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Turner and Music:

New Symphonic Songs inspired by Turner's Paintings and Classical Poetry

Natalia Kouznetsova, a British composer of Russian origin and a Turner Society member, has completed work on a new composition: symphonic songs inspired by Turner's paintings. The first public performance will take place at the end of September in Pushkin House in Bloomsbury, central London, and all Turner Society members are welcome. She has also kindly supplied this feature for TSN.

The Prince of the Rocks: The World of J.M.W. Turner has been composed for orchestra and soloists, but will be performed in a piano arrangement with two singers on two consecutive evenings: one performance will be by the renowned international award-winning pianist Alexander Karpeyev and the other by Katya Nikonorova. One of the vocal parts will be sung by Igor Outkin, an established international baritone now based in London.

The performance is as visual as it is aural: the music is accompanied by a projection of a selection of paintings by Turner. The screen will be built into a set painted by a professional artist.

The Prince of the Rocks embodies one of the most significant and attractive ideas from recent cultural history: the notion of the interaction between different types of art. This interaction was Natalia's research subject at the Astrakhan Conservatoire and the post-graduate Gnesin Russian Academy of Music in Moscow. In *The Prince of the Rocks*, she attempts to unite paintings, music and poetry.

The Prince of the Rocks unites Turner's art with Natalia's symphonic music and classical poetry through the imagination of the composer. The lyrics for the eight symphonic songs are drawn from classical English verse. Natalia has chosen poetry in which she finds links with Turner's life, character, personality or philosophy. The lyrics are by Shelley, Byron, Turner himself, Masfield, Shakespeare, Tennyson and Belloc.

The performance includes poetry written by Turner in one of his *Southern Coast* sketchbooks, about Corfe Castle and Studland Bay, which was transcribed by Andrew Wilton. There are, of course, paintings by Turner of the very places described in these verses and this is reflected in the music.

The cycle of symphonic songs is united by its basis in the paintings of Turner; by the pace and development of the musical narration from the beginning of the cycle until the end; and, throughout the score, by the homogeneous musical style. The unity of the musical style is revealed not so much through melodic links (which do, however, occur), but mainly through the means by which the composer gives musical expression to the literary content of the poetry and the paintings.

In this score instrumental music (tonal), colouristic in many places, and the human voice as the eternal reflection of man's soul expressed in the beauty of the poetry, aim to construct in the listener's mind a bridge with the world of

Turner's paintings, evoking his or her own musical and aesthetic response to it.

The composer is very pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Turner Society for the many lectures which have contributed to her understanding of Turner's work. Professor Sam Smiles of the University of Plymouth also gave invaluable help to the composer regarding the correct historical interpretation of events. The help, advice and expertise of Andrew Wilton, Turner Society Chairman and former Keeper of the Turner Collection at the Tate, is also very gratefully acknowledged.

Tickets for the performance on 30 September will be available later this year. The composer has kindly arranged for fifteen tickets to be available for members of the Turner Society, for a small donation (see Programme for full details and booking arrangements).

Turner Vignettes Return to Abbotsford

Two of Turner's tiny watercolour vignettes to illustrate the works of Sir Walter Scott have recently been donated to the Abbotsford Trust and will go on show at the writer's home in 2013. The works (W 1093, 1081) depict Abbotsford itself and Newark Castle in Yarrow and were engraved in 1833-4 for Scott's *Poetical Works* (R 516, 504). Their acquisition by Abbotsford from a private collection, made possible through the Art Fund, is much to be welcomed. Abbotsford is to undergo complete refurbishment at a cost of £13 million, together with the construction of a new visitor centre to open in 2013.

You can Bet your Turner!

How's this for a wager? About a year ago, before the Indianapolis Colts played the New Orleans Saints in the Super Bowl, the art critic Tyler Green instigated a bet between the museums of art in Indianapolis and New Orleans, suggesting that each institution should put one of its most treasured works on the line for their respective teams. The museums agreed, Indianapolis wagering Turner's *Fifth Plague of Egypt* (1800) while New Orleans put up a work by Claude Lorraine. When the Saints won the match, the Indianapolis Museum of Art duly sent its Turner to New Orleans where it was displayed in the museum for three months. Is this the first time that a Turner has been wagered in a bet? If any reader is aware of such a bet having been made previously, please let us know!