

Programme notes by Chris Darwin: use freely for non-commercial purposes

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936) *Rêverie Orientale* Op 14 (1886) for clarinet and string quartet

Adagio non troppo (c.7 mins)

Glazunov was blessed with an exceptional ear and musical memory. He started to compose aged 11. At 14 Balakirev recommended him to Rimsky-Korsakov, who taught him all he could in two years since he progressed '*not from day to day but from hour to hour*'. Eight years later when he and Rimsky were deeply involved in completing Borodin's legacy after his sudden death, Glazunov's phenomenal musical memory allowed him to write down the overture to Borodin's *Prince Igor* as he had heard it played on the piano by the composer.

Rêverie Orientale was composed shortly before this mnemonic feat, just after Glazunov had been taken by the rich patron Mitrofan Belyayev on a tour of western Europe including a visit to Liszt in Weimar. It is more often heard today in its orchestral version, but Glazunov preferred the more intimate chamber version played this evening. Its delicate interplay between the instruments conveys everything the title of the piece suggests – "the colourful imagination of a confirmed Russian dreaming of far-off lands". (Alan George)

Later in his life, Glazunov, through his directorship of the St Petersburg Conservatoire, exerted a major influence on the direction of Russian music after both the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, ensuring that a specifically Russian style was maintained against a broader European tradition. Although stylistically conservative in his own compositions, he nurtured progressive students such as the young Shostakovich, while maintaining a working relationship with the soviet authorities.