



## Steve Martland (1954–2013)

### Eternity's Sunrise (2007)

"I wanted to write a companion piece for Tiger Dancing, which was written for the choreographer Henri Oguike and his company. Although Eternity's Sunrise was written for the concert hall rather than the theatre, dance is a pervasive feature of the music: the ensemble plays almost throughout in rhythmic unison. The opening burst sets the stage for what follows and makes a short final return as a coda." Steve Martland

The title of this piece comes from the visionary English poet William Blake's short verse, *Eternity*:

*He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

It was commissioned Scottish Ensemble with support from the PRS Foundation for New Music.

## Alexander Borodin (1833–1887)

### Sinfonia for Strings (1881) (String Quartet No. 2, arr. Lucas Drew)

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Scherzo: Allegro
- 3 Notturmo: Andante
- 4 Finale: Andante – Vivace

Alexander Borodin was professor of chemistry at the Medico-Surgical Academy in St Petersburg, Russia, as well as being a research chemist and an influential advocate of women's rights, especially equal educational opportunities, in demand as a speaker and activist all over Russia. Oh, and he was also a composer – in fact, one of the finest melodists that Russia ever produced, even if it sometimes took him years to complete a single piece because he was so busy with his other activities, both professional and political.

In the case of his Second String Quartet, though – which you hear tonight as the Sinfonia for Strings, in an arrangement for string orchestra by US double bassist Lucas Drew – things were different. Borodin completed the Quartet in just a few months, in a rush of activity during the summer of 1881, while he and his wife, pianist Catherine Protopopova, were holidaying in Zhitovo, near Moscow.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that she was his inspiration: he dedicated the Quartet to her on their 25th wedding anniversary, and there's a sense of warmth and affection about the whole work that's a long way away from the drama, conflict and hard-won resolution of more traditional quartets. It's probably these qualities that brought the work to the attention of Robert Wright and George Forrest, who lifted two of its melodies for their 1953 musical *Kismet* (that stage work's most famous number, 'Stranger in Paradise', was another Borodin tune, taken from his opera *Prince Igor*).

The Sinfonia's first movement inhabits a world of calm lyricism and restraint – its gently swaying opening melody is passed gracefully between violins and cellos before its second theme, with a more martial character, emerges. After a slightly more turbulent central development section, the opening themes return with richer harmonies and the movement ends in peaceful bliss, with any conflict long since forgotten.

The second movement – a brief, sunny Scherzo – contrasts a seemingly unstoppable spinning-wheel melody that turns over and over with a more lyrical waltz theme (which became *Kismet*'s '*Baubles, Bangles and Beads*'), ending with gentle pizzicato chords.

The exquisite slow movement could almost be a conversation between two lovers, charting discussion, disagreement and finally resolution. Its expressive opening cello melody (which became *Kismet*'s '*And this is my beloved*') is taken up by the violins before a more animated argument is launched with the unmistakable flourish of a rising scale. Violins and cellos come together to sing the same melody near the end, though, and the music floats off into the blissful stratosphere.

The more humorous, even quizzical Finale begins with what sound like two questions, left hanging in the air, and they return to punctuate the movement's breathless sprint through intertwining melodies before its ringing, resounding conclusion.

*David Kettle*