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ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV

When Tchaikovsky died in 1893, Marius Petipa began to search for composers for his ballets. One of those to whom he turned was Alexander Glazunov, who was not yet thirty, but who had been one of the most gifted protégés of Rimsky-Korsakov and who already enjoyed a considerable international reputation. The results of their collaborations were three ballets: the three-act *Raymonda* in 1898, Glazunov's first work for the theater, and *Les Ruses d'amour* and *The Seasons*, composed in 1898 and 1898, respectively, and produced in 1890, after which Glazunov composed nothing else for the theater.

Glazunov was born in 1865 in St. Petersburg into a cultivated family. His talent was evident early, and he began to study the piano at age nine and to compose at age 11. In 1879, he met the composer Mily Balakirev who recommended studies with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, with whom his formal lessons advanced rapidly. At age 16, Glazunov completed his First Symphony, which received its premiere in 1882 led by Balakirev, followed by a performance of his First String Quartet. His talent gained the attention of the arts patron and amateur musician Mitrofan Belyayev, who championed Glazunov's music, along with that of Rimsky-Korsakov, Anatoly Lyadov, among others, and took Glazunov on a tour of western Europe, during which he met Franz Liszt in Weimar. In 1889, Glazunov led a performance of his Second Symphony in Paris at the World Exhibition.

Glazunov's ballets were commissioned by Ivan Vsevolozhsky, director of the Imperial Theatres, for Petipa, his ballet master. Petipa and Vsevolozhsky's original intentions were to commission the score for *Les Millions d'Arléquin*, or *Harlequinade*, from Glazunov and for Riccardo Drigo to compose the score for *The Seasons*.

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The composers were close friends and soon developed an affinity for each other's assigned ballet.

Glazunov expressed to Petipa and Vsevolozhsky that the subject of *Harlequinade* was ideally suited to the Italian composer's talents. In the end, Glazunov was commissioned to compose the scores for the two one-act ballets *The Seasons* and *Les Ruses d'amour*, while Drigo wrote the music for the two-act *Harlequinade*.

In 1899, Glazunov was appointed professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and at the end of 1905, became its director, a position he kept until 1930. During this period and notwithstanding heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities, Glazunov completed his Violin Concerto, Eighth Symphony, First Piano Concerto, and his Sixth String Quartet, some of his most acclaimed orchestral and instrumental works. Glazunov possessed an exceptional ear and musical memory. After Alexander Borodin's sudden death in 1887, he, along with Rimsky-Korsakov, completed and revised various unfinished works, including parts of *Prince Igor*. The younger composer also orchestrated two movements of Borodin's Third Symphony.

Glazunov's masterful sense of color is also evident in the orchestral arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* (1878), originally a work for violin and piano. Glazunov's orchestration was published in 1896 by P. Jurgenson. Alexei Ratmansky set two of the three movements of the orchestrated version as a ballet in 2012. American Ballet Theatre gave the American premiere in 2017.

In 1832, Glazunov moved to Paris, where he settled with his wife and adopted daughter. His Saxophone Concerto, written in 1934, was one of his last large-scale works. He died on March 21, 1936. His remains were transferred in 1972 to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and reinterred in Tikhvin Cemetery, where Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Petipa are buried.