Dancing with the Tzars

KAREN KYRIAKOU

INSTRUMENTATION

- 1 Conductor
- 8 1st Violin
- 8 2nd Violin
- 5 Viola
- 5 Cello
- 5 String Bass

NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

Full of fun while very serious, this original piece also provides cool inter-disciplinary teaching opportunities and reproducible historical notes. From rags to riches, revolutions, glorious victories, the demise of empires, traitors, conspiracies, rebellions, suspicions, abominations, heroes and heroines, the history of Russian tzars is presented in three movements.

I. Reach for the Tzars ★ Catherine the Great (1729–1796)

This movement is to be played with a pompous and steady manner, to emulate the dignity that Catherine commanded. When playing the main theme, re-take the bow after the first beat and don't be afraid to land heavily on beat 2! At measure 30, make sure the upper strings remain steady and do not race the pizzicato. Keep the tremolo soft initially at measure 45, but play out when the theme returns after the violin solo. Feel free to really draw out the molto ralls when they occur.

II. Dark Tzar ★ Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584)

The initial impact of this piece is made by the immediate swell in bar 1. A gritty sound using the lower half of the bow is required for Ivan's theme at measure 9. All instruments play this theme at different times so it may be a good idea to rehearse the melodies in unison to practice this bowing technique. Although the dynamics can be quite loud at times, the bass line must always be heard. Unison rhythms at measure 33 and again at bar 57 need to be precise. At measure 50, play with as much rubato as you dare—but take a breather before returning to tempo!

III. Catch a Falling Tzar * Nicholas II (1868–1918)

The melody at measure 6 is to be played in a lyrical style. Ensure that dotted half notes are played to their full value. Let this melody swell but phrase off on the long notes—keep it classy! The upper strings need to be careful not to race at measure 22, letting the lower strings take over this melody. All gets more rigid at measure 39, however. Lower strings are to use short bows, on the string, maintaining this rhythm until measure 57. Violins and violas need to be delicate in their entry at measure 39, but everyone can go for it at measure 57 where chaos is about to unfold! Bars 66–77 may need to be rehearsed slowly. Enjoy the different textures of the music at bar 78 and use full bows with a rich and sustained sound.

At the website, www.inapiece.com.au, you will find teacher resources and warm up materials for this piece.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

All Belwin string parts have been carefully bowed and fingered appropriately by level. The Yellow Very Beginning series includes many bowings as well as reminder fingerings for first-time readers. The Red Beginning series includes frequent bowings to assist younger players. Fingerings for altered pitches are often marked. The Green Intermediate series includes appropriately placed bowings for middle-level students. Fingerings and positions are marked for notes beyond first position. The Blue Concert series includes bowings appropriate for the experienced high school player. Fingerings and position markings are indicated for difficult passages.

Bob PhillipsBelwin/Pop String Editor



DANCING WITH THE TZARS

by Karen Kyriakou

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Movement I. Reach for the Tzars ★ Catharine the Great (1729–1796)

Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst was born in Germany, a princess of a small German state. In order to marry Charles Peter Ulrich, heir to the Russian throne, she had to move from her homeland and convert to the Russian Orthodox faith, changing her name to Catherine. Her husband (Peter III) then inherited the throne and he proved himself to be an incompetent ruler—very childish and distracted—whereas Catherine was a dedicated scholar, motivated and highly intelligent. Her married life was very unhappy but she persevered in her role as a means to power. Catherine was allegedly involved in a coup, plotting against her husband, who soon died under 'mysterious' circumstances, She became the new ruler of Russia and worked hard to gain the trust and respect of her new homeland. She was then known as Catherine II. The empire Catherine inherited was full of corruption and injustice. She worked relentlessly to improve the image of Russia across Europe, investing in hospitals, schools and universities, and calling highly educated professionals to Russia Heavily supportive of the arts, and wanting Russia to have the culture of cities such as Paris and Berlin, she had a theater and an opera house built and commissioned many grand works of art and architecture. The number of factories increased and Russia's economy thrived during her leadership. Catherine died of a stroke at the age of 67, ending a thirty-four year reign. Russia was left as one of the strongest powers in Europe. She had been offered the title "Catherine the Great" by the Grand Commission, but never chose to use it.

Movement II. Dark Tzar ★ Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584)

Ivan IV Vasilyevich was a very complex and unstable person who perceived himself to be a moral and righteous man, but was actually known for his torturous and tyrannical ways. His cruelty was evident even at a young age and this most likely stemmed from his very neglected and abusive upbringing. He was crowned tzar at the age of 17 and married Anastasia three weeks later, winning her in a competition. Ivan was initially guided by the Church, wanting to be considered a Christian ruler. He improved the structure of the Russian armies and implemented a new legal code to help Russia's social problems. He also established the first Russian Parliament and a Council of Nobles. Russia was at war for much of Ivan's reign, with varying levels of success. Ivan started a holy war against the Tartars, Russia's Muslim neighbors, and he showed no mercy to anyone not belonging to the Orthodox Church. Through his reign he sent thousands of people into exile, condemning tens of thousands of others to their horrendous and torturous deaths. After Anastasia died, Ivan became even more unstable. In a fit of rage, he killed his own son by striking him with his staff. Riddled with guilt and remorse, he prayed for the souls of all the people he had executed. It wasn't long however before he continued his harsh regime. Ivan was responsible for making the Russian culture more religious than ever before and through his wars, he expanded the boundaries of the Russian empire. He also left Russia in a state of desperate poverty and famine. Unbelievably enough, Ivan is sometimes thought of as a national hero.

Movement III. Catch a Falling Tzar * Nicholas II (1868–1918)

Nicholas II (Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov) was the last emperor, or tzar, of Russia. Completely unprepared to rule, Nicholas suddenly inherited the throne and was hurriedly married at 26 years of age. He would rather have been a farmer! He had a very devoted wife, Alexandra Fedorovna, who was heavily criticized for her faith in the controversial holy man, Rasputin. Nicholas, a gentle and passive character, was very much dominated by his wife and Alexandra made many of the important decisions during his rule. At the same time, he was stubborn, supporting the rights of the sovereign despite the people's discontent. Nicholas' downfall was obvious when World War I approached, as the army was completely unprepared and ill equipped to win. Over a million Russian soldiers and farmers lost their lives and nearly another million were injured. Nicholas' insistence on commanding the army himself is directly linked to their demise. By the end of the war Russia was in a devastated position with massive casualties, huge inflation and extreme famine. The country was at the beginning of launching into the next Russian Revolution. In 1917, Nicholas was forced to abdicate his throne and flee. While in exile in Siberia in 1918, Nicholas and his family were assassinated by the opposing Bolshevik party, possibly under their leader Vladimir Lenin's instructions. Their hidden bodies have only recently been uncovered and identified. The Russian Orthodox Church later declared Nicholas and his family to be royal martyrs.

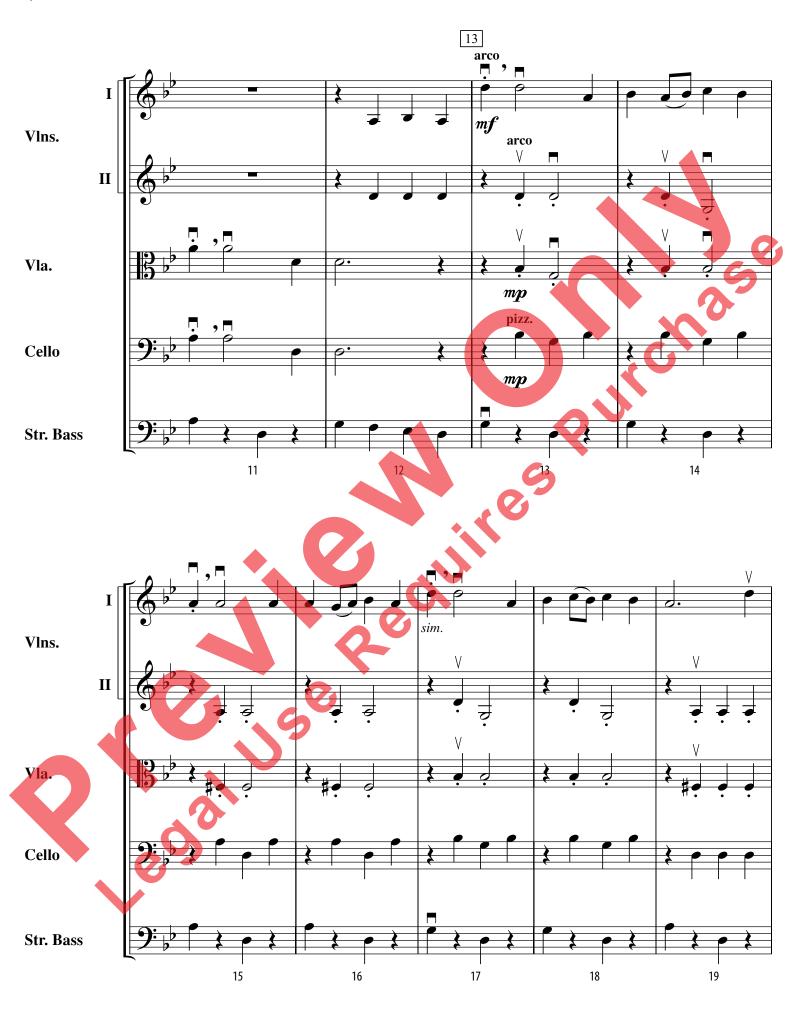
Dancing with the Tzars

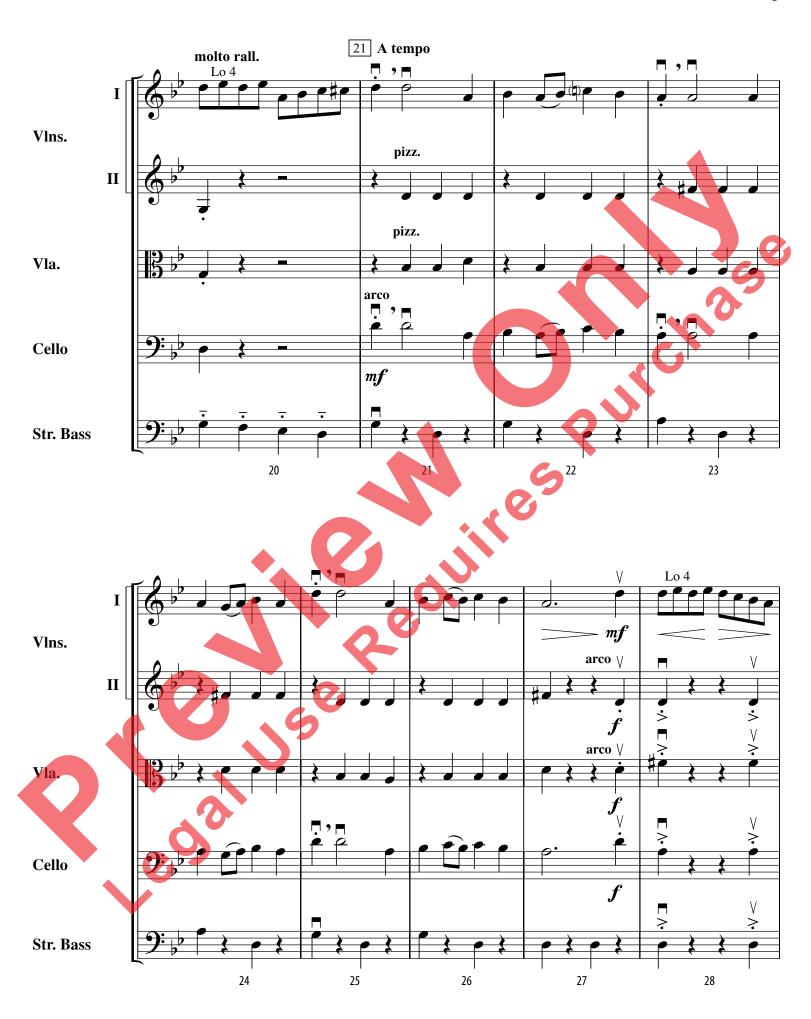
CONDUCTOR SCORE Karen Kyriakou

Duration - 2:30

I. Reach for the Tzars – Catherine the Great (1729–1796)

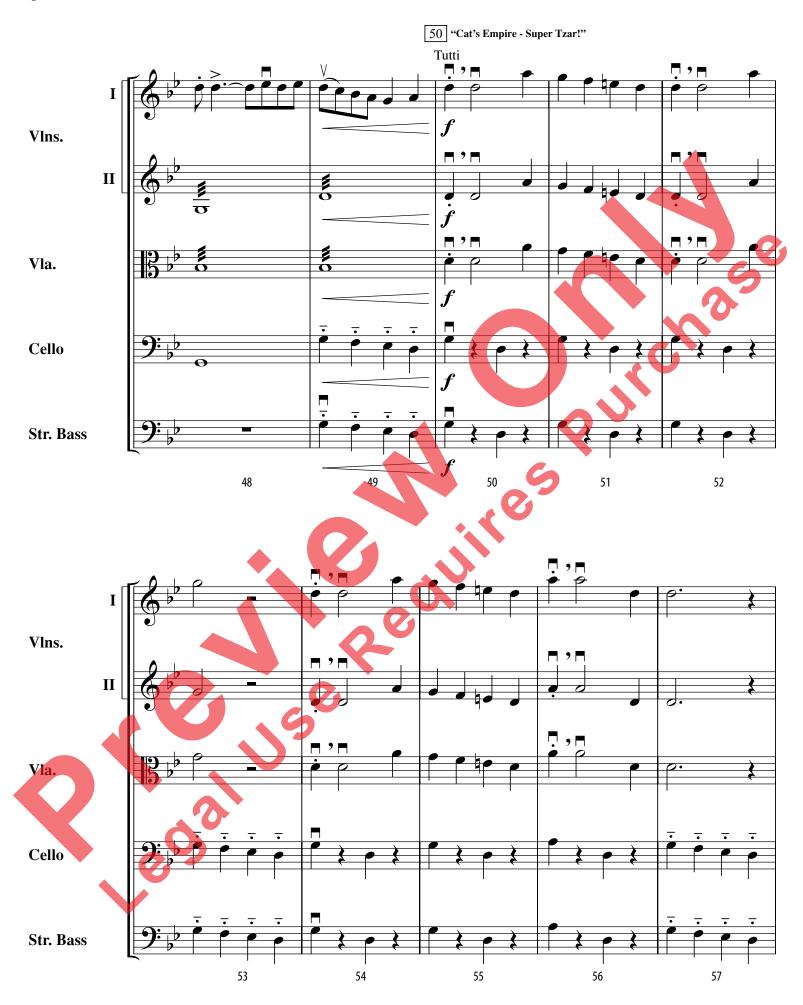










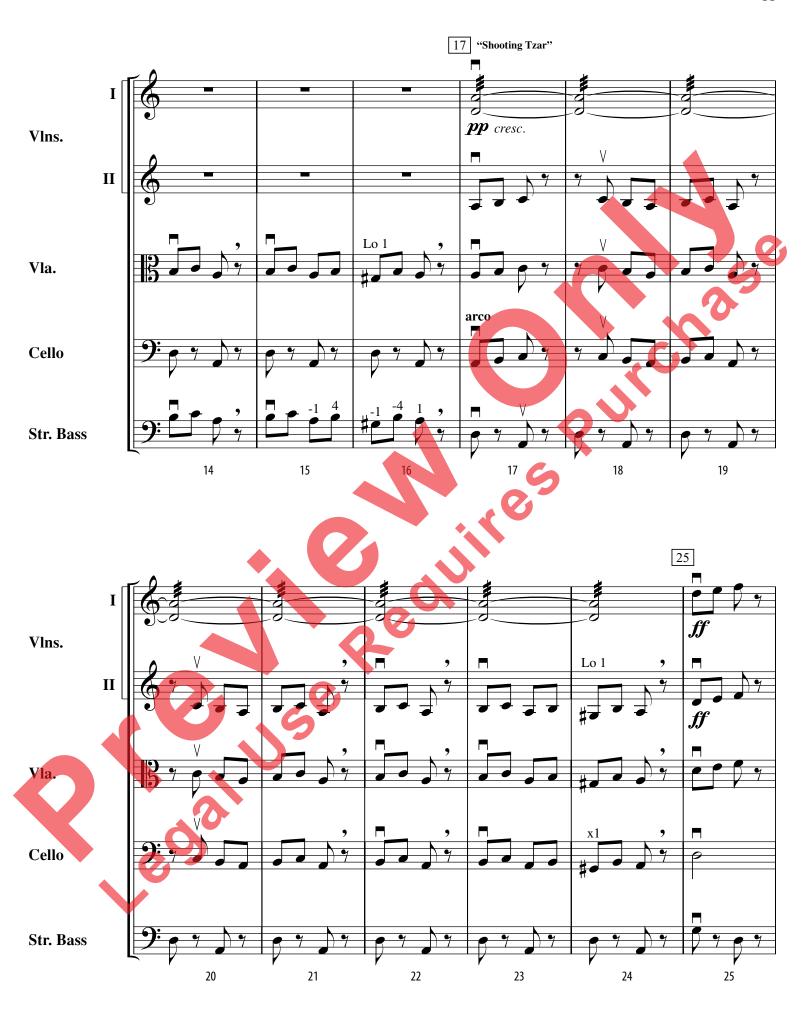




II. Dark Tzar – Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584)

Duration - 1:22













III. Catch A Falling Tzar – Nicholas II (1868–1918)

Duration - 2:15

