith Ní Bhreasláin
Richard Sheahan
Françoise Robinson
Elizabeth Bell
Rufus Rottenberg
Liz Errington
Jenny Davie
Jill Ives

Viola
Beccy Spencer
Guy Raybould
Sonia Brazier
Sally Randall
Phil Cooper
Nick Macrae
Jane Spencer-Davis
Liz Lavercombe
Alison Nethsingha
Lucy Ellis
Tom Philpott
Georgina Rannard

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Joseph Spooner
Alex Dinwiddie
Judith Robinson
David Baxendale
Annie Marr-Johnson
Anna Baker
Lois Mattson
Becca Walker
Peter Nagle
Rosie Goddard
Cat Muge
Anna Hamilton

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Steph Fleming
Phil Rashleigh
Lauren Baker
Oliver Bates
Ingela Weeks

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Mike Copperwhite
Claire Pillmoor
Judith Jerome
Dan Dixon

Oboe
Charles Brenan
Sarah Bruce
Chris Calvert
Chris Astles

Cor Anglais
Chris Astles

Clarinet
Chris Horril
Claire Baughan
Emma Dyer

E-flat Clarinet
Graham Elliott

Bass Clarinet
Ian Noonan

Bassoon
Nick Rampley
Sheila Wallace
Hannah Robinson
Robin Thompson

Contrabassoon
Robin Thompson
Sheila Wallace

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Jon Boswell
Jim Moffat
Ed Corn
Heather Pawson
Alex Edmundson
Richard Charlton

Wagner Tuba
Alex Edmundson
Richard Charlton

Trumpet
Steve Willcox
John Hackett
Leanne Thompson
Michael Collins

Cornet
John Hackett
Leanne Thompson

Offstage Trumpet
Jonathan Spencer
Nick Walkley
Michael Collins

Trombone
Phil Cambridge
Ken McGregor
Rich Hubbard

Bass Trombone
David Musgrove

Timpani & Percussion
Tim Alden
Andrew Barnard
Brian Furner
Joe Kearney
Tommy Pearson
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KENSINGTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Monday, 15 October 2012
BERLIOZ Overture: Benvenuto Cellini
BERG Three Pieces for Orchestra
STRAVINSKY The Firebird (complete ballet)

Monday, 26 November 2012
MAGNUS LINDBERG Gran Duo
PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No. 2
SCHUMANN Symphony No. 4

Monday, 21 January 2013
(At Queen Elizabeth Hall)
'A Night at the Oscars', to include:
STEINER Gone with the Wind
GERSHWIN Rhapsody in Blue
BERNSTEIN On the Waterfront
JOHN WILLIAMS Star Wars

Saturday, 9 March 2013
(With guest conductor Stuart Barr)
GLINKA Overture: Ruslan and Lyudmila
SCHOENBERG Verklärte Nacht
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Scheherazade

Tuesday, 21 May 2013
MAHLER Symphony No. 7

Monday, 24 June 2013
LYADOV 8 Russian Folk Songs
MATTHEW TAYLOR Storr
DVOŘÁK Symphony No. 7

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