



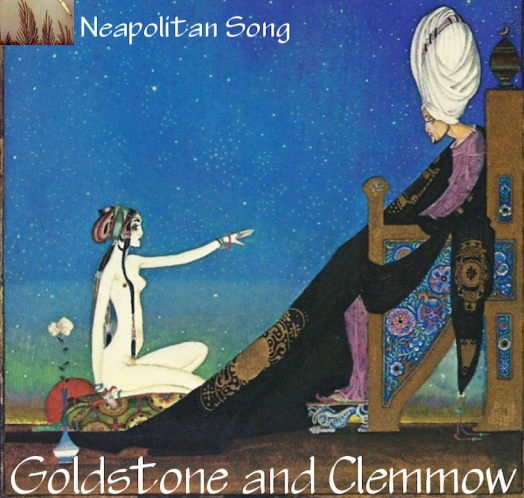
Rimsky-Korsakov

for piano duo

Scheherazade

Antar

Neapolitan Song



Goldstone and Clemmow

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

***Scheherazade*, after “One Thousand and One Nights”,
Symphonic Suite for Orchestra, Op. 35
(the composer’s piano duet version)**

		42.00
1	I. The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship	9.47
2	II. The Story of the Kalender Prince	10.42
3	III. The Young Prince and the Young Princess	9.17
4	IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship goes to pieces against a rock surmounted by a bronze horseman (The Shipwreck)	12.13

***Antar*, Symphonic Suite (2nd Symphony), Op. 9 *
(transcribed for piano duet by Nadezhda Purgold)** **32.03**

5	I. The Desert – The Rescue – Gul-Nazar’s Gifts	12.09
6	II. The Joy of Vengeance	5.42
7	III. The Joy of Power	5.30
8	IV. The Joy of Love – Antar’s Death	8.41
9	Neapolitan Song (after Denza), Op. 63 (the composer’s piano duet version)	3.11

Total CD duration: **77.15**

* world première recording

Goldstone and Clemmow

four hands at one piano

We used to feel that it was necessary to explain, even virtually to apologise for, playing arrangements or transcriptions. However in the nineteenth century it was common to play such things, both for great performers – many of the great pianist-composer Liszt's works exist in more than one form: think, for example, of Mephisto Waltz No. 1, which I would argue is far more effective in piano form than on the orchestra, and for avid amateurs, who could become familiar with new (or not so new) orchestral and chamber works in this way before the age of recording and the radio.

In the mid part of the twentieth century it became fashionable to look down one's nose at transcriptions, but in the last twenty-five years or so they have been increasingly sought out, performed and recorded, and the best of them shed a totally new light on music that we all thought we knew intimately. Whenever we perform *Scheherazade*, which is of course very well known in its orchestral form, as a piano duet, people tell us that it comes alive afresh and they hear strands of melodic detail that they had never realised were there. This is despite the fact that Rimsky-Korsakov was a master orchestrator and wrote a huge treatise on the subject.

One or two sentences should suffice to dismiss the idea that transcriptions are without value. J.S. Bach transcribed numerous works – both his own and those of others, and it is now conjectured that his Toccata and Fugue in D minor, one of the most popular organ works of all time, was first written for solo violin. (The authorship of the Toccata and Fugue has been called into question, but it cannot be denied that it is a masterly organ work.) Again, Brahms's Piano Quintet started life as a string quintet, which he destroyed, and was resurrected as a two-piano sonata, which has survived and prospered, before taking its final form, considered one of the pillars of the repertoire while being the result of not one but two transcriptions by its composer.

When Rimsky-Korsakov began work on what turned out to be his most popular work, *Scheherazade*, after “**One Thousand and One Nights**”, *Symphonic Suite for Orchestra*, Op. 35 [1-4], in the winter of 1887-8, he was firmly established in St. Petersburg both as a professor and as a major composer. His orchestral showpiece *Capriccio Espagnol* [recorded by Goldstone and Clemmow in the composer's four-hand version on Divine Art DDA 25101] had recently been enthusiastically received. As a prominent member of the “nationalist” school of Russian composers, he was nevertheless inspired by the music of other cultures, Spain and the middle east being obvious examples. In *Scheherazade*, though, it seems that there are no authentic Arabic melodies such as we find in his earlier middle-eastern-inspired work *Antar*.

It should be mentioned that the composer considered it sufficiently important to write a four-hand transcription of the work himself, and not to delegate the task, that he interrupted work on an opera for

two weeks to do so. The result is highly complex, requiring many months of work to master, but enormously effective and rewarding. There is scope for more spontaneity and flexibility than would be possible with a large orchestra, and the timbres are remarkably pungent.

The origin of “The 1001 (or Arabian) Nights” is lost in mystery. The fables may have started in Persia well over a thousand years ago, later being translated into Arabic and greatly expanded through the years, spreading and captivating all – including, latterly, “the west” – as they went. Although Rimsky-Korsakov was eager to allow the listener to weave his own fantasy rather than slavishly follow a programme, a synopsis of the frame story is provided:

“The sultan Schahriar, convinced of the deceptiveness and infidelity of womankind, had decreed that each of his wives be put to death following the first night. But Scheherazade [the beautiful daughter of the vizier, who courageously offered herself in an attempt to halt the slaughter] has survived by engaging him with tales that she recounted to him throughout one thousand and one nights. Driven by curiosity, the sultan would postpone the torment of his wife day after day and finally completely cancelled her bloody fate.”

“Many were the wonders recounted to the sultan by Scheherazade his wife. For her stories she borrowed verses from the poets and words from popular songs, mixing up the narratives and the adventures one with the other.”

I. The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship [1] immediately introduces the two main motifs: first comes that of the sultan, angular, stark and severe; after some expectant chords Scheherazade appears in the form of a sensuous, feminine “arabesque”, famously given to a solo violin in the orchestral version. These two opposites are then woven into the main story, representing, one might conjecture, the cruel sea and the fragile vessel. Rimsky-Korsakov was at pains to state in his book “My Musical Life” that his themes, unlike Wagner’s leitmotifs, were primarily for symphonic development and could depict “different images, actions and pictures”.

II. The Story of the Kalender Prince [2] concerns a sparsely dressed Sufi mendicant, blind in the right eye, who, in return for food and hospitality, tells how he had been a prince but was forced to adopt a disguise and flee his country by civil turmoil (there were three “kalenders” in the story, reflected perhaps in the triple statement of the doleful melody heard after Scheherazade’s introduction). The character of the music reflects the brutal conflict contained in the narrative, and the sultan’s theme accompanies the final build-up.

III. The Young Prince and the Young Princess [3] is the one movement that contains no reference to the heartless sultan, as befits an oriental idyll where the prince serenades his beloved (the occasional flurries

of notes are perhaps her shy giggling responses), after which she performs a seductive dance. Scheherazade's motif makes an appearance towards the end and after a passionate declaration of love the pair skip out of the picture.

IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Shipwreck [4] begins with the sultan impatiently commanding his wife, whose pacifying reply results only in making him more insistent. She is more confident now and launches into a thrilling account of a whirling *mélée* in which one recognises motifs heard in previous movements used in a new context. Characters come and go with bewildering speed – Rimsky-Korsakov here looks forward to the cinema's pan and zoom shots, and as the festival reaches its climax (7'46") another cinematic technique is prophetically employed as the scene instantly changes to a boiling seascape. This tempestuous resumption of material from the first movement climaxes (9'05") with the ship breaking up on the rock and disappearing beneath the waves. The sultan's motif is recalled, sapped of all energy; he has been subdued, and Scheherazade's feminine cunning has prevailed; her beautiful melisma winds upwards in sweet victory.

Because *Scheherazade* is so familiar and its wonderful themes part of our subconscious, it is easy to overlook the mastery of form, the original use of motto themes and the sheer genius displayed in this generous work.

In his memoirs Rimsky-Korsakov related that in 1868, at the age of twenty four – and two decades before the much better known *Scheherazade*, he “turned to [the orientalist writer Osip] Senkovsky's beautiful tale of *Antar* at the suggestion of Balakirev [the prime mover of the Russian nationalist group of composers] and Mussorgsky; on this subject I had planned to compose a symphony or symphonic poem in four movements.” The work caused him much soul searching: it would go through three versions and was published as *Antar, Symphonic Suite (2nd Symphony), Op. 9 [5-8]*. He wrote, “I was wrong in calling *Antar* a symphony. My *Antar* was a poem, suite, fairy-tale, story, or anything you like, but not a symphony.”

The real Antara ibn Shaddad was a sixth-century Arab warrior-poet. He overcame the rejection he received because his mother was a Negro slave to become a soldier admired for his great bravery and battle skills and a feted writer of love and war poetry. He was so famous that his life became the subject of a romance, orally handed down with accretions through the centuries and highly fictionalised.

Rimsky-Korsakov's work, which follows Senkovsky's fanciful retelling of the legend, is in four movements, above each of which is written an explanatory note:

I [5]. Formidable is the aspect of the desert of Sham, formidable are the ruins of Palmyra, that city constructed by the spirits of darkness; but Antar, the jewel of the desert, defies them and presses steadfastly on to the midst of the debris of the ruined city. Antar has renounced the society of people for good – he has vowed eternal hatred towards them on account of the wickedness with which they have repaid his goodwill towards them...

Suddenly a graceful, nimble gazelle appears; Antar prepares to hunt it, but a terrible noise reverberates in the heavens and the daylight is obscured by a dense shadow: an enormous bird is giving chase to the gazelle. Antar immediately changes his aim; his spear strikes the monster, which flees uttering a piercing cry, and the gazelle makes off at once. Antar, remaining alone amid the ruins, soon falls asleep reflecting on the incident that has just come to pass.

He sees himself transported within a splendid palace, where a multitude of slaves rush to serve him and charm his ear with their singing. It is the residence of the queen of Palmyra, the fairy Gul-Nazar: the gazelle that he has saved from the talons of the spirit of darkness is none other than the fairy herself. Gul-Nazar in gratitude promises Antar the three great joys of life, and when Antar decides to accept the gift the vision disappears and he awakes amid the ruins.

II [6]. The first joy accorded by the queen of Palmyra to Antar is the pleasure of vengeance.

III [7]. The second joy is the pleasure of power.

IV [8]. Antar has returned to the centre of the devastation of Palmyra. The third and last joy granted by the fairy to Antar is the pleasure of love. Antar begs the fairy to take his life whenever she perceives the slightest cooling on his part and she promises to do what he asks. When, after a long and mutual happiness, the fairy one fine day sees that Antar is distracted and looks into the distance, she immediately guesses the cause and so embraces him passionately. The fire of her passion is conveyed to Antar and inflames his heart; their lips unite in a final embrace and Antar dies in the arms of the fairy.

The musical language of *Antar* is an individual fusion of Berlioz (the hero's *idée fixe*), Liszt, Wagner, Russian and oriental (using Arabic melodies). The opening movement begins with a sombre mood of desolation out of which appears Antar's noble motto (2'08"). This melody, which Rimsky-Korsakov gave to the deep-throated orchestral violas at Mussorgsky's suggestion, plays a major part in the work as a whole, as one would expect. The programme can be followed without too much difficulty.

The second movement is white-hot, the third a triumphal march that speeds up frighteningly in the coda (the indication is strangely missing in the orchestral score) and concludes with an octatonic progression of stamping chords. The octatonic (eight-note) scale alternating tones and semitones had existed in middle-eastern music for centuries, but Rimsky-Korsakov believed that he first brought it into "western" music.

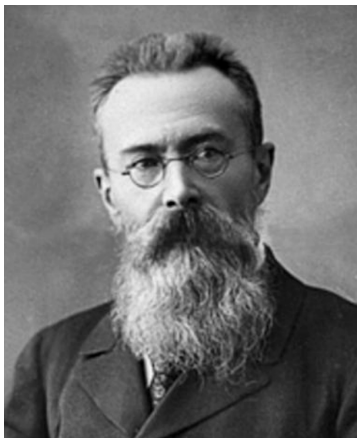
Indeed it has been used by his pupil Stravinsky and many others since. The last movement is particularly touching in both its story and Rimsky-Korsakov's haunting music, which finally fades into silence with exquisite sadness.

At the time when he was working on *Antar*, Rimsky-Korsakov became friendly with the cultured Purgold family and four years later married the youngest daughter Nadezhda, who became his great support. She was a fine pianist and a composer in her own right, having studied with Tchaikovsky's teacher Zarembo, and it was she who was entrusted with transcribing *Antar* for four hands. Nikolai Artsybushev, a friend and pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov's, relates that he was at his friend's apartment when Balakirev suggested sitting down to play the work with its composer, presumably in Nadezhda's four-hand version. In Artsybushev's words, "I found myself listening to the enchanting music of *Antar* in a performance by two great artists." It must surely have been a memorable occasion.

[Goldstone and Clemmow's recording of Artsybushev's four-hand transcription of Mussorgsky/Rimsky-Korsakov's *Night on Bald Mountain* is on Divine Art DDA 25104; that of Nadezhda's transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* is on Divine Art DDA25020.]

The Neapolitan composer Luigi Denza (1846-1922) can boast the distinction of having one of his songs unwittingly appropriated by two great composers. He was a prolific song composer, appointed professor of singing in 1898 by London's Royal Academy of Music; in addition to hundreds of songs he composed an opera and wrote for the guitar and the mandolin, both of which he played well. His song *Funiculi, Funiculà*, written in 1880 in praise of the new cable railway on Mount Vesuvius, became – and remains – extremely popular; in fact it was so ubiquitous that the great German composer Richard Strauss, while on tour in Italy, mistook it for a traditional ditty and incorporated it into his 1886 tone poem *Aus Italien*, Op 16. Denza took Strauss to court and won.

Half a year before he died Rimsky-Korsakov almost certainly made the same error in his orchestral jest **Neapolitan Song, Op. 63 [9]**, which we play in his own four-hand version for piano. Before the first performance he withdrew it, having been dissatisfied with it at the rehearsal, with the likely consequence that Denza was ignorant of its existence. However the composer's self-criticism seems unjust, as the idiosyncratic key changes add humorous twists to the well-known tarantella melody, resulting in a rollicking occasional piece.



Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov, c.1897



Nadezhda Nikolayevna Rimskaya-Korsakova, c.1872

With grateful thanks to:

Francis Hornak, Alan Watkins, Tatiana Webster and Clugston Group Limited

Tracks 5-8 recorded in St. John the Baptist Church, Alkborough, North Lincolnshire, England, in 2013

A *Maxim* digital recording

Piano technician: Benjamin E. Nolan

Tracks 1-4 and 9, originally issued by Gamut Classics in 1990, recorded in the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, England, in 1990

Producer: Nigel Wilkinson; Sound engineer: Keith Warren

Cover image: 'Prologue: Scheherazade and Shahriar' by Kay Nielsen, pre-1920

with thanks to John Monhoff and Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Cover inset: 'Antar' - unknown artist

Booklet and packaging design: Stephen Sutton

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Goldstone and Clemmow

With CDs approaching forty in number and a busy concert schedule stretching back more than thirty years, the British piano duo Goldstone and Clemmow is firmly established as a leading force. Described by *Gramophone* as 'a dazzling husband and wife team', by *International Record Review* as 'a British institution in the best sense of the word', and by *The Herald*, Glasgow, as 'the UK's pre-eminent two-piano team', internationally known artists Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow formed their duo in 1984 and married in 1989. Their extremely diverse activities in two-piano and piano-duet recitals and double concertos, taking in major festivals, have sent them all over the British Isles as well as to Europe, the Middle East and several times to the U.S.A., where they have received standing ovations and such press accolades as 'revelations such as this are rare in the concert hall these days' (*Charleston Post and Courier*). In their refreshingly presented concerts they mix famous masterpieces and fascinating rarities, which they frequently unearth themselves, into absorbing and hugely entertaining programmes; their numerous B.B.C. broadcasts have often included first hearings of unjustly neglected works, and their equally enterprising and acclaimed commercial recordings include many world premières.

Having presented the complete duets of Mozart for the bicentenary, they decided to accept the much greater challenge of performing the vast quantity of music written by Schubert specifically for four hands at one piano. This they have repeated several times in mammoth seven-concert cycles, probably a world first in their completeness (including works not found in the collected edition) and original recital format. *The Musical Times* wrote of this venture: 'The Goldstone/Clemmow performances invited one superlative after another.' The complete cycle (as a rare bonus including as encores Schumann's eight Schubert-inspired Polonaises) was recorded on seven CDs, 'haunted with the spirit of Schubert' – *Luister*, The Netherlands.

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