

## CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOLE OP. 34

**COMPOSER:** Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov  
**DATES:** 1844 - 1908  
**NATIONALITY:** Russian

- ♪ Nicolai began playing the piano from an early age
- ♪ At 12 he attended a Russian Navy Training School as a cadet
- ♪ By eighteen he had joined the Russian Navy as an officer
- ♪ In 1865 he left the Navy to concentrate on composing
- ♪ In 1871 he became a professor at St. Petersburg Conservatoire
- ♪ Nicolai was an important Russian composer in the 19th century

### THE MUSIC:

- ♪ Nicolai composed this lively orchestral music in 1887
- ♪ He conducted the premiere in St Petersburg during that year
- ♪ In 1939 Leonide Massine produced choreography for a ballet
- ♪ The five contrasting sections are based on Spanish folk tunes
- ♪ The music reveals Nicolai's brilliant orchestral writing

### LISTENING PLAN:

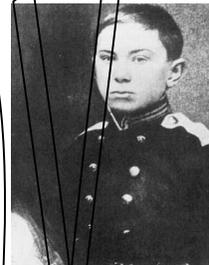
#### 1 ALBORADA (MORNING SONG)

The orchestra leaps into a lively dance with swirling strings, spinning woodwind, a rhythmic tambourine and a stomping drone. The clarinet plays two solos as the strings strum like mandolins but the orchestra maintains the festive mood. A solo violin shows off playing two notes at the same time (double stopping) that makes the triangle tingle and flute flutter. The woodwind section sighs and the timpani respond before the opening festivities come to an end.

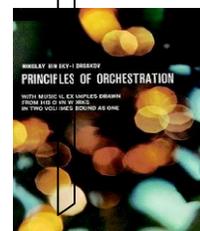
#### 2 VARIATIONS

The mood changes as the strings idle along before the horns introduce a slow romantic tune. The strings take over as the double basses pluck (pizzicato) a drone-like accompaniment. Gently shimmering strings support a tender variation shared by the oboe and horn. Passionate strings return until the flute drifts in with another variation supported by pizzicato strings. The tension increases as the violins lead the orchestra into another variation. Dazed flutes wander up and down and finally flutter (trills) before the orchestra interrupts to bring the movement to a close.

### YOUNG NICOLAI



### PRINCIPLES OF ORCHESTRATION



In 1873 Nicolai began writing a book to help his students develop their technique for orchestral composition. Maximilian Steinberg completed the book 3 years after the composer's death.

### THE BALLET



In 1939 the Russian Ballet performed the ballet in Monte Carlo

### 3. ALBORADA

The orchestra marches back to the original Alborada tune. A solo violin encourages the flute and clarinet to join in but the percussion section seizes the opportunity to interrupt. The timpani respond to a tipsy clarinet and the orchestra produces an abrupt “showtime” ending before fading.

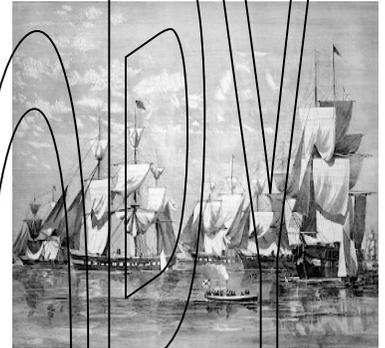
### 4 GYPSY SONGS

The snare drum rolls as the trumpets and horns play a cadenza-like fanfare. The drums fade but linger as the solo violin plays a passionate gypsy tune. The snare drum, timpani and cymbal then provides a rhythmic accompaniment for a solo flute, clarinet and oboe. Finally the harp sweeps in (glissando) leaving the orchestra totally surprised.

### 5 FANDANGO (SPANISH DANCE)

The brass stamp in and the strings swirl until the fandango rhythm is pounded out by dancing violins. The violin and oboe converse as the flutes and bassoons chatter that sends the orchestra into a spin. The chattering conversation is passed around the orchestral sections until the castanets snap the orchestra back into a festive mood. Eventually the strings shudder as the orchestra stomps back to the original Alborada tune until a frenzied surge leads to a brilliant “Ole” conclusion.

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Nicolai sailed on the clipper Almaz that visited the USA during 1863

#### **OTHER WORKS BY THIS COMPOSER**

##### Opera

Snow Maiden (1881)  
Golden Cockerel (1907)

##### Concerto

Piano Concerto (1883)

##### Orchestral

Symphony No 1 (1865)  
Sadko (1867)  
Scheherazade (1888)