

SATURDAY 29 JUNE 2024 7:30PM



ALL SAINTS, WEST DULWICH

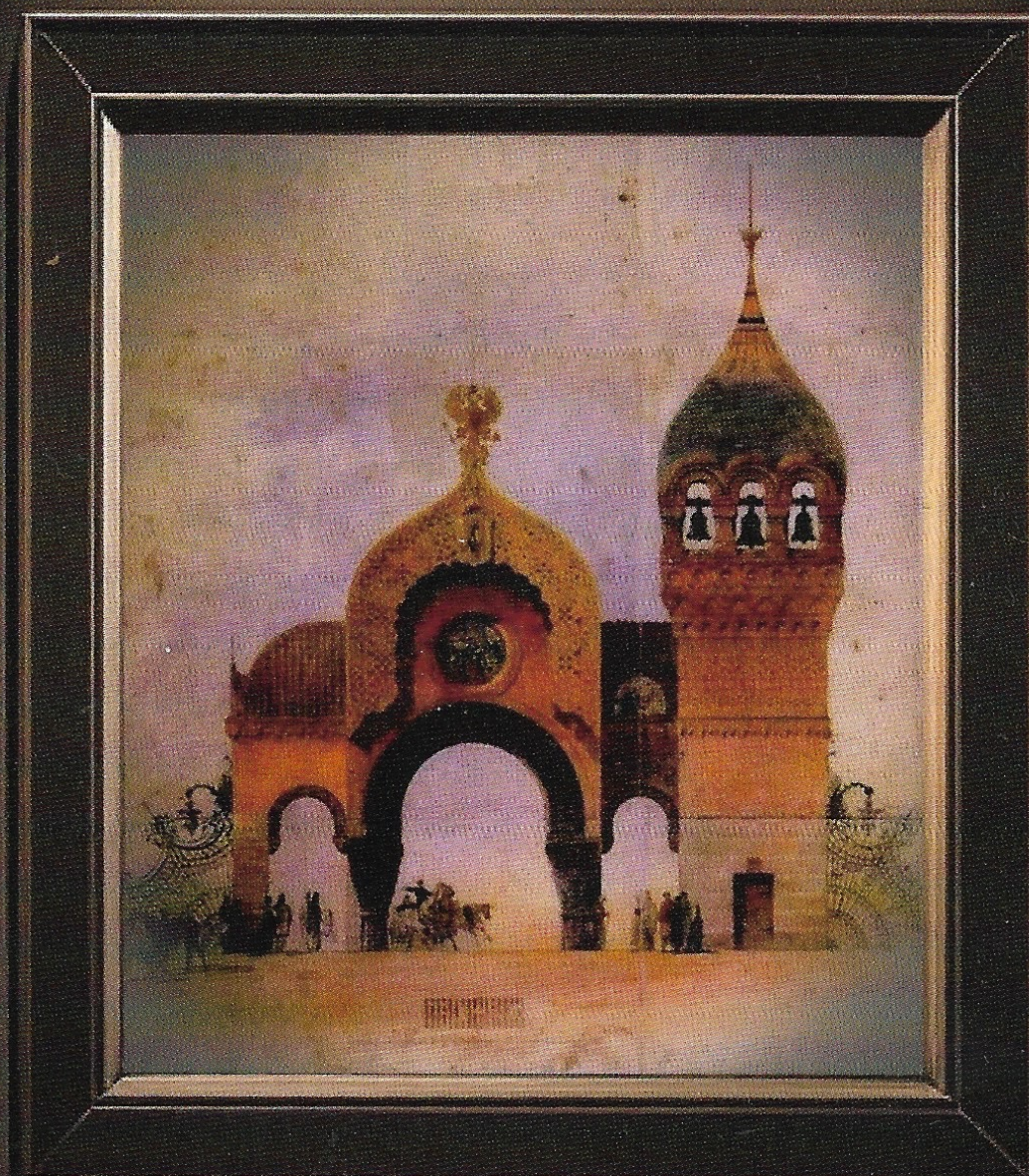
LONDON SE21 8JY

**DULWICH SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

SOLOIST: STEPHEN BRYANT

CONDUCTOR: CHRIS STARK

LEADER: PAULA TYSALL



KORNGOLD

THEME AND VARIATIONS

GRACE WILLIAMS

VIOLIN CONCERTO

MUSSORGSKY / RAVEL

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk

THEME AND VARIATIONS

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897-1957)

Korngold was an Austrian composer and a child prodigy, who was composing by the age of 7 and had a successful ballet performed at the Vienna Court Opera when he was only 11. Growing up, he was praised by prominent composers such as Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler and Giacomo Puccini and he developed experience in the theatre, composing an opera and orchestrating music for the stage.

In 1934 Korngold was invited to Hollywood to adapt Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for a film version of the play and this was followed by further film commissions. Over the following years, his gift for melody and sense of drama resulted in him winning two Oscars. He was adept at manipulating the emotions of the audience; sentiment, humour and excitement were all present, along with rich textures and skilful orchestration.

While some have claimed that Korngold 'sold out' by becoming a Hollywood composer, it seems more likely that Korngold actually created the Hollywood sound. His delicious harmonies and vivid orchestration were ideally suited to creating a soundworld for the big screen. In the 1960s, the creator of *Star Trek* asked his composer to use one of Korngold's film scores as a guide to the sound he was aiming for, while John Williams acknowledges his debt to Korngold in writing the *Star Wars* series.

The Theme and Variations which we are performing this evening is the last original work Korngold composed. The main theme is akin to a lush Irish folk melody and is followed by 7 variations in the space of 9 minutes, which demonstrate Korngold's gift for theatricality and ability to tug at our heart strings. Let the world of the movie unfold!

Claire Richards

VIOLIN CONCERTO

GRACE WILLIAMS (1906-1977)

i) *Liricamente* ii) *Andante sostenuto* iii) *Allegro con spirito*

"To compose music is to do something off the beaten track, even if you're a man. But if you're a woman composer it is considered very odd indeed."

But in any case, Grace Williams was never one to follow convention, take the easy route, or do what might have been expected of her as a composer. She was also fiercely self-critical; there's a diary entry in red ink, which Grace headed: "DAY OF DESTRUCTION: Examined all my music manuscripts and destroyed nearly all which I considered not worth performing."

This uncompromising attitude to her own music, as well as her apparent disinterest in following musical fashion, is at least partly responsible for the belated recognition of Grace Williams as one of the finest and most individual Welsh composers of the 20th century. There's a growing interest in her beautifully scored, generously lyrical writing, often influenced by Welsh landscape, language, and her love of the sea.

Grace Williams was born in the coastal town of Barry in 1906, she played piano and violin, and began writing songs sitting on the town beach. She moved to London in 1926 to study at the Royal College of Music with Ralph Vaughan Williams, becoming friends with fellow composers Benjamin Britten, Imogen Holst and Elizabeth Maconchy. Grace studied in Vienna for a year, but the New Viennese School wasn't for her. 'Music for me has got to flow, because I have been brought up in the singing tradition, and everything I've ever written...is basically melodic and onward-moving.' In Vienna Grace was immersed in the music of Wagner, Richard Strauss and Mahler, and you can sometimes feel their influence.

In 1941 Grace Williams had a major breakthrough when her *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* was broadcast by the BBC, and her *Sea Sketches* were critically acclaimed. But wartime deprivation took its toll on her health, she was struggling to earn a living, and in 1945 she wrote to a friend: "I don't want to stay in London – I just long to get home and live in comfort by the sea." Back in Barry, Grace thought her inspiration might have dried up, writing in 1949: 'From now until Christmas I'm having my last fling at composing...I've started on a Violin Concerto.'

It's a piece with a romantic sweep and lyrical flow that's irresistible, and a sense of freedom in the relationship between the soloist and orchestral players. Williams headed the 1st movement 'Liricamente', and while it feels like a harmonically lush rhapsody, there's a complex interplay of rhythms and time signatures.

The second movement opens with an oboe solo that's based on the Welsh hymn tune 'Yr Hen Ddarbi': 'How dark was the night of his coming! The earth is made bright with the glory'.

The third movement is a witty, spirited Allegro, the soloist sparring with the orchestra, before an unconventionally reflective cadenza.

Instead of being Grace Williams' 'last fling', her Violin Concerto turned out to be the start of an Indian summer, with some of her most significant works to follow: the symphonic poem *Penillion*, a Second Symphony, her opera *The Parlour*, a Trumpet Concerto, and *Missa Cambrensis*. Grace Williams turned down an OBE, but there were tributes and broadcasts of her music to mark her 70th birthday in 1976. Just a few months later she was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and wrote a last letter to Elizabeth Maconchy to tell her "...I'm quite calm and prepared and can only count my blessings - that I've had such a run of good health, able to go on writing - and just being me with my thoughts and ideas and sensitivity. From now on it won't be so good but even so there are sunsets and the sea and the understanding of friends."

Andrew McGregor

Interval drinks are available in the church (donations to the orchestra gratefully received)

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881), MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Originally written for solo piano, Mussorgsky's 1874 composition was inspired by the unexpected death of his close friend, Russian artist and architect Viktor Hartmann. The suite depicts 11 of the 400 artworks displayed in a commemorative exhibition at Saint Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Arts. The movements are anchored by the recurring 'Promenade' theme, symbolising the composer's stroll through the gallery and mirroring his changing moods and perspectives as he observes the diverse scenes. The music remained in relative obscurity until 1922, when French composer Maurice Ravel transformed the vivid imagery into a rich orchestral work. Ravel's masterful orchestration added colour and texture to the musical sketches, creating the most celebrated symbiosis of art and music.

Promenade I

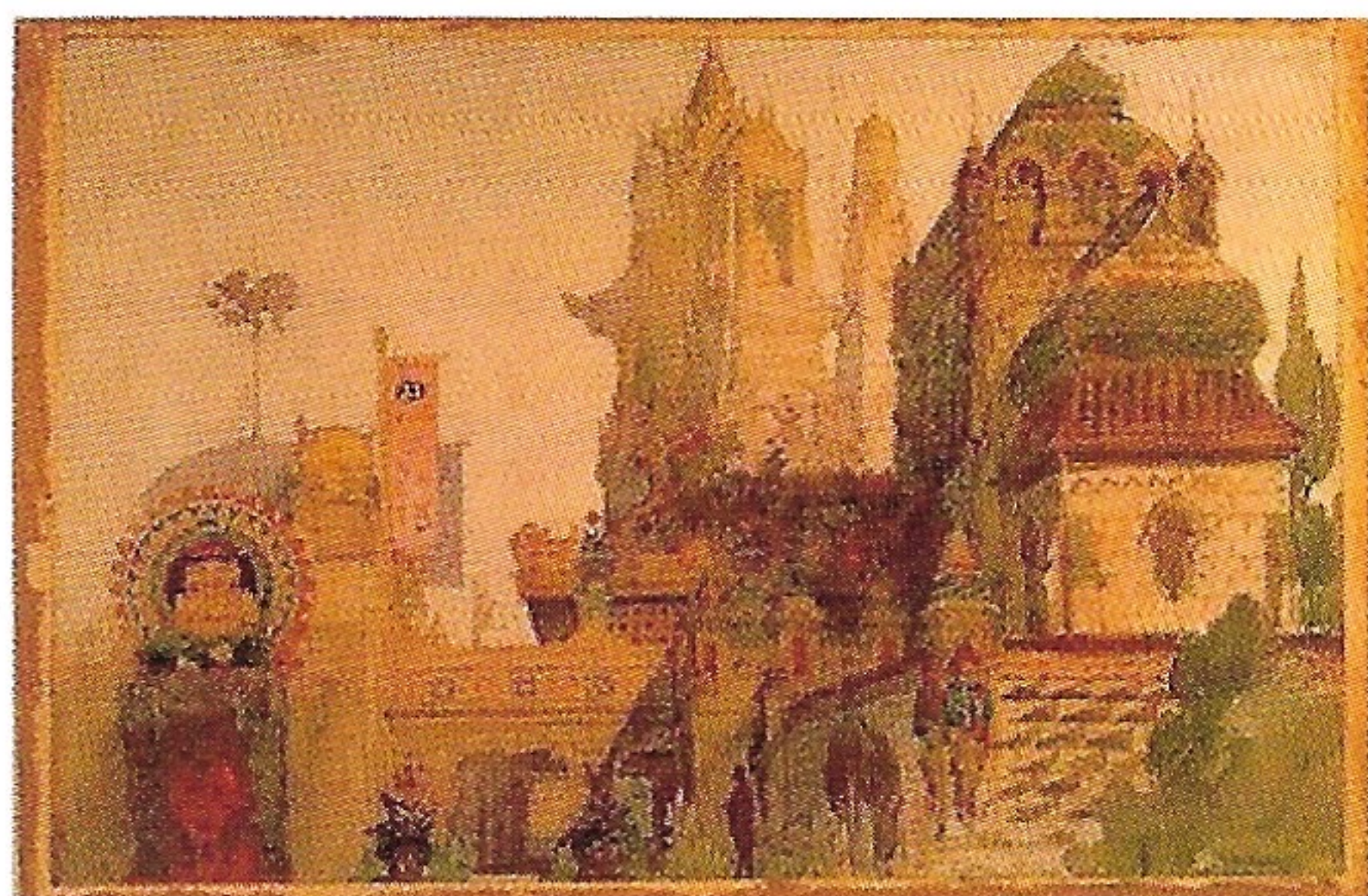
The Gnome

The lost work is believed to represent a design for a wooden nutcracker. The music uses contrasting tempi to depict the gnome scurrying on its crooked legs.

Promenade II

The Old Castle

Depicting medieval Italy, an alto saxophone sings out the song of a troubadour.



Promenade III

Tuileries

Also lost, the picture is believed to show a tree-lined avenue of the Tuileries Gardens in Paris, with the music evoking a lively scene of children with their nurses.

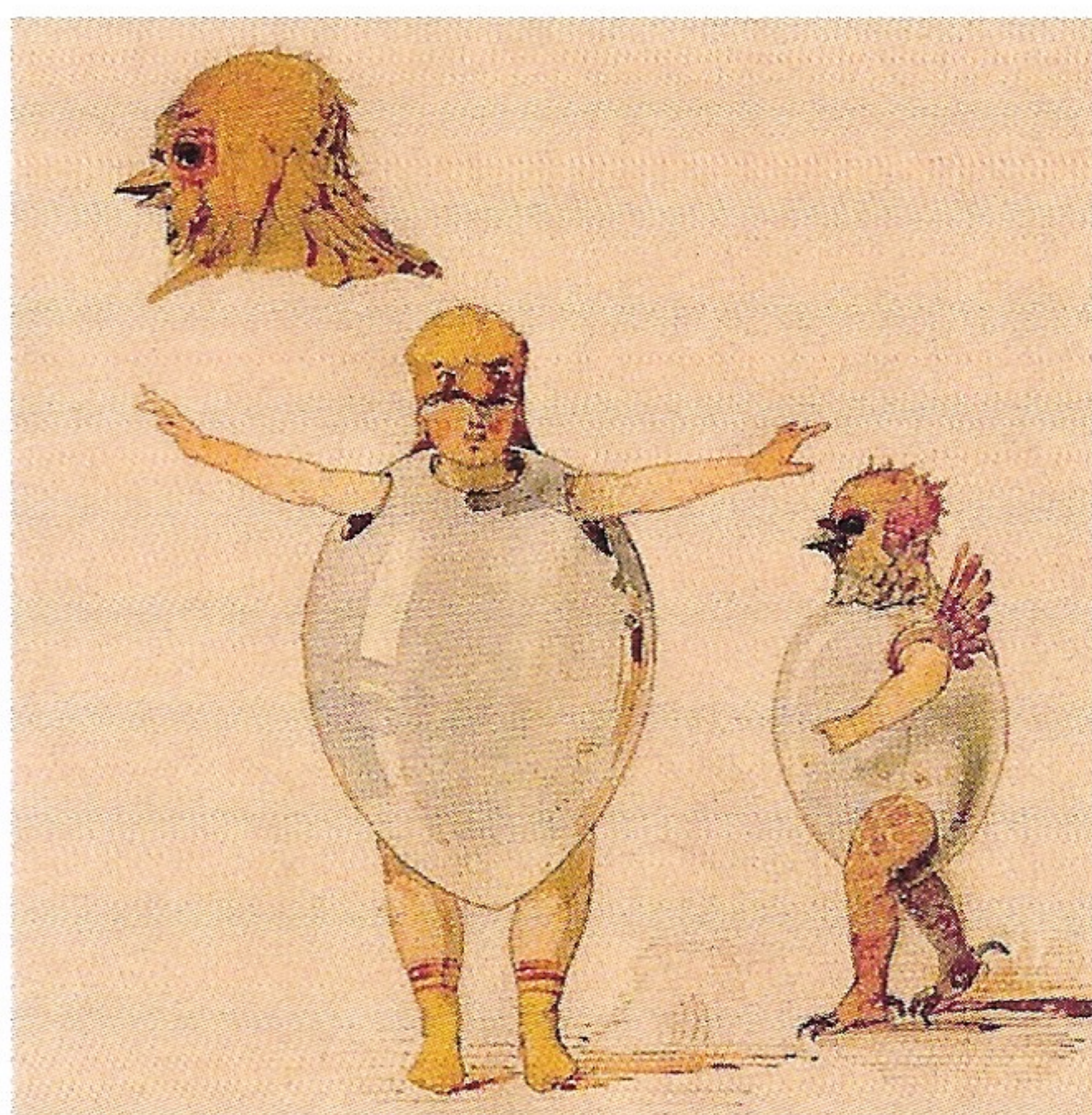
Bydlo (Oxcart)

A solo euphonium represents the trudging ox, while the rest of the orchestra provides a musical animation of the cart rumbling behind.

Promenade IV

Ballet of Unhatched Chicks

Hartmann sketched 17 costume designs for the ballet "Trilbi", featuring children from the Russian Imperial Ballet School.



Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

Based on two paintings gifted to Mussorgsky, the movement depicts a conversation between two Polish Jews—one rich, one poor.



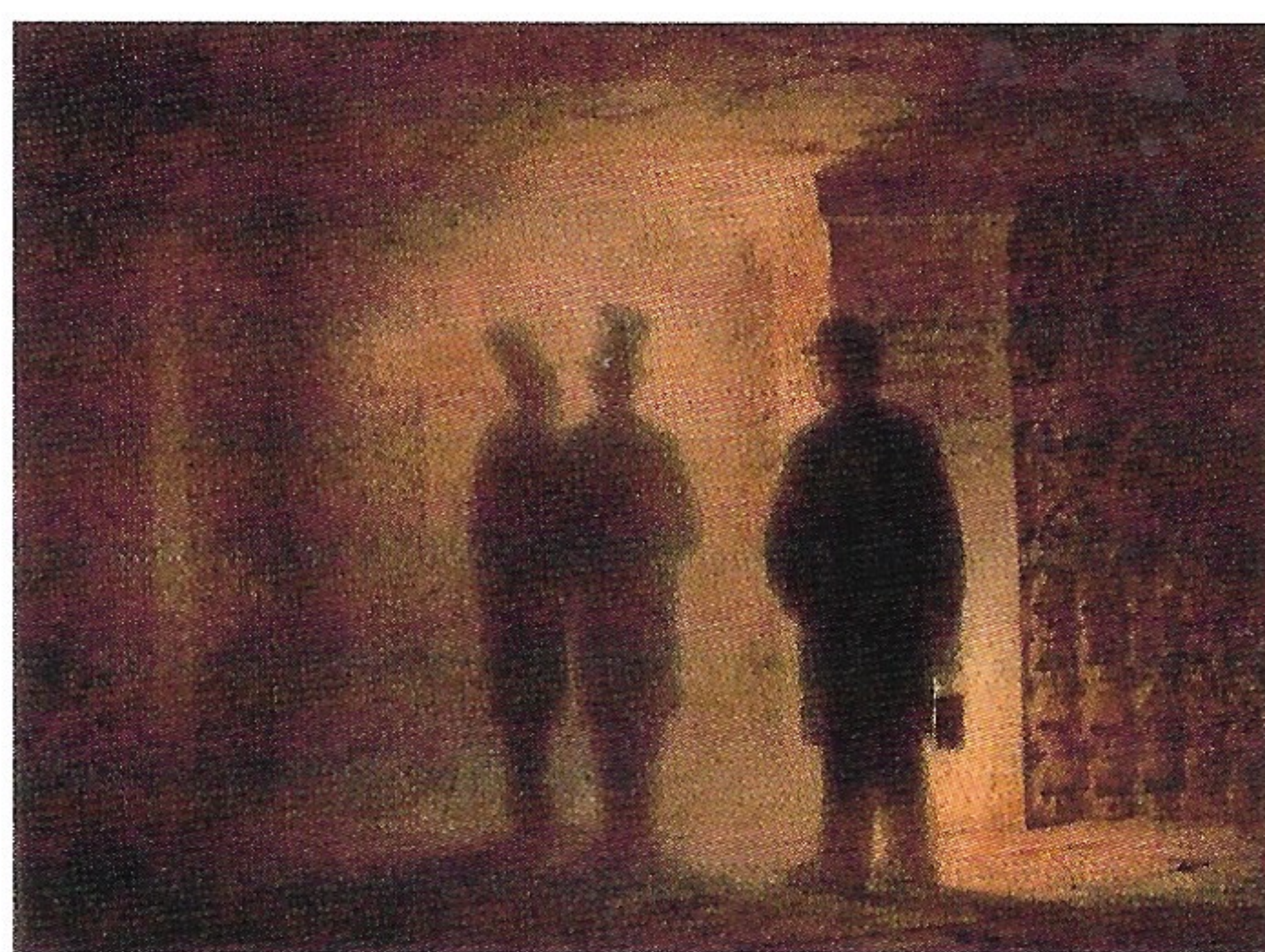
Promenade V

Limoges: The Market Square

While the picture is lost, several sketches made during Mussorgsky's time in the French city remain. The movement depicts a lively conversation among women in a bustling market—its scurrying coda leading straight to the next movement.

Catacombs: Roman Tombs

Hartmann's painting shows himself with a fellow architect exploring the Roman catacombs in Paris, where he studied for four years. Alternating *forte* and *piano* chords reflect the eerie exploration.

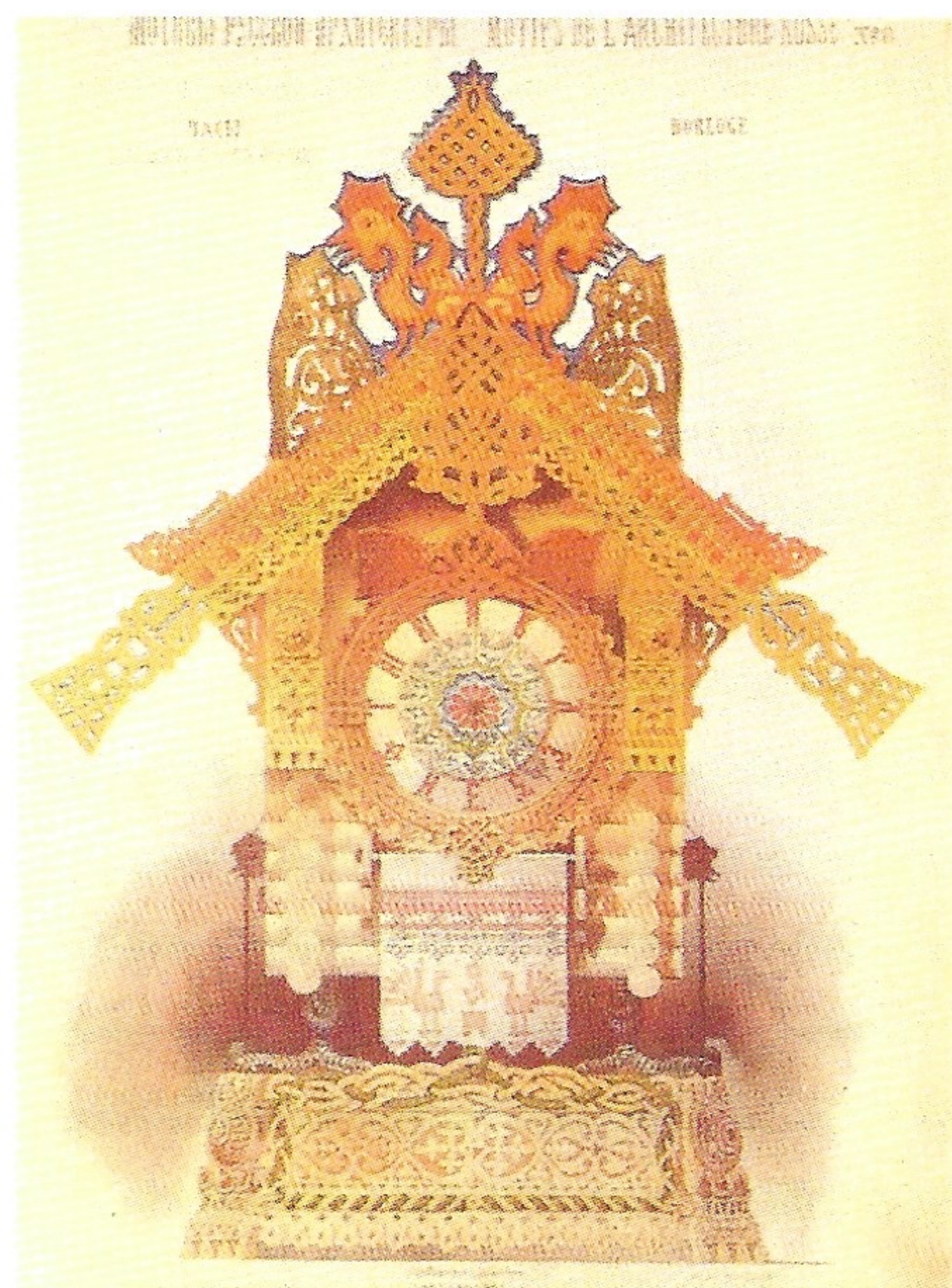


Con Mortuis in Lingua Mortua (With the Dead in a Dead Language)

A continuation of 'Catacombs', the 'Promenade' theme is used to imagine a conversation between the composer and his deceased friend.

Baba Yaga: The Hut on Hen's Legs

Hartmann's design for a bronze clock was inspired by Baba Yaga—a terrifying witch of Russian fairy tales, who lives in a hut standing on chicken's legs.



The Great Gate of Kiev

Hartmann's design for a gate commemorating Tsar Alexander II, after a failed 1866 assassination attempt, is widely considered his most accomplished work. It was selected as the winning entry in a competition to celebrate the Tsar's survival, though the project was ultimately cancelled.

The final movement revives the 'Promenade' theme in grandiose fashion, with brass chorales and tolling bells, reflecting Hartmann's majestic design.

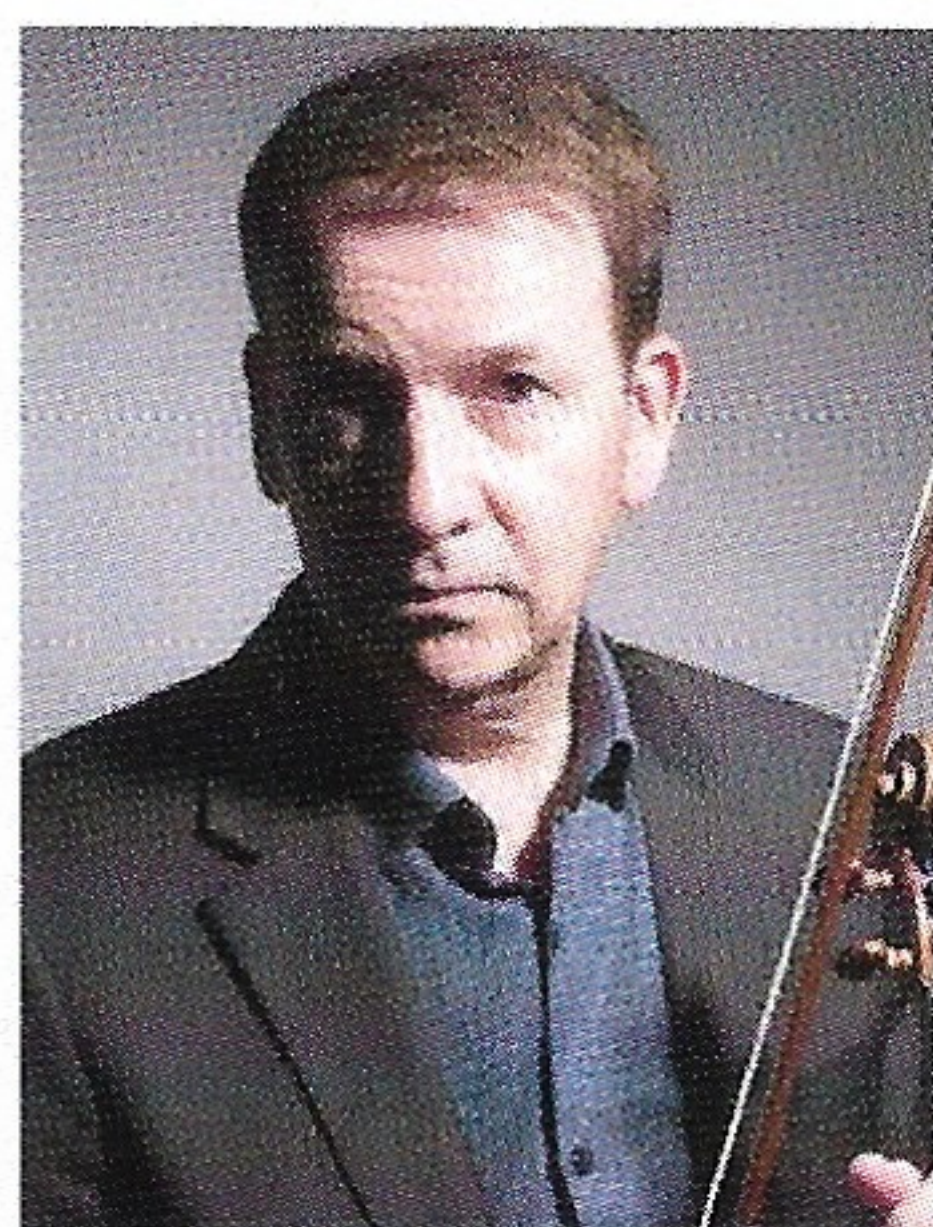


Helen Bartholomew

Stephen Bryant was born in Croydon and began playing the violin aged six. At 18, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. After a year of postgraduate study he was appointed co-leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra—a post he held until taking up his current role as leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

As a soloist, Stephen has appeared regularly with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and gave the UK premiere of the Korngold Violin Concerto in 1982. He also gave the UK premiere of the Detlev Glanert violin concerto in 2011 and the world premier of Elgar's 'Etudes Characteristiques' in London in 1987.

He coaches and teaches at all of London's music colleges and has sat on panels for the BBC Young Musicians competition as well as the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.



Chris Stark is based in South East London. He began as a cellist, turning to conducting whilst a choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge.

As co-founder of the RPS Award Winning Multi-Story Orchestra, he has conducted all of the Orchestra's car park performances since their inception with The Rite of Spring in 2011, including celebrated performances at the BBC Proms.

Away from Multi-Story, he works mostly in opera, for organisations that include Glyndebourne, Oper Köln, Garsington, ETO, OAE and Gurzenich Orchestra.

Committed to community music, he is principal conductor of Ernest Read and Blackheath Halls Symphony Orchestras.

He has recorded for NMC and broadcast with both Multi-Story and Aurora.

Paula Tysall studied violin at the Centre for Young Musicians, where she was awarded the Associated Board's Silver Medal, the Royal College of Music and the National Centre for Orchestral Studies.

As a member of the New London Orchestra she has recorded for Hyperion Records, made broadcasts for the BBC and Classic FM, appeared at the Proms and in Matthew Bourne's award winning Swan Lake. She has played with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia and English National Ballet.

She teaches at Westminster School and is a member of the Ashington, Beaufort and Allenby String Quartets.

Violin 1

Paula Tysall
Helen Bartholomew
Chris Burns
Tessa Crilly
Christine Foster
Ruth Holton
Emma Owen
Piers Patten
Sappho Xenakis

Violin 2

Jane Howard
Janet Davies
Virginia Kennedy
Andrew McGregor
Jessica Smith

Viola

David Lawes
Joe Berry
Liz Cleary
Sophia Swanepoel
Alan Taylor
Imogen Tedbury
Sally Winter

Cello

Nicky Jackson
Sarah Bort
Karen Bowman
Emma Geoghegan
Catherine Johnson
Annabelle Juritz
Celia Kent

Double Bass

Chris Bond
Sylvain Letall
Sam Wise

Flute

Alison Gill
Claire Bridge
Sam Purser

Oboe

Ian Finn (and cor anglais)
Nicholas Mitchell
Louise Simon

Clarinet

Ally Rosser
Claire Richards

Bass Clarinet / Saxophone

André Stryger

Bassoon

Jeremy Crump
Hilary Dodd

Contrabassoon

Graham Clayton

French Horn

Mary Cowlett
Alec Johns
David Aylmer

Trumpet

John-Paul de Soissons
Susan Emmons

Trombone

Peter Whitehouse
Frances Barrett

Bass Trombone

Andrew Ross

Tuba

Martin Oxenham

Harp

Nicolette Chin
Elin Samuel

Percussion

Tobias Engelbrektsson
Theo Francis-Crossley
Ethan Windle

Fanny Mendelssohn

Overture in C

Brahms

Song of Destiny

Beethoven

Choral Fantasy

Fauré

Requiem

Saturday 30 November 2024

7:30 pm

All Saints, West Dulwich

With Dulwich Choral Society

