

**Notes on the Program**  
**by Artistic Director Nikolai Kachanov**  
**(translated by Anna Astrakhan)**

The theme of tonight's program—Sunset, Night, Sunrise—is one that I have contemplated for many years. While working on it, I noticed that *night* is the most treasured time of day in the artistry of Russian poets and composers of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The primary place occupied by night has played a significant role in the creation of tonight's program. This time of day, more than any other, brings to light the wide array of feelings, visions and creative longings in Russian Romanticism. Night sets loose the imagination of composers, sending their thoughts and feelings on a creative journey. One of my favorite phrases from Pushkin's "Ruslan and Ludmila" shines a light on the mystery of those hidden sources of inspiration to which the creative spirit is drawn: "My mind, on wings of fancy soaring, to parts ethereal was borne." Russian Romanticism is one of the most famous and best-loved genres of Russian music partly because the Romantic composers were driven by their deepest thoughts and feelings, unfettered from the social constraints, routine commitments, and conditions of surrounding reality. In many ways, Russian Romanticism is a dialogue with one's soul, which means the realm of the internal and the private was particularly appealing to Russian Romantics. Romances by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff fall into this category.

The extraordinary variety of musical colors, so masterfully used by the composers, creates tangible images of nature. We see stars, moon, night, clouds, the smooth surface of water, evening fog rising over the valleys, the glow of the setting sun, and a thin strip of sunrise intensifying into the bright rays of the rising sun. These images come to life through the extraordinarily realistic expression of the sounds of nature: the scream of a bird at night, the rustling of reeds, the whisper of rippling water, the monotonous ring of a bell, the gushing stream of moonlight and transparent mist. Before our eyes emerge a night of snow, a summer night, a night of the full moon, the Venetian night.

Another important aspect of the art of the Russian Romantics—one particularly evident in their romances—is their unusually vivid and candid emotional expressiveness. The rich abundance of emotional states often leads to strong musical contrasts. These ever-changing internal states of feeling are typical of Russian art in general, and of the Romantic period in particular. Such contrasts, which overwhelm with the force of their emotional expressiveness, could perhaps be captured in Pushkin's "Winter Road", "sometimes fiery, daring, cheery, sometimes grieving in my heart."

It is interesting to note that musical keys played an important role in the romance genre as well as that of chorus miniatures. In tonight's program, for example, one can trace the general tendency to use predominantly minor, flat keys in the depiction of the deep, dark night ("Winter Road," "To the Dying

Stars”). The evening, on the other hand—the quiet, starry night, the translucent vaporous fog—is rendered more in major flat keys, or major-minor sharp keys (“Evening,” “Stars,” “Look, What a Mist,” and “Little Dawn”). And then, there is also the transformation of pre-sunrise C minor into the triumphant, radiant C major of “Sunrise.”

Mere words cannot do justice to the full panoply of colors and feelings of the Russian Romantics' musical language. I would like, however, to touch upon one of the most mysterious aspects of Russian art: Russian melancholy. This melancholy manifests itself most deeply in the poetic and musical image of the night. In Pushkin's poem “Winter Road,” for example, out of 55 words, expressions referring to sorrow, melancholy, and dejection are used 16 times! Such melancholy is not a counterpart to our modern depression, but rather a longing for an otherworldly, magnificent mode of being, captured only partially by the language of art.