



# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 1

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Tuesday, August 5, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor

Vadim Gluzman, Violin

### OPENING NIGHT

SMITH      *The Star-Spangled Banner*

BEETHOVEN      Overture to Goethe's *Egmont*, Op. 84

BEETHOVEN      Symphony No. 4 in B-flat major, Op. 60

Adagio — Allegro vivace

Adagio

Menuetto: Allegro vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

— INTERMISSION —

BRAHMS      Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

This concert is sponsored by Bibs, Marge and Sarah.

Vadim Gluzman appears by arrangement with Herbert Barrett Management, Inc.  
d/b/a Barrett Vantage Artists, Inc. d/b/a Barrett Vantage Artists.

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Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 1

### Overture to Goethe's *Egmont*, Op. 84 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

*Composed in 1810.*

*Premiered on June 15, 1810 in Vienna.*

"The first casualty when war comes," observed Senator Hiram Johnson in 1917, "is truth." So when Napoleon invaded Vienna in May 1809, convinced that the Austrian Empire was the major stumbling-block to his domination of Europe, it is not surprising that censorship of literature, of the press, and of the theater were instituted immediately. The months until the French departed in October were bitter ones for the Viennese. The value of the national currency dwindled, food was in short supply, and freedoms were limited. Soon after the first of the year, with Napoleon's forces gone, the director of the Hoftheater, Josef Härtel, arranged for the production of a series of revivals of the dramas of Schiller and Goethe, the great figures of the German stage. Appropriately, two plays that he chose dealt with the oppression of a noble people by a foreign tyrant, and of the eventual freedom the patriots won for themselves — Schiller's *William Tell* and Goethe's *Egmont*.

Beethoven was commissioned to write the music for Goethe's play. (Adalbert Gyrowetz was assigned *William Tell*. Rossini's setting of the tale was still two decades in the future.) *Egmont*, based on an incident from 1567, depicts the subjugation of the Netherlands to the tyrannical Spanish rulers, the agony of the people, and their growing defiance and dreams of liberty, and ends with Count Egmont's call for revolution and his vision of eventual victory in the moments before his execution.

The theme of political oppression overthrown in the name of freedom was also treated by Beethoven in his only opera, *Fidelio*, and the musical process employed there also served well for *Egmont*. The triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness, is portrayed through the overall structure of the work: major tonalities replace minor at the moment of victory; bright orchestral sonorities succeed somber, threatening ones; fanfares displace sinuous melodies. The Overture compresses the action of the play into a single musical span. A stark unison begins the introduction. Twice, stern chords from the strings are answered by the lyrical plaints of the woodwinds. The main body of the Overture commences with an ominous melody in the cellos. A storm quickly gathers (note the timpani strokes), but clears to allow the appearance of the contrasting second theme, a quicker version of the material from the introduction. The threatening mood returns to carry the music through its developmental central section and into the recapitulation. A falling, unison fourth followed by a silence marks the moment of Egmont's death. Organ-like chords from the winds sustain the moment of suspense. Then, beginning almost imperceptibly but growing with an exhilarating rapidity, the stirring song of victory is proclaimed by the full orchestra. Tyranny is conquered. Right prevails.

### Symphony No. 4 in B-flat major, Op. 60 Ludwig van Beethoven

*Composed in 1806.*

*Premiered in March 1807 in Vienna.*

On November 13, 1805 Napoleon's army entered Vienna for the first time. A week later, Beethoven gave the premiere of *Fidelio* before an audience largely comprising French officers. It failed. The French forces withdrew early the next year, and the local aristocrats, who had fled Vienna before the invasion, returned to their city palaces. *Fidelio*, extensively revised, was presented again on March 29, 1806, but its reception was still cool and Beethoven spent the following summer away from Vienna. His first visit was to the ancestral Hungarian estate of his friend Count Brunsvick at Martonvásár, where the Count's sisters, Thérèse, Joséphine and Caroline, were also in residence. Journalist and Harvard librarian Alexander Wheelock Thayer, in his pioneering biography of the composer, spread the rumor that Beethoven and Thérèse got engaged that May, and that it was under the spell of that love affair that the Fourth Symphony was conceived. In 1890, a book appeared titled *Beethoven's Immortal Beloved, from Personal Reminiscences*, purporting to be from Thérèse's hand, that recounted the relationship. It was a hoax. ("The Immortal Beloved," to whom Beethoven wrote three unheaded letters, was convincingly identified in Maynard Solomon's 1977 biography of the composer as Antonie Brentano, a married Viennese noblewoman. Solomon also showed the letters to have been written in 1812, not 1806.) The Fourth Symphony was therefore apparently not a musical love-child, though the country calm of that summer, perhaps the most halcyon time of Beethoven's life, may have influenced the character of the work.

After visiting with the Brunsvicks, Beethoven moved to the summer castle of Prince Lichnowsky at Grätz in Silesia. Lichnowsky introduced him to his neighbor in Ober-Glogau, Count Franz von Oppersdorf, a moneyed aristocrat who placed such importance on his household musical establishment that he would not hire a servant unable to play an instrument. Oppersdorf, an admirer of Beethoven's music, arranged a performance by his private orchestra of the Second Symphony for the composer's visit, and also commissioned him to write a new symphony. Beethoven put aside the C minor Symphony (No. 5), already well advanced, to work on the commission, and most of the B-flat Symphony was completed during September and October 1806 at Lichnowsky's castle.

It is sweetness subtly tinged with Romantic pathos that opens the Fourth Symphony. The main theme is a buoyant tune given by the violins. The complementary melody is a snappy theme discussed by bassoon, oboe and flute. Inventive elaborations of the main theme occupy the movement's development before a heightened

recall of the earlier melodies and a vigorous coda close the movement. Of the second movement, little needs to be added to the words of Hector Berlioz: "Its form is so pure and the expression of its melody so angelic and of such irresistible tenderness that the prodigious art by which this perfection is attained disappears completely." Though Beethoven called the third movement a minuet, it is really one of his most boisterous scherzos. The outer sections of the movement, with their rugged syncopations, sudden harmonic and dynamic shifts and tossing-about of melodic fragments among the orchestral participants, stand in strong contrast to the suave central trio. The finale is a whirlwind sonata form with occasional moments of strong expression in its development section.

### **Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77** **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

*Composed in 1878.*

*Premiered on New Year's Day 1879 in Leipzig, conducted by the composer with Joseph Joachim as soloist.*

"The healthy and ruddy colors of his skin indicated a love of nature and a habit of being in the open air in all kinds of weather; his thick straight hair of brownish color came nearly down to his shoulders. His clothes and boots were not of exactly the latest pattern, nor did they fit particularly well, but his linen was spotless.... [There was a] kindness in his eyes ... with now and then a roguish twinkle in them which corresponded to a quality in his nature which would perhaps be best described as good-natured sarcasm." So wrote Sir George Henschel, the singer and conductor who became the first Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, of his friend Johannes Brahms at the time of the composition of his Violin Concerto. Brahms at 45 was coming into the full efflorescence of his talent and fame. The twenty-year gestation of the First Symphony had finally ended in 1876, and the Second Symphony came easily only a year later. He was occupied with many songs and important chamber works during the years of the mid-1870s, and the two greatest of his concertos, the B-flat for piano and the D major for violin, were both conceived in 1878. Both works were ignited by the delicious experience of his first trip to Italy in April of that year, though the Piano Concerto was soon laid aside when the Violin Concerto became his main focus during the following summer. After the Italian trip, he returned to the idyllic Austrian village of Pörschach (site of the composition of the Second Symphony the previous year), where, he wrote to the critic Eduard Hanslick, "the air so bristles with melodies that one has to be careful not to tread on them."

The Violin Concerto was written at Pörschach for Brahms' old friend and musical ally, Joseph Joachim. In August, when the sketches for the new work were almost completed, Brahms sent a draft of the solo part to Joachim for his advice on the technical aspects of the violin writing with the following note: "I wanted you

to correct it — and I didn't want you to have any excuse of any kind: either that the music is too good [to be changed] or that the whole score isn't worth the trouble. But I shall be satisfied if you just write me a word or two, and perhaps write a word here and there in the music, like 'difficult,' 'awkward,' 'impossible,' etc." Joachim took great pains in examining the score (his notated copy is still in the State Library in Berlin), and passed his advice on to Brahms who, rather obstinately, ignored most of it. Brahms, whose instrument was the piano rather than the violin, made a few changes in the musical aspects of the score, but left the sometimes ambiguous string notation largely untouched, a circumstance that has caused considerable interpretative difficulties for other violinists.

The first movement is constructed on the lines of the Classical concerto form, with an extended orchestral introduction presenting much of the movement's main thematic material before the entry of the soloist. The last theme, a dramatic strain in stern dotted rhythms, ushers in the soloist, who plays an extended passage as transition to the second exposition of the themes. This initial solo entry is unsettled and anxious in mood and serves to heighten the serene majesty of the main theme when it is sung by the violin upon its reappearance. A melody not heard in the orchestral introduction, limpid and almost a waltz, is given out by the soloist to serve as the second theme. The vigorous dotted-rhythm figure returns to close the exposition, with the development continuing the agitated aura of this closing theme. The recapitulation begins on a heroic wave of sound spread throughout the entire orchestra. After the return of the themes, the bridge to the coda is made by the soloist's cadenza. With another traversal of the main theme and a series of dignified cadential figures, this grand movement comes to an end.

The rapturous second movement is based on a theme that the composer Max Bruch said was derived from a Bohemian folk song. The melody, intoned by the oboe, is initially presented in the colorful sonorities of wind choir without strings. After the violin's entry, the soloist is seldom confined to the exact notes of the theme, but rather weaves a rich embroidery around their melodic shape. The central section of the movement is cast in darker hues, and employs the full range of the violin in its sweet arpeggios. The opening melody returns in the plangent tones of the oboe accompanied by the widely spaced chords of the violinist.

The finale is an invigorating dance whose Gypsy character pays tribute to the two Hungarian-born violinists who played such important roles in Brahms' life: Eduard Reményi, who discovered the talented Brahms playing piano in the bars of Hamburg and first presented him to the European musical community; and Joseph Joachim. The movement is cast in rondo form, with a scintillating tune in double stops as the recurring theme. This movement, the only one in this Concerto given to overtly virtuosic display, forms a memorable capstone to one of the greatest concerted pieces of the 19th century.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 2

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Thursday, August 7, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Hai-Ye Ni, Cello  
Chia-Hsuan Lin, Emerging Conductor

### RACHMANINOFF I

MUSSORGSKY Introduction (Dawn on the Moscow River)  
to *Khovantchina*

Chia-Hsuan Lin, Conductor  
Emerging Conductor Program

WALTON Cello Concerto\*  
Moderato  
Allegro appassionato  
Lento — Risoluto tempo giusto, Briosso (cadenza) —  
Allegro molto — Rapsodicamente (cadenza) —  
A tempo di Movement I ma un po' più lento

— INTERMISSION —

RACHMANINOFF Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13

Grave — Allegro ma non troppo  
Allegro animato  
Larghetto  
Allegro con fuoco

\* first PMF performance

Pre-concert talk — 6:00-6:45

This concert is sponsored by OC and Pat Boldt.

Hai-Ye Ni appears by exclusive arrangement with Diane Saldick, LLC.

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Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 2

### Introduction (Dawn on the Moscow River) to *Khovantchina*

**Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)**

*Composed 1872-1880; finished by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1883.*

*Premiered on February 21, 1886, in St. Petersburg.*

*Khovantchina* is a product of the last, sad decade of Mussorgsky's brief life. Though trained for a career in the army, there dwelled always within him the soul of an iconoclastic, bohemian artist, seeking, as he said, "to portray the soul of man in all its profundity." He resigned from military service in 1858 to give himself over to music, and secured a minor government position to provide for his sustenance. The death of his mother in 1865 plunged him into a profound despair that seemed to alter his personality, and he was thereafter subject to fits of morbid depression, drank to excess and showed signs of physical deterioration. His condition became such that his comrades in a cooperative apartment asked him to leave, so he first moved in with his brother and then into a flat with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov until the latter got married in 1872. Despite his problems during those years, Mussorgsky's creativity deepened, and by 1870 he had completed *Boris Godunov*, the greatest of all Russian operas and one of the most startlingly innovative pieces of musical stagecraft ever conceived. *Boris*, however, was rejected and revised for three years before it was finally premiered in 1873. Stung by the puzzled critical and public reception of his new opera and by the death in that same year of his close friend artist Victor Hartmann, Mussorgsky's health declined steadily. Though his alcoholism became uncontrollable and he frequently lost his lucidity of mind, he still composed whenever he was well enough, producing during his last years some of his finest songs (including the *Songs and Dances of Death*) and the opera *Khovantchina*, which he left unfinished at his death in a St. Petersburg hospital one week after his 43rd birthday.

The inspiration for *Khovantchina* came to Mussorgsky in 1870 from Vladimir Stasov, the critic and journalistic champion of the Russian nationalism movement and the music of "The Five." Stasov wrote in his biography of Mussorgsky, "It seemed to me that the fight between old and new Russia would give a fine field for a drama or even an opera, and Mussorgsky agreed with me." For a subject, Stasov directed Mussorgsky to the era of Peter the Great, the 17th-century czar who first opened his country to the West. The dramatic engine of the opera is the conflict between Peter's proposed reforms of the Church and the fanaticism of the Old Believers, represented in the opera by the Princes Khovantsky, father and son, whose plots against him Peter called "Khovantchina." Mussorgsky undertook an extensive program of reading and research to prepare for writing this historical pageant. Rather than make a detailed plan for the

libretto based on a completed scenario, Mussorgsky concocted the book as he went, constantly burdened by a surfeit of characters and situations. "[The opera] reminds us of those early icons belonging to the period when the transport of pictures through the forests, bogs and wilderness so restricted their distribution that the religious painter resorted to the expedient of representing on one canvas as many saints as could be packed into it," wrote Rosa Newmarch of Mussorgsky's text.

Despite his initial enthusiasm, Mussorgsky did not begin composing music for the new opera for some time. "The Introduction to *Khovantchina* (dawn over the Moscow River, matins at cock crow, the patrol, and the taking down of the chains) and the opening moments of the action are ready, but not written down," he confided in July 1873 — it took him another full year to commit just this portion to paper. For years he played and sang for friends other bits that he intended to include in the opera, but many of those were never written down. (Rimsky-Korsakov lent a hand by orchestrating some excerpts from the score in 1879, including the *Dance of the Persian Slaves*, and those were heard on a St. Petersburg concert in November.) Though he returned to the score many times, Mussorgsky was unable to finish it completely before his death, and he left a draft manuscript for voice and piano that Rimsky had to organize, complete, revise and orchestrate to allow for its performance. *Khovantchina* was first given, in an amateur production, in St. Petersburg in 1886 and not staged professionally until 1911. Stravinsky, Ravel and Shostakovich also later added their own alterations to the score.

The Introduction to *Khovantchina*, subtitled "Dawn on the Moscow River," is a series of tone color variations on a folk theme presented quietly by the oboe above tremolo strings. As the music progresses, "The domes of the churches are lit by the rays of the morning sun.... Matins bells are heard," according to the score.

### Cello Concerto

**William Walton (1902-1983)**

*Composed in 1956.*

*Premiered on January 27, 1957 in Boston, conducted by Charles Munch, with Gregor Piatigorsky as soloist.*

It was with the First Symphony, completed after almost three years of painstaking labor in 1935, that William Walton came to his artistic maturity. Though he had gained a wide notoriety with *Facade* (1922), the Viola Concerto (1929) and the oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast*, it was beginning with the Symphony that, according to the British critic Colin Mason, "the impulse is no longer the desire to express for others, but the necessity to express for himself." In his next major orchestral work, the Violin Concerto written in 1939 for Heifetz, Walton added to the sturdy harmonic palette, exuberant rhythms and brilliant manner of orchestration of his Symphony "a strong feeling for lyricism" (the composer's own words) and a virtuosic flair, all based on an unmistakable allegiance to his Romantic antecedents.

Much of Walton's activity during World War II was given to composing ballet and music for films (including the memorable collaborations with Olivier on *Henry V*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III*). In the early 1950s, he undertook the opera *Troilus and Cressida*, a full-scale stage work in the Romantic "grand manner." The Cello Concerto, commissioned in 1956 by Gregor Piatigorsky, continued the spirit and technique of *Troilus* with an even greater refinement of gesture, color and texture. In comparing the Cello Concerto with the opera, Colin Mason wrote that "the harmony is a shade less sweet and the mood more serene and 'objective,' with less of his old nostalgic bittersweet melancholy."

The Cello Concerto shares with Walton's earlier concertos for viola and violin a formal plan that surrounds a fast, scherzo-like middle movement with music of greater introspection. The opening movement of each work is slow in tempo and lyrical in nature, while the finale recalls thematic material from previous movements to round out the composition's overall structure. Also common to all three string concertos is Walton's expert skill at creating expressive melodies, about which the English scholar Hubert Foss wrote, "I confess that the quality of Walton's lyrical invention overcomes me emotionally in a way that is quite exceptional. I do not find myself tiring of his lyrical romanticism.... I think Walton touches us all with his own humanity. There is at once a friendliness in the music as an oracular vision that comprehends but stands above sympathy."

The essential elements of the opening movement are the lyrical qualities of its cello themes, and the restrained and refined handling of the instrumental resources which allows the soloist to soar unhindered above the orchestral accompaniment. John N. Burk noted that this sensitive balancing of the Concerto's performing forces enhances "the expressive beauty of the cello, which more nearly approaches the human voice than any other instrument. It has a magnificent range and variety of color. It is indeed the aristocrat among instruments." Formally, the first movement is a hybrid of sonata and rondo designs. A main theme begun with two leaping, interlocking intervals is given by the soloist after a rocking introductory gesture in the orchestra. Complementary melodies follow: one growing from an arch-shaped initial phrase, the other making a long descent through altered scale patterns. A brief developmental section leads without pause to a restatement of the main theme, on this appearance accompanied by violin tremolo and an answering dialogue from the celeste. A lyrical episode for the soloist and the first violins ensues before the movement closes with another traversal of the main theme, with its rocking background restored.

The second movement is, in the composer's words, "technically more spectacular" than the first. It is an extended essay of unabashed virtuosity based on a *moto perpetuo* rhythmic motive announced by the soloist. Walton described the finale as a "*tema con improvisazioni* — there are four 'improvisations,' the second and fourth being for solo cello only; the latter leads into the epilogue, which is based on themes from the first and last movements." The first four sections, alternating tutti paragraphs with the soloist's cadenzas, are loosely based on the theme presented in the first measures

by the cello. The final, coda-like portion recalls mainly the subject of the first movement's lyrical episode, but closes with a quiet reminiscence of the wide intervals from the tender opening theme of the Concerto.

### **Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13** **Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**

*Composed in 1895.*

*Premiered on March 27, 1897 in St. Petersburg, conducted by Alexander Glazunov.*

"If there is a conservatory competition in Hell, this Symphony would gain first prize," railed César Cui. "Forgive me," Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov said to the composer, "but I do not find this music at all agreeable." "A kind of shapeless, turbid sound-mass that dragged on interminably," was the assessment of musicologist Alexander Ossovsky. The object of these critical thunderbolts was the First Symphony of a 24-year-old Russian musician who had already won the highest rating ever given by the Moscow Conservatory to one of its graduates, established a reputation as a top-notch pianist, had an opera staged by the Moscow Bolshoi and orchestral, chamber and piano works played by some of the country's leading artists, acquired a prestigious publisher, and been hailed as a genius by the late Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky — Sergei Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff, proud of his accomplishments and confident of his future, had every reason to expect a good reception for his Symphony No. 1 when it was premiered in St. Petersburg's Hall of the Nobility under the baton of Alexander Glazunov on March 27, 1897. What he got, however, was a trauma that threw him into a pit of depression and self-deprecation.

Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 1, composed between January and August 1895, was hardly his first work for orchestra. He had been experimenting with symphonic composition for almost a decade by that time, having attempted three symphonies, a suite, a symphonic poem, two piano concertos and a scherzo; the Piano Concerto No. 1 and the tone poem *The Rock* had been successfully performed. "I had a high opinion of my Symphony," he later recalled. "The joy of creating it carried me away." He showed the new work to his composition teacher at the Moscow Conservatory, Sergei Taneyev, who advised him that the score could stand some serious revision, but then recommended to the publisher Mitrofan Belyayev that he include the piece on his concert series in St. Petersburg: "A man as richly gifted as Rachmaninoff will the more quickly come to his true path if he can hear his pieces performed." Belyayev, eager to win the promising young composer away from his agreement with Moscow publisher Karl Gutheil, scheduled the premiere of the Symphony for March 1897.

Rachmaninoff traveled expectantly from Moscow to St. Petersburg, but began to have serious misgivings soon after he arrived. Two other new works were also to be given on the same program — Tchaikovsky's *Fatum* (whose score the composer had destroyed after two unsuccessful performances in 1869 but Belyayev had reconstructed for his catalog from a set of parts he unearthed at the St. Petersburg Conservatory) and Nikolai

Artsibushev's *Valse-Fantaisie* — and the rehearsals were little more than cursory run-throughs. Glazunov, the conductor, admitted not caring much for Rachmaninoff's music in any case ("there is a lot of feeling in it, but no sense whatsoever"), and the other local musicians were hardly more encouraging. When Glazunov showed up drunk for the premiere and launched into a wretched representation of the Symphony, Rachmaninoff knew that disaster was at hand, and he endured the experience huddled on the auditorium's fire escape: "It was the most agonizing moment of my life! Sometimes I stuck my fingers in my ears to prevent myself from hearing my own music, the discords of which tortured me.... All my hopes, all belief in myself, had been destroyed." He bolted from the hall, not even taking time to collect the orchestra's parts, and spent the entire night aimlessly prowling the streets and riding the trams. Unable to face an immediate return to Moscow, he fled to the comfort of his beloved grandmother's nurturing in Novgorod before heading home. He tried to salve his pain and regain his confidence by beginning another symphony, but nothing would come. His aunt and uncle, Varvara and Alexander Satin, alarmed over his mental state, convinced him to give up his private flat and move in with them. The wealthy industrialist Savva Mamontov tried to divert Sergei's morbid thoughts by giving him a conducting job with the opera company he was then backing. (Ironically, this post allowed Rachmaninoff to discover a true genius for conducting amid the debris of the Symphony's premiere, and he quickly developed a significant parallel career in that field.)

For more than two years after the disaster in St. Petersburg, Rachmaninoff could not bring himself to compose again. Then in 1900, he began consulting one Dr. Nicholas Dahl, a Moscow physician specializing in the treatment of alcoholism through hypnosis. Dahl's method of auto-suggestion (and, probably, his enlightened conversation about music) restored the composer's confidence and desire to work. Within a year, the Second Piano Concerto was produced and successfully launched into the world, and Rachmaninoff, having learned the lessons from his early debacle about perfecting his processes of composition and revision and sharpening his creative personality, was on his way to international fame. Though he did not destroy the score of his Symphony No. 1, and occasionally hinted that he might revise it, the manuscript disappeared when he fled Russia in the wake of the 1917 revolution. In 1945, the instrumental parts were discovered in the library of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and a performing edition of the work made from them. Rachmaninoff's First Symphony was heard for the second time on October 17, 1945 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, conducted by Alexander Gauk, more than two years after the composer's death. Eugene Ormandy gave the American premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra on March 19, 1948 as part of the first complete symphony concert televised in this country.

The occasional performances and numerous recordings of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 1 indicate that the work itself does not deserve the ferocious attacks it received at its premiere. Though his skills of orches-

tration, melodic construction, harmonic cogency and thematic development naturally grew as he matured, Rachmaninoff already demonstrated in this early composition his characteristic voice, his ability to construct large instrumental forms, and his strong emotionalism. The reasons for its initial failure, in other words, lie not just in the music itself, but also in the circumstance in which it was first heard in St. Petersburg. That Glazunov's performance was a disgrace is now well documented, but Rachmaninoff was also the victim not only of jealousy over his astounding youthful genius but also of a virulent animosity within the Russian musical community. The St. Petersburg school of composers — centered by "The Five": Cui, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov — felt that they represented the true soul and spirit of Russia, and favored nationalistic works based on native folk and church music, history and lore whose expression, they were convinced, could be hampered by a strict conservatory education. In contrast, the Moscow group, led by Nikolai Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, held that the discipline of formal training was essential for making any serious music of lasting value, whatever its national origins, and looked down on the rough-hewn works of The Five. (Tchaikovsky once castigated Mussorgsky's work as "the lowest, commonest parody of music; it may go to the devil for all I care.") Rachmaninoff, Moscow Conservatory, Class of '92, was a vulnerable target caught in the cross-fire between those feuding factions.

The Symphony follows the conventional four movements, though the scherzo comes second and the *Larghetto* third. The tiny slashing motive of close intervals that opens the work recurs throughout the Symphony, most obviously at the beginning of each movement. The brief introduction also contains a broad unison phrase in the strings, which Rachmaninoff said was one of several themes in the work modeled on Russian ecclesiastical chants. Speeded up, it becomes the main theme of the sonata form that occupies the main body of the movement; a quick, descending bass motive provides counterpoint. A Gypsy-influenced melody wound through an exotic scale serves as the contrasting second theme. The development section is concerned with the two motives of the main theme. The recapitulation returns the earlier material in modified versions to round out the movement. The second movement, the Symphony's scherzo, is built from a variant of the opening movement's main theme, and the relationship between the two movements is strengthened by the direct quotation and further development of the earlier melody in the central section. The *Larghetto* takes as its subject a romantic strain, first sung by the clarinet, for which the turbulent central episode, based on the slashing motive that opened the Symphony, provides formal and expressive contrast. The finale gathers together the principal thematic elements of the Symphony as a summary of the entire work: the slashing motive as introduction, a brilliant fanfare treatment of the first movement's main theme, a soaring transformation of the Gypsy-influenced melody, references to the scherzo and the *Larghetto* in the central section. The work closes with the final appearance of the slashing motive as a weighty coda.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 3

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Saturday, August 9, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor

Igor Yuzefovich, Violin

### WINE, WOMEN AND SONG

GLAZUNOV      Valse de Concert No. 2 in F major, Op. 51

TCHAIKOVSKY      Waltz from *Eugene Onégin*, Op. 24

TCHAIKOVSKY      Three Pieces for Violin and Orchestra

    Melodie from *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, Op. 42, No. 3

    Sérénade Mélancolique, Op. 26

    Valse-Scherzo, Op. 34

— INTERMISSION —

J. STRAUSS, JR.

*Roses from the South*, Waltz, Op. 388

*Voices of Spring*, Waltz, Op. 410

*Thunder and Lightning*, Polka Schnell, Op. 324

*Wine, Women and Song*, Waltz, Op. 333

*On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, Waltz, Op. 314

This concert is sponsored by Emil and Gail Fischer.

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Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 3

### **Valse de Concert No. 2 in F major, Op. 51** **Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)**

*Composed in 1894.*

By the turn of the 20th century, Russian music had become a mature art. The works of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky and Borodin, having been played at home and abroad, established a national character and tradition that those masters wanted to see passed on to succeeding generations. The most important Russian musical torchbearer of the two decades after 1900, the time between the deaths of Tchaikovsky and his contemporaries and the rise of the modern school of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, was Alexander Glazunov.

Glazunov was gifted with an exceptional ear and musical memory (after Borodin's death, he completely reconstructed the Overture to *Prince Igor* from recollections of Borodin's piano performance of the piece), and early demonstrated his gifts in his native St. Petersburg. By age nineteen, he had traveled to western Europe for a performance of his First Symphony. During the 1890s, he established a wide reputation as a composer and a conductor of his own works, journeying to Paris in 1889 to direct his Second Symphony at the World Exhibition. In 1899, he was engaged as instructor of composition and orchestration at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. When his teacher, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, was dismissed from the Conservatory staff in the wake of the 1905 revolutionary turmoil, Glazunov resigned in protest in April and did not return until December 14th, by which time most of the demands by the faculty for the school's autonomy had been granted. Two days later he was elected director of the Conservatory. He worked ceaselessly to improve the curriculum and standards of the Conservatory, and made a successful effort to preserve the school's independence after the 1917 Revolution. In the final years of his tenure, which lasted officially until 1930, Glazunov was criticized for his conservatism (Shostakovich, one of his students, devoted many admiring but frustrated pages to him in his purported memoirs, *Testimony*) and spent much time abroad. In 1929, he visited the United States to conduct the orchestras of Boston and Detroit in concerts of his music. When his health broke, in 1932, he settled with his wife in Paris; he died there in 1936. In 1972, his remains were transferred to Leningrad and reinterred in an honored grave. A research institute devoted to him in Munich and an archive in Paris were established in his memory.

The 19th-century mania for the Viennese waltz raged in Russia as virulently as it did in the rest of Europe — Johann Strauss the Younger spent many summers at the fashionable resort of Pavlovsk, south of St. Petersburg, after he began touring in 1856 — and left its progeny in the concert and stage works of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Liadov, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and other of the nation's composers. In 1894, Glazunov

contributed two fine specimens to the genre of the concert waltz, which are based on the Viennese model that strings together several continuous strains of complementary character.

### **Waltz from *Eugene Onégin*, Op. 24** **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**

*Composed in 1877-1878.*

*Premiered on March 29, 1879 in Moscow.*

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) is widely regarded as the greatest Russian poet of the 19th century. His narratives *Boris Godunov*, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, *The Golden Cockerel* and *The Queen of Spades* inspired some of the country's finest operas, but *Eugene Onégin*, his 1833 novel in verse, seemed an unlikely source for a libretto when Elizabeth Andreievna Lavrovskaya, a singer and professor at the Moscow Conservatory, suggested it to her faculty colleague Peter Tchaikovsky in May 1877 for his next stage work. *Onégin* is a story of delicate sensibilities, devoid of the grand dramatic gestures usually associated with opera, but Tchaikovsky was powerfully drawn by its very intimacy, telling his brother Modeste that "[it is] delightful to avoid the commonplace Pharaohs, Ethiopian Princesses, poisoned cups and all the rest of these dolls' tales. *Eugene Onégin* is full of poetry." Tchaikovsky sketched a scenario for the new opera in one sleepless night, engaged Konstantin Shilovsky the next morning to write the libretto, and eagerly began the music for Tatiana's letter scene even before Shilovsky had submitted any verses. More than half of the opera was sketched by early July, but work on it was interrupted by the roaring debacle of the homosexual Tchaikovsky's marriage later that month. The composer, in emotional anguish, fled from Moscow to his sister's estate at Kamenka, where he recovered enough presence of mind to finish most of the opera by the end of the summer. After a second disastrous attempt at living with his new wife, in September, Tchaikovsky was near collapse, and he decamped first to St. Petersburg and then to Vienna, Switzerland and Italy. Work afforded him solace, however, and the Fourth Symphony and *Eugene Onégin* were completed in Florence by February 1878.

In November 1877, even before *Eugene Onégin* was finished, Tchaikovsky proposed to Nikolai Rubinstein, director of the Moscow Conservatory, that the school stage some scenes from the new opera. Rubinstein agreed, but it was not until March 29, 1879 that the production was mounted at the Maly Theater. The student performers made an excellent effort, but there were some misgivings among the listeners and the composer's friends about the new work's fitness for Pushkin's revered verses. Critical reaction, however, was generally favorable. *Eugene Onégin* was given its first professional production by the Moscow Bolshoi on January 23, 1881, and soon came to be viewed as Tchaikovsky's greatest work in the form; it has remained a staple of the Russian repertory.

In the plot of the opera, the young and worldly Eugene Onégin arouses love for himself in Tatiana, a gentle country girl. She innocently writes him a letter revealing her feelings, to which Onégin haughtily replies that the best he can offer her is brotherly affection. At a ball in honor of Tatiana's name-day, Onégin deliberately inflames the jealousy of Lensky by flirting with Olga, Lensky's fiancée and Tatiana's sister. Lensky challenges Onégin to a duel, and is killed. Four years elapse, during which Onégin, haunted by Lensky's death, has sought diversion in constant travel and amusement. Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, he is invited to a party at the house of Prince Gremin, at which he again sees Tatiana, now a grand and beautiful lady after two years of marriage to the Prince. Onégin regrets his earlier refusal of Tatiana's advances and the unsettled state of his life, and realizes that he is, after all, in love with her. He pleads his affection in a series of passionate letters, and Tatiana agrees to see him. She confesses that she still loves him, but that she will not be untrue to her husband. She bids Onégin farewell forever, and leaves him distraught and overcome by despair.

The graceful Waltz is heard during the scene of Tatiana's name-day party at her family's country estate in Act II.

***Souvenir d'un lieu cher* for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 42  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

*Composed in 1878.*

After his disastrous marriage in the summer of 1877, Tchaikovsky fled from Moscow to his brother Modeste in St. Petersburg, and, early the next year, went on to Clarens on Switzerland's Lake Geneva. There he heard a performance of Lalo's colorful *Symphonie Espagnole* that inspired him to write his own violin concerto. Work on the piece went quickly, but he was dissatisfied with his original slow movement, which he called *Meditation*, and discarded it in favor of the lovely *Canzonetta* that occupies the center of the finished Concerto. The *Meditation* lay unused until Tchaikovsky was invited by his benefactress, Nadezhda von Meck, to visit her estate at Brailov in the Ukraine in June while she was spending the summer in Moscow. In one of his daily letters to her, he wrote, "I continue to be very pleased with Brailov.... Everything is perfect, and the house is more like a town house, large, luxurious and very comfortable. I like the garden more and more. Today I climbed over the wall and on the other side found a small square wood which I immediately explored. It happens to be what is left of a garden which had been planted by Catholic monks who had a monastery here until 1840. Of the walls that surrounded the monastery only the ruins of the gates are left; the trees are old and large, the grass thick and luscious. Of all I have seen here I like this charming little wood the best. Plenty of scope for imagination...." He was pampered unreservedly by Mme. von Meck's servants, who always had a carriage ready for his junkets and would bring him a splendid tea wherever his afternoon journey took him. He developed a passion for collecting mushrooms, and particularly enjoyed partaking in the religious services at a local nunnery, whose fine

choir, he carefully noted, was capable of reading music and was well directed.

In appreciation of Mme. von Meck's hospitality, Tchaikovsky wrote for her a little set of three violin and piano pieces, his only original works for that chamber combination, which he collectively titled *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* — "*Remembrance of a Dear Place*." Two of the movements, an elfin *Scherzo* and a tender *Melodie*, were composed at Brailov, but the first, *Meditation*, was the piece that he had left over from his sketches for the Violin Concerto. He gave the manuscript to one of the household servants when he left for Moscow on June 11th, and Mme. von Meck received the *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* upon her return to Brailov. The piano accompaniment was later orchestrated by Alexander Glazunov.

***Sérénade Mélancolique* for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 26  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

*Composed in 1875.*

*Premiered on January 28, 1876 in Moscow, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein with Adolf Brodsky as soloist.*

The New Year of 1875 found Tchaikovsky mired in one of the worst periods of depression and self-deprecation that he ever experienced. On the preceding Christmas Eve, he had taken his newly sketched B-flat minor Piano Concerto to Nikolai Rubinstein, director of the Moscow Conservatory and his boss, for an evaluation. Rubinstein vilified it. Tchaikovsky was both enraged and wounded. His always-delicate nerves gave way and his doctors advised him to travel abroad, forbidding him to compose or touch a piano, which counsel he ignored by staying in winter-bound Moscow to continue his teaching duties at the Conservatory. On January 21, 1875, he wrote to his brother Anatoli of the underlying cause of his malaise: "I am very, very lonely here, and if it weren't for my constant work, I should simply succumb to my melancholia. It's a fact that XXX [his symbol in his correspondence and diaries for his homosexuality] constitutes an unbridgeable chasm between me and the majority of people. It imparts to my character an aloofness, a fear of people, a timidity, an excessive shyness, a distrustfulness — in a word, a thousand traits that are making me more and more unsociable." He admitted to Modeste, Anatoli's twin, that he was so disgusted with his life that he often considered suicide. He could rouse little enthusiasm for composition during the first months of 1875, completing just the bittersweet *Sérénade Mélancolique* for Violin and Orchestra (Op. 26) for Leopold Auer and a handful of songs. The only solution to his problem, he believed, was to marry, as a sign to himself and to the world that he was capable of fitting his life into a traditional mold. "From this day on I will seriously consider entering into matrimony with any woman," he wrote to Modeste. "I am convinced that my inclinations are the greatest and insuperable barrier to my well-being, and I must by all means struggle against my nature." He finally did marry, in 1877 — to one of his students — and it was a complete disaster. His marital catastrophe did serve, however, to exorcise at least some of his personal devils and to bring him some measure of contentment with himself thereafter.

The *Sérénade Mélancolique*, whose title and mood were almost certainly influenced by the emotional turmoil of the time of the work's composition, is one of Tchaikovsky's most attractive miniatures. It was apparently written at the suggestion of Leopold Auer, the famed Hungarian violinist who was called to St. Petersburg in 1868 to serve both as soloist in the Imperial Orchestra and successor to Wieniawski as professor at the Conservatory, where he became the teacher of such distinguished virtuosos as Heifetz, Elman and Zimbalist. Auer had led the first St. Petersburg performances of Tchaikovsky's two string quartets (the Third Quartet dates from 1876), but had not had any personal dealings with the composer until they were introduced at Nikolai Rubinstein's home in Moscow early in January 1875. In appreciation of Auer's advocacy of his music, and to have one of his compositions associated with the country's leading virtuoso, Tchaikovsky wrote the *Sérénade* quickly later that month and dedicated the score to the violinist upon its publication. It was not Auer who gave the premiere, however, but Adolf Brodsky, who played the work on January 28, 1876 at a Russian Musical Society concert in Moscow conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein; Auer first played it ten months later, when he gave its first performance in St. Petersburg on November 18th. The success of the *Sérénade Mélancolique* and of another small work for violin and orchestra (the 1877 *Valse-Scherzo*) encouraged Tchaikovsky to write a full-length Concerto in March and April 1878. He tried to enlist Auer to give its premiere, but, when the violinist saw the score, he railed at what he called its difficulty and "radicalism" and turned down the offer. Tchaikovsky angrily withdrew his plan to dedicate the Concerto to Auer, and then had to search for three years to find another player who would take on the work's challenge. The honor of the premiere of another Tchaikovsky composition therefore fell, once again, to Adolf Brodsky. Soon after the premiere, Auer admitted his mistake about the Concerto, and espoused it wholeheartedly, making it one of the principal vehicles of his concertizing and teaching.

The *Sérénade Mélancolique* plies familiar Tchaikovskyian expressive waters. "[It is] highly characteristic of Tchaikovsky's art," wrote Eric Blom, "in that vein of mingled sadness and graciousness in which he excelled when he felt things profoundly without being in too emotionally self-indulgent a mood." The piece encompasses three lyrical paragraphs, the first and last sharing the same theme and pensive mood, while the shorter center section is more animated in rhythm and brighter in spirit.

### ***Valse-Scherzo for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 34* Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

*Composed in 1877.*

*Premiered on September 20, 1878 in Paris, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein with Stanislaw Barcewicz as soloist.*

Early in 1876, Karl von Meck, who made himself rich by spanning Russia's vast spaces with railway lines, died, leaving his widow, Nadezhda, with a great fortune, two railroads and twelve children. Mme. von Meck largely withdrew from public life and sought solace in

travel, in her family, in seeing that her husband's legacy was properly managed, and in music. Among the few visitors she admitted was Nikolai Rubinstein, pianist, conductor and director of the Moscow Conservatory, who was discrete and sympathetic and keenly aware of her ability to help his institution. Mme. von Meck asked Rubinstein to recommend a violinist she could accompany at the piano at home and on her travels, and he suggested a recent graduate of the Conservatory named Joseph Kotek. Kotek was immediately engaged at a splendid salary. In addition to his violin training at the Conservatory, Kotek had also been a student in Tchaikovsky's composition class, and he had developed a strong affection for both the man and his music. It was through Rubinstein and Kotek that Mme. von Meck came to know not only of Tchaikovsky's work but also of his financial difficulties, a result of both his meager salary and his generosity to his friends. She became enthralled with his music and determined to help him, and before the end of the year she had commissioned him to make an arrangement of a piece of his (it is unknown which one) for her to play with Kotek. "Allow me to express my gratitude for the swift execution of my commission," she wrote to him on December 30th. "Your music makes life easier and more pleasant." "Thank you most sincerely for the kind and flattering things you have been good enough to write me," he replied. Other exchanges followed, increasingly more personal and revealing on both sides, and by spring 1877, she had offered to support Tchaikovsky with a generous annual pension that would allow him to quit his irksome teaching job at the Moscow Conservatory to devote himself entirely to composition. Though the two never met, their correspondence and financial arrangement continued for the next thirteen years.

It was early in 1877 that Tchaikovsky composed his tuneful and brilliant *Valse-Scherzo* for Violin and Orchestra. The piece was written for Kotek, and may well have been associated with the quickly developing relationship with Mme. von Meck, but documentary evidence on that point is lacking. Though the *Valse-Scherzo* was intended for Kotek, circumstances prevented him from giving its first performance. Nikolai Rubinstein scheduled a concert of Tchaikovsky's music for September 20, 1878 at the Paris Exhibition which was to include the First Piano Concerto (with Rubinstein also serving as soloist), *The Tempest*, the *Sérénade Mélancolique* and the *Valse-Scherzo*. Kotek, however, was just then starting a new position teaching violin at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, so the honor of the premiere of the *Valse-Scherzo* fell to the Polish violinist Stanislaw Barcewicz, another student of Tchaikovsky at the Moscow Conservatory. Kotek and Tchaikovsky remained friends: Kotek gave technical advice on the Violin Concerto and often acted as intermediary with Mme. von Meck in financial matters, and the composer paid a special visit to the violinist in 1885, when Kotek was dying of tuberculosis, at age 29, in a sanatorium at Davos, Switzerland.

There is more waltz than scherzo in the *Valse-Scherzo*, one of Tchaikovsky's many splendid examples of the most popular and elegant dance form of his day. The piece takes as its main theme a lilting strain given by the

violin after a few prelude gestures from the orchestra. A complementary episode of considerable technical challenge for the soloist intervenes before the main theme returns to round out the work's first section. The center of the piece (the "trio" of Tchaikovsky's scherzo form) is occupied by music of a more thoughtful nature, and culminates in a cadenza that serves as a bridge to the recall of the opening music which closes this delightful composition.

### **Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825-1899)**

#### ***Roses from the South, Waltz, Op. 388***

*Composed in 1880.*

*Premiered on November 7, 1880 in Vienna, conducted by Eduard Strauss.*

Johann Strauss' operetta *Das Spitzentuch der Königin* ("The Queen's Lace Handkerchief"), whose convoluted plot has the famed Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes resolving intrigues at the 16th-century Portuguese court, premiered with modest success at Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien on October 1, 1880; after opening the Casino Theatre in New York on October 21, 1882, it was his most popular stage work with American audiences for many years. For a Sunday afternoon concert at the Musikverein directed by his brother Eduard on November 7th, Strauss assembled a sequence of waltz melodies from the operetta under the title *Roses from the South*.

#### ***Voices of Spring, Waltz, Op. 410***

*Composed in 1883.*

*Premiered in March 1883 in Vienna, conducted by the composer.*

*Voices of Spring* was composed in 1883 as a virtuoso showpiece for the coloratura soprano Bianca Bianchi; the text was by Richard Genée. The work met with little acclaim when Bianchi premiered it at the Theater-an-der-Wien, the critics rating it as "mediocre," "not very melodious" and "top-heavy with coloratura." *Voices of Spring* proved popular on Strauss' tours abroad, however, and it enjoyed wide success in a piano transcription that the composer made for his friend Alfred Grünfeld. Even the Viennese press came eventually to admire the work, allowing that *Voices of Spring* was "closer to Mozart and Schubert than to Lanner and Father Strauss" because of its elegance and sophistication.

#### ***Thunder and Lightning, Polka Schnell, Op. 324***

*Composed in 1868.*

*Premiered on February 16, 1868 in Vienna.*

*Thunder and Lightning* originated as a *Schnell-Polka* ("Fast Polka") titled *Sternschnuppe* ("Shooting Star") written for the Hesperus Ball given by the Vienna Artists' Association on February 16, 1868; Johann, Josef and

Eduard Strauss took turns conducting the orchestra that evening. For the traditional "Carnival Revue" on March 1st of all the new pieces that the Strauss brothers had written for that year's festivities (twenty in 1868), Johann revised *Sternschnuppe* and re-titled it *Donner und Blitz* — *Thunder and Lightning*.

#### ***Wine, Women and Song, Waltz, Op. 333***

*Composed in 1869.*

Strauss' waltz *Wine, Women and Song*, whose title was also something of a credo for the voluptuous closing decades of the Viennese empire, was composed in February 1869 for the annual "Fool's Evening" of the Vienna Men's Choral Association, which sang the vocal parts supplied for the original version. The Strauss Orchestra appeared in an assortment of carnival hats to complement the company's fanciful costumes. Though his disparagement of his contemporaries knew few limits, Richard Wagner genuinely admired Johann Strauss and he claimed *Wine, Women and Song* as his favorite waltz. On his 63rd birthday, as he was listening to an amateur orchestra in Bayreuth conducted by Anton Seidl, Wagner bolted from his chair and took over the direction of the piece. Wagner once called Strauss "the most musical brain I've ever known," and delighted in playing the Viennese composer's music for his visitors.

#### ***On the Beautiful Blue Danube, Waltz, Op. 314***

*Composed in 1867.*

*Premiered on February 15, 1867 in Vienna, conducted by Johann Herbeck.*

*On the Beautiful Blue Danube* almost sank beneath the waves at its launching. Johann Herbeck, director of the Vienna Men's Chorus, asked Strauss if he could provide a new piece for his ensemble, and Strauss responded with a melody inspired by a line from a poem of Karl Isidor Beck: "On the Danube, on the beautiful, blue Danube." Herbeck assigned Josef Weyl, a police clerk who sang in the chorus and a poet-manqué, to concoct some verses to fit Strauss' exquisite melody. "Vienna, be gay! And what for, pray? The light of the arc! Here it's still dark!" was the best that Weyl could do. (Hans Fantel suggested that this doggerel may have been prompted by the carbon-electrode lights just beginning to sprout on Vienna's street corners.) The press notices of this new choral number's premiere on February 15, 1867 were not unkind, but Strauss judged the whole thing a marginal fiasco, and tucked *The Blue Danube* in his desk. Later that year, he was invited to take part in the International Exhibition in Paris that Napoleon III was staging in honor of himself. His music proved so successful in the French capital that he dusted off *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* and displayed it to the delirious Parisians. Within weeks, demand for the work had spread across the western world, and *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* has since come to be regarded as the quintessential expression of the Viennese waltz.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 4

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Tuesday, August 12, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Alain Trudel, Guest Conductor

Winston Choi, Piano

### CLASSICS OLD AND NEW

STRAVINSKY

Suite from *Pulcinella*

Sinfonia (Overture): Allegro moderato

Serenata: Larghetto —

Scherzino — Allegro — Andantino

Tarantella —

Toccata: Allegro

Gavotta con due variazioni: Allegro moderato

Vivo

Minuetto: Molto moderato —

Finale: Allegro assai

J.S. BACH

Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, BWV 1052

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

*Performed in Memory of William Tritt*

— INTERMISSION —

J.S. BACH

Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068

Overture

Air

Gavottes I and II

Bourrée

Gigue

STRAVINSKY

Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments

Largo — Allegro — Maestoso

Largo

Allegro

This concert is sponsored by the Ralph and Genevieve B. Horween Foundation  
in memory of Marion Horween Chase.

Winston Choi appears by arrangement with Marilyn Gilbert Artists Management, Inc.

Mr. Choi is performing on the Esther Browning Piano.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.*

## Program 4

### Suite from *Pulcinella*

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Composed in 1919-1920.

Premiered on May 15, 1920 in Paris, conducted by Ernest Ansermet.

The appearance of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* in 1920 caused some consternation among the critics and public of Paris. The musical world had just recovered from the seismic shock of *Le Sacre du Printemps* ("The Rite of Spring") of 1913, the work that caused the most tempestuous opening-night riot in the annals of music. During the intervening years, Stravinsky had come to be viewed not so much as a wild-eyed anarchist as a highly individual aberration of the great and continuing tradition of Russian Romantic music: he employed folk-like themes; he orchestrated in the grand manner of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov; and he wrote sharply etched rhythms that galvanized the *corps de ballet*, even if they played havoc with the toe-tapping proclivities of the patrons. The musical community allowed that, by 1920, they knew Stravinsky well enough to be able to predict the future of his career. They were wrong.

Stravinsky, though not uninterested in public opinion, was certainly not one to allow it to dictate the course of his music. He realized that *Le Sacre* had carried the techniques of the traditional Russian style about as far as they could go, and his artistic sense impelled him to strike out in new directions. During the First World War, when the logistical problems of assembling a large symphony orchestra were frequently insurmountable, he started to compose for small chamber ensembles. *Les Noces* ("The Weddings"), *The Soldier's Tale* and *The Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* date from that time. Those works were not well known in Paris, however, and when *Pulcinella* appeared there was general surprise at what many perceived to be a stylistic about-face by Stravinsky. Gone were the massive orchestras of the early ballets, the hectic rhythmic patterns, the riveting dissonances. In their place, Stravinsky offered a ballet, scored for small orchestra with three solo voices, whose melodies, sonority and ethos were built on the Baroque models of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, a musical meteor who flashed briefly across the Italian artistic firmament during the early years of the 18th century (1710-1736) and created several important instrumental and operatic pieces that laid the foundations of the Classical style. Once the novelty had passed from *Pulcinella*, however, the public was delighted with the new piece, and Stravinsky reaped much approval for lighting out on a different path, one carefully attuned to the time. The ballet became a success, and its style led the way to a new attitude about the relationship between 20th-century music and that of earlier eras, a trend that became known as "Neo-Classicism."

The idea for *Pulcinella* originated with Serge Diaghilev,

the legendary impresario of the Ballet Russe, who had also engaged Léonide Massine to choreograph the piece and devise the scenario and an appropriate text for the three vocal soloists, and Pablo Picasso to do the decor and costumes. For the work's musical substance, Diaghilev suggested the music of Pergolesi to Stravinsky. The composer, perhaps with Diaghilev's help (Stravinsky's writings are unclear on this matter), selected from Pergolesi's works several movements from the trio sonatas and arias from two operas. To these he added a generous gaggle of musical bits by other composers. In general, he kept the bass lines and melodies of his models intact but added to them his own spicy harmonies and invigorating rhythmic fillips, and then illuminated the whole piece with a brilliant, translucent orchestration. Stravinsky's role in *Pulcinella*, however, was far more than that of simply transcriber or arranger. He not only created a cogent work of art from a wide variety of previously unrelated pieces, but he also gave a new perspective to both his own and Pergolesi's music. "*Pulcinella*," he recalled in the autobiographical *Dialogues and a Diary*, "was my discovery of the past — but it was a look in the mirror, too." With this music, Stravinsky found a manner in which to apply earlier styles and techniques to his own compositional needs, a discovery that was to provide the inspiration for his works for the next thirty years. "Art about art" is American composer and critic Eric Salzman's perfect phrase describing the essence of Stravinsky's neo-classical aesthetic during the ensuing three decades.

The plot of *Pulcinella* was based on an 18th-century manuscript of *commedia dell'arte* plays Diaghilev discovered in Naples. Stravinsky provided the following synopsis: "All the local girls are in love with Pulcinella; but the young men to whom they are betrothed are mad with jealousy and plot to kill him. The minute they think they have succeeded, they borrow costumes resembling Pulcinella's to present themselves to their sweethearts in disguise. But Pulcinella — cunning fellow! — has already changed places with a double, who pretends to succumb to their blows. The real Pulcinella, disguised as a magician, now resuscitates his double. At the very moment when the young men, thinking they are rid of their rival, come to claim their sweethearts, Pulcinella appears and arranges all the marriages. He himself weds Pimpinella, receiving the blessing of his double, who in his turn has assumed the magician's mantle."

In 1922, Stravinsky extracted an orchestral suite from *Pulcinella* whose movements serve as a précis of the ballet's music and story. The exuberant Sinfonia (Overture), based on the opening movement of Pergolesi's Trio Sonata No. 1 in G major, serves as the curtain-raiser for Stravinsky's insouciant tale. The movements that follow accompany the entrances of the Neapolitan girls who try to attract Pulcinella's attention with their dances. (The Serenata derives from a pastorale in Act I of Pergolesi's opera *Flaminio*; the Scherzino, Allegro and Andantino are all borrowed from trio sonatas by the Venetian violinist and composer Domenico Gallo.) The Tarantella (from the

fourth movement of Fortunato Chelleri's Concertino No. 6 in B-flat major) portrays the confusion when Pulcinella is apparently restored to life. The five movements that close the suite serve as background for the events from the point at which the young men claim their sweet-hearts until the end of the ballet. The Toccata and Gavotte are based on anonymous harpsichord pieces; the Vivo on Pergolesi's F major Cello Sonata; the Minuetto on a canzone from his comic opera *Lo frate 'nnamorato*; and the Finale on a trio sonata by Gallo.

**Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, BWV 1052**  
**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

*Composed around 1730.*

It is said that when the Viennese were finally able to drive the Turks from their walls in 1683, the fleeing legions left behind an unforeseen legacy — coffee. The rage for the stimulating new beverage swept through Austria and into Germany, where coffee houses became important centers of society and amusement. In order to give public concerts of instrumental music at one of the local coffee houses in Leipzig, in 1704 Georg Philipp Telemann organized some of his fellow students at the city's university into a performing group known as the "*Collegium Musicum*," a "*Musical College (or Society)*." So popular did their programs prove to be that they were continued after the close of the school term, though the proceedings were moved into the coffee house garden during the clement summer weather so the patrons could enjoy the pleasant outdoor setting without sacrificing propinquity to the brewing pot. Those Friday afternoon concerts became a fixture of life in Leipzig, and they were still popular when Bach arrived in 1723 to assume the position of cantor and organist at the Thomas Church. In 1729, he took over the leadership of the Collegium Musicum and continued in the post for seven years. In addition to his work at the Thomas Church and with the Collegium during those years, Bach also derived special delight from making music at home with his family. He wrote to his old friend Georg Erdmann in 1730, "Altogether, [the children] are born musicians, and I can assure you that I am already able to form a concert, both vocal and instrumental, with my family, especially since my present wife sings with a very clear soprano, and my eldest daughter too does not join in badly." It was for use at both his home entertainments and at the Collegium concerts that Bach created his concertos for keyboard.

Thirteen of Bach's keyboard concertos have survived. Seven are for solo clavier (only the beginning of an eighth is extant), three for two claviers, two for three, and one for four. (The multiple-keyboard works were probably for performance by him and his oldest sons — Wilhelm Friedemann, Carl Philip Emanuel and Johann Gottfried Bernhard — who began leaving home in 1733 to start their own careers.) Though Bach is not usually looked upon as an innovator, these concertos were the first works written for solo keyboards and orchestra, a stylistic advance previewed by the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto, which, about a decade earlier, had raised the clavier from its traditional accompanimental role to

that of a peer to the other solo instruments. Rather than compose completely original music for these Leipzig keyboard concertos, however, Bach turned to earlier concerted pieces for violin and solo wind instruments, and reworked them for clavier. The Italian concertos of Vivaldi and his contemporaries were very much the fashion in Germany during the first half of the 18th century, and Bach had been studying them for years: he transcribed no fewer than sixteen such works for organ. For these keyboard concertos, however, he seems to have used mostly his own music, some of which has been identified, some conjectured. The Third and Seventh Concertos, for example, are arrangements of the E major and A minor Violin Concertos; the Sixth corresponds to the Fourth Brandenburg. Some of the music was used yet again in other works — parts of the D minor Concerto reappear in two cantatas; the slow movement of the F minor Concerto was used in another vocal work. Though the keyboard concertos are modeled on earlier works for solo melody instruments, they show richer textures, greater integration of soloist and accompaniment, and more idiomatic writing for the keyboard than is heard in their predecessors.

The source of the Concerto No. 1 in D minor continues to puzzle scholars. From stylistic evidence, it seems to have been based originally on a violin concerto by a composer other than Bach. An early version of Bach's arrangement for harpsichord and orchestra corresponds with instrumental movements in his Cantatas No. 188 (*Ich habe meine Zuversicht* ["I have my faith"]) and No. 146 (*Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal* ["We must go through much sorrow"]). The final version of the Concerto, the one known today, apparently represents yet a further refinement of the earlier arrangements. The structure of the opening movement follows the ubiquitous Baroque formal practice of *ritornello*, which is characterized by a returning orchestral refrain separated by episodes for the soloist. This *Allegro* is music of grave countenance but vigorous rhythmic energy that embodies the Baroque ideals of touching sentiment allied with physical stimulation. The somber *Adagio* is an elaborately decorated song spun by the soloist above affective harmonies in the orchestra. The finale returns the bracing vitality of the first movement. Its dashing rhythmic motion is enriched by elaborate conversational interchanges between orchestra and soloist. This music of clearly etched, contrasting moods recalls the words of the venerated conductor Sir Thomas Beecham about the art of making music: "For a fine performance only two things are absolutely necessary: the maximum of virility coupled with the maximum of delicacy."

**Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068**  
**Johann Sebastian Bach**

*Composed around 1720.*

From 1717 to 1723, Bach was director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. He liked his job. His employer, Prince Leopold, was a well-educated man, 24 years old at the time he engaged Bach. (Bach was 32.) Leopold was fond of travel and books and

paintings, but his real passion was music. He was an accomplished musician who not only played violin, viola da gamba and harpsichord well enough to join with the professionals in his house orchestra, but he also had an exceptional bass voice. He started the court musical establishment in 1707 with three players (his puritanical father had no use for music), and by the time of Bach's appointment the ensemble had grown to nearly twenty performers equipped with a fine set of instruments. It was for this group that Bach wrote many of his outstanding instrumental works, including the Brandenburg Concertos, *Orchestral Suites*, *Violin Concertos* and much of his chamber music. Leopold appreciated Bach's genius, and Bach returned the compliment when he said of his Prince, "He loved music, he was well acquainted with it, he understood it." Though the exact dates of Bach's *Orchestral Suites* are uncertain, all four were composed during or immediately after the Cöthen period.

These *Suites* (Bach would have called them "Overtures" — French for "opening piece" — after their majestic first movements) follow the early 18th-century German taste of deriving stylistic inspiration from France. It was Jean Baptiste Lully, composer to the legendary court of Louis XIV, whose operas and instrumental music set the fashion. Lully filled his operas with dances to please the taste of his ballet-mad King. If the mood struck him, Louis would even shed his ermine robes and tread a step or two with the dancers on stage. (Reports, all — understandably — laudatory, had it that he was excellent.) For formal ballroom dancing or dinner entertainment or concert performance, Lully extracted individual dance movements from his operas, prefaced them with the opera's overture, and served them up as *suites*. C.H. Parry wrote that these *Orchestral Suites* show Bach's genius "in a singular and almost unique phase: for none of the movements, however gay and merry, ever loses the distinction of noble art. However freely they sparkle and play, they are never trivial, but bear even in the lightest moments the impress of a great mind and the essentially sincere character of the composer."

Each of Bach's four *Suites* is scored for a different orchestral ensemble. Three trumpets, two oboes and timpani join the strings and continuo (bass and keyboard) in the Third Suite. Each Suite comprises a grandiose Overture followed by a series of dances of various characters. The aptly named "French" Overtures are based on the type devised by Lully — a slow, almost pompous opening section filled with snapping rhythmic figures and rich harmony leading without pause to a spirited fugal passage in faster tempo. The majestic character of the opening section returns to round out the Overture's form. The chain of movements that follows varies from one Suite to the next, though Bach's sense of musical architecture demands that they create a pleasing balance of tempos and moods. The first such movement in the Third Suite bears the title *Air*, a general term used during Bach's time for an instrumental piece in slow tempo with a sweet, ingratiating melody in the upper voice. This haunting, bittersweet music is one of Bach's best-loved creations. Next is a pair of *Gavottes*, a dance of moderate liveliness whose ancestry traces back to French peasant music. The *Bourrée*, also of French origin, is joyful and diverting in character, and,

when danced, was begun with a brisk leap, which is mirrored in Bach's quick upbeat pattern. The *Gigue* was derived from an English folk dance, and became popular as the model for instrumental compositions by French and Italian musicians when it migrated to the Continent.

## Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments

Igor Stravinsky

*Composed in 1923-1924.*

*Premiered on May 22, 1924 in Paris, conducted by Sergei Koussevitzky with the composer as soloist.*

Stravinsky, though principally remembered as one of the 20th-century's compositional giants, was also a gifted conductor, lecturer, writer and, for the fifteen years after 1924, pianist. He had been well trained in keyboard performance during his student years, and he composed at the piano throughout his life, but before and during World War I, he had been so busy with creative work that his technique had fallen into disrepair. His interest in the piano as a concert instrument was rekindled through his work on the transcription of the *Three Movements from "Petrushka"* that he did for Artur Schnabel in 1921 and the clangorous tintinnabulations of *Les Noces* of 1923. Additionally, his music was beginning to receive serious critical attention at that time (the *Revue Musicale* of December 1923 was the first important publication devoted exclusively to him), and he was looking for other ways — Stravinsky was never shy about displaying his abilities — to publicize himself. The conductor and Russian compatriot Sergei Koussevitzky suggested that perhaps a concerto for piano, with the solo part played by the composer himself, would be an appropriate vehicle for his varied talents, especially since Stravinsky's first American tour was just then being arranged. Stravinsky was hesitant, fearing that he would not have time to work up the necessary technique and endurance. "But," he wrote in his *Chronicles*, "I am by nature rather tempted by anything needing prolonged effort, and prone to persist in overcoming difficulties; and as also the prospect of creating my work myself, and thus establishing the manner in which I wanted it to be played, greatly attracted me, I finally decided to accept the proposal." Composition competed with Czerny finger exercises during the ensuing several months.

The Concerto for Piano and Winds opens with a dark-hued and weighty introduction. The main body of the first movement begins with a change of tempo, a spark of lightning, and the initial entry of the soloist. This fast section is ternary (A-B-A) in design, with the exposition reappearing nearly intact. The introductory material in a brighter setting is recalled to close the movement. The second movement is also ternary in form. A heavy tread forms the accompaniment to an operatic lament in the opening and closing sections, while the center section is sung by woodwinds over a rocking accompaniment. A flashing piano cadenza is used both to lead into and out of this latter portion. The finale returns the bounding rhythms of the opening movement (there are some thematic connections, as well); the ending evokes the swinging rhythms of jazz.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 5

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Thursday, August 14, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Susanna Self, Flute  
Robert McConnell, Emerging Conductor

### **RACHMANINOFF II**

DVOŘÁK      Legend in G major, Op. 59, No. 2  
                 Robert McConnell, Conductor  
                 Emerging Conductor Program

NIELSEN      Flute Concerto  
                 Allegro moderato  
                 Allegretto — Adagio ma non troppo — Allegretto — Tempo di marcia

— INTERMISSION —

RACHMANINOFF      Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27  
                 Largo — Allegro moderato  
                 Allegro molto  
                 Adagio  
                 Allegro vivace

*Performed in Memory of Marion Marcellus*

Pre-concert talk — 6:00-6:45

This concert is sponsored by Richard Kozak in memory of Marian R. Polito.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.  
Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 5

### Legend in G major, Op. 59, No. 2

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

*Composed in 1881.*

The year 1881 was a watershed in Bohemian history. Having ruled much of Eastern Europe since the early 16th century, the Austrians found it necessary to start easing their steely grip on their territories following the uprisings of 1848, and by the closing decades of the 19th century they were willing to make important concessions to try to appease the rising tide of nationalism in the provinces. Among the 1881 changes in Bohemia were: a greater share of parliamentary representation in Vienna for the delegates from Prague; the elevation of the Czech language to a semi-official status, so that correspondence with the government, including applications for civil service employment, could be written in Czech rather than in German, and so that witnesses in court could henceforth give testimony in their native tongue; the creation of the Czech University at Prague; and the opening of the National Theater in the capital city.

By 1881, three years after the appearance of his *Slavonic Dances*, Antonín Dvořák had established himself as one of the leaders of Czech culture, and much of his music of the time (*Slavonic Dances*, A major String Sextet, E-flat String Quartet, *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, *Mazurek* for Violin, *Czech Suite*) shows the indelible nationalistic influence of indigenous songs and dances. On October 15, 1880, one day before he completed the Sixth Symphony, Dvořák notified his publisher in Berlin, Fritz Simrock, that he intended to begin immediately a set of piano pieces collectively titled *Legends* that would be a sort of pendant in style and mood to the *Slavonic Dances*. However, a trip to Vienna the following month to discuss the premiere of the new Sixth Symphony with its dedicatee, conductor Hans Richter, delayed the composition of the *Legends*, as did a commission from Simrock in December to orchestrate five of Brahms' *Hungarian Dances*, originally for piano, and Dvořák was not able to undertake the work until February 16th; he finished the ten pieces in Prague and at his sister-in-law's country estate in Vysoká by March 22nd, and orchestrated them later that year.

Like Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* and his own *Slavonic Dances*, the *Legends* were first written for piano, four-hands and later orchestrated. Also like those works, they were not intended to convey any specific programmatic content but rather entrust the discovery of extra-musical meanings to the listener's imagination. In his study of Dvořák's orchestral compositions, Otakar Sourek wrote, "Everything in the *Legends* is on an intimate and dainty scale.... Everything is determined by the content of the compositions, which are illuminated by a truly legend-like tenderness, and, whether they sing of love or loving, suffering or sacrifice, of enthusiasm or glory, always tell

their story with a warm fervency, and are always shrouded in the same shadowy mysticism that gives them their special quality: a particular sweetness and spirituality of expression." Though the *Legends* have never achieved the enormous success of the *Slavonic Dances*, they are among the most characteristic and immediately appealing of Dvořák's works. When Simrock sent Johannes Brahms an advance copy of the score, that doyen of Viennese music replied, "Please give Dvořák my greetings and tell him how much his *Legends* have given me lasting pleasure. They are a fascinating work, and the man's fresh, exuberant, rich powers of invention are enviable."

The Legend No. 2 (G major) takes as its main theme a lyrical melody of almost hymn-like serenity and balances that with two related intervening episodes of more animated character.

### Flute Concerto

Carl Nielsen (1865 -1931)

*Composed in 1926.*

*Premiered on October 21, 1926 in Paris, conducted by Emil Telmányi with Holger Gilbert-Jespersen as soloist.*

Carl Nielsen, Denmark's greatest composer, was fascinated by the wind instruments of the orchestra all his life. As a boy, he received instruction on the cornet and demonstrated such early proficiency that he was able to perform as a military trumpeter in Odense by the age of fourteen. Among his earliest compositional ventures during those teenage years were some dance pieces for the Odense band and a quartet for cornet, trumpet and two trombones. In the six symphonies of his maturity, which form the heart of his output, Nielsen always took special care with the scoring of the wind and brass instruments. He not only exulted in writing passages deliberately intended to challenge the technique of the individual instruments, but he also tried to capture something of their unique characteristics in his music. His interest in composing specifically for the winds was spurred in 1921 when he heard a rehearsal of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat (K. 297b) by the Copenhagen Wind Quintet. He produced a Wind Quintet (Op. 43) the following year, and also determined to write a concerto for each of the members of the Copenhagen ensemble that would be tailored to the technique and personality of the individual musicians. He was able to finish only the concertos for flute and clarinet (there is a third concerto for violin), but these pieces are among the most important for their instruments written during the 20th century.

Largely because of his labors on the problematical Sixth Symphony, Nielsen was unable to begin work on his Flute Concerto until 1926, by which time the Copenhagen Quintet's original flutist, Paul Hagemann, had been replaced by Holger Gilbert-Jespersen. Nielsen composed the Concerto during a sojourn in Florence, completing the first movement there on September 6th and the second on October 1st. Gilbert-Jespersen introduced the work at the Salle Gaveau in Paris on October 21st; the orchestra was directed by the composer's son-

in-law, the violinist and conductor Emil Telmányi. Despite its good reception (Arthur Honegger described it as “piquant, fluent and with no dearth of humor”), Nielsen was dissatisfied with the tonal structure of the Concerto’s ending, and he revised the score before conducting it for the first time, in Oslo on November 9th.

In his study of Nielsen’s music, British author and composer Robert Simpson wrote that the Flute Concerto “has a ripe sense of fun with a deeply poetic insight into human character; in many ways it is the richest and most original concerto ever written for the flute.” One of Nielsen’s favorite compositional techniques was to pit two instruments against each other as virtual combatants. In the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, this device was used to realize the music’s underlying philosophical program, but in this Concerto, it was used for fun — specifically in the squaring off between the flute and the bass trombone, which Kaikhosru Sorabji described as the soloist’s *persona ingratisima*. “This coarse individual spreads himself all over the score with a grotesque and aimless blether,” noted Simpson, “as if looking for something he has never even remembered to forget, while the aristocratic flute expresses its outraged sensibilities.” The object of the Concerto’s search is not discovered until late in the second movement, when the trombone stumbles upon a tidy little march tune in 6/8 meter. “This is plainly what everybody has been looking for,” continued Simpson, “and the discomfiture of the flute at having been forestalled by a mere uncouth yokel is clear in the exquisitely graceful and pained phrases he emits. As for the trombone, his chortles of joy take the form of distinctly uncultured *glissandi*, and the Concerto ends on this delightful note.”

In 1929, Nielsen wrote his own description of the Flute Concerto’s progress: “First Movement: Even though the Concerto begins with a dissonance, it might still come under the designation, ‘gentler zone.’ The beginning is, if anything, kept in a free, improvisatory style, and the solo instrument moves about as if seeking something, until it takes hold of a little, more decisive motive, which is later taken up by the orchestra and subsequently comes to play a certain part in a fairly developed transition to the movement’s second theme (a ‘song-subject’). This is first stated by the orchestra, after which the solo flute plays the same thing a fourth higher and then goes on into a little conversation with the solo clarinet and a bassoon. A vigorous crescendo-measure after that drives the solo instrument on to some more impassioned expressions, but this is not very severely intended, and we slide once more into a peaceful state of affairs with some small pottering about here and there. But then it seems as if the instrument is beginning to become bored, and so it seizes upon a somewhat more pronounced and fugal theme, which is suddenly interrupted by the timpani, who soon after chase a solo trombone out of its inertia. The solo flute becomes quite nervous and screams out, and now things grow more lively in their haggling. Gradually, the orchestral writing also becomes fuller and more agitated, though this is not for long: for the flute cannot forswear its nature, it hails from Arcadia and prefers the pastoral atmospheres.

Consequently, the composer is obliged to conform to its mild nature, if he would not risk being branded as a barbarian. There appear no more new factors in the first movement, but the soloist still has a pair of free cadenzas and a duet with the solo clarinet. The movement ends not as it began, but contrary-wise; it subsides gently to repose in G-flat major, whereas it began dissonantly and without a key.

“Second Movement: In order to move away from the gentle G-flat major tonality that ended the first movement, the orchestra jabs, somewhat maliciously, a few notes at the beginning of the movement, but this quickly turns milder, and when the solo flute comes in it is quite child-like and innocent. Through a good many more ‘spicy’ episodes, we arrive at last at an *Adagio*, where the solo instrument sings a mournful melody, which is also developed and elucidated in the orchestra. Thereafter, the first (innocent) motive returns and is treated anew, but it passes once more into some slow measures from the *Adagio*. Then something new happens: there appears a little march-motive, which puts the solo flute in a better mood, and the movement ends in this lighter, more superficial, and smiling atmosphere.”

### **Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27** **Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**

*Composed in 1906-1907.*

*Premiered on January 26, 1908 in St. Petersburg, conducted by the composer.*

How much Rachmaninoff’s life changed in just a half dozen years! The premiere of his First Symphony in 1897 was a complete failure, a total fiasco. The Russian nationalist composer César Cui ranted, “If there is a conservatory competition in Hell, Rachmaninoff would gain first prize for this Symphony.” Rimsky-Korsakov did not find it “at all agreeable.” Young Rachmaninoff — aged 24 — was plunged into a Stygian despair. For over two years, he entertained the darkest thoughts and composed nothing. Then in 1900, he began consulting one Dr. Nicholas Dahl, a physician specializing in the treatment of alcoholism through hypnosis. Dahl’s method of auto-suggestion (and probably his enlightened conversation about music) restored the composer’s confidence and desire to work. Within a year, the grand Second Concerto was produced and successfully launched into the world and Rachmaninoff was on his way to international fame. By 1905, he was one of the most important figures in Russian music.

Beside his prodigious talents as pianist and composer, Rachmaninoff was also a first-rate conductor, and when his stock began rising after the Second Concerto carried his name into important Russian circles, he was appointed opera conductor at the Moscow Imperial Grand Theater. As with his music, he found excellent success with his conducting, but he had understandable misgivings about the way it interfered with his creative ambitions. In an interview with Frederick H. Martens, he said, “When I am concertizing I cannot compose. When I feel like writing music I have to concentrate on that — I

cannot touch the piano. When I am conducting I can neither compose nor play concerts. Other musicians may be more fortunate in this respect; but I have to concentrate on any one thing I am doing to such a degree that it does not seem to allow me to take up anything else.” There was much music in him that needed to be written, and he knew that a choice about the direction of his future work was imminent.

By the beginning of 1906, he had decided to sweep away the rapidly accumulating obligations of conducting, concertizing and socializing that cluttered his life in Moscow in order to find some quiet place in which to compose. His determination may have been strengthened by the political unrest beginning to rumble under the foundations of the aristocratic Russian political system. The uprising of 1905 was among the first signs of trouble for those of his noble class (his eventual move to the United States was a direct result of the swallowing of his family’s estate and resources by the 1917 Revolution), and he probably thought it a good time to start looking for a quiet haven.

A few years before, Rachmaninoff had been overwhelmed by an inspired performance of *Die Meistersinger* he heard at the Dresden Opera. The memory of that evening and the aura of dignity and repose exuded by the city had remained with him, and Dresden, at that time in his life, seemed like a good place to be. Besides, the city was only two hours by train from Leipzig, where Arthur Nikisch, whom Rachmaninoff considered the greatest living conductor and who had shown an interest in his music, was music director. The decision to move to Dresden was made early in 1906, and by autumn the composer, his wife and their new-born daughter were installed in a small but smart house complemented by an attractive garden. They arrived quietly, and lived, as much as possible, incognito and in seclusion. When he chanced to meet a Russian acquaintance on the street one day, Rachmaninoff pleaded, “I have escaped from my friends. Please don’t give me away.” The atmosphere in Dresden was so conducive to composition that within a few months of his arrival he was working on the Second Symphony, the First Piano Sonata, the Op. 6 collection of Russian folk songs and the symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead*.

The Second Symphony was unanimously cheered when it made the rounds of the Russian concert societies in 1908, and it was an important item on Rachmaninoff’s first American tour the following year. With this work, *The Isle of the Dead*, the Second and Third Concertos, and the ubiquitous Prelude in C-sharp minor, he made a profound impression on the American musical scene. He was twice offered the post of music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and twice declined. For the two decades before his death in 1943, his cross-country concert tours became an institution still remembered with a swell of passion such as can only be engendered by the most important events. Many of his compositions continue to enjoy a popularity greater in America than anywhere else in the world.

Philip Hale, writing of the American renown that has

attached itself to Rachmaninoff’s works in general and to the Second Symphony in particular, stated, “The reasons for the popularity of the Symphony are not far to seek. The themes are eminently melodious, and some of them are of singular beauty; there is rich coloring; there are beautiful nuances in color; there is impressive sonority; there are frequent and sharp contrasts in sentiment, rhythm and expression; there is stirring vitality.” Underlying these attractive external qualities is Rachmaninoff’s philosophy of the emotional, communicative powers of music.

The majestic scale of the Symphony is established at the outset by a slow, brooding introduction. The low strings and then the violins give out a fragmentary theme that generates much of the material for the entire work. A smooth transition to a faster tempo signals the arrival of the main theme, an extended and quickened transformation of the basses’ opening motive. The expressive second theme enters in the woodwinds. The development deals with the vigorous main theme to such an extent that the beginning of the formal recapitulation is engulfed by its surging sweep. The lovely second theme reappears as expected, again in the woodwinds. The coda resumes the energetic mood of the development to build to the fine climax which ends the movement.

The second movement is the most nimble essay to be found in Rachmaninoff’s orchestral works. After two preparatory measures, the horns hurl forth the main theme, which bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Dies Irae* (“*Day of Wrath*”), the ancient chant from the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead that haunted the composer for many years. The vital nature of the music, however, does not support any morbid interpretation. Eventually, the rhythmic bustle is suppressed and finally silenced to make way for the movement’s central section, whose skipping lines embody some of Rachmaninoff’s best fugal writing. Almost as if by magic, the opening scherzo returns amid a full-throated cry from the brass. Once again, this quiets and the movement ends on a note of considerable mystery.

The rapturous third movement, wrote Patrick Piggott, “is as romantic as any music in the orchestral repertory — if by romantic we mean the expression, through lyrical melody and richly chromatic harmony, of a sentiment which can only be described as love.” This is music of heightened passion that resembles nothing so much as an ecstatic operatic love scene. Alternating with the joyous principal melody is an important theme from the first movement, heard prominently in the central portion and the coda of this movement.

The finale bursts forth in the whirling dance rhythm of an Italian tarantella. The propulsive urgency subsides to allow another of Rachmaninoff’s wonderful, sweeping melodic inspirations to enter. A development of the tarantella motives follows, into which are embroidered thematic reminiscences from each of the three preceding movements. The several elements of the finale are gathered together in the closing pages to produce the rich and sonorous tapestry appropriate for the life-affirming conclusion of this grand and stirring Symphony.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 6

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Saturday, August 16, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Judith Jackson, Vocal Coach

### DON GIOVANNI ACT I

HAYDN      Symphony No. 88 in G major  
                 Adagio — Allegro  
                 Largo  
                 Menuetto: Allegretto  
                 Finale: Allegro con spirito

— INTERMISSION —

MOZART      *Don Giovanni, Act I, K. 527\**  
                 *Highlights in Concert*

Donna Anna.....Kimberly McCord  
Donna Elvira.....Kathy Pyeatt  
Don Ottavio.....Grant Knox  
Don Giovanni.....Christopher Grundy  
Leporello.....Keven Keys  
Zerlina.....Hannah Dixon McConnell

\* first PMF performance

This concert is sponsored by Billie Kress.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.  
Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 6

### Symphony No. 88 in G major

Joseph Haydn (1732 -1809)

*Composed in 1787.*

Haydn apparently wrote the Symphonies No. 88 and No. 89 in 1787 on speculation for a foray into the lucrative Parisian music publishing market, and gave the two works to Johann Tost, a violinist in the Esterházy orchestra who was moving to Paris, to sell as best he could. The unscrupulous Tost struck a deal with Jean-Georges Sieber for not two, but three symphonies, the third being a work by Adalbert Gyrowetz that Tost passed off as Haydn's. (Gyrowetz had enormous difficulty later persuading French musicians that this was indeed his music.) When Sieber complained about this shady deal to Haydn, the composer replied without sympathy, "Thus Herr Tost has swindled you; you can claim your damages in Vienna." Whether Sieber, Tost or Haydn continued to peddle the new works to other publishers is unclear from the extant records, but within two years, editions of the Symphonies No. 88 and No. 89 appeared in London, Vienna, Offenbach/Main, Berlin and Amsterdam. Such sordid tales as these were the norm rather than the exception in the publishing practice of the 18th century, when a composer needed almost as much of the mercenary as the genius to make a living.

The Symphony No. 88 opens, as do most of Haydn's late symphonies, with a slow introduction, which serves as a musical foil to the main theme (presented by the violins in quick tempo), a nimble melody whose roots are deeply embedded in the soil of folk song. This jolly little tune soon acquires a bustling rhythmic accompaniment which bounds through the energetic transition and leads to the second theme, a shy motive decorated with drooping, chromatic harmonies in the winds. The rhythmic bustle soon returns to bring the exposition to an inconclusive end on an unexpected silence. The development is concerned with the rhythm as much as the melodic shape of the main theme. (Note the grouping of notes: ta-ta-TA-da-ta-ta-tah.) It was exactly this marvelous working-out of a tiny motive to simultaneously provide thematic unity and variety — almost like a brilliant, wide-ranging sermon on a single Bible verse — that marks the maturity of the symphony as a form. The end of the development section, like that of the exposition, is signaled by an inconclusive halt and a silence that ushers in the recapitulation to recall the themes in slightly embellished versions.

The slow movement is a set of free variations on the lovely hymn tune sung at the beginning by the oboe and solo cello. The theme is gradually enriched as the movement unfolds in a wondrous display of harmonic and orchestral mastery. The third movement paints a colorful scene of peasant life with what Haydn scholar

H.C. Robbins Landon termed a "barn-yard richness." The minuet is a robust, stomping village dance; the central trio summons bagpipe drones to accompany a theme of rustic charm. The jovial theme of the finale, pronounced merrily by bassoon and violins, is a country cousin to that of the opening movement. This chipper ditty encounters a wealth of ingenious contrapuntal and harmonic adventures as it scurries along with the perfect balance of naiveté and sophistication that is one of Haydn's most endearing qualities. The Symphony No. 88 is a masterwork of 18th-century music, one of the brightest jewels in Haydn's unparalleled collection.

### *Don Giovanni*, Act I, K. 527

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

*Composed in 1787.*

*Premiered on October 29, 1787 in Prague, under the direction of the composer.*

*The Marriage of Figaro* played in Prague for the first time in December of 1786; it was a smash hit. When Mozart visited the city the following month for further performances of the opera, he reported that "here they talk about nothing but *Figaro*. Nothing is played, sung or whistled but *Figaro*. No opera is drawing like *Figaro*. Nothing, nothing but *Figaro*." In the wake of *Figaro*'s success, Pasquale Bondini, the manager of Italian opera at Prague's National Theater and the local producer of *Figaro*, commissioned Mozart to write a new piece for his fall season for the considerable sum of 100 ducats, equal to 12.1 ounces of gold bullion. As soon as Mozart returned to Vienna in February, he asked Lorenzo da Ponte, creator of the masterful libretto for *Figaro*, to write the book for the new opera. Da Ponte suggested the subject of *Don Juan*; Mozart agreed. By 1787, the legendary libertine had been the central character in stage presentations for at least a century-and-a-half (a Spanish play from 1630 by one Tirso de Molina seems to be the ultimate source of the story), but da Ponte's immediate model was an opera called *Don Giovanni Tenorio* presented in Venice on February 5, 1787, with music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and words by Giovanni Bertati.

During the early months of 1787, Da Ponte simultaneously received libretto commissions from Mozart, Salieri and Vicente Martin y Soler, the popular Spanish composer of comic operas then based in Vienna, and he described the arduous work on them in his memoirs, written in the 1820s, after he had settled in New York City: "I sat down at my writing table and stayed there for twelve hours on end, with a little bottle of tokay at my right hand, an inkstand in the middle, and a box of Seville tobacco on the left. A beautiful young girl of sixteen was living in my house with her mother, who looked after the household. (I should have wished to love her only as a daughter, but ... ) She came into my room whenever I rang the bell, which in truth was fairly often, and particularly when my inspiration seemed to begin to cool. She brought me now a biscuit, now a cup of coffee, or again

nothing but her own lovely face, always gay, always smiling and made precisely to inspire poetic fancy and brilliant ideas." Under such hardship was the libretto for *Don Giovanni* conceived; the verses were finished by June.

Mozart worked throughout the late summer on the score, and left for Prague with his wife, Constanze, on October 1, 1787. He applied the final touches to the music as the rehearsals proceeded, but two days before the October 29th premiere he had still not written the overture. The evening before the dress rehearsal, according to an account in a biography of the composer by Constanze's second husband, Georg von Nissen, "Mozart told his wife that he wanted to write the overture that night, and asked her to make him some punch and stay up with him to keep him merry. She did so, told him fairy tales of Aladdin's Lamp ... and so on, which made him laugh until the tears came to his eyes. But the punch made him sleepy, so that he nodded whenever she paused, and worked only while she was talking. But since his exertion, his sleepiness, his frequent nodding and catching himself made the work terribly hard, his wife made him lie down on the couch, promising to wake him up in an hour. But he slept so soundly that she did not have the heart to do so, and only awakened him after two hours had passed. This was at five o'clock. The copyist had been ordered for seven o'clock; at seven o'clock the Overture was finished." Such compositional celerity passes all understanding for us mere mortals, but was common to Mozart, as Ernest Newman explained in his study of the composer: "He had not only extraordinary facility in composition; he also had a marvelous memory. 'Composition,' for him, meant developing the work in his head; he found the business of writing it out rather tiresome, and he would often postpone it as long as he could. There can be little doubt that the Overture to *Don Giovanni* had been worked out in his head long before the final rehearsal and that all he had to do on that historic night was to put the notes on paper."

The premiere of *Don Giovanni* was a triumph exceeded in Prague only by the wild success of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mozart was feted and acclaimed and invited to take up residence in the city, but he decided rather to return to Vienna — reports correctly had the old composer to the Habsburg court, Christoph Willibald von Gluck, near death, and Mozart hoped to succeed him in the position. (In December, after Gluck died, he did, but at a fraction of his predecessor's salary.) In addition to his interest in securing a court post in Vienna, Constanze was near giving birth and she wanted to return home to be cared for by her own doctors. (A daughter, Theresia, was born on December 26th; she died six months later.) *Don Giovanni*, with some additional music, was first given in Vienna in May 1788; the local audiences, however, did not care much for it, and its near-failure proved a setback from which Mozart never fully recovered.

ACT I, Scene 1: *Courtyard of the Commendatore's Palace*. Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant, grumbles about his duties while he patrols the entrance to the house of Donna Anna, whom his master is attempting to seduce under cover of darkness. Anna, still uncertain

of her seducer's identity despite their close encounter, furiously drives him out of the palace. Anna's father, the Commendatore (Commander) of Seville (represented at this concert by trombone), rushes to his daughter's aid, and challenges Giovanni to a duel, which the libertine reluctantly accepts. As they fight, Anna runs for help to her fiancé, Don Ottavio. The Commendatore is mortally wounded, and Giovanni escapes with Leporello before Anna and Ottavio return. They swear vengeance upon her father's murderer (*Fuggi, crudele, fuggi!*).

Scene 2: *A Street in Seville*. Giovanni and Leporello come upon a woman in distress, whom the rake proposes to comfort in his usual way. The woman vents her rage about a faithless lover (*Ah, chi mi dice mai*), and Giovanni and Leporello discover as they move closer that she is Donna Elvira, whom Giovanni has jilted and upon whose head she pours her scorn. Giovanni retreats, and leaves his servant behind to offer Elvira whatever comfort lies in his recitation of Giovanni's prodigious catalog of amorous conquests (*Madamina, il catalogo è questo*). Elvira swears that she, too, will have revenge upon Giovanni.

Scene 3: *A Country Scene near Don Giovanni's Castle*. Upon passing a celebration of the impending wedding of Zerlina and Masetto (also represented by trombone), Giovanni takes a fancy to the bride. He orders Leporello to steer Masetto and the peasants into his castle so that he can be alone with the maiden and plies his wiles on the girl (*Là ci darem la mano*). Just as she is about to succumb, Elvira storms onto the scene, warning Zerlina of Giovanni's treachery. She leads Zerlina away as Anna and Ottavio enter. Anna, not yet recognizing Giovanni as her father's killer, asks his help in finding the miscreant. When Elvira returns and continues to denounce Giovanni's faithlessness and lies — Giovanni tries to convince them that she is mad — Anna realizes that Giovanni is actually the man she seeks. Giovanni departs in haste. Anna and Ottavio renew their vow of vengeance. Ottavio sings of his beloved, whose peace of mind alone will bring him happiness (*Dalla sua pace*).

Scene 4: *The Garden of Don Giovanni's Castle*. Giovanni instructs Leporello to prepare a grand supper party for the villagers, taking special care to distract them with an abundance of wine while Giovanni corners Zerlina (*Finch' han dal vino*). The villagers arrive, and Masetto quarrels with Zerlina over her unfaithfulness. She soothes his jealousy (*Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*), but she is still eager to join the party in the castle with their host. Elvira, Anna and Ottavio, disguised in elegant masks, enter the garden, and Giovanni bids Leporello to invite them in (*Proteggia il giusto cielo*).

Scene 5: *The Ballroom of the Castle*. During the dancing, Giovanni inveigles Zerlina to follow him into an adjoining room (*Venite pur avanti*). Her cries for help draw the guests' attention, and Giovanni emerges dragging along Leporello, whom he claims he stopped from making advances upon the girl. His bluff is greeted with skepticism, however, especially by Anna, Ottavio and Elvira, who reveal their identities and threaten Giovanni with ruin. He forces his way through the restive crowd with drawn sword and escapes.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 7

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Tuesday, August 19, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Gabriela Martinez, Piano

### **SYMPHONIC BRILLIANCE**

SCHUBERT      Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759, “Unfinished”  
                         Allegro moderato  
                         Andante con moto

BARBER      Piano Concerto, Op. 38  
                         Allegro appassionato  
                         Canzone: Moderato  
                         Allegro molto

*Performed in Memory of John Browning*

— INTERMISSION —

SIBELIUS      Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82  
                         Tempo molto moderato —  
                         Allegro moderato (ma poco a poco stretto)  
                         Andante mosso, quasi allegretto  
                         Allegro molto

This concert is sponsored by the Egan Family and  
the Little Rapids Corporation–Egan Family Foundation in memory of Peg Egan.

Gabriela Martinez appears by arrangement with Sciolino Artist Management.

Ms. Martinez is performing on the Esther Browning Piano.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.  
Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 7

### **Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759, "Unfinished"** **Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

*Composed in 1822.*

*Premiered on December 17, 1865 in Vienna, conducted by Johann Herbeck.*

The mystery surrounding the composition of the "Unfinished" Symphony is one of the most intriguing puzzles in the entire realm of music. It is known that Schubert composed the first two movements of this "Grand Symphony," as he referred to it, in autumn 1822 and then abruptly stopped work. He sent the manuscript to his friend Anselm Hüttenbrenner, who was supposed to pass it on to the Styrian Music Society of Graz in appreciation of an honorary membership that that organization had conferred upon Schubert the previous spring. Anselm, described by Schubert's biographer Hans Gal as a "peevish recluse," never sent the score. Instead, he squirreled it away in his desk, where it gathered dust for forty years. It was not until 1865 that he presented it for performance to Johann Herbeck, director of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.

Lacking conclusive evidence, writers on Schubert have advanced a fascinating variety of explanations as to why the young composer never completed the last two planned movements of this Symphony. Among others: he was too ill with syphilis; he could not be bothered with the labor of writing down the last two movements; his friends believed he was basically a song composer rather than an instrumental composer, and their arguments caused him to lose faith in this large work; the last two movements were lost; he despaired of ever having a work of this scale performed; a new commission intervened; Hüttenbrenner's servant used the manuscript to start a fire. All of these have been proven false. The truth is that, despite exhaustive research, there is no conclusive evidence to support any single theory. The explanation currently given the greatest credence is that Schubert thought he could not match the wonderful inspiration of the first two movements in what was to follow, so he abandoned this Symphony for work on another project and simply never returned to complete it.

The first movement is a sonata form that begins without introduction. The first theme, in the dark tonality of B minor, is made up of three components: a brooding, eight-measure phrase heard immediately in unison cellos and basses; a restless figure for violins; and a broad melody played by oboe and clarinet. The music grows in intensity as it approaches the second theme, played in a brighter key by the cellos over a gently syncopated accompaniment. A series of decisive chords and a tossing-about of fragments of the second theme bring the exposition to a close. The development, based entirely on the movement's opening phrase, begins softly in unison cellos and basses. This lengthy central section rises to great peaks of emotional tension before

the recapitulation begins with the restless violin figure of the first theme. The oboe-clarinet theme is heard again, as is the second theme, before the movement ends with restatements of the cello-bass phrase that began the exposition and the development. The second movement is in the form of a large sonatina (sonata form without a development section) and flows like a calm river, filled with rich sonorities and lovely melodies.

### **Piano Concerto, Op. 38**

**Samuel Barber (1910-1981)**

*Composed in 1962.*

*Premiered on September 24, 1962 in New York City, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf with John Browning as soloist.*

In Joseph Machlis' *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, Samuel Barber is classified as one of the "American Romantics," along with Virgil Thomson, Howard Hanson and Norman Dello Joio. Another noted writer on music, David Ewen, summarized the reasons for this classification: "Barber belonged to the conservative American composers ... in that he paid considerable attention to his architectonic construction, was not afraid to yield to fluent melodic writing, preferred simplicity to complexity, and was ever in search of a deeply poetic idea." Barber made a point of writing accessible music and his compositions are among the most frequently performed of those by any American composer.

An important component of Barber's style was his ability to write expressive melodies. He came by this sense of lyricism almost as part of his birthright, since his aunt was the great operatic contralto Louise Homer, and her frequent visits to the family home left a lasting impression on the budding musician. When Barber went to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia to undertake his professional training, he studied not only composition and piano, but also voice. He was good enough to give a number of professional recitals in his early years, and he even made a recording of his own *Dover Beach* as baritone soloist. The ideal of Romantic song wedded to clear forms and beautiful harmony is at the heart of his compositional style, and it is not an incidental fact that his music attracted such conductors of the great classical masters as Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter and George Szell.

In the works of Barber's mature years, his style came to include more modern procedures of harmony and rhythm. Rather than forfeiting any of the essence of his earlier music, however, these works gained in depth of expression and technical mastery because of the expanded resources at Barber's disposal. The Piano Concerto is one such work. Though there are more than subtle traces of the influences of Bartók, Stravinsky and other modern masters, especially in the Concerto's finale, Barber still sang with his own distinctive voice to produce one of the most gratifying piano works of the mid-20th century. It gained such an immediate popularity at its premiere that it was performed more than fifty

times in Europe and North and South America within its first year.

For the premiere, Barber provided the following outline of the Concerto's structure:

"The Concerto begins with a solo for piano in recitative style in which three themes or figures are announced, the first declamatory, the second and third rhythmic. The orchestra interrupts, *più mosso*, to sing the impassioned main theme, not before stated. All this material is now embroidered more quietly and occasionally whimsically by piano and orchestra until the tempo slackens and the oboe introduces a second lyric section. A development along symphonic lines leads to a cadenza for soloist and a recapitulation with a fortissimo ending.

"The second movement (*Canzone*) is song-like in character, the flute being the principal soloist. The piano enters with the same material, which is subsequently sung by muted strings to the accompaniment of piano figurations.

"The last movement (*Allegro molto* in 5/8), after several fortissimo repeated chords by the orchestra, plunges headlong into an ostinato bass figure for piano, over which several themes are tossed. There are two contrasting sections (one for solo clarinet and one for three flutes, muted trombones and harp) where the fast tempo relents: but the ostinato figure keeps insistently reappearing, mostly from the piano protagonist, and the 5/8 meter is never changed."

### **Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82** **Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)**

*Composed in 1915; revised in 1916, 1918 and 1919.*  
*Premiered on December 8, 1915 in Helsinki, conducted by Robert Kajanus.*

For the three years after he issued his brooding Fourth Symphony in 1911, Sibelius was largely concerned with writing program music: *The Dryad*, *Scènes Historiques*, *The Bard*, *The Océanides*, *Rakastava*. He even considered composing a ballet titled *King Fjalar* at that time but rejected the idea: "I cannot become a prolific writer. It would mean killing all my reputation and my art. I have made my name in the world by straightforward means. I must go on in the same way. Perhaps I am too much of a hypochondriac, but I cannot waste on a few ballet steps a motif that would be excellently suited to symphonic composition." As early as 1912, he envisioned a successor to the Fourth Symphony but did not have any concrete ideas for the work until shortly before he left for a visit to the United States in May 1914 to conduct some of his compositions at the Norfolk (Connecticut) Music Festival. (*The Océanides* was commissioned for the occasion.) He returned to Finland in July; war erupted on the Continent the next month. In September, he described his mood over the terrifying political events as emotionally "in a deep dale," but added, "I already begin to see dimly the mountain I shall certainly ascend.... God opens the door for a moment and His orchestra plays the Fifth Symphony." He could not begin work on the piece immediately, however. One

of his main sources of income — performance royalties from his German publisher, Breitkopf und Härtel — was severely diminished because of the war-time turmoil, and he was forced to churn out a stream of songs and piano miniatures and to undertake tours to Gothenburg, Oslo and Bergen to pay the household bills.

Early in 1915, Sibelius learned that a national celebration was planned for his fiftieth birthday (December 8th), and that the government was commissioning from him a new symphony for the festive concert in Helsinki. He withdrew into the isolation of his country home at Järvenpää, thirty miles north of Helsinki (today a lovely Sibelius museum), to devote himself to the gestating work and admitted to his diary, "I love this life so infinitely and feel that it must stamp everything I compose." He had to rush to finish the work for the concert in December, even making changes in the parts during the final rehearsal, but the Symphony was presented as the centerpiece of the tribute to the man the program described as "Finland's greatest son." Sibelius' birthday was a veritable national holiday, and he was lionized with speeches, telegrams, banquets, greetings and gifts; the Fifth Symphony, conducted by the composer's friend and artistic champion Robert Kajanus, met with great acclaim. The concert was given three additional times during the following weeks to satisfy the demand to hear this newest creation of the country's most famous musician.

Theorists have long debated whether Sibelius' Fifth Symphony is in three or four movements; even the composer himself left contradictory evidence on the matter. The contention centers on the first two sections, a broad essay in leisurely tempo and a spirited scherzo, played without pause and related thematically. The opening portion is in a sort of truncated sonata form, though it is of less interest to discern its structural divisions than to follow the long arches of musical tension and release that Sibelius built through manipulation of the fragmentary, germinal theme presented at the beginning by the horns. The scherzo grows seamlessly from the music of the first section. At first dance-like and even playful, it accumulates dynamic energy as it unfolds, ending with a whirling torrent of sound. The following *Andante*, formally a theme and variations, is predominantly tranquil in mood, though punctuated by several piquant jabs of dissonance. "There are frequent moments in the music of Sibelius," wrote Charles O'Connell of the Symphony's finale, "when one hears almost inevitably the beat and whirl of wings invisible, and this strange and characteristic effect almost always presages something magnificently portentous. We have it here." The second theme is a bell-tone motive led by the horns that serves as background to the woodwinds' long melodic lines. The whirring theme returns, after which the bell motive is treated in ostinato fashion, repeated over and over, building toward a climax until it seems about to burst from its own excitement — which it does. The forward motion abruptly stops, and the Symphony ends with six stentorian chords, separated by silence, proclaimed by the full orchestra.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 8

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Thursday, August 21, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Gabriela Martinez, Piano  
Jiang Xie, Emerging Conductor

### RACHMANINOFF III

BORODIN      Overture to *Prince Igor*  
Jiang Xie, Conductor  
Emerging Conductor Program

TCHAIKOVSKY      Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23  
Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso — Allegro con spirito  
Andantino semplice — Prestissimo  
Allegro con fuoco

— INTERMISSION —

RACHMANINOFF      Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44  
Lento — Allegro moderato  
Adagio ma non troppo — Allegro vivace — Tempo come prima  
Allegro

Pre-concert talk — 6:00-6:45

This concert is sponsored by Jerome and June Maeder.

Gabriela Martinez appears by arrangement with Sciolino Artist Management.

Ms. Martinez is performing on the Esther Browning Piano.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.  
Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 8

### Overture to *Prince Igor*

**Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)**

*Composed in 1886-1887; completed by Alexander Glazunov.*

*Premiered on November 4, 1890 in St. Petersburg.*

In Borodin's opera, Igor is captured while trying to rid Russia of the Polovtsi, an invading Tartar race from Central Asia. The leader of the Polovtsi, Khan Kontchak, treats Igor as a guest rather than a prisoner and entertains him lavishly. Khan offers him his freedom if he will promise to leave the Polovtsi in peace, but Igor refuses. Igor nevertheless effects his escape and returns triumphantly to his people. Borodin wrote that *Prince Igor* is "essentially a national opera, interesting only to us Russians, who love to steep our patriotism in the sources of our history, and to see the origins of our nationality again on the stage." To make his opera as authentic as possible, he studied the music, history and lore of Central Asia, where the opera is set, and sought out travelers with first-hand knowledge of the region. His colorful, "Oriental" writing for the Polovtsi was influenced not only by authentic Caucasian melodies, but also by music from the Middle East and North Africa.

Several of the opera's most attractive and colorful themes are woven into a sonata-form structure to create its fine, and characteristically Russian, Overture. The work begins with an atmospheric, morning-mist introduction that leads without pause into the main part of the Overture, heralded by snapping blasts from the brasses using motives heard in the opera as fanfares for the Polovtsian warriors. Three delectable melodies (a quasi-Oriental strain first posited by the clarinet, a majestic processional for the full orchestra, and a lyrical horn song floated on a weightless triplet accompaniment) comprise the exposition. An ingenious development section, a full recapitulation of the earlier themes and a brief coda round out this excellent work, one of the minor masterpieces of 19th-century music.

### Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**

*Composed in 1874-1875; revised in 1889.*

*Premiered on October 25, 1875 in Boston, with Hans von Bülow as soloist.*

At the end of 1874, Tchaikovsky began a piano concerto with the hope of having a success great enough to allow him to leave his irksome teaching post at the Moscow Conservatory. By late December, he had largely sketched out the work and sought the advice of Nikolai Rubinstein, Director of the Moscow Conservatory and an excellent pianist. Tchaikovsky reported the interview in a letter:

"On Christmas Eve 1874, Nikolai asked me to play

the Concerto in a classroom of the Conservatory. We agreed to it. I played through the work. There burst forth from Rubinstein's mouth a mighty torrent of words. It appeared that my Concerto was utterly worthless, absolutely unplayable; the piece as a whole was bad, trivial, vulgar." Tchaikovsky was furious, and he stormed out of the classroom. He made only one change in the score: he obliterated the name of the original dedicatee — Nikolai Rubinstein — and substituted that of the virtuoso pianist Hans von Bülow, who was performing Tchaikovsky's piano pieces across Europe. Bülow gladly accepted the dedication and asked to program the premiere on his upcoming American tour. The Concerto created such a sensation when it was first heard, in Boston on October 25, 1875, that Bülow played it on 139 of his 172 concerts that season.

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto opens with the familiar theme of the introduction, a sweeping melody nobly sung by violins and cellos above thunderous chords from the piano. Following a decrescendo and a pause, the piano presents the snapping main theme. (Tchaikovsky said that this curious melody was inspired by a tune he heard sung by a blind beggar at a street fair.) The clarinet announces the lyrical, bittersweet second theme. The simplicity of the second movement's three-part structure (A-B-A) is augured by the purity of its opening — a languid melody in the solo flute. The center of the movement is of very different character, with a quick tempo and a swift, balletic melody. The languid theme and moonlit mood of the first section return to round out the movement. The crisp rhythmic motive presented immediately at the beginning of the finale and then spun into a complete theme by the soloist dominates much of the movement. In the theme's vigorous full-orchestra guise, it has much of the spirit of a robust Cossack dance. To balance the vigor of this music, Tchaikovsky introduced a romantic melody first entrusted to the violins. The dancing Cossacks repeatedly advance upon this bit of tenderness, which shows a hardy determination. The two themes contend, but the flying Cossacks have the last word.

### Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44

**Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**

*Composed in 1935-1936.*

*Premiered on November 6, 1936 in Philadelphia, conducted by Leopold Stokowski.*

Following the burst of creative activity between 1895 and 1910 that brought forth three piano concertos, two symphonies, two operas, a symphonic poem and the "choral symphony" *The Bells*, Sergei Rachmaninoff did not issue another work for orchestra until the Fourth Piano Concerto of 1927. After being forced from his beloved Russian homeland by the 1917 Revolution, he established a career as a pianist and conductor in Europe and the United States whose enormous success almost completely prohibited composition. ("When I am concertizing I cannot compose," he said. "When

I feel like writing music I have to concentrate on that — I cannot touch the piano. When I am conducting I can neither compose nor play concerts. Other musicians may be more fortunate in this respect; but I have to concentrate on any one thing I am doing to such a degree that it does not seem to allow me to take up anything else.”) His return to the orchestral idiom with the Fourth Concerto was poorly received (he revised the score extensively in 1941), and it took him until 1934 to gather enough courage to try again. That attempt — the splendid *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* — met with exceptional acclaim, and encouraged him to undertake a long-delayed successor to the Second Symphony of 1907. The Third Symphony was begun on June 18, 1935 at his Swiss villa, “Senar,” on Lake Lucerne, not far from “Tribschen,” the house in which Wagner lived from 1866 to 1872. (“Senar” was named for SErgei and his wife, NAtalyia, Rachmaninoff.) Though he had to spend three weeks taking the waters at Baden-Baden for his rheumatism in July, he finished the first movement by August 22nd and the second movement a month later. By then, however, it was time for him to again begin his strenuous annual international tours, and the Symphony had to await its completion until June 1936. It was finished exactly three decades after the Second Symphony.

Rachmaninoff gave the honor of the Symphony’s premiere to Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, with whom he had enjoyed an especially close association ever since making his United States debut as a conductor with that ensemble in 1909. The work was received by American and European audiences and critics with certain misgivings (“sourly” was the composer’s word), with much of the grumbling engendered by Rachmaninoff’s writing in an admittedly reactionary Romantic style at a time when Schoenberg, Hindemith, Stravinsky, Bartók and a host of other path-breaking 20th-century composers were already long established on the musical scene. “I feel like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien,” Rachmaninoff once said. “I cannot cast out the old way of writing and I cannot acquire the new. I have made intense efforts to feel the musical manner of today, but it will not come to me.” Though he recognized only too well the anachronism of his Third Symphony, he continued to believe in it and did not withdraw it, as he had the Fourth Concerto. “Personally, I am convinced that this is a good work.... Sometimes the author is wrong, [but] I maintain my opinion,” he wrote to his friend Vladimir Wilshaw on June 7, 1937. His faith has proven to be justified. The Symphony was taken into the standard orchestral repertoire during the last years of his life and it remains one of his most popular large compositions.

After being driven from Russia in 1917, Rachmaninoff pined for his homeland for the rest of his life. Whether in his New York apartment or his Swiss villa, he did his best to keep the old language, food, customs and holidays alive in his own household. “But it was at best synthetic,” wrote David Ewen. “Away from Russia, which he could never hope to see again, he always felt lonely and sad, a stranger even in lands that were ready to be hos-

pitable to him. His homesickness assumed the character of a disease as the years passed, and one symptom of that disease was an unshakable melancholy.” The Third Symphony is certainly touched by this emotion, though Rachmaninoff steadfastly denied that it was in any specific way nationalistic or pictorial. It is, however, imbued with the grand, brooding passion and epic sweep that mark Rachmaninoff’s greatest music, whatever the impetus behind the notes.

As do his two earlier works in the genre, Rachmaninoff’s Third Symphony opens with a motto theme that returns in later movements. The motto, here presented immediately in unison by clarinet, muted horn and cellos, is a small-interval phrase derived from the style of ecclesiastical chant. A few measures of vigorous orchestral warming-up introduce the movement’s main theme, a doleful plaint issued by the double reeds. The second theme is a lovely, lyrical strain, initiated by the cellos, which gives testimony that Rachmaninoff retained his wonderful sense of melodic invention throughout his life. (He was 63 when he finished the score.) Following a development section of considerable ingenuity and rhythmic energy, the two principal themes are recalled in the recapitulation. The motto theme returns quietly in the trumpet and bass trombone and then in the pizzicato strings to bring the movement to a subdued close.

The second of the Symphony’s three movements combines elements of both a traditional *Adagio* and a *Scherzo*. The motto theme in a bardic setting for horn accompanied by strummed harp chords is heard to open the movement. The solo violin gives out the principal theme of the *Adagio*, a languid melody in triplet rhythms; the flute presents a graceful complementary idea that ends with a cadential trill. These two motives are elaborated until a sudden change of tempo and the introduction of a bustling rhythmic figure usher in the *Scherzo* section of the movement. An abbreviated recall of the music of the opening *Adagio* rounds out the movement, to which the motto theme played by pizzicato strings serves as a tiny musical benediction.

The finale is a virtuosic tour-de-force for orchestra. (The work was written with Stokowski’s Philadelphia Orchestra in mind.) The main theme, presented by violins and violas, is a motive of martial vigor; the contrasting second theme, given by the strings doubled by harp (Rachmaninoff demonstrated a remarkable skill in orchestrating for percussion, celesta and harp in this work), is chordal in shape and lyrical in style. The center of the movement is a thorough working-out of the melodic materials, beginning with a fugal treatment of the main theme. As a bridge to the recapitulation, Rachmaninoff employed the *Dies Irae* (“*Day of Wrath*”), the ancient chant from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass for the Dead that courses like a grim musical marker through the *Isle of the Dead* (1907), the *Paganini Rhapsody* (1934), the Second Symphony, this Third Symphony and the *Symphonic Dances* (1940). This evocative traditional tune as well as the Symphony’s motto theme are woven into the recapitulation of the movement’s earlier motives. A brilliant coda brings the work to an exhilarating close.

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# PENINSULA MUSIC FESTIVAL

## PROGRAM 9

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Saturday, August 23, 2014, 7:30 p.m.

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Victor Yampolsky, Conductor  
Elena Urioste, Violin

### SEASON FINALE

ELGAR      Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61\*  
                 Allegro  
                 Andante  
                 Allegro molto

— INTERMISSION —

RACHMANINOFF      *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45  
                 Non allegro  
                 Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)  
                 Lento assai — Allegro vivace — Lento assai — Allegro vivace

\* first PMF performance

This concert is sponsored by Tony and Prilla Beadell  
in memory of Marcia, Charles and Cindy Larsen.

Elena Urioste appears by arrangement with Sciolino Artist Management.

*Photography and audio recordings of this concert are strictly prohibited.  
Please, no cell phones during the concert.*

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## Program 9

### Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61 Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

*Composed in 1909-1910.*

*Premiered on November 10, 1910 in London, conducted by the composer with Fritz Kreisler as soloist.*

In 1909, Edward Elgar was at the height of his career. The *Enigma Variations* had appeared in 1899 and the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* one year later, spreading Elgar's name throughout Britain, the Continent and the New World. Cambridge University made him a doctor *honoris causa* in 1900; Oxford did so five years later. With his choral ode for the coronation of Edward VII in 1901 and the appearance of the first two *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* in 1902, he became England's unofficial music laureate. (He had to wait until 1924 to be appointed Master of the King's Musick.) He was knighted in 1904. The University of Birmingham named him to its music faculty in 1905. Europe and America demanded to see him in person, so he traveled widely to conduct and dispense his own music. A series of splendid works tumbled forth in those years — *Cockaigne*, *Sea Pictures*, the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, supplemented by numerous part and solo songs and chamber pieces. When he finished the First Symphony in late 1908, he was ready for a rest.

In April 1909, shortly after Hans Richter had introduced the First Symphony in Manchester and London, Elgar and his wife, Alice, accepted an invitation to visit their American friend Mrs. Julia Worthington at her villa in Careggi, near Florence. Feeling drained creatively, Elgar had sworn off music for the time being (in later years at his home, "Plas Gwyn" at Hereford, he set up a chemistry lab into which he frequently escaped for the same reason), and played the part of the happy tourist in Italy. The Elgars traipsed about Tuscany and made an excursion to Venice. As it had Mendelssohn and Brahms and Berlioz during the previous century, Italy inspired Elgar to composition. While in Careggi his muse was rekindled and the first sketches for two new works — a violin concerto and another symphony — appeared. Elgar left Italy in early June, stopping at Garmisch-Partenkirchen for a session of sincere mutual admiration with Richard Strauss, and arrived at Plas Gwyn on June 16th. He worked some more on the Concerto, but the second half of 1909 was heavily booked with festival appearances and conducting engagements, including an extended tour with the fledgling London Symphony Orchestra, and he devoted his available time for composition to the Second Symphony, so the violin piece lay dormant until the first of the year.

After resuming work on the Violin Concerto in January 1910, Elgar had doubts about his ability to finish it. (He had already abandoned two attempts at such a piece in 1890 and 1901.) Some of his close friends, especially the Lord and Lady Stuart-Wortley and Lady Edward

Speyer (who in less elevated days had been the professional violinist Leonora von Stosch), shepherded him through that bad time, and by March he was committed to the completing the piece. Though Elgar was himself an experienced violinist, he asked W.H. Reed, a member (and later concertmaster) of the LSO, for advice on the finer points of technique and notation. Reed described the scene when he entered Elgar's London flat in New Cavendish Street: "There was the composer, striding about, arranging scraps of manuscript in different parts of the room, pinning them to the backs of chairs and placing them on the mantelpiece with photograph frames to hold them in position. It was wonderful to note the speed at which he scribbled out another passage or made an alteration or scrapped a sketch altogether as being redundant." (Elgar always used separate sheets of manuscript paper so that he could shuffle them at will to compare the piece's various sections.) Elgar worked on the Concerto throughout the summer, in London, at Plas Gwyn and at the cottage of his friend Frank Schuster at Maidenhead, frequently seeking Reed's advice and trial performance of the most recent sketches. (The two musicians remained close; Reed issued an admiring biography of the composer in 1949.) The Concerto was finished on August 5, 1910. "It's good! awfully emotional! too emotional but I love it," he told Schuster.

When the Concerto was published by Novello simultaneously with its premiere, the score appeared with a cryptic Spanish legend on the flyleaf: "*Aquí está encerrada el alma de....*" ("*Here is enshrined the soul of....*"), a quotation from Le Sage's *Gil Blas de Santillane* (1735). As with the *Enigma Variations*, Elgar here posed a puzzle of identity. When the conductor Nicholas Kilburn asked for a solution to the riddle, Elgar replied, "Here, or more emphatically in here, is enshrined or simply enclosed — burial is perhaps too definite — the soul of ...? The final 'de' leaves it indefinite as to sex or rather gender. Now guess," though he assured another friend that "the 'soul' was feminine." Elgar seems to have provided one clue by the five dots following the quotation, two more than the three customary for an ellipsis in printer's syntax, with which he was thoroughly familiar. Early speculation favored Mrs. Worthington, at whose Italian villa the Concerto was conceived. Her first name was Julia (five letters) and her nickname was "Pippa," and, it was rumored, the composer was in love with her. Later and more convincing evidence, however, points to Alice Stuart-Wortley as the recipient of the tacit dedication. The Elgars had met Alice, daughter of the painter Millais, in 1906, when the Stuart-Wortleys moved to London from Sheffield. Elgar visited them frequently at their home in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, thereafter, and was particularly delighted when Alice played his music for him on the piano. ("I love to hear you play," he confided to her in 1911.) His feelings for her at the time of the composition of the Violin Concerto seemed to have warmed beyond fondness. "I have been working hard at the 'windflower' themes [his nickname for her; they both loved the countryside and its wildflowers] — but all stands still until you

come and approve,” he wrote on April 27, 1910. For the rest of his life he referred to the piece in his letters to her as “our own concerto,” and sometimes inscribed them with a musical quotation from the score. Whether to Alice or to Julia or to some unknown other, Elgar’s mysterious legend calls forth not just the unspoken emotions of many years ago, but also serves as an arrow straight to the heart of this eloquent Concerto’s true nature — feelings intimate and tender contained in a setting expansive and magniloquent. “To listen to the Violin Concerto,” wrote Diana M. McVeagh, “is at times like eavesdropping on a private conversation — or even a confessional — so inward is its quality.”

It may be of some interest to certain listeners to know that the opening movement largely follows the traditional sonata-concerto form, that the four main thematic motives are presented in quick succession by the orchestra during its introduction, that the music is spun almost completely from these melodic fragments, and that the requirements for the soloist, both technical and expressive, are among the most demanding of any concerto in the literature. Others, however, will find that Elgar’s craftsmanship, masterful and mature as it is, is simply the means to the end of this music’s expression, of which John F. Porte wrote, “His vein of tender sentiment is perhaps the most lovable of all its kind in music, and shared by that of Schubert; Elgar never shows us a soul that is seared or tortured, for while he can feel, he does not despair. An extreme sensitiveness to poetic ideas or reflections is part of Elgar’s thought, but this is always counterbalanced by a breezy reaction, a throwing aside, as it were, of anything which might lead to doubt; it is the ascendant spirit, the strong faith in himself, the blessing of common pluck, which never failed him.” The second movement continues in a similar vein, though is more given to song than to rhetoric. Elgar once said that he wrote the finale as a frame for the accompanied cadenza that lies at its heart, “whose amazing loveliness would alone keep the composer’s name alive,” wrote Diana McVeagh. Themes from the earlier movements are recalled and transformed in the course of the finale to create a marvelous unity of expression throughout the entire work.

***Symphonic Dances, Op. 45***  
**Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)**

*Composed in 1940.*  
*Premiered on January 4, 1941 in Philadelphia, conducted by Eugene Ormandy.*

World War I, of course, was a trial for Rachmaninoff and his countrymen, but his most severe personal adversity came when the 1917 Revolution smashed the aristocratic society of Russia — the only world he had ever known. He was forced to flee his beloved country, leaving behind family and financial security. He pined for his homeland the rest of his life and did his best to keep the old language, food, customs and holidays alive in his own household. “But it was at best synthetic,” wrote musicologist David Ewen. “Away from Russia, which he could never hope to see again, he always felt lonely and

sad, a stranger even in lands that were ready to be hospitable to him. His homesickness assumed the character of a disease as the years passed, and one symptom of that disease was an unshakable melancholy.” By 1940, when he composed the *Symphonic Dances*, he was filled with worry over his daughter Tatiana, who was trapped in France by the German invasion (he never saw her again), and had been weakened by a minor operation in May. Still, he felt the need to compose for the first time since the Third Symphony of 1936. The three *Symphonic Dances* were written quickly at his summer retreat on Long Island Sound, an idyllic setting for creative work, where he had a studio by the water in which to work in seclusion, lovely gardens for walking, and easy access to a ride in his new cabin cruiser, one of his favorite amusements. Still, it was the man and not the setting that was expressed in this music. “I try to make music speak directly and simply that which is in my heart at the time I am composing,” he once told an interviewer. “If there is love there, or bitterness, or sadness, or religion, these moods become part of my music, and it becomes either beautiful or bitter or sad or religious.”

It is nostalgic sadness that permeates the works of Rachmaninoff’s later years. Like a grim marker, the ancient chant *Dies Irae* (“*Day of Wrath*”) from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass for the Dead courses through the *Paganini Rhapsody* (1934), the Second (1908) and Third (1936) Symphonies and the *Symphonic Dances* (1940). The *Symphonic Dances* were his last important creation, coming less than three years before his death from cancer at age seventy. There is nothing morbid about them, however. They breathe a spirit of dark determination against a world of trial, a hard-fought musical affirmation of the underlying resiliency of life. Received with little enthusiasm when they were new, these *Dances* have come to be regarded as among the finest of Rachmaninoff’s works.

The first of the *Symphonic Dances*, in a large three-part form (A–B–A), is spun from a tiny three-note descending motive heard at the beginning that serves as the germ for much of the opening section’s thematic material. The middle portion is given over to a folk-like melody initiated by the alto saxophone. The return of the opening section, with its distinctive falling motive, rounds out the first movement. The waltz of the second movement is more rugged and deeply expressive than the Viennese variety, and possesses the quality of inconsolable pathos that gives so much of Rachmaninoff’s music its sharply defined personality. The finale begins with a sighing introduction for the winds, which leads into a section in quicker tempo whose vital rhythms may have been influenced by the syncopations of American jazz. Soon after this faster section begins, the chimes play a pattern reminiscent of the opening phrase of the *Dies Irae*. The sighing measures recur and are considerably extended, acquiring new thematic material but remaining unaltered in mood. When the fast, jazz-inspired music returns, its thematic relationship with the *Dies Irae* is strengthened. The movement accumulates an almost visceral rhythmic energy as it progresses, virtually exploding into the last pages, a coda based on an ancient Russian Orthodox chant.

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