

***Capriccio espagnol*, Opus 34**

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov

transcribed by Mark Hindsley

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) was one of the more fascinating members of the school of Russian romantic composers. As a teenager he was taken under the wing of Mily Balakirev along with the aspiring young composers Modest Mussorgsky and César Cui. Rimsky-Korsakov's musical studies were initially encouraged, but then discontinued by his much older brother Voin, who pushed Nicolai toward a military career. His musical tendencies could not be suppressed, however, and he went on to compose an impressive number of ballets, operas, and symphonic works over the course of his distinguished career. He was also a pioneer in the collection and setting of hundreds of Russian folk-songs. These melodies provided him with source material for many of his original works; pieces that were highly influential to subsequent generations of Russian composers including one of his pupils, Igor Stravinsky. He was also highly regarded by his peers for his revisions, editions, and orchestrations of works by Mussorgsky and Alexander Borodin.

Capriccio espagnol was written in 1887 and was an immediate success. Upon its first reading, the work generated enthusiastic applause from the musicians and commanded an encore performance at its première. Rimsky-Korsakov originally conceived the work as a virtuoso showpiece for violin and orchestra based on gypsy-flavored themes, and while the violin is still prominent at times, other instruments are featured as well. Though he had been to Spain only once early in his life, the work is an exuberant representation of a culture which he clearly adored. Rimsky-Korsakov later wrote of the enduringly popular work, "According to my plans, the *Capriccio* was to glitter with dazzling orchestral color and, manifestly, I had not been wrong." The work was transcribed for concert band by Mark Hindsley, former director of bands at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.