

# MRP QUARTER NOTES

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT, INC.

JUL/AUG/SEPT. 2004 VOL. 5-ISSUE 3

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



There is no holiday more popular with American concert bands than the 4th of July. For this one day, players and conductors alike let their hair down and really play from the heart taking their cues not so much from the conductor but from the claps and cheers of the crowds they play for. I can think of no finer way to celebrate our nation's birthday than to pack a picnic supper, find a comfortable spot to listen to the band and finish the evening watching the fireworks. Whether it's the Boston Pops on the Esplanade or the local community band on the town common, go out this July 4th and catch the excitement.



*Dave Rolince*  
Dave Rolince, Pres. MRP

### '04 \$CHOLARSHIP WINNER!

The MRP scholarship committee is pleased to announce **Madeline Here** as our winner of this year's award. Madeline is a graduating senior from Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School, and will be pursuing Music Studies at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. All of us at the MRP wish Madeline the best of luck in achieving her goals. Congratulations Madeline!

MRP Scholarship Committee

### LENDING LIBRARY GROWS

A very, very **BIG "THANK YOU"** to **John Duff** of Weymouth High School and **Bob Arseneault** of Mt. Hope High School, for their donations of music to the Music Lending Library.

The Library currently has over 200 titles of Concert Band Music, and now, about 100 Orchestra titles on its shelves to loan. In addition to the generous donations from John and Bob, several pieces were purchased by the MRP from various sources. The music lending library is free for any music organization to borrow from. We appreciate donations of music in any genre and style. You can email requests for music and a current list of titles available at:

MRPLibrarian@aol.com.

## HEY KIDS! 'MAKE' NOISE ON THE 4TH

As we are making final revisions to our upcoming website, we thought it would be fun to print in our newsletter some instruments to make from the web page's "FOR KIDS" section. Here are a couple that are sure to make some noise on the 4th of July - or anytime.

### Patriotic Poppers:

**MATERIALS** - Rectangular piece of paper any size but 11"x17" or larger make lots of sound

**STEP 1** - Fold the paper in half lengthwise. It is now measuring 5 1/2" x 17" Crease the fold, then unfold.

**STEP 2** - Now fold in all four corners to the middle creased fold. Fold the bottom half up on the crease.

**STEP 3** - Fold this in half vertically, crease again, then unfold once.

**STEP 4** - Fold the bottom corners up to form a diamond shape.

**STEP 5** - Flip this diamond shape over, and then fold in half vertically.

**POPPING:** Place your index finger between the ends of the popper with the long side of the triangle facing you. Hold it over your head, then whip it downward with a quick, forceful motion. It may take a few whips before you get it to "Pop!" The inside of the popper acts like a parachute, catching the air and snapping open with a pop when you whip it downward.

### Popsicle-stick Bangs:

Here's a simple and fun instrument to build. But unbuidling it is a real **BLAST!**

**MATERIALS** - Five Popsicle sticks. Red & Blue paints or markers.

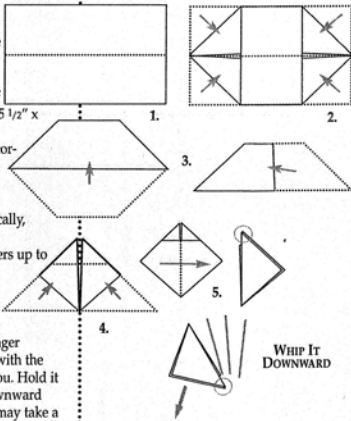
**STEP 1** - Lay one popsicle stick on the table straight up and down, north to south. Then add 2 sticks like a tepee triangle on top of the first one. the tops of the 3 sticks should be overlapped at the top with the first stick on the bottom.

**STEP 2** - Pinch the point where all three sticks overlap with your thumb and fingers and weave a 4th stick under the middle stick and over the other 2.

**STEP 3** - Keeping a firm hold on the point of overlap again, force the 5th stick into position weaving it under the outer 2 and over the middle stick. The Popper should now stay together by itself.

**TO BANG:** Hold the instrument above the floor with the point facing downward. Let it drop. When the banger lands, it will burst apart, sending the sticks flying and making a popping sound!

For extra fun, paint one side of the sticks with a red, white and blue theme. Before the sticks drop, you can guess how many sticks will be paint side up!



### MUSIC THROUGH THE CENTURIES: TCHAIKOVSKY'S 1812 OVERTURE

Piotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)  
"1812" Overture in Eb Major Op. 49 (1880)

Though far from Tchaikovsky's most important or impressive work, the "1812 Overture" is undoubtedly his best known piece.



Tchaikovsky himself didn't feel much enthusiasm for the work while he was composing it, and if it were not for a lucrative commission for a ceremonial overture to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory over Napoleon in 1812, it is unlikely that Tchaikovsky would have composed the overture on his own initiative.

Tchaikovsky worked on the overture from October 12 to November 19, 1880, for the dedication ceremony for the Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The music was to set the tone for the celebrations around the new Church, which was erected with public donations in thanksgiving for and commemoration of the Russian victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812. In his own words, he found it "very loud and noisy."

The score included massive strings and brass, live cannon and peeling bells. The premiere was duly given on August 20, 1882 and was an immediate success. It was subsequently published as his Op. 49 and enjoyed many performances throughout Russia.

Its popularity has never waned. Tchaikovsky even conducted a performance of it in 1893, his last year. The response was raucous. In 1974, lamenting the declining audiences attending the Boston Pops concerts at the Hatch Memorial Shell on the picturesque Charles River Esplanade - a tradition dating back to 1929 - Boston businessman, David Mugar and the legendary Boston Pops conductor, Arthur Fiedler, hatched a plan to enliven the concert. The crowd responded so enthusiastically to the revitalized program, the pair made it an annual event. The enthusiasm was due in no small part to the concert's featuring the "1812" with booming cannons, ringing church bells, patriotic sing-a-longs, and a grand fireworks finale. The Boston event became the first to play the overture as part of a 4th of July celebration. The innovation has since been duplicated in countless cities around the country.

The piece opens with the somber tones of a Russian Church hymn, "God Preserve Thy People" recalling that the declaration of war was announced at Church services in Russia and then immediately followed by a solemn chant for Russian success in the war.

Then follows a theme of marching of armies, carried out by the horns.

Another theme used in the early part of the overture is the initial notes of the French national anthem "The Marseillaise" which begins "Allons enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé!" The French anthem reflects the early French victories in the war, including the capture of Moscow in Sept. 1812.

This is followed by a Russian folk dance theme, which commemorates the national unity that developed in beating back Napoleon. While Napoleon could be more daring in battle, the Russians had the patience and the people on their side to wait out the invader and wear down his enthusiasm.

The French retreat from Moscow began in late October 1812. Caught in the Russian winter for which they were ill-prepared and hounded by local resistance and guerrilla warfare, the French Army suffered great losses. This is reflected in the dizzying spirals of a diminuendo.

The firing of cannons reflects the Russian military advances in forcing the French further toward the borders.

Toward the military conflict over, we return to a solemn Church chant to give thanks for the victory and the liberation of Russia from French occupation.

Below the triumphant cannons and the horns, we hear the strains of the victorious Russian national anthem beginning with the words: "God, Preserve the Tsar!". The Russian anthem makes an important counterpoint to the French anthem that was heard earlier - and culminates in a final peal of bells and fanfare of augmented brass and full orchestra.

On a personal note, I find the "1812" a very satisfying piece to play with its expressive opening and exciting central passages - a real challenge to the fingers!

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was well-suited to his task, with his typically Russian sensitivity and excitable temperament, so freely expressed in his music. He did not begin studying music seriously until the age of 22. Up till then, he had only taken a few piano lessons. At 22, he left his job as a clerk in the government and entered the musical conservatory of St. Petersburg, Russia, where he studied composition and orchestration. Upon graduation from the conservatory, he moved to Moscow, and became an instructor of music theory at the Moscow Conservatory. This position allowed him to continue composing. By the age of 23, he had devoted himself entirely to music.

Living in poverty, he worked so hard that he suffered greatly from nerve disorders, depression and insomnia, with frequent nightmares about sharps and flats. His great gift for melody, brilliant orchestral colour and strong emotional expression quickly captured the ear of audiences. He led a curious life. For example, he never actually met his wife (although they did pass once on the street). He married Antonina, but the marriage was a failure and he soon left her.

After Tchaikovsky's marriage failed, a wealthy widow, Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, began supporting him financially. This enabled him to leave his teaching position and devote full-time to composing.

Tchaikovsky was a vain man and he agonized over his music. He always had the feeling that it was never good enough and that the audience would not like it. He alternated between periods of writing and travel.

When he was writing, he had a daily routine: he would work from 9:30 to 11:00 in the morning, have a lunch, take a walk, and work again from 5:00 to 7:00 in the evening before dinner. He relied upon the financial support of others to allow him to spend his time writing music. Without that support Tchaikovsky might have spent his entire career as an instructor at the Moscow Conservatory.

Madame von Meck supported Tchaikovsky for 13 years on one condition: that he never attempt to meet her. For the first few years, Tchaikovsky composed much music, but from 1881 to 1888, he traveled extensively and wrote very little. In 1888 (age 45) the Russian government recognized his talents and gave him an annual salary for life. He then spent two years touring Europe as an orchestral conductor.

In 1890, Madame von Meck ended her financial support. Although Tchaikovsky no longer needed the money, he was greatly hurt by this; he felt that his greatest supporter had abandoned him.

He hankered after 'a quiet country life' playing 'Patience' card games and watching flowers grow.

Tchaikovsky made an extended visit to the United States in 1891 and conducted an orchestral performance of the "1812 Overture" at the grand opening of Carnegie Hall in New York City. He found the U.S. exciting, both musically and intellectually. When he returned to Russia; however, he was once again depressed over the loss of support from Madame von Meck.

He died during an epidemic of cholera after drinking unboiled water, despite friends who were present begging him not to, and within a week he was dead.

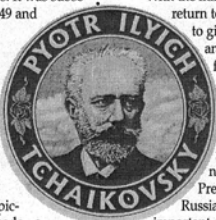
## COMMUNITY CALENDAR:

Spread your blankets at these traditional outdoor park concerts, all are FREE!

- 07/04 Boston Pops Esplanade 4th - 7 pm
- 07/04 MWS, Needham Town Green - 7pm Including Fireworks!
- 07/05 Not the 4th of July Concert - 5 pm Tweeter Center, w/ Fireworks!
- 08/09 Youth Summer Bands, 9-12am Capron Park Newell Shelter, Attleboro

If you would like to serve on the Board or volunteer for a committee, meetings are held monthly. Call 508-226-6897 for details.

The MRP QUARTER NOTES Newsletter is a quarterly publication. Contributions are welcome by writing to the Music Revitalization Project, Inc. P.O. Box 709, Norton, MA. 02766. All articles included are at the discretion of the editor as space allows.



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