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Sherwood M. and Judy Weiser Auditorium

Swanee and Paul DiMare Stage

February 18, 2019

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DAVID FOSTER Foster's first round of fame was as a studio musician, arranger, and recording artist. His second round was becoming one of the most successful songwriters and record producers in history — shepherding albums that have collectively sold in the hundreds of millions. This period of his four-decade career also found him creating The David Foster Foundation and volunteering his time and talent to over 400 charities, as well as becoming a household name as a performer throughout Asia where he tours annually.

For his third round, Foster is gearing up to take on Broadway with several projects. These include writing the music for a new musical about the iconic, animated character Betty Boop, which will be directed by Tony Award-winner Jerry Mitchell.

Foster has created hit songs and award-winning gold and platinum albums for a diverse array of artists including Barbra Streisand, Celine Dion, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Andrea Bocelli, Michael Bublé, Josh Groban, Rod Stewart, Stevie Wonder, Earth, Wind & Fire, Diana Krall, Natalie Cole, Michael Bolton, Seal, Chaka Khan, Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, Chicago, Hall & Oates, Brandy, 'N Sync, Boz Scaggs, and Gloria Estefan. He has escorted singers who have straddled both pop and classical styles like Andrea Bocelli and Josh Groban into the mainstream. He has created culture-defining soundtracks for blockbuster films like *The Bodyguard*, *Urban Cowboy*, and *St. Elmo's Fire*; and crafted timeless holiday classics, including perennial best-sellers like Josh Groban's *Noel*, Michael Bublé's *Christmas*, Celine Dion's *These Are Special Times*, Rod Stewart's *Merry Christmas Baby*, Andrea Bocelli's *My Christmas*, and Mary J. Blige's *A Mary Christmas*.

For his remarkable work, Foster has won 16 Grammy Awards, including three for Producer of the Year, an Emmy Award, a Golden Globe, and racked up three Oscar nominations for "Best Original Song." He has also earned a reputation as a keen spotter of new talent, playing a key role in the discovery and career launches of Celine Dion, Josh Groban, and Michael Bublé.

In 2008 and 2011, Foster stepped out as performer in his own right as the host of "Foster & Friends" — two star-studded concert events in Las Vegas that celebrate the music from Foster's unparalleled catalog. The shows were filmed for *Great Performance on PBS* and Foster's *Hit Man* and *The Hit Man Returns* became PBS' highest-rated pledge drive shows of the decade. Foster is also a household name as a performer throughout Asia where he fills arenas on his frequent tours. In 2015, Foster became a celebrity judge on the smash hit TV show *Asia's Got Talent*. Billed as the biggest TV show in the world, it is broadcast throughout Asia into 20 countries. Foster also recently became the new Global Grand Brand Ambassador for AirAsia.

Born in Victoria, British Columbia, Foster began studying piano at age four. The son of a maintenance yard superintendent and a homemaker, Foster has chronicled his life in the highly regarded, best-selling autobiography *Hit Man*.

Foster has made charitable work his life's other priority. Meeting with a young girl from his hometown who was awaiting a liver transplant had a profound impact and led him to create The David Foster Foundation in 1986. Its mission is to provide financial support to Canadian families with children in need of live-saving organ transplants, along with a new focus on organ donor awareness. Foster has also volunteered his time and talent to over 400 charities over the past two decades, including the annual Muhammad Ali Celebrity Fight Night, The Andre Agassi Foundation, and Carousel of Hope.

Foster has also been rewarded with professional honors, including being inducted into the Canadian Walk of Fame in 2002, The Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 2007, The Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2010, and the Songwriters Hall of Fame in the U.S., also in 2010.

JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT CONCERT HALL

Sherwood M. and Judy Weiser Auditorium

Swanee and Paul DiMare Stage

February 23, 2019

Adrienne Arsht Center presents

KNIGHT MASTERWORKS 
CLASSICAL MUSIC

**ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN
IN THE FIELDS**

Jeremy Denk, Piano

Tomo Keller, Director

Tomaso Albinoni
(1671-1750/51)

Concerto a cinque No. 5 in A minor, Op. 5

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
(1714-1788)

Symphony in E-flat major, H. 654

I. Prestissimo
II. Larghetto
III. Presto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414

I. Allegro
II. Andante
III. Allegretto

Jeremy Denk, piano

—INTERMISSION—

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Young Apollo, Op. 16

Jeremy Denk, piano

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Symphony No. 44 in E minor (Mourning)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Menuet: Allegretto; canon in diapason
III. Adagio
IV. Presto

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JEREMY DENK (Pianist) is one of America's foremost pianists. Winner of a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship, and the Avery Fisher Prize, Denk was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Denk returns frequently to Carnegie Hall and in recent seasons has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra, as well as on tour with Academy St. Martin in the Fields, and at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms.

In 18-19, Denk embarks on a three-week recital tour of the US, including appearances in Washington, D.C., Seattle, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, and culminating in his return to Carnegie Hall. His orchestral highlights include play-directing Mozart with the Toronto Symphony, and on tour throughout the US with Academy of St Martin in the Fields. He also returns to the Atlanta and Colorado Symphonies, and continues his work as Artistic Partner with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, opening the season directing Beethoven 5 from the keyboard.

In the same season, Denk re-unites with his long time collaborators, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis, on an eleven-city tour of the US, including appearances in New York, Boston, Washington, and San Francisco. He also performs and curates a series of Mozart Violin Sonatas ('Denk & Friends') at Carnegie Hall. Further collaborations include performing the Ives violin sonatas at Tanglewood with Stefan Jackiw. Abroad, he returns to the Barbican in London to reunite with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, makes his debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony, and returns to the Helsinki Philharmonic. He also appears in recital in Europe, including his return to the Wigmore Hall as part of a three-year residency. His recording *c.1300-c.2000* will be released by Nonesuch Records with music ranging from Guillaume de Machaut, Gilles Binchois and Carlo Gesualdo, to Stockhausen, Ligeti and Glass. Jeremy Denk graduated from Oberlin College, Indiana University, and the Juilliard School. He lives in New York City.

TOMO KELLER (Director) was born in Stuttgart in 1974, to German-Japanese musicians, and started playing the violin at the age of six. At ten years old he gave his first performances with orchestra. He studied at Vienna's University for Music and Performing Arts and New York's Juilliard School of Music.

Numerous top prizes and awards followed, at the Fritz Kreisler Competition, the Johannes Brahms Competition, and the German Music Competition Berlin where he was awarded the Grand Prize. He was also the first instrumentalist to receive the Aalto Stage Prize for young musicians.

He has since performed at major concert halls all around the world, most recently at the new Philharmonic Halls of Hamburg and Paris and has been invited both as soloist and chamber musician to music festivals such as the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festspiele and Festival de Musica Manuel de Falla. He has also been a frequent guest on radio and television broadcasts on ARD, BBC, NHK and ORF.

As a soloist Tomo has performed with the Beethovenhalle Orchestra Bonn, St Petersburg Camerata, London Symphony Orchestra, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Concert tours have led him all across Europe, as well as Russia, Asia, America and the Middle East.

Tomo Keller is a much sought-after orchestral leader, having led the London Symphony Orchestra as Assistant Leader from 2009-2015. In 2014 he became first concert master of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared with more than 20 orchestras as guest leader all over Europe, the US and Asia. Tomo was appointed Leader of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in December 2015.

Tomo's recordings include solo works by Bach, Bartók and Ysaÿe, orchestral recordings including Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner/LSO, and *Avant Gershwin* with Patti Austin and the WDR Big Band, which was awarded a Grammy in 2008. He has given violin, chamber music and orchestral masterclasses at all major London Music Colleges as well as at Yale University and numerous other schools in the US and the Far East.

Tomo Keller plays a violin by Guadagnini, Turin 1778, kindly made available to him by the Swedish Järnåker Foundation.

THE ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS is one of the world's finest chamber orchestras, renowned for fresh, brilliant interpretations of the world's greatest orchestral music.

Formed by Sir Neville Marriner in 1958 from a group of leading London musicians, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church in November 1959. Through unrivalled live performances and a vast recording output – highlights of which include the 1969 best-seller Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and the soundtrack to the Oscar-winning film *Amadeus* – the Academy quickly gained an enviable international reputation for its distinctive, polished and refined sound. With over 500 releases in a much-vaunted discography and a comprehensive international touring program, the name and sound of the Academy is known and loved by classical audiences throughout the world.

Today the Academy is led by Music Director and virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell, retaining the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductor-less ensemble which has become an Academy hallmark. Under Bell's direction, and with the support of Leader/Director Tomo Keller and Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia, the Academy continues to push the boundaries of play-directed performance to new heights, presenting symphonic repertoire and chamber music on a grand scale at prestigious venues around the globe.

In the 2018/19 Season the Academy collaborates with artists including pianist Kit Armstrong, cellist Andreas Brantelid, pianist Jeremy Denk and violinist Julia Fischer for tours across Europe, the USA, Mexico and Russia. The orchestra looks forward to celebrating its 60th anniversary in the 2019/20 season with exciting projects in the UK and beyond, including a special Gala Concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on 12 November 2019.

Complementing a busy international schedule, the Academy continues to reach out to people of all ages and backgrounds through its Learning and Participation programs. The orchestra's composition and performance workshops in schools are soon to become inter-generational as local older people will be invited to join in; partnerships with Southbank Sinfonia, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal Northern College of Music and masterclasses on tour further the development of the professional musicians of tomorrow; the Academy provides a creative outlet for some of London's most vulnerable adults at a center for homeless people; and a regular program of pre-concert talks and podcasts create opportunities for Academy audiences the world over to connect and learn with the orchestra.

Notes on the Program

By Octavio Roca

TOMASO ALBINONI

Born: June 8, 1671, Venice, Italy

Died: January 17, 1751, Venice, Italy

Concerto in A-minor, Op. 5, No. 5

Tomaso Albinoni's Concerto à cinque in A minor was the very first piece the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields performed in its historic church in London's Trafalgar Square in November 1959. The brief and stunning score remains vital and surprising now as the orchestra celebrates this 60th anniversary USA tour in 2019. The 1707 Op. 5 concertos embody the surprise, originality and lyricism of the Venetian master, musically interesting in structure with intricate divisi strings including two separate viola parts. Concerto No. 5 in particular shows Albinoni at his best, with the violin's longing solo in the Adagio movement rivaling the poignancy of the composer's more popular Adagio in G.

C.P.E. BACH

Born: March 8, 1714, Weimar, Germany

Died: December 14, 1788, Hamburg, Germany

Symphony in E-flat major, Wq. 179

It must have been tough to be a son of a Bach, at least in terms of posterity. Still, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Johann Sebastian Bach's second eldest son, certainly learned much from his father as well as from his godfather George Philipp Telemann—whom he eventually replaced as Kappellmeister in Hamburg. Attention was paid, with good reason, and no less an admirer than Mozart said of C.P.E. Bach that "He is the father, we are the children." It is easy to hear what Mozart meant while listening to the innovative Symphony in E-flat major, Wq. 179. The vertiginous opening Prestissimo with its wild up-and-down arpeggios, Haydn-esque dynamic contrasts, and what emerges as powerful primal energy reveal a shining path from the Baroque to Classical era. The expressive Larghetto brings a sweet, pensive melody that could have come from a much later time. His music is timeless.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born: January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Piano Concerto No. 12 in A Major, K. 414

The 25-year-old Mozart moved to Vienna with his bride Constanze in 1781, leaving behind what he felt were the provincial mores of Salzburg and also the suffocating supervision of his father Leopold. The big city was a tonic for the young man, who was hailed not only as the greatest pianist of the day but also increasingly as a composer of rare genius. In Vienna between 1782 and 1786 Mozart wrote fifteen piano concertos, beginning with his No. 12 in A Major. The melodic invention alone is miraculous—a foreshadowing of the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* that soon followed. Melody after heartbreaking melody arrives as an individually cut diamond, dazzling and unique. After the gentle first movement, a moving Andante quotes a theme by Johann Christian Bach, Mozart's friend and mentor who had just died on New Year's Day in 1782. The rondo finale is drenched in what we now recognize as Mozartean grace.

Notes on the Program

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Born: November 22, 1913, Lowestoft, U.K.

Died: December 4, 1976, Aldeburgh, U.K.

Young Apollo for piano and strings, Op. 16

Too little-known but decidedly worth celebrating now in its 80th anniversary year, *Young Apollo* was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1939, as Britten and his lifelong partner Peter Pears stopped off for a few weeks in Quebec on their way to the United States. Composed for piano, string quartet, and string orchestra, *Young Apollo* premiered August 27, 1939 in Toronto and broadcast over the CBC Radio, with Britten as soloist. A second broadcast performance followed in New York December 20, 1939. *Young Apollo* was not performed again after that until 1979, three years after Britten's death. Britten never explained his reasons for withdrawing the score.

The score is defiantly monotonal, with a constant A major tonality veiled by the rich variety of textures from the brilliant piano part, the very lively string quartet, and the string orchestra itself. Britten found his inspiration in *Hyperion*, an unfinished epic poem about the sun god *Apollo* by John Keats. From that poem comes the epigraph Britten added as an epigraph to the printed score:

“He stands before us

the new dazzling Sun-god

quivering with radiant vitality.”

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 44 in E minor, “Mourning”

Haydn wrote his miraculous *Symphony No. 44* in 1771, in the thick of his *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) period. There is a liberating sense of exploration in this masterpiece of a score, of course within the bounds of elegant classicism. There is also a heightened emotional urgency that is barely contained by Haydn's musical architecture. At the center of the score, after the *Allegro con brio* opening and an unusual minuet second movement, comes a gentle, emotionally devastating E-major *Adagio* with muted strings.

Years later—and remember that Haydn composed 106 symphonies—the composer remembered his touching *Adagio* from the *Symphony No. 44* and asked that it be played at his funeral: that is how the symphony got its nickname, “*Trauersinfonie*” (“*Mourning*”). Alas, the 1808 went without Haydn's chosen music.

Academy of St Martin in the Fields USA tour with Jeremy Denk

Violin I

Tomo Keller (director)
Harvey de Souza
Helen Paterson
Robert Salter
Martin Gwilym-Jones
Alicja Smietana

Violin II

Martin Burgess
Jennifer Godson
Mark Butler
Sijie Chen
Richard Milone

Violas

Robert Smissen
Alexandros Koustas
Martin Humbey
Stephen Upshaw

Cellos

Stephen Orton
William Schofield
Sarah Suckling
Jane Oliver

Double Basses

Lynda Houghton
Benjamin Russell

Oboes

David Thomas
Rachel Ingleton

Horns

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February 27, 2019

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KNIGHT MASTERWORKS 
CLASSICAL MUSIC

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
RICCARDO MUTI

Riccardo Muti, Zell Music Director
Conductor

Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 64

Andante—Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza

Waltz: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso—Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Rimsky-Korsakov

Sheherazade, Op. 35

The Sea and Sinbad's Ship

The Tale of the Dervish Prince

The Young Prince and the Young Princess

Festival in Baghdad, and the Sea

Robert Chen, violin

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RICCARDO MUTI Born in Naples, Italy, Riccardo Muti is one of the preeminent conductors of our day. In 2010, when he became the tenth music director of the world-renowned Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), he had more than forty years of experience at the helm of Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (1968–1980), the Philharmonia Orchestra (1973–1982), the Philadelphia Orchestra (1980–1992), and Teatro alla Scala (1986–2005), and he has had a close relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic and the Salzburg Festival for more than 45 years. He is an honorary member of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, the

Vienna Hofmusikkapelle, the Vienna Philharmonic, and the Vienna State Opera.

Muti has received innumerable international honors. He is a Cavaliere di Gran Croce of the Italian Republic, Knight Commander of the British Empire, Officer of the French Legion of Honor, Knight of the Grand Cross First Class of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great and a recipient of the German Verdienstkreuz and the Russian Order of Friendship. Muti has also received Israel's Wolf Prize for the arts, Sweden's Birgit Nilsson Prize, Spain's Prince of Asturias Award, Japan's Praemium Imperiale and Order of the Rising Sun Gold and Silver Star, as well as the gold medal from Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the "Presidente della Repubblica" award from the Italian government. He has received more than twenty honorary degrees from universities around the world.

Riccardo Muti's vast catalog of recordings, numbering in the hundreds, ranges from the traditional symphonic and operatic repertoires to contemporary works. He also has written two books, *Verdi, l'italiano* and *Riccardo Muti: An Autobiography: First the Music, Then the Words*, both of which have been published in several languages.

Passionate about teaching young musicians, Muti founded the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra in 2004 and the Riccardo Muti Italian Opera Academy in 2015.

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Founded in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is consistently hailed as one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Its music director since 2010 is Riccardo Muti, one of the preeminent conductors of our day. The musicians of the CSO command a vast repertoire and annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago, and, since 1936, in the summer at the Ravinia Festival. Since its first tour to Canada in 1892, the Orchestra has performed in 29 countries on five continents during 61 international tours.

Since 1916, recording has been significant in establishing the Orchestra's international reputation, with recordings by the CSO earning a total of 62 Grammy awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Its independent label, CSO Resound, was launched in 2007. The 2010 release of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*, with the CSO and Chicago Symphony Chorus conducted by Muti, was recognized with two Grammy awards. Listeners around the world can hear the CSO in weekly airings of the CSO Radio Broadcast Series, which is syndicated on the WFMT Radio Network and online at CSO.org/Radio.

The CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Program Notes

PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

Composed: May–August 26, 1888

First performance: November 17, 1888; Saint Petersburg, Russia. The composer conducting

Approximate performance time: 45 minutes

Ten years passed between Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth symphonies—a decade which saw his international reputation grow as he finished *Eugene Onegin* and three other (less successful) operas, the Violin Concerto, the 1812 Overture, the Serenade for Strings, a second piano concerto, the *Manfred* Symphony, the A minor piano trio, and the *Capriccio italien*. As he began this symphony, Tchaikovsky feared his muse was exhausted. "I am dreadfully anxious to prove not only to others, but also to myself, that I am not yet played out as a composer," he said at the time. In the spring of 1888, Tchaikovsky had recently moved into a new house outside of Moscow, and as he was beginning this symphony, he found great joy working in his garden; he wrote to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, that when he was "past composing" he might devote himself to growing flowers. Work on the new symphony was often rough going. "The beginning was difficult," he reported midsummer, "now, however, inspiration seems to have come." He later complained, "I have to squeeze it from my dulled brain." But by the end of the summer, when four months of intensive work had brought him to the last measures of the symphony's finale, he admitted that "it seems to me that I have not blundered, that it has turned out well."

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony had been his answer to Beethoven's Fifth: it's a symphony of triumph over fate, and he explained its meaning in detailed correspondence with Mme von Meck. For his next symphony, Tchaikovsky again turned to the theme of fate, although this time he gave away little of the work's hidden meaning. As a motto theme, Tchaikovsky picked a phrase from Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* which accompanies the words "turn not into sorrow." Before he began composing, he sketched a program for the work in his notebook, labeling the theme as "complete resignation before Fate," and describing the first movement as "doubts ...reproaches against xxx." That xxx, like the cryptic Z that appears elsewhere in the same pages, refers, almost without doubt, to the homosexuality he dared not admit. (It remained a well-kept secret during his life. His friends didn't know what to make of the disastrous match that publicly passed for a marriage—lasting only weeks and driving the composer to attempt suicide—or of his one satisfying relationship with a woman, Nadezhda von Meck, whom he never met in fourteen years and couldn't bring himself to speak to the one time they accidentally passed on the street.)

The symphony opens with an introduction in which the motto theme is quietly played by the clarinet (it returns later in the most dramatic form). The Allegro also begins with a gently moving theme in the clarinet, doubled by the bassoon. (Tchaikovsky launches this E minor melody from the lower C, rising a third to E, rather than from the lower fourth, B—the more predictable start, and the way many listeners incorrectly remember it.) This ultimately leads to the remote key of D major, where the violins introduce a lovely sighing theme, delicately scored at first, then blossoming to encompass the full orchestra. The development section travels through many harmonic regions, but presents very little actual development, because Tchaikovsky's themes are full melodies, not easily dissected.

The Andante presents one of Tchaikovsky's most beloved themes, a horn melody so poignant and seductive that it tempts many listeners to overlook the eloquent strands the clarinet and oboe weave around it. The opening bars of quiet sustained chords begin in B minor and then swing around to D major—that unexpected tonal territory from the first movement—before the hushed entry of the horn. The lyrical flow is halted by the motto theme, first announced by the full orchestra over a fierce timpani roll midway through, and once again just before the end.

The third movement is a minor-key waltz; a livelier trio, with playful runs in the strings, also sounds uneasy, suggesting something sinister on the horizon. Perhaps it's the fateful motto theme, which sounds quietly in the low winds just before the dance is over. The finale opens

Program Notes

with the motto, fully harmonized and in the major mode. This furiously driven movement often has been derided as overly bombastic, formulaic, and repetitive, although it has many delicate touches, including a high, singing theme in the winds. The tempo never eases, not even in the one moment of repose that is marked *pianissimo* and lightly scored. The motto theme sweeps through, once at a brisk speed, and then, near the end, leading a magnificent march. It's the main melody of the first movement, however, that comes rushing in to close the symphony.

Tchaikovsky conducted the first performance of the symphony in Saint Petersburg in November 1888 and introduced the work in Europe on a concert tour in early 1889. In Hamburg he met Brahms, who postponed his departure in order to hear his Russian colleague's latest symphony; Brahms liked what he heard, except for the finale.

Tchaikovsky was far from written out. Before he even finished this symphony, he began the fantasy overture *Hamlet*, and a few weeks later started work on a new ballet about a sleeping beauty who is awakened with a prince's kiss.

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Sheherazade, Symphonic Suite, Op. 35

Composed: 1888

First performance: November 3, 1888; Saint Petersburg, Russia. The composer conducting

Approximate performance time: 47 minutes

As a boy, Rimsky-Korsakov yearned to see the world, a desire fueled by his restricted upbringing (at the age of twelve, he had left his hometown only three times) and by the letters his older brother Voin sent from the Far East, where he was serving in the navy. Young Nikolai fell in love with a sea he had never seen; he devoured books about it, memorized nautical terms, and even rigged up a model brig. Like many of his ancestors—and in obvious emulation of his brother—he set his heart on a career in the navy. But at the age of seventeen, when his piano teacher introduced him to Balakirev, Cui, and Mussorgsky, he could no longer deny that the pull of music also was strong. By the time he graduated from the College of Naval Cadets in 1856 and was due to set sail on the *Almaz* for a thirty-month cruise, he confessed that he wanted to be a musician instead of a sailor. Although the ship took him to many distant ports, including New York City and Rio de Janeiro, Rimsky-Korsakov rarely traveled far from home once the voyage was completed, settling instead for the world of his imagination, which he depicted in the fiction of his undeniably potent and atmospheric music.

Rimsky-Korsakov first tried to capture the music of the lands he and his century knew as the “Orient” in his *Antar* Symphony; having no firsthand experience, he borrowed a French volume of Arab melodies collected in Algiers from his friend Alexander Borodin. He was particularly proud of composing a melody for *Antar* with “florid oriental embellishments,” and later boasted that “the abundant use of oriental themes lent my composition an odd turn of its own, hardly in wide use until then...” Within the decade, however, Rimsky-Korsakov was to hear oriental music for himself.

Early in July 1874, Rimsky-Korsakov took his wife and young child to Sevastopol on the southern coast of Crimea, across the Black Sea from Constantinople (now Istanbul). From there they traveled to the town of Bakhchisaray, where he marveled at “the coffeehouses, the shouts of its vendors, the chanting of the muezzins on the minarets, the services in the mosques, and the oriental music.” Rimsky was intoxicated by the sounds of this otherworldly place. “It was while hearing the Gypsy musicians of Bakhchisaray that I first became acquainted with oriental music in its natural state, and I believe I caught the main feature of its character,” he later reported in *My Musical Life*. Music filled the streets from morning till night—“in front of every coffeehouse there was continual playing and singing,” he wrote. But seven years later, when he returned to Bakhchisaray, he was stunned to discover that the authorities had cleaned up the streets, and the seductive sounds of the town remained a distant memory. Perhaps hoping to experience some of the local color the place now denied him, he sailed on to Constantinople, where he stayed three days before returning home.

Program Notes

In February 1887, Alexander Borodin died. Rimsky-Korsakov was devastated at the loss of his friend and colleague (he didn't sleep all night after hearing the news), and within days he decided to put his own work aside in order to complete Borodin's famously unfinished opera *Prince Igor*. Sometime the following winter, while he was immersed in Borodin's world of Polovtsian chiefs, harem girls, and Turkish invaders, Rimsky-Korsakov conceived his own oriental fantasy—an orchestral work inspired by *The Arabian Nights*, a collection of Arabic, Persian, and Indian tales that had held an enormous, almost uncanny fascination for many cultures since the ninth century. (*The Arabian Nights* had circulated throughout the West in Antoine Galland's French translation since the early eighteenth century.) *Sheherazade*, as he came to call the work, was composed that summer.

Sheherazade consisted of “separate, unconnected episodes and pictures,” as the composer put it, from *The Arabian Nights*: snapshots, in other words, of a world he never knew. *Sheherazade* is a triumph of imagination over experience. It's a feast of sumptuous colors and brilliant instrumental effects—by the man, after all, who literally wrote the book on orchestration—and it quickly became a favorite romantic showpiece and a landmark in the history of descriptive music.

Rimsky-Korsakov prefaced the score with a brief reminder of the premise behind the world's first great serial story: to subvert the Sultan Shahriar's vow to kill each of his wives after the first night, the Sultana Sheherazade spins an intricate web of to-be-continued tales, one per night, for 1,001 nights, ultimately fascinating and winning over the sultan.

By the time he wrote his autobiography, Rimsky-Korsakov shied away from a literal, programmatic reading of the score, denying that it depicted actual characters and episodes from *The Arabian Nights*. “In the majority of cases, all these seeming ‘leitmotifs’ are nothing but purely musical material, the themes for symphonic development,” he wrote. Originally, he claimed, he hadn't even planned to give the four movements titles (beyond the musical labels prelude, ballade, adagio, and finale); his student Lyadov convinced him otherwise. The programmatic names he finally chose, however, don't refer to specific tales in *The Arabian Nights*, but to general scenes—Sinbad sailing the sea, a festival in Baghdad, a ship being dashed against the rocks. (Rimsky-Korsakov decided to omit the titles in the second edition of the score.) He conceded that the violin solo was meant to delineate Sheherazade “as she tells her wondrous tales to the stern sultan,” but the imposing theme with which the score begins wasn't reserved specifically for the sultan.

“In composing *Sheherazade*, I meant these hints to direct only slightly the listener's fancy on the path that my own fancy had traveled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each,” Rimsky-Korsakov later wrote. “All I wanted was that the hearer, if he liked the piece as *symphonic music*, should carry away the impression that it is undoubtedly an oriental narrative of numerous and varied fairy-tale marvels, and not merely four pieces played one after the other and based on themes common to all four.”

Rimsky-Korsakov's genius is for an art of illusion; it has nothing to do with the precise, note-specific observation of a latter-day ethnomusicologist. One day of sightseeing in Bakhchisaray was sufficient, for his purposes, to “capture the main feature” of oriental music. He sought to depict the Orient of people's dreams, and that's why he called the work *Sheherazade*: “Because this name and the title *The Arabian Nights* connote in everyone's mind the East and fairy tales.” With this score, which immediately became a favorite of European and American armchair travelers, Rimsky-Korsakov ensured the power of that identification for years to come.

Notes by Phillip Huscher, program annotator for the Chicago Symphony since 1987

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Scott Hostetler

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Program/Music

Beethoven Nine Symphony

Aaron Copland Song of the Americas

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Stevie Wonder

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Martin Bejerano Fantasia de Tres Mundos

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