

signum  
CLASSICS

# TCHAIKOVSKY

## Piano Concerto No.1 Nutcracker Suite

Alexandra Dariescu *piano*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Darrell Ang *conductor*



# PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

## PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1

### NUTCRACKER SUITE

#### **Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 23**

1	I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso	[20.39]
2	II. Andantino semplice	[6.51]
3	III. Allegro con fuoco	[7.18]

#### **Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a (arr. Mikhail Pletnev)**

4	I. Tempo di marcia viva	[2.01]
5	II. Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy: Andante ma non troppo	[2.00]
6	III. Tarantella	[1.23]
7	IV. Intermezzo	[4.24]
8	V. Trepak – Russian Dance: Molto vivace	[1.19]
9	VI. Tea – Chinese Dance: Allegro moderato	[1.18]
10	VII. Andante maestoso	[5.43]

Total timings: [52.58]

ALEXANDRA DARIESCU PIANO  
ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA  
DARRELL ANG CONDUCTOR

## FOREWORD

About 20 years ago I watched my first concerto on TV – it was Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto played by Emil Gilels from 1959. It hit me: the power, the energy, the sheer scale of this piece! I decided I wanted to play it, but it took time until I felt ready. A few years later, whilst studying at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Ronan O'Hora, I felt this was the time to approach the piece. After a few good months of practicing, I started performing it in concerts. One of my most fulfilling performances took place at the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. When the opportunity arose to record my first concerto disc, I knew it had to be this one.

Coupling it with the *Nutcracker Suite* was inspired by another childhood memory of mine: I used to listen to musical stories on LPs whilst drawing. *The Nutcracker* was one of my favourites, and 2016 marks 200 years since E. T. A. Hoffman wrote his original tale. Playing Pletnev's beautiful arrangement of the music which captures the magic of the ballet, normally performed by an entire orchestra, gives me the opportunity to tell this wonderful story

and share the excitement of childhood with you, the listener!

Heartfelt thanks to Marco Assetto, Bob and Elisabeth Boas, Sir Vernon and Lady Ellis, Sir George and Lady Iacobescu, Andrew Jackson, Sir Harvey and Lady McGrath, Sara Naudi, Andrew and Samantha Popper for believing in me and making this project happen!

Alexandra Dariescu

## TCHAIKOVSKY

*Piano Concerto No.1 in B-Flat Minor*  
*Nutcracker Suite*

Many works now firmly established in their respective repertoires, whether symphonies, concertos or operas, initially met with either rejection by musicians or a public reception ranging from indifference to downright hostility. Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* is among the most celebrated cases of a piece which inspired total rejection by its intended soloist. When the composer gave a private performance of his concerto for Nikolai Rubinstein, director of the Moscow Conservatory from 1866 to 1881, he was deeply shocked by his reaction. Three years later – still wounded – he recalled that scene: “Then sprang forth a vigorous stream of words ... by degrees his passion rose, and finally he resembled Zeus hurling thunderbolts ... My concerto, it turned out, was worthless and unplayable ... so clumsy, so badly written as to be beyond rescue ... the music itself was bad, vulgar ...”. Rejection in itself was damaging enough, but the gratuitously cruel manner in which it was expressed compounded the insult. Tchaikovsky refused to change a single note. When he later realised his

misjudgement, Rubinstein became one of the concerto's most enthusiastic advocates. What most disturbed this conservative academic Rubinstein was probably the audacious originality of the concerto. There are two striking aspects to the very first theme. This broad melody for strings is supported by massive chords on the piano, a thrilling solo entry which is a paradoxical combination of accompaniment and the grand manner. (Originally Tchaikovsky indicated these chords to be played arpeggiated!) Equally unusually, this melody is never recalled. The initial double statement of the opening theme leads to a cadenza, some brief development and a restatement of the big melody with even more extravagant piano accompaniment. The types of relationship between soloist and orchestra in Romantic piano concertos vary considerably – ranging from a dialogue of equals to a gladiatorial contest. Tchaikovsky sees his soloist playing the role of a gladiator, with a piano part that – from the very outset – is heroically assertive in character. This quality recurs throughout much of the concerto, often in fiercely demanding piano-writing. The opening paragraph ends calmly and reflectively, before the soloist embarks upon a new, jaggedly rhythmic theme in a faster tempo (*Allegro con*

*spirito*) – a theme derived from a Ukrainian folksong traditionally sung by blind beggars. The melodies of the second subject group are lyrical and, like the opening theme of the concerto, have that intensely memorable quality characteristic of Tchaikovsky greatest music. In the development section Tchaikovsky generates great dramatic tension, while also transforming out of all recognition a tender melody originally introduced by muted first violins. A passage of alternating orchestral and piano chords leads to a large-scale cadenza, before the resplendent coda concludes this massive movement (far longer than the other two movements added together) in resplendent manner.

The second movement is simple in form – a placid opening section with a charming flute melody, a brilliant central section in much faster tempo, then a return to the first section. In the dizzying, scherzo-like middle section, marked *Prestissimo*, the violas and cellos play a melody based on a French cabaret song that was popular in Russia – “*Il faut s’amuser, danser et rire*” (*One must amuse oneself with dancing and laughing*). The solo piano prepares the return to the opening melody with a passage in which flamboyance dissolves

into delicacy. The fiery third movement is in the style of a Russian dance in 3/4, with a strong accent on every second beat. Its opening theme, introduced by the piano almost immediately, is based on a Ukrainian folksong welcoming the arrival of spring. The strongly contrasting second theme, a broad, serene melody first played gently by the violins, is loosely derived from yet another Russian folksong. This melody returns *fortissimo* near the end of the movement, now re-scored with tremendous grandeur for piano and orchestra. Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* was premiered in Boston on 25th October 1875. Soloist Hans von Bülow was accompanied by a freelance orchestra under B. J. Lang.

During the first half of the 19th century, before Tchaikovsky, the quality of ballet music seldom rose above mediocre. Ballet-masters actually required undistinguished music, so that the dancing should always command undivided attention. They happily employed composers such as Ludwig Minkus and Adolphe Adam, who employed all the facile tricks of the trade in providing stereotyped music of little individuality. This state of affairs meant also that serious composers of any ambition tended to show little interest in writing for

the ballet. Before Tchaikovsky the outstanding composer of ballet scores was Delibes, whose *Coppélia* remains central to the repertoire. Himself a great admirer of Delibes' music, Tchaikovsky expressed doubts about writing ballet scores: "They tell me that during the production of a new ballet, ballet-masters treat the music very unceremoniously and demand many changes and alterations. To write under such conditions is impossible." However, this initial reluctance was subsequently overcome by professional expediency. By October 1875, shortly after receiving his first ballet commission, *Swan Lake*, he was able to write: "I accepted the work, partly because I want the money, but also because I have long had the wish to try my hand at this kind of music." Already in *Swan Lake* Tchaikovsky's inspired and utterly memorable music represented a tremendous advance on traditional ballet scores. His second ballet score, *The Sleeping Beauty*, followed in 1889. **The Nutcracker** (1892) is based on *Nutcracker and Mouse-king*, a story by E. T. A. Hoffmann combining reality with fantasy. It is Christmas Eve and the town president has planned a celebration for his children and their friends. Clara, the daughter of the house, receives among her presents a nutcracker in the shape

of a man, but her brother Fritz breaks it. At midnight she sneaks back for another look at the broken nutcracker, only to be confronted by an invasion of mice. The toys all come to life and engage in a battle with the mice, at the height of which the Nutcracker and the Mouse-king fight a duel. Clara intervenes to save the Nutcracker from defeat and, now transformed into a handsome prince, he invites her to the Kingdom of Sweets. Tchaikovsky again displayed his special genius for writing tactile music of great potency and his extraordinary affinity with the magical world of ballet.

The *Divertissement* from Act 2 provides an extremely varied sequence of entertaining dances with no bearing on the plot. Many of these dances are heard, in a different order, in the orchestral concert-suite Tchaikovsky devised. The *March*, which accompanies the children's entrance in Act 1, is deft and piquant, evoking the world of toys rather than the parade ground. For the famous *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* Tchaikovsky specially (and secretly, in case Rimsky-Korsakov or Glazunov heard of it and used it first) ordered from Paris a celesta, a relatively new instrument. A lively *Russian Dance* follows, then the brief but vivid

*Chinese Dance*, originally orchestrated with strutting bassoons and shrill flute and piccolo. Forming part of a double-bill with Tchaikovsky's last opera, *Iolanta*, *The Nutcracker* was first staged in December 1892 at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg.

Mikhail Pletnev (born 1957 in Archangelsk) is one of the outstanding pianists of his generation and a conductor in great demand. He received the gold medal in the 1978 International Tchaikovsky Competition and has subsequently made numerous recordings of music including Scarlatti, C. P. E. Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Prokofiev and Shchedrin. In 1990 he founded the Russian National Orchestra, serving as its chief conductor until 1999.

As an arranger for piano he has transcribed – in addition to the *Nutcracker Suite* recorded here – suites from *The Sleeping Beauty* and from Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella*. His transcription of seven movements from *The Nutcracker* (published 1978) represents a personal choice rather than adherence to the sequence familiar from Tchaikovsky's orchestral suite. In Pletnev's piano version the *Overture* from the orchestral suite is

omitted, the remaining movements being *March*, *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, *Tarantella* (Variation 1, which follows the *Pas de deux*), *Intermezzo* (No. 8 from Scene II of the ballet, with its wonderfully spacious and dignified melody), *Trepak* (*Russian Dance*, with Pletnev's brilliant additions), *Tea* (*Chinese Dance*) and the rapturous *Pas de deux* (*Andante maestoso*) with its overwhelming climax. Only movements 1, 2, 5 and 6 are from the orchestral suite. Pletnev's magnificent arrangement, while vividly orchestral in effect, enhances the virtuoso pianist's repertoire in the tradition of all the greatest transcriptions.

Philip Borg-Wheeler

## ALEXANDRA DARIESCU

From the Royal Albert Hall in London to Carnegie Hall in New York, the young Romanian pianist Alexandra Dariescu, named as “one of 30 pianists under 30 destined for a spectacular career” (International Piano Magazine), has dazzled audiences worldwide with her effortless musicality and captivating stage presence.

Alexandra made important debuts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, London’s Royal Albert Hall as well as Carnegie Hall in New York at a special invitation of Sir Andrés Schiff. She is a regular guest at the Wigmore Hall in London and frequently appears at festivals such as the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest. Alexandra plays with orchestras such as BBC Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Bournemouth Symphony, EU Chamber Orchestra, Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau, Mecklenburgische Staatskapelle Schwerin, Philharmonisches Orchester Cottbus, KwaZulu Natal Philharmonic, Kymi Sinfonietta, Stavanger Symphony, Szczecin Philharmonic Orchestra, Sinfonia ViVA, Royal Northern Sinfonia as well as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé and Royal Scottish Orchestra. Artists Alexandra collaborates with include



Darrell Ang, Jiří Bělohlávek, Alexandre Bloch, André de Ridder, Fabien Gabel, Ben Gernon, Andrew Gourlay, Ivo Hentschel, Antony Hermus, Daniel Huppert, Damian Iorio, Jakob Koranyi, Andrew Litton, Grant Llewelyn, Grzegorz Nowak, Vasily Petrenko, Jamie Phillips, Timothy Redmond, Uwe Sandner, Clemens Schuldt, Gavin Sutherland, Alexandra Soumm, Tiberiu Soare, John Storgårds, Maxime Tortelier and Ryan Wigglesworth.

Dedicated to discovering new works, Alexandra gave the world premiere performance of Iris ter Schiphorst’s piano concerto *Sometimes* and Danyal Dhondy’s *In Touch* for piano and orchestra. Other premieres include Alberto Ginastera’s *Concierto Argentino*, Dinu Lipatti’s *Concertino in Classical Style* as well as *Mesmerism* for piano and orchestra by British Composer-Award winner Emily Howard, recorded with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for NMC Records. Alexandra released her second volume of complete preludes by Shostakovich and Szymanowski as part of her trilogy project for Champs Hill Records. The first volume of this project include the complete preludes of Chopin and Dutilleux.

Alexandra began her piano studies in her native Romania before moving to the UK at the age of 17 to study at Pocklington School and at the Royal Northern College of Music as well as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Selected by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2008 she was the first pianist mentored by Imogen Cooper through the Royal Philharmonic Society/YCAT Philip Langridge Mentoring Scheme. Alexandra was a Laureate at the Verbier Festival Academy in Switzerland where she won the Verbier CUBS Prize. She received the UK’s Women of the Future Award in the Arts and Culture category in 2013, as well as becoming the youngest musician to receive the Custodian of the Romanian Crown Medal.

[www.alexandradariescu.com](http://www.alexandradariescu.com)



# ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

## First Violin

Duncan Riddell \*  
Judith Templeman  
Kay Chappell  
Anthony Protheroe  
Erik Chapman  
Rosemary Wainwright  
Cindy Foster  
Geoffrey Silver  
Lynette Wynn  
Jeremy Morris  
Claire Raybould  
Sarah Buchan

## Second Violin

Jennifer Christie \*  
Stephen Payne  
Sali Wyn Ryan  
Colin Callow  
Robin Wilson  
Suzie Watson  
Nicola Hutchings  
Cecilia Romero  
Helen Cochrane  
Vernon Dean

## Viola

Abigail Fenna \*  
Chian Lim  
Jonathan Hallett  
Stanislav Popov  
Martin Fenn  
Helen Picknett  
Elizabeth Butler  
Jenny Wilkinson

## Cello

Louisa Tuck \*  
Roberto Sorrentino  
Niamh Molloy  
William Heggart  
Shinko Hanaoka  
Jonathan Few  
Jane Oliver  
Clare Graham

## Double Bass

Anthony Alcock \*  
David Broughton  
David Gordon  
Benjamin Cunningham  
John Holt  
Lowri Morgan

## Flute

Harry Winstanley \*  
Jennifer Doyne

## Oboe

John Roberts \*  
Lauren Weavers

## Clarinet

Tim Lines \*  
Katie Lockhart

## Bassoon

Helen Storey \*  
Stuart Russell

## French Horn

Paul Gardham \*  
Michael Kidd  
Mark Wood  
Tim Anderson  
Jocelyn Lightfoot

## Trumpet

Toby Street \*  
Adam Wright

## Trombone

Dudley Bright \*  
Richard Ward

## Bass Trombone

John Heeley \*

## Timpani

Matt Perry \*

\* indicates principal player

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) has been at the forefront of music-making in the UK since its formation in 1946. Its home base since 2004 at London's Cadogan Hall serves as a springboard for fourteen residencies across the country. With more concerts than any other UK large ensemble, the RPO has truly become Britain's national orchestra.

The regional programme, plus regular performances at Cadogan Hall, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall and the Royal Albert Hall, are conducted by a distinguished roster of musicians: Charles Dutoit, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor; Pinchas Zukerman, Principal Guest Conductor; Alexander Shelley, Principal Associate Conductor, and Permanent Associate Conductor Grzegorz Nowak. International touring is also vital to the Orchestra's work, taking it to many prestigious destinations worldwide.

For more than twenty years RPO Resound, the Orchestra's community and education programme, has taken music into the heart of the regions that the Orchestra serves. The team has worked with a variety of participants in a range of settings including working with young people, the homeless and recovering stroke patients.

The RPO has its own online radio station, The Sound of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which broadcasts via its website, and RPO TV, an online video channel streaming fly-on-the-wall shorts written, directed and filmed by the musicians. The Orchestra has become increasingly active on social media platforms, inviting audiences to engage on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and the RPO blog. It also offers a digital booking service on its app, RPO Rewards.

Although the RPO embraces twenty-first-century opportunities, including appearances with pop stars and on video game, film soundtracks and on CD, its artistic priority remains paramount: the making of great music at the highest level for the widest possible audience. The RPO's versatility and high standards mark it out as one of today's most open-minded, forward-thinking symphony orchestras. Now it proudly looks forward to the future.

[www.rpo.co.uk](http://www.rpo.co.uk)

## DARRELL ANG

Darrell Ang's triumph at the 50th Besançon International Young Conductor's Competition, where he took all three top awards – Grand Prize, Audience Prize and Orchestra Prize – launched his international career, leading to the music directorship of the Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne and numerous guest conducting engagements with Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de Lyon, and Orchestre Philharmonique du Strasbourg, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano "Giuseppe Verdi", St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra, and RTVE Symphony Orchestra Madrid, among others. Three years later Darrell Ang was selected to join the prestigious International Conductors' Academy of the Allianz Cultural Foundation and invited to take on residencies with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra. He is grateful to his mentors Vladimir Jurowski and Esa-Pekka Salonen for their invaluable advice and support.



In 2015, Darrell Ang made a triumphant debut with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic which led to an immediate reengagement in the 2015-2016 season. The ambitious program included Ravel *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, Hindemith *Concerto for Orchestra*, and Shostakovich *Symphony No.9*, as well as the UK premiere of *Wolf Totem*, Tan Dun's latest concerto, which featured the orchestra's principal double bassist, Marcel Becker as soloist.

In his native Singapore, Ang became the youngest Associate Conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra where he worked with Lan Shui for five years. He also served as the Music Director of the Singapore National Youth Orchestra, bringing the ensemble to the 'Young Euro Classic' Festival at Konzerthaus in Berlin. In 2010 Darrell Ang led the World Youth Olympic Games Orchestra in an internationally-televised opening ceremony of the first-ever World Youth Olympic Games in Singapore. As a guest conductor, he has worked with Asia's top ensembles including the Hong Kong Philharmonic and National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan. As the chief conductor of the NTSO Taiwan-China Youth Orchestra, Darrell was at the heart of the

initiative which brought together the best young musicians from China and Taiwan, leading them in high-profile concerts at the national concert halls of Beijing and Taipei. Darrell's latest project, The Young Musicians' Foundation of Singapore and its resident orchestra, raises funds for young local musicians who wish to pursue a career in music.

[www.darrellang.com](http://www.darrellang.com)



Alexandra Dariescu and producer Alexander Van Ingen.

Heartfelt thanks to Marco Assetto, Bob and Elisabeth Boas, Sir Vernon and Lady Ellis, Sir George and Lady Iacobescu, Andrew Jackson, Sir Harvey and Lady McGrath, Sara Naudi, Andrew and Samantha Popper for believing in me and making this project happen!

In memory of Mark Ray.

*Piano Concerto No. 1* recorded on 2nd August, 2014, in Henry Wood Hall, London  
Producer – Alexander Van Ingen  
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch  
Recording Assistant – Chris Kalcov  
Editor – Dave Rowell

*Nutcracker Suite* recorded on 22nd June 2016, in All Saints Church, Durham Road, London  
Producer & Editor – Tim Oldham  
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch

Cover Image and Photos of Alexandra – Andrew Mason  
Hair & Make up – Suki Miles  
Design and Artwork – Woven Design [www.wovendesign.co.uk](http://www.wovendesign.co.uk)

© 2016 The copyright in this sound recording is owned by Signum Records Ltd  
© 2016 The copyright in this CD booklet, notes and design is owned by Signum Records Ltd

Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording of Signum Compact Discs constitutes an infringement of copyright and will render the infringer liable to an action by law. Licences for public performances or broadcasting may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from Signum Records Ltd.

SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK.  
+44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: [info@signumrecords.com](mailto:info@signumrecords.com)

[www.signumrecords.com](http://www.signumrecords.com)

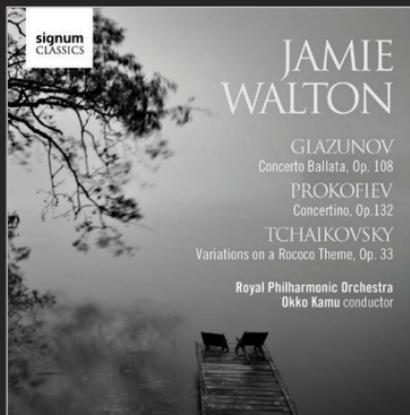
# ALSO AVAILABLE ON SIGNUMCLASSICS



**Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6**  
Philharmonia Orchestra  
Charles Mackerras *conductor*  
SIGCD253

*"This is a superb record - a magnificent and highly original live account of the 'Pathétique' Symphony that can stand comparison with the most exacting competition."*

International Record Review – 'Outstanding Recording'



**Tchaikovsky • Glazunov • Prokofiev**  
Jamie Walton *cello*  
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Okko Kamu *conductor*  
SIGCD407

*"Walton embraces Glazunov's tenderness with the warmth and suppleness of his tone...Walton interprets [the Prokofiev] with impressive, seamless sweeps and refined dynamic shading."*

The Daily Telegraph

Available through most record stores and at [www.signumrecords.com](http://www.signumrecords.com) For more information call +44 (0) 20 8997 4000