

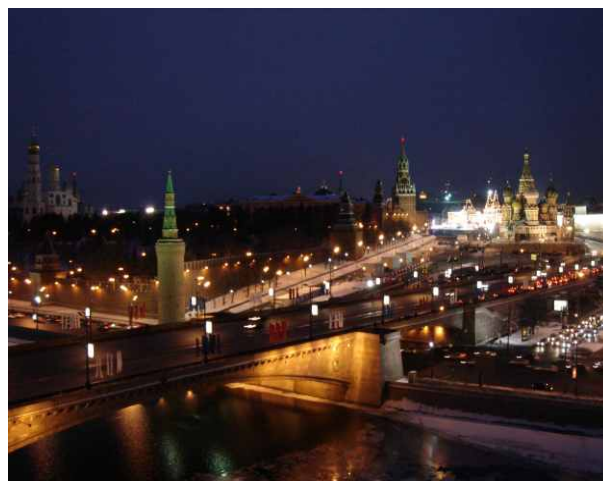
## From Russia (and sinfonia ViVA) With Love

Principal Guest Conductor **Nicholas Kok** and scintillating pianist **Ian Buckle** gear up for the New Year's Eve spectacle that is sinfonia ViVA's **Russian Nights**

### Ian Buckle

**Q. Can you talk us through your approach to the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.2?**

**IB** - For myself as for many pianists, Rach 2 is one of the first pieces I fell in love with as a child, and one which has been a constant soundtrack to my life, so to speak. Familiarity with it creates problems when approaching my own performances because it's a question of trying to "unlearn" elements of ingrained recordings and trying to derive an interpretation based only on information given by the composer in the score. The situation is further aggravated by the existence of a recording of the piece made by Rachmaninoff himself, and it's almost impossible to ignore the various discrepancies between what he wrote and what he played. My way around this is to think that Rachmaninoff the composer and Rachmaninoff the pianist are essentially two different personae, creating the piece in two entirely different ways and under very different circumstances; and given a conflict of ideas I choose always to prefer the text as definitive.



**Q. How do you keep your approach to performing familiar pieces fresh?**

**IB** - No matter how familiar, these pieces - Tchaikovsky 1, the Grieg, Rhapsody in Blue, Beethoven's Emperor, etc. - remain pinnacles of the repertoire, and they always present fresh challenges to the pianist. Despite their countless performances by innumerable performers, I am constantly surprised on re-opening the score to discover what the composers did actually write, and the many "traditional" aspects of interpretation that they did not. It's always a joy to have to re-examine one's reading of these great pieces, and to really think about what the composers wanted at the time of writing, before anyone had played them.



**Q. What kind of music do you enjoy listening to?**

**IB** - At the moment I'm really into Michel Legrand - his songs, orchestral pieces, film music, anything and everything. Classical music-wise I listen to a lot of contemporary stuff but if I'm pottering at home or in the car it's always Radio 5 Live.

**Q. When you get free time, which probably isn't that often, how do you like to spend it?**

**IB** - I'm a Sheffield Wednesday season ticket holder (a ridiculous admission to a Nottingham audience, I know) and my dad and I follow them through thin and thin. I love French films, an interest that was kindled by a fabulous, inspirational French teacher I had for A-level, and love to visit France whenever possible.

**Also in this issue** - Peter Helps reports on the Orchestra's latest strategic planning meeting... Review of **Alexander Shelley** and **Ashley Wass** making a stir with sinfonia ViVA in Nottingham...

*All the latest news...*

*... from sinfonia ViVA*

**Plus** - Full details of sinfonia ViVA's latest concerts as well as a unique seasonal gift suggestion for lovers of classical music...



## Nicholas Kok

### Q. How challenging it is to come up with a programme for a much-loved concert like the New Year's Eve Gala?

**NK** - I talk to Peter Helps, ViVA's Chief Executive, over a period of many months leading up to the concert. We actually began our discussions for Russian Nights way back in January, so we've spent virtually a whole year working on it. We generally come up with all kinds of ideas each time, most of which are rejected. Themes can be a help and a hindrance - in one respect, they focus the mind but they can also narrow one's horizons/possibilities. One needs to complement and contrast - fast/slow, happy/sad - all within a framework that allows for chat and fun. I do tend to encourage a bit of "singing along" in the programme. Due to Peter's voice, however, he is not so keen!!

### Q. Why Russian Nights as a theme? What's the particular attraction of Russian music?

**NK** - Russian music is full of expression and vibrancy and enormously rich in terms of sheer energy, emotional scope and colour. It's a huge country with a dramatic past and intriguing cultural history to match. Russian composers are great orchestrators, which allows the expanded sinfonia ViVA orchestra of New Year's Eve - one of the largest that ViVA puts on during the concert year - to be suitably challenged and fulfilled.

### Q. How did you decide on the order of pieces in the programme?

**NK** - This is done in terms of pacing - that is, with an eye on the tempo and feel of each piece. I also try to allow for more of the customary chat and general mischievous behaviour to happen in the second part of the concert.

### Q. From a conductor's viewpoint, can you give us a whistle-stop tour of the programme for this year's concert?

**NK** - The Strauss Waltzes are my real love. They are much harder to do well than one might imagine. Each year when studying and performing them, I learn a little more. The Stravinsky is one of the masterpieces of the 20th Century - "The Firebird" set music off in a new direction, although one can clearly see its roots in the Russian music of the previous century. And as for the Rachmaninoff 2: truly one of the greatest of all Piano Concerti, virtuosic in the extreme and rich in emotion and orchestral colour.

### Q. Ian Buckle will be joining sinfonia ViVA as soloist for the gorgeous Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.2. How well do you know each other, and does this help with your interpretation of the score?

**NK** - I've worked quite a lot with Ian, most recently with Psappha and with Opera North. He is a musician of great integrity and immense skill, and a very amusing man! And obviously, because we've worked together so often, there's an understanding and unspoken communication between us that enhances the work of us both.

### Q. There's a great deal of humour and interaction between the audience and conductor at New Year - it's becoming something of a tradition! Do you go out with any kind of mental or written list of what you are going to talk about, or is there some ad libbing too?

**NK** - I try to have an extremely rough outline, but nothing too detailed. When I started doing New Year's Eve for the first time, Peter suggested / had to virtually force me to speak! I used notes at the time, and found it all very difficult and muddling with bits of paper all over the place. Nowadays, I go out there quite simply to have fun.





Saturday 1st Dec

Royal Concert Hall Foyer, Nottingham 11.00-12.00, 1.30-2.30pm and 3.00-4.00pm  
 Tickets: Adults and Children £5 Box Office: 0115 989 5555 www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2007-12-01-nottingham

## ▶▶ The Beanbag Proms: *Pitter! Patter! Rumble!*



Join us and explore a kaleidoscope of weather themes for a performance that will be a perfect treat come rain or shine. If you listen carefully you might just hear the Colours of The Wind from Pocahontas. Then join us as we take a ride Over the Rainbow. And wrap up in your warmest clothes as we sing along to Let It Snow! These and many more weather-related songs and stories will keep the children spellbound and snugly warm throughout this performance!

Musical maestro Alasdair Malloy leads this enchanting and entertaining hour which will excite and enthrall your child in a relaxed and comfortable setting.

At the end of the performance there will also be an opportunity for children to have a close look and touch (gently!) the instruments used during the performance. So join Beanie Bear's gang and enjoy a magical musical adventure that your children will be talking about for a long time to come. Please note: Parents must remain in the foyer area with their children throughout this performance. Video or audio recording of this performance is strictly forbidden. Photographs may be taken at the end of the performance. Please also note that the programme of music is subject to change and alteration. Places are limited for each performance and will be sold on a first come first served basis.

Supported by Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, Orchestras Live and the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham. ViVA would also like to acknowledge the generous support of John Lewis, Nottingham, The Jessie Spencer Trust, The Whitaker Charitable Trust and The Lady Hind Trust.

Monday 31st Dec

Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham 7.30pm  
 Tickets: £7 to £27 (concessions for Friends of ViVA) Box Office: 0115 989 5555 www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2007-12-31-nottingham

## ▶▶ New Year's Eve Gala 2007: Russian Nights

Join sinfonia ViVA with regular New Year conductor and host Nicholas Kok and terrific soloist Ian Buckle (piano) for its ever popular New Year's Eve Gala, with music from the Strauss family and some well-loved Russian pieces. Starting with the stirring finale to Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, the concert also includes one of the best-loved of all piano concertos. Music from three major Russian ballet scores ranges from the passionate drama of Swan Lake and Spartacus to the glittering fairy-tale world of The Firebird. Alongside the familiar Strauss favourites are some not-so-familiar ones, with the Peasant's Polka offering the chance for some audience participation!

The perfect start to your New Year's Eve celebrations!

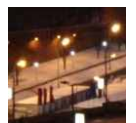
**Tickets are selling very quickly - be sure to get yours now!**

The programme includes:

<b>Mussorgsky</b>	<b>Great Gate of Kiev</b>
<b>Tchaikovsky</b>	<b>Waltz from Swan Lake</b>
<b>Stravinsky</b>	<b>Berceuse and Finale from the Firebird</b>
<b>Rachmaninoff</b>	<b>Piano Concerto No.2</b>

INTERVAL

<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Tales from the Vienna Woods</b>
<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Egyptian March</b>
<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Peasant's Polka</b>
<b>Khachaturian</b>	<b>Adagio from Spartacus</b>
<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Perpetuum Mobile</b>
<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Jokey Polka</b>
<b>Strauss</b>	<b>Thunder and Lightning Polka</b>



The Kremlin from The Kempinsky by Michael A Oakes.  
 Image used with kind permission of the artist

Premium Seating: Area A - £27.00 (includes a \*programme booklet per person and a \*\*bar voucher up to the value of £3.00 per person)

General Seating: Area A - £20.50, Area B - £18.00, Area C - £16.00, Area D - £12.00

Friends of ViVA benefit from discounted prices saving £2.50 on selected tickets as follows: Area A - £18.00, Area B - £15.50, Area C - £13.50

Choir Stalls, all seats - £7.00. Registered Disabled plus one accompanying adult - £12.00 per person, all areas. Family ticket, Stalls Area B only, for 4 persons which must include at least two children - £54.00

\* One free programme per Premium Seat booked. Programmes to be collected from the ViVA desk on the night of the concert. Voucher sent with tickets.

\*\* Bar Voucher to the value of £3 per Premium Seat redeemable at the Royal Centre bar on the evening of the concert only. Voucher sent with tickets.



Please note - there are no sinfonia ViVA concerts during January 2008

Tuesday 19th Feb

Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham 7.30pm  
 Tickets: £9 to £30 Box Office: 0115 989 5555 [www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-02-19-nottingham](http://www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-02-19-nottingham)

## ▶▶ Schumann and Strauss



**Schumann: Zwickau Symphony in G minor**  
**Strauss: Horn Concerto No.2**  
**Schumann: Symphony No.4**

Join sinfonia ViVA with Principal Conductor **André de Ridder** and the sensational **David Pyatt** (French Horn), who first came to prominence as the youngest ever winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in 1988, for this powerful yet beautiful collection of classics.

The turbulent and tragic Robert Schumann, whose intention to become a concert pianist was defeated by an injury to his right hand, decided instead to study and master composition. His Zwickau Symphony in G minor was begun in 1832, the first movement receiving its premiere during the winter of that year, performed by his former piano teacher's thirteen year old daughter, Clara Wieck. A gap of almost 60 years separates Strauss's Horn Concerto No.2 from its earlier relative. Written at the age of 78, this is an optimistic and rich work demonstrative of the composer's affinity for the instrument. Back to Schumann for the final piece on tonight's programme, his Symphony No.4, performed as originally scored in 1841 rather than the version heavily revised by the composer ten years later.

Free pre-concert talk at 6.30pm in the auditorium: André de Ridder talks about Schumann's Zwickau Symphony.

Supported by Arts Council England and Nottingham Trent University.

Wednesday 27th Feb

Lincoln Drill Hall 7.30pm  
 Tickets: £11, £9 (£7 students) Box Office: 01522 873894 [www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-02-27-lincoln](http://www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-02-27-lincoln)

Saturday 1st Mar

Plowright Theatre, Scunthorpe 7.30pm  
 Tickets: £15.50 (£14.50 concessions) Box Office: 01724 277733 [www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-03-01-scunthorpe](http://www.vivaorch.co.uk/concert-2008-03-01-scunthorpe)

## ▶▶ Past Masters

**Mozart: Symphony No.14**  
**Donizetti: Concerto for Violin and Cello**  
**Gluck: Dance of the Blessed Spirits**  
**Bottesini: Grand Duo for Violin & Double Bass**  
**Bach: Suite No.2**

sinfonia ViVA returns to Lincoln Drill Hall with the Orchestra's Leader **Benedict Holland** as Director/Soloist bringing an exciting programme of classics for all to enjoy!

Mozart's Symphony No.14 opens tonight's concert. Composed when aged 15 and barely in the foothills of the 40-plus symphonies he would write in his lifetime, this is a warm and engaging piece worthy of reflection: a stepping-stone on the path to greatness. Donizetti, chiefly famed for his operatic compositions (he produced something like 75 of them), nevertheless accumulated over 600 works in total to his name, the three movement Concerto for Violin and Cello being one of nine concertos and concertinos he composed. The next item needs little introduction: instantly recognisable having been heard in many forms is the most famous single piece of music from all of Gluck's forty operas, Dance of the Blessed Spirits from Orfeo. Dubbed 'The Paganini of the double bass', Bottesini's Grand Duo for Violin and Double Bass is the technically challenging work one might expect. Complex to perform and intriguing for the listener, this is a masterwork in the true sense of the word! Finally to Bach's Suite No.2, one of four he composed in the style of entertainment music which was popular during the 1720's and 1730's. Scored for strings with a prominent solo flute, this is a light piece with its graceful yet energetic dance-like passages.

Join us for this tour of German, Italian and Austrian composing excellence!

This programme may also be heard at the Plowright Theatre, Scunthorpe on Saturday 1st March 2008.

Supported by Orchestras Live, Arts Council England, The Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation, The Foyle Foundation, Lincoln City Council and Recommended by Classic FM



## Creation : Music and Dance Performance



Take four exceptional string musicians. Add one sparkling dancer. Just watch the music come alive!

sinfonia ViVA's acclaimed string quartet is joined by dancer **Tom Dale** for this exciting collaborative performance based on the theme of dance inspired music. The programme will include the first performance of a new piece created by Tom and performed to live music provided by the quartet.

The performance forms part of sinfonia ViVA's annual Spring education residency in Derby. The project this year will involve music and dance and will culminate in a large scale performance with over 100 performers including students from all stages of education, members of Chaos and the Orchestra.

Supported by Orchestras Live, Rolls-Royce plc and Derby City Council



## Looking for the perfect Christmas gift for a lover of Classical Music?



### Why not give them a **Friends of ViVA** membership!

As a **Friend of ViVA**, your support is crucial to the continued development of the Orchestra. If you would like to help expand the support we receive, why not give a membership of **Friends of ViVA** as a gift to someone you know who loves and appreciates classical music performed to the highest standard? It's unique and will give them pleasure for a whole year!

Just complete the form below with your name and phone number (in case we need to query anything with you) and their name and address (or write out these details on a sheet of paper), enclose the correct payment, send it to us and we will do the rest. They will receive a welcome pack and a special certificate showing you as the person gifting them the membership.

To give the gift of **Friends of ViVA** membership, fill in the form below and send it with a cheque payable to '**Friends of ViVA**' to:

**VIVA: FREEPOST DY961, DERBY, DE21 8BR**

Name of gift giver .....  
Contact phone no. of gift giver .....

Name of gift recipient .....  
Recipient's Address .....

Postcode .....

(Tick appropriate level of membership for the recipient. Membership runs for 12 months)

- Single Membership £10
- Single Unwaged £5
- Double Membership (self and partner) £15
- Family Membership (2 adults & all children) £20

sinfonia  
Principal Conductor  
André de Ridder





## The Chief Points



### Peter Helps on the importance of mapping the future in a world of funding uncertainties



**Last month** my colleagues and I began a series of meetings which, for want of a better title, we have called 'Now Where Now'. (Some of you may recall that 2 years ago, we held a similar exercise under the heading 'Where Now' - so perhaps you can see the logic of the subsequent name!). In part, what we are doing over the next few months is looking at the progress the organisation has made against a set of ambitions established by that first meeting. In part, we are deciding what the future ambitions of *sinfonia VIVA* should be. Many issues are already arising, and I'd like to discuss just one of them here - something concert-goers often comment upon: choice of repertoire.

Firstly, I want to dispel a myth: we (the Orchestra) don't have a totally free hand in choosing the music. The selection of repertoire for concerts is governed by several things and boils down to a compromise between the artistic and the practical. Artistically, there is the need to present a coherent programme of interesting, enjoyable pieces which makes sense to the audience - something that Nicholas Kok has touched upon in the context of New Year's Eve in his article this month. This can be quite tricky to get right: whatever the 'theme' or academic premise behind selecting the music, too much of one 'flavour' in a concert can be overwhelming and lack variety, but then again, injecting too much contrast in a programme can be confusing and fragmentary. There is also the artistic balance between performing 'favourite' pieces from the repertoire and newer, often more challenging, works to consider. While some concert-goers have their preferences firmly in the former camp and enjoy re-visiting pieces that they have heard many times before, others want to hear fresh, innovative music - including newly commissioned works, not just new interpretations of classical 'standards'. (Possibly, this latter group would agree with Einstein's definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results). And then, there are many more people who prefer a mix of the two approaches. In reality, the programming 'coin' has more than two sides. A multi-faceted die perhaps, though if we're looking for an analogy, an artist's mixing palette with many possible combinations (not all of which 'work') is closer to how programming actually happens.

On the practical side, promoters often bring programme suggestions to the discussion. The physical features of a venue sometimes play a part in the choice of pieces too, as does the size of musical 'forces' required to put on a particular programme - some combinations of pieces never leave the drawing board because they are not logistically possible to resource. And in our dialogue with supporters, partners and music organisations with whom we collaborate, as well as the musical considerations, finance has to be taken into account. Everything must be paid for!



*sinfonia VIVA*'s artistic ambition is, I believe, second to none, and the repertoire we perform reflects this. We have a hard-earned track record of successfully combining music from the past 400 years with the best of modern styles and performing it to the highest standard in venues as intimate as church halls to magnificent concert halls of national significance. With André de Ridder as Principal Conductor (above, pictured with me during a break from our planning meetings), *VIVA*'s reputation for excellence in programming and our popularity with audiences across the region and nationally can only grow stronger.

Do people ever tell us we make errors of judgement in programming? Yes. Along with the complimentary comments we get are people with a concern to express, a point to make, a question to ask or a suggestion to put forward. All this feedback, supportive or critical, causes us to reflect pragmatically as well as artistically - and to learn. I reply in person to everyone who takes the time to contact us to make their feelings known. We strive to be perfect knowing that perfection is always going to be one programme away, but that in aiming for it, we aspire to be the best. We can never be criticised for not listening to and acting upon the seasoned thoughts of our audiences. So come on - next time you are at a *VIVA* concert, seek me out and tell me your thoughts, or if you prefer, put pen to paper using our FREEPOST address on page 5 (or take that email to the virtual postbox!). Be part of the process that decides 'Now Where Now'.

### Peter Helps

## In Review...

*sinfonia VIVA* at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham  
7th November 2007

When *sinfonia VIVA* are on top form the effect is a bit like seeing an old master painting whose layers of varnish and grime have been removed to allow the original bright colours to shine through.

Their trademark transparency of orchestral textures was much in evidence on Wednesday evening as they worked their magic with some familiar favourites, making them gleam like new. Take their decision to unearth the original 1830 version of Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*; small forces did not mean any diminution in dramatic power.

There were also two eighth symphonies. Beethoven's is a small-scale essay in exuberance and wit; here the briskness and buoyancy of the outer movements was balanced by relaxed tempos adopted by conductor Alexander Shelley in the middle of the work. As a sharp contrast, Schubert's was given a depth of rich romanticism with beautifully shaped phrases and a sense of mystery.

Ashley Wass was the soloist in Mozart's *Piano Concerto No.22*. Crystal clear articulation characterised both pianist and orchestra. There was plenty of sensitive interplay between them, the slow movement elegantly handled and the fast movements full of the sort of vitality and unforced spontaneity which makes good Mozart playing so exhilarating.

Reviewed at [thisisnottingham website](http://thisisnottinghamwebsite.com).



**Next Month...** Musician **Anthony Thompson** describes his first encounter with a *VIVA* Education project... **Peter Helps** casts an eye over the musical delights in store in the New Year... PLUS all the regular concert listings

### *VIVA* receives funding from Derby City Council and Arts Council England

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