

# Notes on the Program

by Erik Shinn, Concert Operations & Personnel Manager

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## *Swan Lake: Suite, Op. 20a [1954 version]*

### Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky's first iconic ballet began as a miniaturized version of itself that the composer had written to entertain his sister's children while they were on holiday in the summer of 1871. When a commission for a full ballet from the Imperial Theatre came four years later, he did what many composers had before and recycled fragments of already-written works to create something new. In this case combining music from his juvenile ballet to fragments of *Undine* and *Voyevoda*, operas he had previously written but ultimately disowned.

While *Swan Lake* stands today as one of Tchaikovsky's greatest scores, it did not achieve widespread acclaim during his lifetime. By all accounts the premiere was riddled with issues including poor choreography, sets, costumes, and execution. Musicians in the orchestra complained that several numbers were too difficult to play, and some were cut. Later performances saw additional cuts, further diminishing Tchaikovsky's score. Shortly after his death, a new production was mounted at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, with choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, which finally cemented the ballet as a cornerstone of the repertoire.

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** May 7, 1840, in Votkinsky, Vyatka Province, Russia

**Died:** November 6, 1893, in St. Petersburg, Russia

**Work composed:** ballet 1875-76; commissioned by the Russian Imperial Theatre; dedicated to Vladimir ("Bob") Lvovich Davidov, the composer's nephew; six-movement suite extracted posthumously by the publisher in 1900; second expanded-version in 1954; third version, expanded again, published in 2006

**World premiere:** complete ballet, March 4, 1877, at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, Stephan Ryabov conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** complete ballet, October 30, 1956 with Ballet Danielian, Robert Mandell conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** selections from the ballet, November 6, 1996, Robert Baker, conductor

**Estimated duration:** ca. 31 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes and piccolo,  
two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons,  
four horns, two trumpets, two cornets,

three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle,  
military drum, cymbals, bass drum, tam-  
tam, harp, and strings

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## From Ballet to Suite

In 1882 Tchaikovsky wrote to his publisher, Piotr Jurgensen, that he would like to extract an orchestral suite from the ballet; however, the composer never got around to it. Jurgenson posthumously published a six-movement suite in 1900. During the Russian Revolution of 1917 all music publishing was nationalized and fell under control of the musical division of the State Music Publishing House known as Muzgiz. The soviet publisher issued a second version in 1954, removing the Act IV finale and replacing it with three of the national dances from the end of Act III. After the suite fell into the public domain, American music editor Carl Simpson created a third version for the publisher Kalmus in 2006, which restored the finale to the end of the 1954 version.

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## The Story

Prince Siegfried is celebrating his birthday [Valse] when the festivities are interrupted by his mother, the Princess. She worries about her son's carefree lifestyle and tells him that he must choose a bride at the royal ball the following evening. Siegfried is upset that he cannot marry for love and his companions try to cheer him up. They see a flock of swans flying overhead and decide to go on a hunt to lighten their spirits.

Siegfried becomes separated from his friends during the hunt and eventually finds himself next to a lake just as the flock lands [Scène: Moderato]. He takes aim at one with his crossbow, but stops as it transforms into a beautiful maiden, Odette. At first, she is frightened of Siegfried, but when he promises not to harm her, she tells him that she is the Swan Queen and that she and her companions are the victims of the sorcerer Von Rothbart. By day they are swans and only at night, when they return to the lake, do they regain human form. She then tells Siegfried that the spell can be broken, but only if someone who has never fallen in love swears to love her forever. Von Rothbart appears and Siegfried threatens to kill him; however, Odette intercedes – if the sorcerer dies before the spell is lifted, it can never be broken. Von Rothbart disappears, Siegfried breaks his crossbow, and pledges to win Odette's heart as they fall in love. As dawn arrives, Odette and her companions return to the lake and transform back into swans [Danse des cygnes; Scène: Pas d'Action].

Guests arrive at the palace for the ball and princesses are presented to Siegfried, whose mother hopes he will choose one for his bride. Von Rothbart arrives in disguise with his own daughter, Odile, who he enchants to look like Odette. The princesses vie for

Siegfried's attention [Danse hongroise; Danse espagnole; Danse napolitaine; Mazurka], but he is only interested in Odile, who he mistakenly believes is the Swan Queen. When Von Rothbart shows Siegfried a magical vision of Odette, he realizes his mistake and runs back to the lake.

Odette is distraught at Siegfried's betrayal. Her maidens attempt to comfort her, but she is resigned to death; however, Siegfried arrives to apologize, and she accepts. Von Rothbart appears and insists that Siegfried must marry Odile, but Siegfried chooses to die instead and leaps into the lake with Odette. This breaks the spell and the maidens watch as the two ascend into the heavens together.

# Three Latin-American Dances

## Gabriela Lena Frank

At 47 years old, Gabriela Lena Frank has become and continues to be one of the leading voices for multiculturalism in classical music. Frank's own cultural identity is especially diverse, and she credits both that diversity and its acceptance in the United States at what allows her to succeed as a composer.

I firmly believe that only in the United States could a Peruvian-Chinese-Jewish-Lithuanian girl born with significant hearing loss in a hippie town successfully create a life writing string quartets and symphonies.

Coming of age during the height of the Cold War and eventually the fall of the Berlin Wall, Frank initially thought about pursuing Russian Studies in college, but later changed her mind after attending a summer program at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

It changed my life, because I was exposed to this whole music world I didn't know existed. This idea of becoming a composer came to me right away. I didn't know what that meant, or what it was like, but I had written my first piece down on paper, and heard it come to life at the hands of other kids my age and younger, and I was hooked, instantly. Instantly.

During her doctoral studies at the University of Michigan, Frank

rediscovered her love for South American folk music, and began to combine it with her formal compositional training. Today her published repertoire includes almost 100 works, many of which have South American roots.

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** September 26, 1972, in Berkeley, California

**Resides:** Boonville, California

**Work composed:** 2003; dedicated to Aaron Lin Lockhart (born August 24, 2003), son of conductor Keith Lockhart, "in keen anticipation of this *hombrecito's* dance"

**World premiere:** April 23, 2004, at Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City, by the Utah Symphony Orchestra, Keith Lockhart, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 17 minutes

**Instrumentation:** three flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, english horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, bass drum, bongos, castanets, chekere, chimes, claves, congas, cymbals, rainstick, marimba, snare drum, slapstick,

suspended cymbal, tambourine, tam-tam, thunder sheet, temple blocks, triangle, wood block, xylophone, harp, piano, and strings

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## The Composer's Thoughts

### I. Introduction: Jungle Jaunt

This introductory scherzo opens in an unabashed tribute to the Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein before turning to harmonies and rhythms derived from various pan-Amazonian dance forms. These jungle references are sped through (so as to be largely hidden) while echoing the energy of the Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera, who was long fascinated with indigenous Latin American cultures.



Photo credit: Mariah Tauger

### II. Highland Harawi

This movement is the heart of *Three Latin American Dances*, and evokes the Andean harawi, a melancholy adagio traditionally sung by a single bamboo quena flute to accompany a single dancer. As mountain music, the ambiance of mystery, vastness, and echo is evoked. The fast middle section simulates what I imagine to be the “zumballyu” of Illapa – a great spinning top belonging to Illapa, the Peruvian-Inca weather deity of thunder, lightning, and rain. Illapa spins his great top in the highland valleys of the Andes before allowing a return to the more staid harawi. The music of the Hungarian composer Bela Bartok is alluded.

### III. The Mestizo Waltz

As if in relief to the gravity of the previous movement, this final movement is a lighthearted tribute to the “mestizo,” or mixed-race, music of the South American Pacific coast. In particular, it evokes the “romancero” tradition of popular songs and dances that mix influences from indigenous Indian cultures, African slave cultures, and western brass bands. It exists in its original version as the final movement of my string quartet, *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout* (2001).

- Gabriela Lena Frank

# *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45

## Sergei Rachmaninoff

By the mid-1930s Sergei Rachmaninoff had signaled he was nearing retirement. He had completed his Third Symphony, finished building a home on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, and was reducing his performance commitments. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II interrupted his plans and he decided to move his family to the United States, where he had regularly visited for much of his career. He settled on Huntington, New York on Long Island where he would compose his final work *Symphonic Dances* before ultimately retiring to Beverly Hills, California.

The composer's biographer, Victor Seroff, writes that *Symphonic Dances* was initially titled *Fantastic Dances* with movements "Noon," "Twilight," and "Midnight" as a metaphor for human life; however, Rachmaninoff later changed this for a less subjective name. Even so, the work likely maintained its original character, which can be described as powerful, assertive, and melancholic.

In addition to the unorthodox instrumentation (more on that later), the coda of the first dance is particularly interesting. The strings play a lush chorale with glints of sound in the flute, piccolo, harp, piano, and glockenspiel that does appear previously in the movement, and is perhaps the most surreal moment in the entire piece. This material was borrowed from the composer's unpublished First

Symphony, which had almost derailed his career before it began. The composer and critic César Cui called it a "symphony on the 'Seven Plagues of Egypt'" that "would bring delight to the inhabitants of Hell." The work's reception took a heavy toll on Rachmaninoff who took three years away from composing before beginning again. Its inclusion here evokes a sense of peace and serenity with the composer perhaps validating his earlier effort.

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** April 1, 1873, in either Oneg or Semyonovo, Russia

**Died:** March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California

**Work composed:** 1940; dedicated to Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra

**World premiere:** January 3, 1941, at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 34 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes and piccolo, trumpets, three trombones, tuba, two oboes and English horn, three timpani, triangle, tambourine, snare clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), drum, orchestra bells, xylophone, tam-tam, chimes, cymbals, bass drum, harp, alto saxophone, two bassoons and piano, and strings  
contrabassoon, four horns, three

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## Listen for...the Saxophone, and Piano

For his *Symphonic Dances*, Rachmaninoff incorporated two instruments typically not seen within the orchestra, the alto saxophone, and the piano. While unusual, the saxophone was not unheard of in the orchestra and was included in scores by several of Rachmaninoff's Russian contemporaries including Aram Khachaturian's famous "Sabre Dance" from *Gayane* and Sergei Prokofiev's setting of *Romeo and Juliet*. Nonetheless, writing for saxophone was new territory for Rachmaninoff. We know the composer was concerned about writing idiomatically for the instrument and notating the part correctly due to an account between the composer and American composer-arranger Robert Russell Bennet, who was known for orchestrating numerous Broadway shows such as *Oklahoma!*, and *My Fair Lady*:

When he was doing his *Symphonic Dances*, he wanted to use a saxophone tone in the first movement and got in touch with me to advise him as to which of the saxophone family to use and just how to include it in his score – his experience with saxophones being extremely limited...Some days later we had luncheon together at his place in Huntington. When he met my wife and me at the railroad station, he was driving the car and after about one hundred yards, he stopped the car, turned to me, and said "I start on A sharp?" I said, "That's right," and he said "Right," and drove on out to his place.

While the saxophone is only heard in a few brief phrases during the first movement, it brings a new sensation to the listener like experiencing a new taste or smell for the first time.

The piano is a much more common sight for regular concertgoers; however, its position within the orchestra, rather than in a solo capacity in front of the ensemble, is far less typical. While Rachmaninoff enjoyed a long career as composer (including four piano concerti), conductor, and especially concert pianist, performing his own works and others, he never included the piano into any of his purely orchestral works until this final opus. Rachmaninoff includes the piano in the first two movements of *Symphonic Dances* giving it considerably more attention than the saxophone, though it is primarily used in accompanying and reinforcing roles for high-impact moments, rather than as a solo voice.

# Notes on the Program

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## *Made in America*

### Joan Tower

In an interview for the *Harvard Crimson*, Joan Tower was asked how she first came to music composition.

By accident... I went to Bennington College, which was a really wonderful place for me because it allowed me to open up and do what I needed to do with music. The first assignment was to write a piece. I was a pianist. I had never written a piece before. So I said, "Oh my God." So I wrote a piece and it was played, and it was horrible, really horrible. So I thought to myself, "Well, you could do better than that." So I wrote another piece, and it was still really horrible. And I've just been trying to fix it ever since.

Now at 81 years old, Tower, the Grammy-Award-winning Asher B. Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College is highly regarded as one of the greatest living American composers. She has been commissioned by performers and ensembles across the world including the Emerson, Tokyo, and Muir string quartets, and Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. This past summer she was the first female recipient of the Gold Baton award from the League of American Orchestras, the organization's highest honor reserved for

individuals whose "dedication and pivotal contributions to the cause of orchestras and American symphonic music are unparalleled."

Tower is hilariously direct in conversation and does not hesitate to wear her beliefs on her sleeve, including her advocacy for the programming of living composers, especially women. Some of her most

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** September 6, 1938, in New Rochelle, New York

**Work composed:** 2004; commissioned by the Ford Made in America consortium, a partnership program of the American Symphony Orchestra League and Meet the Composer, which included 65 regional orchestras across the USA including the York Symphony Orchestra

**World premiere:** October 2, 2005, at the Glens Falls High School Auditorium, by the Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra (NY), Charles Peltz, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** March 18, 2006, Robert Baker, conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** same

**Estimated duration:** ca. 13 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes (both doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets (one doubling piccolo trumpet), trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, egg maracas, glockenspiel, maracas, sleigh bells, suspended cymbal, tambourine, vibraphone, wood block, xylophone, and strings

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popular compositions are her *Fanfares for the Uncommon Women*, the title of which plays on Copland's famous *Fanfare for the Common Man*.

Some women composers don't want to deal with [it] at all. I do, actually...I think you have to know that the history is very bad. Once you know that you're a little more knowledgeable about your role in this history.

*Made in America* follows a fragment of the tune *America the Beautiful* almost like a protagonist in a novel, as it is interrupted and challenged by a swirl of more aggressive ideas. The melody returns again and again in various iterations, ever evolving and unrelenting. The piece ends rather unceremoniously possibly suggesting that the story is not yet complete. In Tower's score she asks, "How do we keep America beautiful?"

## The Composer's Thoughts

I crossed a fairly big bridge at the age of nine when my family moved to South America (La Paz, Bolivia), where we stayed for nine years. I had to learn a new language, a new culture, and how to live at 13,000 feet! It was a lively culture with many saints' days celebrated through music and dance, but the large Inca population in Bolivia was generally poor and there was little chance of moving up in class or work position.



*Photo credit: Noah Sheldon*

When I returned to the United States, I was proud to have free choices, upward mobility, and the chance to try to become who I wanted to be. I also enjoyed the basic luxuries of an American citizen that we so often take for granted: hot running water, blankets for the cold winters, floors that are not made of dirt, and easy modes of transportation, among many other things. So when I started composing this piece, the song "America the Beautiful" kept coming into my consciousness and eventually became the main theme for the work. The beauty of the song is undeniable and I loved working with it as a musical idea. One can never take for granted, however, the strength of a musical idea — as Beethoven (one of my strongest influences) knew so well. This theme is challenged by other more aggressive and dissonant ideas that keep interrupting, unsettling it, but "America the Beautiful" keeps resurfacing in different guises (some small and tender, others big and magnanimous), as if to say, "I'm still here, ever changing, but holding my own." A musical struggle is heard throughout the work. Perhaps it was my unconscious reacting to the challenge of how do we keep America beautiful.

- Joan Tower

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## The York Symphony Connection

*Made in America* was commissioned by a consortium of 65 regional orchestras including the York Symphony Orchestra, which represent all 50 states and have annual budgets of \$2.5 million or less. The piece was named after the "Ford Made in America" partnership program of the Ford Motor Company, which sponsored the project, and it was organized in collaboration with the American Symphony Orchestra League (now the League of American Orchestras) and Meet the Composer. This is the first repeat performance in York, a critical step in the lifecycle of a composition, since its YSO premiere in March 2006.

# *Billy the Kid: Ballet Suite*

## Aaron Copland

Today Copland's music is held as quintessentially American so it can be difficult to imagine a time when that was not yet the case, as it was when he wrote *Billy the Kid*. His later works such as: *Our Town* (1940), *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942), *Rodeo* (1942), *Appalachian Spring* (1944), *The Red Pony* (1948), and *The Tender Land* (1954) had not yet cemented his name in history, and interestingly enough, the catalyst for one of the most iconic American works was the successful use of Mexican folk material in *El Salón México*. From Vivian Perlis' oral history *Copland: 1900-1942* we learn:

Lincoln [Kirstein] was persuasive and it did not take long to convince me that if I could work with Mexican tunes in *El Salón México*, I might try home-grown ones...It is a delicate operation to put fresh and unconventional harmonics to well-known melodies without spoiling their naturalness; moreover, for an orchestral score, one must expand, contract, rearrange, and superimpose the bare tunes themselves, giving them something of one's own touch. That is what I tried to do, always keeping in mind my resolve to write plainly – not only because I had become convinced that simplicity was the way out of isolation for the contemporary composer, but because

I have never liked music to get in way of what it is supposedly aiding.

Copland composed *Billy the Kid* in a studio in Paris with some character notes and several books of Cowboy tunes as inspiration, having never visited west of the Mississippi. Kirstein wrote that American ballet "springs...from our own training and environment," but perhaps for Copland it was his isolation that helped to conjure the best results.

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York

**Died:** December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

**Work composed:** 1938, at the request of Lincoln Kirstein, artistic director of Ballet Caravan; suite extracted by the composer in 1939 after the premiere of an orchestrated version of the full ballet

**World premiere:** complete ballet (2 pianos), October 16, 1938 at the Chicago Civic Opera House with Ballet Caravan; orchestral version (complete ballet), May 24, 1939 with Ballet Caravan in New York, Fritz Kitzinger, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** April 29, 2000, Robert Baker, conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** same

**Estimated duration:** ca. 22 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns,

three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, gourd, slap stick, sleigh bells, snare drum, triangle, wood block, xylophone, harp, piano, and strings

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## The Story as Told by the Composer

*Billy the Kid* concerns itself with significant moments in the life of this infamous character of the American Southwest, known to the Mexicans as *el Chivato*, or simply, "The Keed." The ballet begins and ends on the open prairie. The first scene is a street in a frontier town. Cowboys saunter into town, some on horseback, others on foot with lassoes; some Mexican women do a *jarabe*, which is interrupted by a fight between two drunks. Attracted by the gathering crowd, Billy, a boy of 12, is seen for the first time, with his mother. The brawl turns ugly, guns are drawn, and in some unaccountable way, Billy's mother is killed. Without an instant's hesitation, in cold fury, Billy draws a knife from a cowhand's sheath and stabs his mother's slayers. His short but famous career has begun. In swift succession we see episodes in Billy's later life – at night, under the stars, in a quiet card game with his outlaw friends; hunted by a posse led by his former friend, Pat Garrett; in a gun battle. A celebration takes place when he is captured. Billy makes one of his legendary escapes from prison. Tired and worn out in the desert, Billy rests with his girl. Finally, the posse catches up with him.

- Aaron Copland

# Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B Minor, Op. 104

## Antonín Dvořák

Some may wonder why the closing selection on a concert titled *Made in America* was written by a composer born in what is now the Czech Republic and who lived most of his life in central Europe; however, Dvořák not only wrote his Cello Concerto in the United States, he taught American composers how to write American music!

Western art in the 19th century saw a great wave of nationalism in reaction to the populism of the 18th century. Where composers like Mozart strove to write music that was accessible to the masses, there was now an appetite for music that defined what it meant to be a part of a particular culture or country. One of the most well-known examples, the “Mighty Handful” or “The Five,” comprised five Russian composers (Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin) who collaborated on compositions, concerts, and worked to define what “Russian classical music” would sound like. After a performance at the 1867 All-Russian Ethnographical Exhibition in Moscow, a critic wrote:

God grant that our Slav guests may never forget today’s concert; God grant that they may forever preserve the memory of how much poetry, feeling, talent, and intelligence are possessed by the small but already mighty handful of Russian musicians.

The same sense of patriotism and want for a national identity existed in the United States, though composers struggled with defining a true national sound in a country whose history was measured in centuries rather than millennia.

In stepped Jeannette Thurber, a Paris-trained American musician turned philanthropist who was determined to help raise musical pedagogy in the United to that of European standards and hoped to facilitate a new generation of musicians that would define an “American sound.” By the 1870s Dvořák was recognized at home for helping to define Czech music through an output that contained Slavonic rhapsodies, waltzes, polkas, and

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic)

**Died:** May 1, 1904, in Prague

**Work composed:** 1894-95; dedicated to cellist Hanuš Wihan

**World premiere:** March 19, 1896, at the Queen’s Hall, London, with the composer conducting the Philharmonic Society, Leo Stern, soloist

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** January 19, 1960, Robert Mandell, conductor with Heinrich Joachim, soloist

## **Most recent York Symphony Orchestra**

**performance:** April 16, 2005, Robert Baker, conductor with Daniel Gaisford, soloist

**Estimated duration:** ca. 40 minutes

**Instrumentation:** solo cello, two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, and strings

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overtures as well as traditional forms like symphonies and string quartets that still contained quintessentially Czech elements. Several decades later he was one of the only Czech composers to achieve worldwide recognition with a style described as “the fullest recreation of a national idiom with that of the symphonic tradition, absorbing folk influences and finding effective ways of using them.” These accomplishments drew Thurber’s attention, and in 1891 she contacted Dvořák and asked him to serve as the director for the newly founded National Conservatory of Music in New York. Dvořák accepted and in the following years helped execute Thurber’s vision by building the school’s curriculum, faculty, appearing as guest conductor, and composing many of his late masterworks including the “American” String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96, Symphony No. 9 “From the New World,” and his Cello Concerto.

# Notes on the Program

by Erik Shinn, Concert Operations & Personnel Manager

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## *D'un matin de printemps [Of a Spring Morning]*

### Lili Boulanger

Much like the composer brothers Joseph and Michael Haydn, Lili Boulanger and her sister Nadia were widely regarded as child prodigies. Similarly, just as Joseph, one of the most prolific and highly respected composers of the Classical period believed that his lesser-known brother was as good if not a better composer than himself, Lili's story is often overshadowed by her older sister's output and career. Both pairs of siblings cared tremendously about the other, and in the case of the Boulanger sisters, much of what we now know of Lili is because Nadia dedicated a significant amount of her life promoting her sister's works after Lili's untimely death at age 25 from bronchial pneumonia and Crohn's disease.

Lili was born into an extremely musical household. By age two it was discovered she had perfect pitch and by age five she was attending music classes with Nadia at the Paris Music Academy. It wasn't long until music consumed her life. In addition to music theory, Lili studied organ, piano, violin, cello, harp, and singing, having lessons seven days a week. In 1912 she was accepted to the Paris Conservatoire to study composition.

The following year she became the first woman to win the school's *Prix de Rome* scholarship with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*, joining the ranks of previous student-winners Hector Berlioz (1830), Charles Gounod (1839), Georges Bizet (1857), and Claude Debussy (1884).

One of her final works, *D'un matin de printemps* began as chamber music for violin and piano and was reworked into

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** August 21, 1893, in Paris

**Died:** March 15, 1919, in Mézy-sur-Seine, France

**Work composed:** 1917 for violin and piano, orchestrated by the composer in 1918

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 5 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, english horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, triangle, harp, celesta, and strings

duets and trios with cello and flute before being fully orchestrated during the last year of the Lili's life. While the manuscript shows notes and rhythms in Lili's handwriting, there is evidence that Nadia had to assist with some of the expressive markings including dynamics. *D'un matin de printemps* is often paired with *D'un Soir Triste* (Of a Sad Evening), which sets a starkly different setting but uses the same opening melodic motive. Unlike many of Lili's works that touch on grief, possibly due to the death of her father when she was six, *Of a Spring Morning* is joyous, energetic, and always floating, never settling on a key center or texture for too long.

*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*  
[*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*]  
*La Mer [The Sea]*

## Claude Debussy

Debussy's most productive compositional period came at the height of the Impressionist and Symbolist movements in France, styles developed in part by the poet Stéphane Mallarmé whose poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* would inspire Debussy's composition. Departing from earlier Romantic composers who were pushing the boundaries of 18th-century musical forms, Debussy's personal aesthetic was more imaginative, presenting fully developed themes and harmonies that painted aural pictures rather than detailed roadmaps. Furthermore, Symbolists like Mallarmé and Debussy sought to "evoke a specific, fleeting emotional illumination in the reader or viewer [or listener] through mysterious metaphors" rather than specific "this represents that" associations that defined impressionism.

About the poem that enraptured Debussy's imagination, James Keller writes:

Vintage Symbolism it is: a faun (a rural deity that is half man and half goat) spends a languorous afternoon observing, recalling, or fantasizing about – it's not always obvious which – some alluring nymphs who clearly affect him in an erotic way.

A decade later, Debussy's revisions to a new collection of symphonic sketches, *La Mer*, further reinforced the composer's Symbolist outlook. The first movement, originally titled "Beautiful Sea at the Sanguinair Islands" was scrapped for the more evocative "From Dawn till Noon on the Sea," while the third movement was changed from "The Wind Makes the Sea Dance" to more-inconspicuous "Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea."

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** August 22, 1862, in St. Germain-en-Laye, just outside of Paris

**Died:** March 25, 1918, in Paris

**Works composed and premiered:**

*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* 1892-94 – perhaps started as early as 1891; premiered December 22, 1894 at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique in Paris, Gustave Doret, conductor; *La Mer* begun 1903; rough draft completed Spring 1905; orchestration completed that summer. Premiered October 15, 1905, in Paris, with Camille Chevillard conducting the orchestra of the Concerts Lamoureux. Debussy continued to tinker with details for years, completing most of his revisions in 1910; dedicated to Jacques Durand, Debussy's publisher

**York Symphony Orchestra premieres and most recent performances:** *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* premiered January 12, 1937, Louis Vyrer, conductor; most recently performed October 11, 1992, Robert Baker, conductor. Only previous performance of *La Mer* February 19, 2000, Robert Baker, conductor

**Estimated durations:** *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, ca. 10 minutes; *La Mer*, ca. 23 minutes

**Instrumentation (Prélude):** three flutes, two oboes, english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, crotales, two harps, and strings

**Instrumentation (La Mer):** two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, english horn, 2 clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass

drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, tam-tam, triangle, two harps, and strings

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While Debussy never visited the Sanguinaire Islands (an archipelago near the entrance of the Gulf of Ajaccio in Corsica) personally, he did have a strong connection to the sea. His father had served in the French navy and aspired for his son to follow in his footsteps. While a series of events would eventually lead Debussy to a life of music, he wrote that he still had “a sincere devotion to the sea.” In addition to his childhood memories, the famous wood-block print “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” hung in the composer’s study and had made such an impression on him during the compositional process that he asked for his publisher to reproduce the image on the cover of the score.



*The Great Wave off Kanagawa, by Hokusai*

# Piano Concerto in G Major

## *Boléro*

### Maurice Ravel

Ravel composed both of his piano concerti over roughly the same three-year period, and while both contain the composer's distinct sound in their colorful orchestration, harmonies, and jazz idioms, they also contain numerous differences. The most obvious of which is that the D-Major "Concerto for the Left Hand" was commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, the famous pianist who lost his right arm in World War I. Wittgenstein solicited works for left hand alone by a number of prominent 20th-century composers, whereas the G Major Concerto is for two hands.

While the bulk of the G-Major Concerto was written between 1929 and 1931, Ravel had plans for a piano concerto on Basque themes as early as 1906. Unfortunately, he had to abandon his sketches in Paris when he relocated to the south of France during The Great War. After completing both concerti he wrote:

The music of a concerto should, in my opinion, be lighthearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or at dramatic effects. It has been said of certain classics that their concertos were written not "for" but rather "against" the piano. I heartily agree. I had intended to title this concerto "Divertissement." Then it occurred to me that there was no need to do so

because the title "Concerto" should be sufficiently clear.

While this description could certainly describe the outer movements of the G Major Concerto that Ravel had begun sketching during the War, it certainly does not match the Adagio, which Michael Steinberg writes "is the reason we not only delight in this concerto but

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** March 7, 1875, in Cibourne, Basses-Pyrénées, France

**Died:** December 28, 1937, in Paris

**Works composed and premiered:** Piano Concerto in G Major 1929-31, although the first and last movements reportedly drew on material composed in 1914; premiered January 14, 1932, at the Salle Pleyel in Paris with the composer conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra, Marguerite Long (the work's dedicatee), soloist. *Boléro* composed 1928; dedicated to Ida Rubinstein; premiered November 22, 1928, at the Paris Opéra, in a ballet production by Rubinstein directed by Bronislava Nijinska, conducted by Walther Straram; concert premiere, November 14, 1929 by the New York Philharmonic, Arturo Toscanini, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premieres and most recent performances:** Piano Concerto in G Major premiered February 13, 1994, Robert Baker, conductor, Peter Schmalfluss, soloist; most recently performed October 20, 2007, Robert Baker, conductor, Christopher O'Riley, soloist. *Boléro* premiered November 13, 1934, Sylvan Levin, conductor; most recently performed May 8, 2010, Robert Baker, conductor

**Estimated durations:** Piano Concerto in G Major, ca. 21 minutes; *Boléro*, ca. 15 minutes

**Instrumentation (Concerto):** solo piano, flute, piccolo, oboe, english horn, clarinet, eb clarinet, two bassoons, two horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, bass drum, suspended cymbal, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle, whip, wood block, harp, and strings

**Instrumentation (Boléro):** two flutes, piccolo, two oboes (one doubling oboe d'amore), english horn, two clarinets (one doubling eb clarinet), bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, piccolo trumpet, three trombones, tuba, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tam-tam, harp, celesta, and strings

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truly love it." Additionally, this view departs from the tone of his D-Major Concerto, completed the previous year, which displays Ravel's own ability for profundity. Perhaps in this instance, our

own evaluations of Ravel's "pre-war" and "post-war" writing better illuminate the composer's beliefs than his own self-evaluations.

Another work that demonstrates Ravel's disconnection between perception and reality is *Boléro*. Composed on the request for a ballet score by Ida Rubinstein, Ravel originally planned on orchestrating an existing work, but eventually decided to write an original composition.

Most music has some combination of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and dynamics, with an emphasis on the first two elements. For this piece however, Ravel chose to focus on the latter. He wrote:

It is an experiment in a very special and limited direction, and should not be suspected of achieving anything different from, or anything more than, it actually does achieve. [It is] a piece lasting seventeen minutes and consisting wholly of orchestral tissue without music – of one very long, very gradual crescendo. The themes are impersonal – folk tunes of the usual Spanish-Arabian kind.

At the first rehearsal Ravel was amazed at the reception it received, insisting that his experiment would never find a place on symphonic concerts as "unfortunately, it contains no music." Contrary to his belief, it became an instant sensation and remains one of the most popular pieces of classical music today.

# Notes on the Program

by Erik Shinn, Concert Operations & Personnel Manager

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## *Loco*

### Jennifer Higdon

According to the League of America Orchestras, Jennifer Higdon is one of the most frequently programmed living composers on concerts in the United States. Since cementing her place as a major orchestral composer with her work *blue cathedral*, which has been performed over 600 times since it premiered in 2000, Higdon has received numerous commissions from a wide array of ensembles including the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, Eighth Blackbird, the President's Own Marine Band, and soloists Yuja Wang and Hilary Hahn. She received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for her Violin Concerto, two Grammys for her Percussion and Viola concerti, and the International Opera Award's Best World Premiere in 2016 for her opera *Cold Mountain*.

While well-educated in classical composition, a key factor of Higdon's success is that she also understands the practical element of attending a 21st-century concert. Orchestras are competing with a multitude of other organizations for attention and that composers need to seek out those who do it best and learn from their example. In a

2017 interview Higdon mentions drawing from pop artists for inspiration.

So, for instance, Beyonce's *Leomade* CD, everyone's talking about it. I'm like, "Okay, I'm gonna buy this thing, I'm gonna check it out." So I started listening to it, and I'm like, "Wow, this is really fantastic..." For Beyonce, *Lemonade* was a statement, it was a point of grieving. You can hear it. It's a point of coping, very much the same way the *blue cathedral* was for me.

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** December 31, 1962, in Brooklyn, New York

**Resides:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Work composed:** 2004; commissioned by the Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, Illinois, to commemorate the Ravinia train as part of the Train Commission Project as organized and imagined by Welz Kauffman

**World premiere:** July 31, 2004 at the Ravinia Festival, by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Christoph Eschenbach, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:**  
this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 8 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, piccolo,  
three oboes, three clarinets, two  
bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns,

three trumpets, three trombones, tuba,  
timpani, bass drum, bongos, castanets,  
cowbell, cymbals, guiro, marimba,  
sandpaper blocks, snare drum,  
suspended cymbal, tambourine, tom-  
toms, vibraphone, wood block, piano,  
and strings

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## The Composer's Thoughts

*Loco* celebrates the Centennial season of Ravinia, and the train that accompanies the orchestra. When thinking about what kind of piece to write, I saw in my imagination a locomotive. And in a truly ironic move for a composer, my brain subtracted the word "motive," leaving "loco," which means crazy. Being a composer, this appealed to me, so this piece is about locomotion as crazy movement!

- Jennifer Higdon



*Photo credit: J. Henry Fair*

## *Rhapsody in Blue*

### George Gershwin (orch. Ferde Grofé) [1942 version]

On January 3, 1924 George Gershwin, his brother Ira, and songwriter “Buddy” De Sylva were killing time in a pool hall when Ira noticed something odd in an article in the New York *Tribune*. It said that stated “George Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto” that would be premiered by bandleader Paul Whiteman at an upcoming concert of new American works combining jazz and classical music. While the concept was certainly intriguing, George wasn’t working on a concerto and didn’t know anything about it! A call to Whiteman the following day revealed that the bandleader had been planning the concert for some time, but a similarly announced project by another conductor had caused him to move up his performance date and forced George’s hand by advertising the collaboration.

George was a little apprehensive having admittedly not composed much “serious music” before but accepted the challenge with a few qualifications. As the concert was only a few weeks away, the concerto would not be a typical multi-movement work but a free-form rhapsody that would spotlight him as the soloist backed by the Whiteman band. Additionally, George was used to writing scores for Broadway where he would write melodies and then hand them off to someone else to orchestrate. With the deadline looming, he would need to have the same arrangement. Whiteman agreed

to both and arranged for his staff orchestrator, Ferde Grofé, to write the band parts.

As if reading about a premiere you haven’t even heard about wasn’t enough pressure, George had other ongoing projects including a trip to Boston for the premiere of his musical *Sweet Little Devil*. He later revealed that the train ride was a

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York

**Died:** July 11, 1937, in Hollywood, California

**Work composed:** 1924, with Ferde Grofé creating the original scoring for solo piano with jazz band; in 1926 Grofé orchestrated it for piano with theatre orchestra and eventually symphony orchestra, published in 1942 but completed earlier

**World premiere:** original version with jazz band, February 12, 1924, Aeolian hall, New York City, with Paul Whiteman leading his orchestra and the composer as soloist

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** symphony orchestra version, April 27, 1965, Francois Jaroschy, conductor, José Iturbi, piano

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra**

**performance:** November 10, 2001, Robert Baker, conductor, Kevin Cole, soloist

**Estimated duration:** ca. 16 minutes

**Instrumentation:** solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, three optional saxophones (two alto, tenor), optional banjo, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, suspended cymbals, tam-tam, triangle, and strings

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key part of the inspirational process for the rhapsody:

It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattley-band that is often so stimulating to a composer...and there I suddenly heard – and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the rhapsody, from beginning to end...I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America – of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance.

# Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100

## Sergei Prokofiev

Sergei Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 was unlike many other composer's war-time symphonies such as Shostakovich's *Leningrad* or Vaughn Williams' Fourth. While those works and many others clearly echoed the horrors of war, Russian-American musicologist Boris Schwartz wrote that Soviet music during World War II "was meant to console and uplift, to encourage and exhort; nothing else mattered." Though some believe there are ominous undertones, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony fits that description.

At the time, it was the longest Symphony Prokofiev had written, at approximately 45 minutes, yet he finished it in less than a month, suggesting that he was in good spirits. Indeed in 1944 the war effort was going well for Russia. The siege of Leningrad had ended and there were major victories in Romania (Battle of Romania), Ukraine (Crimean Offensive), and Poland (Operation Bagration). His relationship with his second wife Mira, was good, and in the early part of the year the two had relocated to a special "House of Rest a Creativity" in Ivanovo, an artist retreat set up by the Union of Soviet Composers away from the front.

The first movement's relaxed *Andante* tempo is unusual for the opening movement of any symphony let alone most contemporary wartime symphonies, which often begin livelier and more

agitated. Of the entire piece, Prokofiev said:

I regard the Fifth Symphony as the culmination of a long period of my creative life. I conceived of it as glorifying the grandeur of the human spirit...praising the free and happy man – his strength, his generosity, and the purity of his soul.

The first movement certainly projects a sense of serenity and strength, especially in the coda's glorious finale.

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** either April 23, as he claimed, or April 27 (according to his birth certificate), 1891, in Sontsovka, Ekaterinoslav district, Ukraine

**Died:** March 5, 1953, in Moscow, USSR

**Work composed:** 1944, drawing on material sketched in the preceding decade; the orchestration was completed that November

**World premiere:** January 13, 1945, in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, by the State Symphonic Orchestra of the USSR, with the composer conducting

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** October 13, 1991, Robert Baker, conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** November 10, 2001, Robert Baker, conductor

**Estimated duration:** ca. 43 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, english horn, two clarinets, eb clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, tam-tam, triangle, wood block, harp, piano, and strings

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The second movement is a true scherzo. In addition to a quicker pace, which further emphasizes the change in tempo from the opening movement, there are several gestures, which could be viewed as musical representations of laughter. Additionally, whereas many Soviet-era compositions contain sections of whit and satire that made state censors question whether a work was truly in support of the empire or sarcastically undermining authority, Prokofiev appears to genuinely capture the spirit of his “happy man.”

The third movement brings yet more contrast with lavish lyricism and our first real glimpse at the darker side of the human psyche. Listeners familiar with the composer’s setting of *Romeo & Juliet*, which was written in the late 1930s, may find the climax and extensive falling action of the movement reminiscent of the music for Juliet’s death, while the finale movement brings us back into the light

with an energetic and almost mechanical-sounding motor towards a spectacular finish.

# Notes on the Program

by Erik Shinn, Concert Operations & Personnel Manager

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## *Three Olympians*

### **Peter Boyer**

American composer Peter Boyer is one of a small handful who has made his name both in the concert hall and on the big screen. In addition to being one of the most programmed living composers with over 500 public performances by more than 150 orchestras, he has worked on over 35 film projects including orchestrations for James Newton Howard (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2*, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them 1 & 2*, *Red Sparrow*), Thomas Newman (*Skyfall*, *Finding Dory*), Michael Giacchino (the Oscar-winning *Up*, *Star Trek*, *Jurassic World*, *Inside Out*, *Cars 2*, *Mission: Impossible III*), the late James Horner (*The Amazing Spider-Man*), and Alan Menken (*Mirror Mirror*).

*Three Olympians* was commissioned by The Conductors Institute at Bard College where Boyer had spent three summers studying as a student (1992-94). While it was originally intended to serve as an educational piece of sorts, requiring various techniques from the student conductors who studied it, *Three Olympians* has turned into one of Boyer's most successful compositions. It has been recorded by both the London Symphony Orchestra and London Philharmonic Orchestra and is regularly featured in

both live performances and on SiriusXM's Symphony Hall channel.

ClassicsToday.com writes that *Three Olympians* is impressive for, "the sonorous inventiveness of its strings-only scoring, with 'modernistic' and textural effects such as snap pizzicatos, harmonics, and glissandos perfectly integrated into Boyer's own tonal idiom, as well as for the distinction of its tunes, especially the lovely one in the central movement depicting Aphrodite."

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### **By the Numbers**

**Born:** February 10, 1970, in Providence, Rhode Island

**Resides:** Altadena, California

**Work composed:** 1999-2000; commissioned by The Conductors Institute

**World premiere:** numerous conductors of The Conductors Institute at Bard College, July 10-14, 2000

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 15 minutes

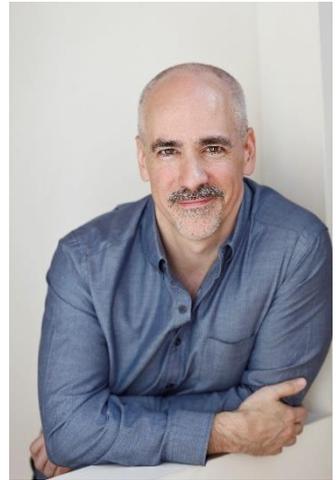
**Instrumentation:** strings

## The Composer's Thoughts

This work was commissioned by the Conductors Institute, Harold Farberman, Artistic Director, for performance by its 30-plus conductors at Bard College in the summer of 2000. The commission request was for a work that had three contrasting movements or sections, which would call for different aspects of technique and approach from the conductors. In thinking about my interest in Greek mythology, I decided that creating three “mini-portraits” of Greek mythological figures would both fulfill this requirement and supply some general imagery on which to draw. Thus the word “Olympians” in the title is not to be understood in the modern-day “athletic” sense of the word, but in the ancient Greek sense: an Olympian was a resident of Olympus, the home of the Greek gods. There were twelve Olympians, all “major deities.” The three which inspired the music in this case — Apollo, Aphrodite, and Ares — were all children of Zeus, but each had a different mother. Apollo is the most multi-faceted of these three, the god of reason and intelligence, music, prophecy, medicine, and the sun.

Of course, the musical portrayals of Apollo have been endless, with Stravinsky and Britten providing noteworthy (and daunting) 20th-century examples. For me, Apollo meant “classical” harmony and phrasing, and a great deal of energy. Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty, which to me unambiguously called for lyrical melody. Ares was the god of war, which to me translated as relentless rhythm, as well as a chance to exploit some of the more menacing effects of which strings are capable. The unison Gs in this movement are a nod to Holst’s famous portrayal of Mars (the Roman incarnation of Ares). This work is unabashedly tonal, straightforward, and hopefully a good deal of fun.

- Peter Boyer

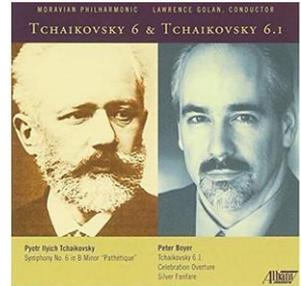


*Photo credit: Danika Singfield*

## The York Symphony Connection

*Three Olympians* is the third piece by Peter Boyer that York Symphony audiences will experience since the appointment of Lawrence Golan as music director in 2014. The YSO's 2014-15 season opening concert began with the aptly titled *New Beginnings*, written for the opening of the Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and has been used in a variety of settings including on *CBS This Morning*, and arranged for marching band. The 2016-17 season featured a concert of American music including one of Boyer's most ambitious works, the Grammy Award nominated *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, which celebrates the American immigrant experience and the American dream while combining orchestral forces with theatrical and multimedia elements.

In addition, Golan's repertoire with other orchestras includes Boyer's *Celebration Overture*, *Silver Fanfare*, *Titanic*, *The Phoenix*, and in the early 2010s Golan commissioned and premiered *Tchaikovsky 6.1*, as part of the "Point-One Series" project, which aims to create and record new works that are musically linked to great masterpieces of orchestral repertoire.



*Golan conducts the music of Tchaikovsky and Boyer with the Moravian Philharmonic. Released on Albany Records*

# Adagio for Strings, Op. 11a

## Samuel Barber

Samuel Barber is widely remembered today for his orchestral music including his three essays, *Overture to The School for Scandal*, and Violin Concerto; however, his most iconic work by far is the Adagio for Strings, which began as the central movement to a piece of chamber music. While it's often difficult to predict the success of a piece before its premiere, Barber had the utmost confidence in the movement. During a visit to Italy in 1936 he wrote to Orlando Cole, cellist with the Curtis String Quartet:

I have just finished the slow movement of my quartet today – it is a knock-out! Now for a finale.

While the finale was not completed in time, the rest of the piece premiered on the quartet's upcoming European tour.

The following year the famed conductor Arturo Toscanini attended the Salzburg Festival in Austria where he heard Barber's Symphony No. 1, the first work by an American to be performed at the event. Toscanini was so moved that he contacted the Barber to request several pieces to perform with his new radio orchestra, the NBC Symphony, suggesting that the slow movement from the string quartet might be reworked into a stand-alone piece for orchestra.

After Toscanini's orchestral premiere, Adagio for Strings quickly became a

staple of the repertoire, and possessing a genuinely solemn quality, has often been associated with tragic moments. The piece was aired in memorial concerts following the deaths of presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy and is often performed at other "in memoriam" occasions.

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania

**Died:** January 23, 1981, in New York City

**Work composed:** as a string quartet in 1936, and expanded for string orchestra in 1938

**World premiere:** string quartet, December 14, 1936, by the Pro Arte Quartet at the Villa Aurelia in Rome; orchestral version, November 5, 1938, in a radio broadcast by Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** January 16, 1947, Louis Vyrner, conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** November 15, 1992, Robert Baker, conductor

**Estimated duration:** ca. 8 minutes

**Instrumentation:** strings

# *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*

## Ralph Vaughan Williams

In 1904 Ralph Vaughan Williams was invited to help produce a new version of *The English Hymnal*. While he felt he knew little about hymns, he agreed to the project and began work correcting errors, removing musically “inferior” hymns, and composing some new ones of his own. One new hymn that he added was the “Third Mode Melody” by Thomas Tallis. Tallis was a 16th-century English composer of church music who worked under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. The “Third Mode” in the hymn’s title references the seven church modes, this one named Phrygian. While complex to fully explain, a quick baseline for the tonality of Phrygian would be to play only white keys from E to E an octave higher on the piano.

A few years later in 1908, Vaughan Williams would travel to Paris to study with Maurice Ravel. While composers across Europe were writing works for some of the largest forces ever called for, many French composers, including Ravel, valued the variety of colors a large ensemble could provide, rather than its sheer volume of sound. Vaughan Williams left Paris with encouragement to think more carefully about his orchestration and how to create impactful works with fewer instruments.

Shortly after returning to England Vaughan Williams was commissioned to

write a piece for the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester Cathedral. Armed with his experience in English church music and composition lessons with Ravel, he composed a fantasia based on Tallis’s Third Mode Melody for strings alone. For an added twist, Vaughan Williams incorporated a spatial element to the work by splitting the orchestra into three groups, a quartet, nonet, and remaining large group of string players, and asks for them to be visually separated on the stage.

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** October 12, 1872, in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England

**Died:** August 26, 1958, in London

**Work composed:** 1910; revised 1913 and 1919

**World premiere:** September 6, 1910, with the composer conducting the London Symphony Orchestra at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester Cathedral

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 15 minutes

**Instrumentation:** solo string quartet, and two string orchestras

# *Within Her Arms*

## Anna Clyne

Anna Clyne has often been viewed as an American composer since relocating from London to New York City to pursue a master's degree at the Manhattan School of Music. She frequently collaborates with artists in other fields including choreographers, visual artists, and filmmakers, earning praise in the *New York Times* as a "composer of uncommon gifts and unusual methods." Through these collaborations, she has been commissioned by a variety of institutions including the BBC Radio 3, Carnegie Hall, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Houston Ballet, and Southbank Centre. Clyne currently serves as Associate Composer with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and on the music composition faculty of the Mannes School of Music

Violinist Jennifer Koh first discovered Clyne through a live performance of her piece *Within Her Arms*. Koh would later commission several works from Clyne including the violin concerto *The Seamstress*, and said of Clyne's music:

Sometimes things reach you and it's colorful or intricate or structured in an interesting way or the orchestra is wonderful. But the extraordinary thing about Anna's music is that it is incredibly moving. And I hadn't had that reaction for a long time.

*Within Her Arms* has been compared to the works of Thomas Tallis and Barber's

Adagio for Strings, which makes it an apt choice for tonight's program. Lawrence Johnson of the *Chicago Classical Review* writes:

*Within Her Arms* is a power work, a somber, deeply felt meditation on loss. Crafted with real mastery for strings, Clyne's work never descends to the sentimental or lachrymose, the music working its way through desolation and painful stabbing violin accents to a sense of hard-won solace and peace.

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** March 9, 1980, in London

**Resides:** Brooklyn, New York

**Work composed:** 2008-09; commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group; dedicated to the composer's mother

**World premiere:** April 7, 2009, by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 14 minutes

**Instrumentation:** strings

## The Composer's Thoughts

Earth will keep you tight within her arms dear one-  
So that tomorrow you will be transformed into flowers-  
This flower smiling quietly in this morning field-  
This morning you will weep no more dear one-  
For we have gone through too deep a night.  
This morning, yes, this morning,  
I kneel down on the green grass-  
And I notice your presence.  
Flowers, that speak to me in silence.  
The message of love and understanding has indeed come.  
- Thich Nhat Hanh

- Anna Clyne



*Photo credit:  
Emily Andrews*

# Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

## Pyotr Tchaikovsky

In the fall of 1880, Pyotr Tchaikovsky was at work on two orchestral compositions. One was his *Serenade for Strings*, the other an occasional piece, an overture, written for an exhibition celebrating the 25th anniversary of the reign of Tsar Alexander II. Tchaikovsky wrote his patron Nadezhda von Meck:

The overture will be very loud and noisy, but I wrote it without warmth or love, so it will probably not have any artistic merit.

The *Serenade*, by contract, I wrote from an inner compulsion; it is deeply felt and for that reason, I venture to think, is not without real merit.

Tchaikovsky, like many composers, wrote one-off pieces for specific events such as his *Coronation March* for Alexander III and the choral *Greeting to Anton Rubinstein* for the composer's 50th Birthday. While "loud" indeed, the *1812 Overture* would become one of Tchaikovsky's most celebrated and performed works.

Of the *serenade*, Michael Steinberg writes that though it is more restrained than his overtures and symphonies, it is "nonetheless full of unmistakable Tchaikovskian melancholy." The forms of each movement look towards the past including, a Baroque-style overture, graceful waltz, and elegy. The finale is the most progressive beginning with music

from the first movement, followed by an *Allegro* that bursts forth with folk songs, which become brilliantly intertwined with the *Serenade's* opening theme.

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## By the Numbers

**Born:** May 7, 1840, in Votkinsky, Vyatka Province, Russia

**Died:** November 6, 1893, in St. Petersburg, Russia

**Work composed:** 1880; dedicated to Constantin Albrecht, a cellist and inspector at the Moscow Conservatory

**World premiere:** October 30, 1881, in St. Petersburg, with Eduard Nápravník conducting a concert of the Russian Musical Society; the piece had already been heard in a surprise performance for Tchaikovsky at the Moscow Conservatory on December 3, 1880, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** January 14, 1943, Louis Vyner conductor

**Most recent York Symphony Orchestra performance:** October 18, 1971, as the score to a ballet by George Balanchine, with the National Ballet; likely Ottavio DeRosa or James Pfohl conductor

**Estimated duration:** ca. 28 minutes

**Instrumentation:** strings

# Notes on the Program

by Erik Shinn, Concert Operations & Personnel Manager

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## *Ode to Joy Fanfare*

### Dianne Wittry

As a skilled conductor, educator, and composer, Dianne Wittry brings a wide variety of experience to the table. In addition to composing, she serves as the music director for both the Allentown Symphony Orchestra and Garden State Philharmonic Symphony in New Jersey, and runs a seminar for young conductors, *Beyond the Baton*, named after her own book detailing every aspect of becoming a professional in the field.

The impetus of her *Ode to Joy Fanfare* was a practical one. Wittry had programmed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for a concert with the Allentown Symphony Orchestra in 2015 and was looking for repertoire to pair it with. In an article to the *East Penn Press* she wrote about an issue many conductors share:

When selecting pieces to be performed in a concert along with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, I am always a little stumped. The Ninth is so incredible and so powerful, how can other pieces share the same concert?

Not only did the fanfare aide in the continuity of the concert by drawing on themes from later in the evening, but it also reinforced Beethoven's message of joy and brotherhood by incorporating a youth orchestra into the performance.

When the *Ode to Joy Fanfare* is paired with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on a program as it is this evening, the concert begins with the famous melody, which Wittry says is "almost like getting to eat desert first;" however, we hope that you save room for the entire concert!

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** October 11, 1964, in Pasadena, California

**Resides:** Allentown, Pennsylvania

**Work composed:** 2015; revised 2017

**World premiere:** April 11, 2015, by the composer conducting the Allentown Symphony Orchestra (PA), and students from the El Sistema Lehigh Valley program

**York Symphony Orchestra premiere:** this performance

**Estimated duration:** ca. 5 minutes

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, chimes, glockenspiel, strings, and student string orchestra

## The Composer's Thoughts

In my fanfare, I didn't want to give away the entire melody too soon, so I selected a variety of musical snippets from the movements of the Ninth Symphony and created what I jokingly refer to as "Beethoven Nine in a blender." I start with a quote of the opening of the last movement, but after that, I give you just fragments and musical motifs that float in and out of the sound.

These are all hints of great themes to come. The "Ode to Joy" melody appears slowly in the piece, just a few notes at a time tossed around the orchestra, but finally when you do hear it completely, it is played not by the members of [a professional orchestra], but by...young string students from [a youth orchestra]. I wanted us to remember the beauty of brotherhood for all mankind, as seen through the eyes of a child.

- Diane Wittry



# Fantasia for Piano, Chorus, and Orchestra in C Minor, Op. 80

## Symphony No. 9 “Choral” in D major, Op. 125

### Ludwig van Beethoven

In December 1808, Ludwig van Beethoven was planning a benefit concert, or *Akademie* as it was known at the time, to both premiere several new compositions and help raise funds for his living expenses. For the location, he chose the Theater an der Wien where many of his previous works had been premiered including the Second and Third Symphonies, Third Piano Concerto, his only opera, *Fidelio*, and his Violin Concerto. The 1808 concert was to be one that topped all the others and included the premieres of his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Fourth Piano Concerto, and an improvised piano fantasia later published as his *Fantasia in G minor, Op. 77* all in one evening. In addition, several movements from his *Mass in C major* and concert aria *Ah! perfido* for soprano and orchestra served as interludes. After concluding that almost four hours of music was not enough, Beethoven set to compose a finale for the concert that would call for all of the forces utilized throughout the evening: an orchestra, chorus, vocal soloists, and a solo pianist. Thus, the *Fantasia in C minor* or *Choral Fantasy* as it is often known came to be.

Unfortunately, Beethoven's vision for the evening likely did not live up to expectations as several circumstances both within and out of the composer's

control worked against him. Scheduling was extremely difficult with only a six-week window available. The aristocratic target audience for the evening (tickets cost two guilden, more than a week's wages for a laborer) fled Vienna during the summers for their country estates, and

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### By the Numbers

**Born:** December 16, 1770 (probably, since he was baptized on the 17), in Bonn, Germany

**Died:** March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

**Works composed and premiered:** *Fantasia* 1808; premiered December 22, 1808 on an all-Beethoven *Akademie* [benefit] concert at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna, with the composer as soloist, and leading an ad hoc orchestra from the piano; *Symphony No. 9* mostly from 1822-1824, though Beethoven was actively plotting the piece by 1817 and some of the musical material was sketched as early as 1812; dedicated to King Frederick Wilhelm III of Prussia, though Beethoven dedicated another manuscript copy to the Philharmonic Society of London, which officially commissioned the piece from him; premiered May 7, 1824, at Vienna's Kärntnertor Theater, Michael Umlauf, conductor

**York Symphony Orchestra premieres and most recent performances:** first performance of the Fantasia; Symphony No. 9 premiered April 25, 1998, Robert Baker, conductor, Jean Bradel, soprano; Gwendolyn Lentz, mezzo-soprano; Paul Hartfield, tenor; Navid Neal, bass. Most recently performed on April 13, 2013, also with Robert Baker; Elizabeth Weigle, soprano; Dawn Pierce, alto; Brian Downen, tenor; Christopher Burchett, bass

**Estimated durations:** Fantasia, ca. 15 minutes; Symphony No. 9, ca. 64 minutes

**Instrumentation (Fantasia):** solo piano, six solo voices (two soprano, mezzo-soprano, two tenor, bass), two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings, and mixed choir

**Instrumentation (Symphony):** four solo voices (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass), two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, strings, and mixed choir

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during the fall and winter the hall was typically booked solid with operas. Only a brief period during Advent and Lent was available, when opera was forbidden to be performed. This restriction placed the concert in the dead of winter in an unheated hall.

Another issue was that most of the Theater an der Wien orchestra was

already engaged to play a different concert at the Imperial Court Theatre to benefit local musicians and their families. This meant that Beethoven would have to assemble an ad hoc group of both professional and amateur musicians in order to fill the stage. Lastly, while all-Beethoven concerts are commonplace today, we must keep in mind that all music was once new, and accounts from the concert detailed how audience members struggled to absorb four hours of music, most of which had never been heard before. Johann Reichardt, a composer who had attended the performance wrote:

There we sat, in the most bitter cold, from half past six until half past ten, and confirmed for ourselves the maxim that one may easily have too much of a good thing, still more of a powerful one.

The music newsletter *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* would echo those sentiments printing:

To judge all these pieces after one and only hearing, especially considering the language of Beethoven's works, in that so many were performed one after the other, and that most of them are so grand and long, is downright impossible.

Lastly the performance of the Choral Fantasy itself was wrought with issues, likely due to insufficient rehearsal time. Accounts from the concert describe Beethoven the piano part differently than he had instructed the music to go in

rehearsals and when the orchestra eventually fell apart, he called out "Again!" and the restarted the work from the beginning.

The *Choral Fantasy* is free-form Fantasia in the truest sense with a unique two-movement structure, the first containing only a "cadenza" for the piano soloist. Beethoven's improvisational skills were legendary throughout Vienna so it is unknown if the published version matches what the composer performed at the premiere. Beethoven may have written new material or transcribed his original improvisation for the sole purposes of publication. The bulk of the work is in the second movement curiously titled "Finale." While it is the last movement of the piece, it would perhaps more accurately describe the ending of the entire *Akademie* concert. The movement contains a set of variations on *Gegenliebe* (*Requited love*), a song Beethoven had written approximately 15 years earlier, though never published in his lifetime, where the various forces on stage layer until they all join at the end. While Beethoven did not know it at the time, he would utilize the same theme in the finale of his Ninth Symphony and in a retrospective letter from May 1824 he wrote that the choral finale to the symphony was "a setting of the words of Schiller's immortal 'Lied an die Freude' [Ode to Joy] in the same way as my piano fantasy with chorus, but on a far grander scale.

By the time Beethoven began writing his Ninth Symphony he had already

established himself as a "scientist" whose creations were one great experiment after another. The *Eroica* which moved the pendulum of emphasis from a symphony's first movement to last, the *Pastoral* with five movements and programmatic content. Yet somehow while these pieces were easily absorbed, many struggled with the Ninth Symphony. First and foremost, the *Eroica*, which clocked in at 50 minutes, quite a stretch for the early 19th-century listener, was now dwarfed by a piece fifteen minutes longer. Others were confused by the voices in the finale and asked, "Was this a symphony or an oratorio?" The form of the finale was also an enigma in that it contains the entire structure of a symphony within itself, presenting material from all the previous movements. Almost 30 years after the piece was premiered, the *Boston Atlas* described it as:

The genius of the great man upon the ocean of harmony, without compass which had so often guided him to his haven of success; the blind painter touching the canvas at random.

The "blind" reference may have been an allusion to a different disability that was a very real part of the composer's life. Beethoven had revealed in an 1802 letter to his brothers that he had started to go deaf. Some hearing remained at the time of the premiere of the *Choral Fantasy*, but by 1816, he had completely lost the sense.

Yet somehow through this impedance and all of the individual compositional

elements that may have hampered another composer's work, the output was a piece that listeners today can't get enough of. The structure is new and different, something of a novelty even in the context of the 21st century, and the momentum built up through the length of the first three movements makes the finale even more satisfying. Beethoven scholar Robin Wallace once commented, "it takes a long runway to land a 747."