

## In The Steppes Of Central Asia



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In the Steppes of Central Asia is the common English title for a "musical tableau" (or symphonic poem) by Alexander Borodin. The Russian title is *В степях Центральной Азии*, literally In Central Asia. Composed in 1880, the work was originally intended to be presented as one of several tableaux vivants to celebrate the silver anniversary of the reign of Alexander II of Russia. The intended production never occurred, but the work itself became a concert favorite ever since its first concert performance on 8 April 1880 (Old style) in St. Petersburg by the orchestra of the Russian Opera under the conductorship of Rimsky-Korsakov. This orchestral work idyllically depicts an interaction of Russians and Easterners in the steppe lands of the Caucasus. A caravan of Central Asians is crossing the desert under the protection of Russian troops. The opening theme, representing the Russians, is heard first (see chart of themes below); then we hear the haunting strains of an ornamented eastern melody on English horn, representing the Easterners. These two melodies eventually are combined contrapuntally. Amidst these two ethnic melodies is heard a "traveling" theme in pizzicato that represents the plodding hoofs of the horses and camels. At the end only the Russian theme is heard.

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