



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director

19:20
140th season

Stéphane Denève, conductor
Isabel Leonard, soprano
Michael Spyres, tenor
John Relyea, bass
Anthony Clark Evans, baritone
St. Louis Symphony Chorus
Amy Kaiser, director
The St. Louis Children's Choirs
Barbara Berner, artistic director

Friday, March 13, 2020, at 8:00PM
Saturday, March 14, 2020, at 8:00PM

BERLIOZ *La damnation de Faust*, op. 24 (The Damnation of Faust) (1845-1846)
(1803-1869) Part I
Part II

INTERMISSION

Part III
Part IV

Isabel Leonard, soprano (Marguerite)
Michael Spyres, tenor (Faust)
John Relyea, bass (Mephistopheles)
Anthony Clark Evans, baritone (Brander)
St. Louis Symphony Chorus
The St. Louis Children's Choirs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2019/2020 Classical Series is presented by **Steward Family Foundation** and **World Wide Technology**.

These concerts are presented by **Mary Pillsbury**.

Isabel Leonard is the **Sanford N. and Priscilla R. McDonnell Guest Artist**.

Michael Spyres is the **Lucy and Stanley Lopata Guest Artist**.

The concert of Friday, March 13, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Elizabeth Mannen**.

The concert of Saturday, March 14, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **David and Susan Hutchinson**.

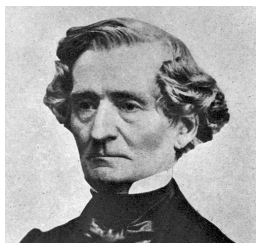
The concert of Saturday, March 14, is the **Thomas Peck Memorial Concert**.

The St. Louis Symphony Chorus is underwritten in part by the **Edward Chase Garvey Memorial Foundation** and the **Richard E. Ashburner, Jr. Endowed Fund**.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by **Washington University Physicians**.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Tim Munro



HECTOR BERLIOZ

Born December 11, 1803,
La Côte-Saint-André, France
Died March 8, 1869, Paris, France

The Damnation of Faust

The story of Faust might appear far away from us. First, it is very old: a dusty folk-tale first written down 500 years ago. Second, it feels distant from our lived experience: a wager between a scholar and the devil results in tragic love, a lost soul.

But look closer. Here is the war between reason and religion. Here is the war between the mind and the senses. Here is a character we know: a weak man who thinks he is better than the world, who thirsts for power, who exploits a woman only to leave her for dead.

Look even closer. The music of Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* sounds newly minted, surprising us with new genres, new sounds. His orchestra can sound like a gust of wind or horses hooves or the shrieks of hell. His chorus can play farmers, angels, alcoholics, and demons.

Faust

The story is simple. A scholar makes a deal with the devil: sensual pleasures in exchange for his everlasting soul.

The first Faust stories were told in the 16th century. At the time, old thinking was being challenged—magic by science, religion by humanism—and the Faust tales put these issues front and center.

Two centuries later, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made his own version. Goethe was Europe's most famous author, an angry young man whose work resisted rationalism and celebrated the individual.

Faust took Goethe five decades to complete. An atheist, Goethe's play is not a pious morality tale, but a fascinating mix of tragedy and comedy, with some religion and philosophy thrown into the mix.

Berlioz

Berlioz was addicted. "I could not put [Goethe's *Faust*] down," he recalled. "I read it constantly, at meals, at the theater, in the street, everywhere."

He must have recognized himself in Goethe's lost scholar. Berlioz shared some of Faust's idealism, alienation, desires, loves, nature-worship. Goethe's play became "a silent confidant of my suffering," holding "the key to my life."

Berlioz made his first musical attempt at *Faust* in his twenties, composing a collection of eight scenes. This work was quickly withdrawn, and it was not until his forties that Berlioz felt ready to craft *Faust* into a coherent whole.

The task engulfed him. He wrote while sipping coffee at a cafe, while wandering through gardens, while battling foot traffic on busy streets. One day he followed an army regiment down a city street, trying to capture their sounds, and ended up on the wrong train.

Berlioz crafted his own text, shaping Part I of Goethe's *Faust* into a uniquely personal creation. Berlioz's Faust is something of a pitiful creature, not worthy of redemption. The demon Mephistopheles is a chameleon: alternately terrifying, comic, seductive.

Marguerite doesn't appear until two-thirds of the way through Berlioz's work. Although she is little more than a plaything for Faust and Mephistopheles, she does inspire some of Berlioz's most radiantly beautiful music.

Fusion

Berlioz spent his career experimenting. With each new work he changed his approach, reinventing genres along the way. *Damnation* was composed for the concert hall, but fuses many musical worlds. First, opera. As a teenager, Berlioz obsessively attended opera in Paris, drawn by the dramas on display. He loaded *Damnation* with nail-biting scenes that would be at home in the opera house.

Second, symphony. In his twenties, Berlioz heard Beethoven's symphonies, an earthquake with lifelong aftershocks. *Damnation*—always intended to be a concert work—reaches for the complexity and experimentation of Beethoven's orchestral music.

Third, oratorio. *Damnation's* chorus (a seven-part adult choir and children's choir) has a dominant role in the drama. They play farmers, demons, angels, soldiers, students, fairies, merrymakers, and everyday city-folk. They sustain beautiful lines, hurl fury, sing a drunken fugue, shout with terror.

Fourth, songs. As a teenager, Berlioz learned to write music through the composition of dozens of *mélodies*, songs for voice and piano. At the heart of *Damnation* are varied songs for voice and orchestra: radiant celebrations of nature, moving evocations of love, funny folk-ditties.

Reinvention

Berlioz reinvented the orchestra. At a time of technological change for instruments, he was fascinated by every new gadget, every new approach to playing. In fact, while working on *Damnation*, Berlioz published an influential book on orchestration.

Damnation's orchestra creates scenic effects. Strings become horse's hoofs and wind gusts. Piccolos cascade and shriek, bassoons sway like drunkards. Trumpets herald soldiers with fanfares, trombones signal darkness. Bases and cellos pull us into hell's chasm.

Instruments also paint characters. Faust the scholar is introduced in his study with an academic musical form: the fugue. The demon Mephistopheles is conjured by a hair-raising string effect called *sul ponticello* and the sound of trombones, the signature of the underworld. Marguerite's arias are accompanied by throaty, soulful instruments: in one a solo viola, in another an English horn.

Berlioz pushed instruments to their limits. A horn player told Berlioz during rehearsals that he had written a note "which does not exist," resulting in "a sort of sneeze like nothing on earth, an impossible din." Berlioz replied, "that is exactly what I want."

The story

Each of *Damnation's* four parts begins with some hope and ends in disappointment. Each begins with an individual and expands to the crowd. Below, italics are descriptions and locations from *Damnation's* score.

[Goethe's *Faust* begins with a Prologue. God and a demon called Mephistopheles agree to a bet: Mephistopheles will try to tempt Faust, God's favorite human, from the path of goodness.]

Part 1: *The plains of Hungary. Faust alone at dawn.* Faust, a medieval scholar, contemplates the beauty of nature, observes the joy of local villagers and the anticipation of soldiers, but remains unhappy.

Part 2: *North Germany.* Back in his study, Faust contemplates suicide. *Easter Hymn.* Struck by the memory of hymn-singing choirs, he has hope. Mephistopheles enters, offering to "delight your eyes and ears."

A cellar in Leipzig: Mephistopheles brings Faust to a raucous bar, but Faust is unmoved. *Meadows on the banks of the river Elbe.* They visit a fantastical garden, and in a dream, Faust lusts after a woman. *Students and soldiers march towards the town.* Faust and Mephistopheles follow this group to the dream-woman's town.

Part 3: *Evening in Marguerite's room.* Faust has snuck into Marguerite's room. *A street in front of Marguerite's home.* Mephistopheles conjures spirits to force Marguerite to love Faust. Marguerite enters her room, discovers Faust. The two sing a love duet. Mephistopheles interrupts: Marguerite's mother has learned of the tryst. Mephistopheles and Faust flee.

Part 4: *Marguerite's room.* Marguerite has been rejected by Faust. *Forests and caves.* Faust, alone, finds solace in nature. Mephistopheles brings news: Marguerite has accidentally poisoned her mother with Faust's sleeping potion, and she will be hanged. To save Marguerite, Faust gives his soul to Mephistopheles. *The Ride to the Abyss—Faust and Mephistopheles on black horses.* Faust believes they will visit Marguerite, but Mephistopheles takes him directly to hell. *On earth.* Angels welcome Marguerite to heaven.

First performance: December 6, 1846, at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, France

First SLSO performance: November 20, 1936, Vladimir Golschmann conducting, with Rose Bampton, Paul Althouse, Chase Baromeo as soloists (bass/Brander soloist not recorded)

Most recent SLSO performance: April 18, 2009, David Zinman conducting, with Katherine Rohrer, Matthew Polenzani, Kyle Ketelsen, and Eric Owens as soloists

Scoring: Solo mezzo-soprano (Marguerite), tenor (Faust), bass-baritone (Mephistopheles), and bass (Brander), mixed chorus, children's choir, 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (both doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 4 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, 4 timpani, bass drum, chimes, cymbals, snare drum, tam tam, triangle, 2 harps, strings

Performance time: Approximately 2 hours and 16 minutes

Tim Munro is the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's Creative Partner. A writer, broadcaster, and Grammy-winning flutist, he lives in Chicago with his wife, son, and badly-behaved orange cat.



ISABEL LEONARD

Sanford N. and Priscilla R. McDonnell Guest Artist

Multiple Grammy Award–winning Isabel Leonard continues to thrill audiences in repertoire that spans from Vivaldi to Mozart to Nico Muhly. She has graced the stages of the Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera, Salzburg Festival, Carnegie Hall, Glyndebourne Festival, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, and the Los Angeles Opera as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Dorabella in

Così fan tutte, Charlotte in *Werther*, Blanche de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Costanza in *Griselda*, the title roles in *La Périochole* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, as well as Sesto in both Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and Handel's *Giulio Cesare*.

She has appeared with some of the foremost conductors and orchestras of her time, and is in constant demand as a recitalist and is on the Board of Trustees at Carnegie Hall. She is a multiple Grammy Award winner, most recently for Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *The Tempest* from The Metropolitan Opera, both having won Best Opera Recording. Television and film appearances include Sesame Street and host for The Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD programs. Leonard is the recipient of the Richard Tucker Award and has lent her voice, in honor of her father who died from the disease, to the Prostate Cancer Foundation by filming a public service announcement.

This season she debuts at Royal Opera House Covent Garden as Charlotte in *Werther*, Dutch National Opera as Angelina in *La Cenerentola*, Cincinnati Opera as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and The Glimmerglass Festival as Maria in *The Sound of Music*. In concert, she will sing *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Cincinnati Symphony, and *Shéhérazade* with the New York Philharmonic and Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Additional performances include a concert with the University of North Carolina Symphony Orchestra and a recital at the University of Connecticut.

Isabel Leonard debuted with the SLSO in 2007.



MICHAEL SPYRES

Lucy and Stanley Lopata Guest Artist

Michael Spyres is one of the most sought-after tenors of his generation and has been celebrated at many of the most prestigious opera houses, festivals, and concert halls. His career has taken him from the genres of Baroque to Classical to 20th century, while firmly establishing him as a specialist in Bel Canto repertoire as well as Rossini and French Grand Opera.

Performances of the 2019/2020 season include house debuts at The Metropolitan

Opera in the title role of *La damnation de Faust* and at the Theater an der Wien as Licinio in *La vestale*, the title role of *Benvenuto Cellini* at the Berlioz Festival, the Berliner Festsspiele, the BBC Proms and in Versailles, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Vienna State Opera, the title role of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Arnold in *Guillaume Tell* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* at the Salzburg Festival, as well as recitals and solo concerts in La Coruna, Toulouse, Bruxelles, Strasbourg, and Moscow.

Spyres was born in Mansfield, Missouri. He began his studies in the U.S. and continued them at the Vienna Conservatory. He first sprang to international attention in 2008 in the title role of Rossini's *Otello* at the Rossini in Wildbad Festival and as an ensemble member of Deutsche Oper Berlin where he made his debut as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*. Spyres is the Artistic Director of his hometown opera company, the Springfield Regional Opera (SROpera), and has been involved in every aspect of the renaissance of this company. The last years have seen him produce numerous events including four operas and four gala concerts. This season will also see his return to the SROpera's main stage to star in his original vaudeville play, coupled with his role debut as Canio in his original concept of *Leoncavallo's Pagliacci*.

In addition to his operatic career, Spyres is accomplished within the concert world and has given concerts and recitals worldwide. He has also recorded several operas and oratorios, as well as two solo recital albums.

This weekend's concerts are Michael Spyres' debut with the SLSO.



SHIRLEY SUAREZ

JOHN RELYEA

John Relyea has appeared on many of the world's great operatic stages, including The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera (where he is an alumnus of the Merola Opera Program and a former Adler Fellow), Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House-Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper, Vienna State Opera, the Mariinsky Theater, and the Canadian Opera Company. His roles have spanned a vast range of repertoire, including the title roles of *Attila*, *Don Quichotte*, and *Aleko*; Figaro in *Le Nozze di*

Figaro and *Bluebeard* in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

In concert, he has performed with major orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, NDR, London Symphony, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, and Philadelphia orchestras, as well as the Atlanta, Dallas, and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras. He has appeared at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, Salzburg, Edinburgh, Lucerne, and Mostly Mozart festivals, and at the BBC Proms.

Recently he returned to the Paris Opera for *Bluebeard's Castle*, and to the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma as Claggart in *Billy Budd*, his debut at the Teatro di San Carlo as Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra*, concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, and Sydney Symphony, in Oslo for *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco* (concert version) with NTR in

Amsterdam, concerts with Orchestra Sinfonica della Rai, and *Les Huguenots* at the Semper Oper in Dresden.

His recordings include Verdi's Requiem and *Idomeneo* and *Clemenza di Tito* with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Symphony No. 8 with Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and The Metropolitan Opera's DVD productions of *Don Giovanni*, *I Puritani*, *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, *Macbeth*, and *Rusalka*.

Relyea is the winner of the 2009 Beverly Sills Award and the 2003 Richard Tucker Award.

John Relyea debuted with the SLSO in 2008.



KRISTIN HOBERMANN

ANTHONY CLARK EVANS

Lauded for his “warm-toned, vivacious and humane” style by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Anthony Clark Evans is quickly gaining recognition as one of the most promising baritones of his generation. The 2019/2020 season sees Evans return to San Francisco Opera in his role debut as Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut*. Evans also reprises the role of Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and in his house debut with Opera Philadelphia.

Operatic highlights include Evans' debut with The Metropolitan Opera as the Huntsman in the new Mary Zimmerman production of *Rusalka*, which was broadcast to theatres around the world as part of the Met's Live in HD program, his San Francisco Opera debut as Sharpless in the Jun Kaneko production of *Madama Butterfly*, his San Diego Opera debut as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and his debut with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Querido Arte in Guatemala as Marcello in *La bohème*.

Concert work includes his Ravinia Festival debut singing in Bernstein's *Songfest* with Ensemble dal Niente, Theatre Director in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* with the Chicago Civic Orchestra, an appearance at the Richard Tucker Gala at Carnegie Hall, and an appearance on the “Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park” concert, conducted by Sir Andrew Davis.

Honors and awards include a 2017 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World main prize finalist, a Grand Finals Winner of the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a 2017 Richard Tucker career grand, a 2014 Sarah Tucker Career Grant, and top prizes in the Gerda Lissner Foundation Competition, the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation Competition, Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, Marcello Giordani Competition, Giulio Gari Competition, and the Mario Lanza Competition. Evans took second prize in both the Liederkrantz Foundation Competition and the Opera Index Competition, as well as prizes from the Sullivan Foundation, the Luminarts Fellowship, and the American Opera Society.

A native of Owensboro, Kentucky, Evans studied voice at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, and was a member of the Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Evans currently resides in Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

This weekend's concerts are Anthony Clark Evans' debut with the SLSO.



AMY KAISER

Director, St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus since 1995, Amy Kaiser is one of the country's leading choral directors. She has conducted the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in Handel's *Messiah*, Schubert's Mass in E-flat, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart, as well as Young People's Concerts. Guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Massachusetts, Santa Fe and at Canterbury Cathedral and Music Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12

seasons, she led many performances of major works at Lincoln Center.

Other conducting engagements include Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival, Peter Schickele's PDQ Bach with the New Jersey Symphony, and more than 50 performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led Jewish Opera at the Y, and many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed *Schubertiade*. She has prepared choruses for the New York Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival, and Opera Orchestra of New York.

Kaiser is a regular pre-concert speaker for the SLSO and presents popular classes for the Symphony Lecture Series and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. A former faculty member at Manhattan School of Music and The Mannes College of Music, she was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford University and holds a degree in musicology from Columbia University. A graduate of Smith College, she was awarded the Smith College Medal for outstanding professional achievement.



BARBARA BERNER

Artistic Director

St. Louis Children's Choirs

Highly regarded by her peers and beloved by her singers, Barbara Berner celebrates her 21st season as Artistic Director of The St. Louis Children's Choirs. Under her direction the Concert Choir has performed at American Choral Directors Association conventions, Carnegie Hall, the White House and on tour to Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Wales, Germany, Sweden, and Scotland.

Mrs. Berner conducted the National Children's Festival Chorus at Lincoln Center. She has prepared the Concert Choir for over ninety performances with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Mrs. Berner received a Master of Music degree from Ithaca College and holds an Advanced Certificate from the Kodály Pedagogical Institute in Kecskemet, Hungary. She was awarded Artist-Teacher and Master Teacher Diplomas from the CME Institute for Choral Teacher Education. In 2017 she was awarded the Missouri Arts Award for excellence in Arts Education.



St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

19:20
140th season

St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra

Sunday, March 15, 2020, at 3:00PM

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Gemma New, conductor

Anna Zhong, violin

DUKAS

(1865–1935)

The Sorcerer's Apprentice (1897)

Stéphane Denève, conductor

SIBELIUS

(1865–1957)

Violin Concerto in D minor, op. 47 (1905)

Allegro moderato

Adagio di molto

Allegro, ma non tanto

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Anna Zhong, violin

INTERMISSION

RACHMANINOFF

(1873–1943)

Symphonic Dances, op. 45 (1940)

Non allegro

Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

Lento assai; Allegro vivace

Gemma New, conductor

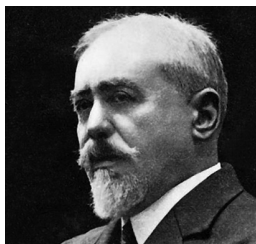
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Presented by **Ameren** and **Kathleen Clucas**.

Supported by the **G. A., Jr. and Kathryn M. Buder Charitable Foundation**
and the **ESCO Technologies Foundation**.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Paul Schiavo



PAUL DUKAS

Born October 1, 1865, Paris, France

Died May 17, 1935, Paris, France

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

If ever a piece of music was victim of its own success, it is surely Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. It scored an immediate success and established Dukas, then in his early thirties, as one of France's important new composers. Its programmatic representation of a supernatural tale proved so vivid that few listeners could fail to imagine the unfolding of its narrative from hearing Dukas' music.

It was precisely the vividness of Dukas' music that prompted animators at the Walt Disney studio to select *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* for one of the episodes in *Fantasia*, the 1940 film. As brought to the screen by the Disney artists, the story related by *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* featured a famous cartoon mouse in the title role. *Fantasia* may have intended to expand the audience for classical music through a fusion with popular culture, but the long-term result for Dukas' piece was precisely the opposite. Rather than a strikingly imaginative and original composition, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* became for many Americans simply the soundtrack to a clever cartoon. The work deserves a better fate.

Dukas' inspiration for *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* was "Der Zauberlehrling," a ballad-like poem written in 1796 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe's poem gives a first-person account of the misadventure that befalls a young man who has been taken on as an apprentice to an aged magician. The novice has seen his master use an incantation to turn a piece of wood into a living servant. Indeed, the apprentice has memorized the magic saying, and when the old sorcerer departs the house, he tries it out himself. The charm succeeds in animating a broom, and the satisfied apprentice orders it to fetch water from a pond that lies close by the house. This the broom does, then does again, and again, and again, for the apprentice has neglected the command to make his enchanted worker cease its labors. As water overflows the basin and begins to cover the floor, the apprentice desperately takes an axe and hacks the uncooperative broom in half. But now both pieces take pails and continue to pour water into the basin. Just as the house is about to become flooded, the sorcerer returns. In the nick of time, he intones the proper formula, and the broomsticks fall to the floor.

The convincing manner in which Dukas evokes this tale through orchestral music bears comparison with the tone poems of Richard Strauss. In the opening measures, embellishment of that most enigmatic of traditional harmonies, the diminished-seventh chord, establishes an air of mystery and supernatural

possibilities. Further harmonic ambiguity attends the apprentice's casting of the spell, where unusual chords (quite modern in 1897) imply that magic is afoot.

First performance: May 19, 1897, at a Société Nationale concert in Paris, the composer conducting

First SLSYO performance: Today's concert

Scoring: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, triangle, harp, strings

Performance time: Approximately 12 minutes



JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865, Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died September 20, 1957, Ainola, Finland

Violin Concerto in D minor, op. 47

Jean Sibelius was and, to a great extent, remains the musical voice of Finland. More than his homeland's first major composer, Sibelius managed to express something essential about the Finnish people, their romantic spirit, their deep affinity with their forests, snow-covered fields, and folklore.

When one considers that Sibelius' output consists chiefly of orchestral music, it seems surprising that he composed only one concerto. What is not surprising is that this singular piece features the violin. Sibelius himself was a more than competent violinist. Indeed, his youthful ambition was to become a virtuoso performer on the instrument. Only after years of practice and a painful realization that he would not have a career as a professional soloist did he turn to composition.

Like many of Sibelius' works, the Violin Concerto did not come easily into the world. The composer wrote an initial version of the piece in 1903, but after conducting the music with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in February of the following year, he pronounced himself dissatisfied and withdrew the score for revision. Not until October 1905, when it was played in Berlin under the direction of Richard Strauss, did the concerto assume its definitive form.

Although it has emerged as one of the most popular works of its kind, this concerto once drew harsh criticism from unsympathetic commentators. "Sentimental" used to be a frequently applied epithet, especially during the 1920s and '30s, when Sibelius' music drew fire in the polemical battles between advocates of modernism and those clinging to the Romanticism of the previous century. Even then, however, so discriminating an observer as the English conductor and writer Donald Francis Tovey championed the work. After acknowledging the special status of the classic concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, Tovey declared: "But in the easier and looser concerto forms invented by Mendelssohn

and Schumann I have not met with a more original, a more masterly, and a more exhilarating work than the Sibelius Violin Concerto.”

The Music

As do most latterday concertos, this one dispenses with the convention of the orchestral exposition, leaving the presentation of the work's initial subject to the solo instrument. More unusually, each of the first movement's two themes—a long, rhapsodic idea sung by the violin and a secondary subject introduced by the orchestra—conclude with cadenza passages for the solo instrument. A third theme, somewhat like a folk song, presently leads to a brief development passage that culminates in a still more extended cadenza. This is no sooner concluded than Sibelius begins his recapitulation of the three themes. (The first reappears not in the solo violin but in the bassoon, at least initially.)

In the second movement, Sibelius builds the main melody into a great lyrical outpouring. The finale begins with timpani and basses establishing a rhythmic figure whose heavyfooted character prompted the aforementioned Professor Tovey to describe the ensuing music as “a polonaise for polar bears.” Sibelius thought it a different kind of dance. Acknowledging the somewhat sinister character of the theme played by the solo violin over the galumphing accompaniment, he called the movement a “*danse macabre*.” However one characterizes it, this initial idea soon is countered by a rhythmically lively second subject, and Sibelius juxtaposes and develops the two themes in a loose rondo format.

First performance: October 19, 1905, by the Berlin Court Orchestra, Richard Strauss conducting, with Karel Halíř as soloist

First SLSYO performance: March 12, 1982, Gerhardt Zimmermann conducting with David Perry as soloist

Most recent SLSYO performance: March 15, 2003, David Amado conducting with Kenji Ishida as soloist

Scoring: solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings

Performance time: Approximately 31 minutes



SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, Semyonovo, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, Beverly Hills, California

Symphonic Dances

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the most successful Russian composer of the generation prior to Prokofiev and Shostakovich, became one of the many Russian artists who lived in exile after the Revolution. Having spent considerable time in the West for the preceding 10 years, Rachmaninoff left his homeland permanently in 1917, eventually settling in the United States. He had already established his reputation

with a string of opulent compositions that included, among other works, the famous Prelude in C-sharp minor, the Symphony No. 2, his Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3, and the tone poem *The Isle of the Dead*. During his American period Rachmaninoff added the enormously successful *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, as well as the piece that we hear now, *Symphonic Dances*.

Rachmaninoff initially conceived this work as a ballet score. In 1939, Mikhail Fokine, another Russian emigrant and the legendary choreographer of *Les Sylphides*, *Petrushka*, *Daphnis and Chloë*, and other works, created a ballet to the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, which Rachmaninoff had written five years earlier. The composer, undoubtedly flattered, took a sudden interest in dance music and early in 1940 began to work on a new score. He initially called this *Fantastic Dances*, and titled its three movements Noon, Twilight, and Midnight.

When he had accumulated sufficient sketches, Rachmaninoff played the music for Fokine, hoping that the choreographer would want to make a ballet with the new work also. But this potential collaboration never materialized, and Rachmaninoff completed the music as a concert piece. By the time he finished it, in the autumn of 1940, he had dropped the descriptive titles of the movements and changed that of the entire composition to *Symphonic Dances*. “It should have been called just ‘Dances,’” the composer told a journalist, “but I was afraid people would think I had written dance music for jazz orchestras.”

Symphonic Dances proved to be Rachmaninoff’s last work, and the music suggests a new direction the composer might have pursued had fate granted him more time. In contrast to the lush harmonies and sweeping melodic lines that formerly characterized his style, this composition offers a more modern sound of leaner textures, sharper harmonies, and more concise motifs. The first movement presents a broad three-part format, with energetic music at the start and close framing a lyrical central section. Its outer panels present an ironic march punctuated by harsh chords, but the insistent rhythms yield in the central episode to pastoral woodwind calls and a pensive melody introduced by an alto saxophone.

The movement that follows brings a strange waltz interrupted periodically by sinister figures from the brass instruments. As in other well-known waltz treatments by early modern composers—Sibelius’ *Valse triste* and Ravel’s *La Valse*, for example—this music conveys a somewhat ghostly atmosphere.

The finale is the longest of the three movements, and the richest in detail. It opens in slow tempo but eventually accelerates to an Allegro vivace marked by animated rhythms and a surprisingly Spanish flavor. As the movement builds to its climax, the brass peal forth the *Dies irae*, an ancient ecclesiastical chant for the dead. With what seems a peculiar morbidity, Rachmaninoff had adopted this melody as a personal motto, quoting it in a number of his compositions. But its reminder of death has only a passing effect here, for the chant is soon swept aside by more vital sounds as the music rushes to its final moments.

First performance: January 3, 1941, Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra

First SLSYO performance: March 14, 1999, David Amado conducting

Most recent SLSYO performance: May 20, 2012, Ward Stare conducting

Scoring: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tam tam, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, harp, piano, strings

Performance time: Approximately 35 minutes



GEMMA NEW

Resident Conductor

Sought after for her insightful interpretations and dynamic presence, New Zealand-born Gemma New is a leader among the new generation of conductors. She is currently Music Director of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Hailed as “a rising star in the musical firmament” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*), New was awarded Solti Foundation Career Assistance Awards in 2017 and 2019.

New's 2019/20 season features her inaugural concerts as Principal Guest Conductor in Dallas and debuts with the National Symphony Orchestra D.C., Milwaukee Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, Kristiansand Symfoniorkester, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, and Ulster Orchestra. On the opera front, she makes her debut with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where she will conduct a production of “Susannah” with Susanna Phillips in the title role. In the summer of 2019, New made five major conducting debuts with the Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony, and Indianapolis Symphony.

Last season, New led the opening concerts of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, made her debut with the New York Philharmonic on a Young People's Concert program, and conducted the SLSO on a live broadcast performance of *Live From Here* with Chris Thile. New has conducted the Atlanta Symphony, Toronto Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Florida Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic, Berkeley Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and many others. Her guest conducting has taken her internationally with orchestras such as the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, Malmö Symfoniorkester, Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester, Filharmonia Szczecin and Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and back home to New Zealand with the Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony, Opus Orchestra, and more.

THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA | 2019/2020

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Anna Zhong
co-concertmaster
Mary Xu
assistant concertmaster
Katie He
co-principal 2nd violin
Rich Qian
co-principal 2nd violin
Claire Zhang
assistant principal
2nd violin
Salma Ahmed
Daboh Ahn
Ayman Ishmael Amerin
Ava Andrews
Micaela Chyu
Madeleine Davis
Sophia Davis
Madeline De Geest
William Dong
Sophia Heaton
Ava Janes
Noah Kennedy
Ava Mandoli
Annie Ruan
Julia Serafimov
Katherine Shaw
Bradley Smith
Emily Tai
Lilly Tung
Ryan Tung
Lana Xu
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Ellie Yang
Kevin Zhou

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Junyi Su
co-principal
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Meredith Blucker
Olivia Davis
Eloise De Geest

Benjamin Duke
Linnea Johansen
Elaina Maurer
Alexander Pompian
Jacob Sheldon
Andy Zhang

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co-principal
Adam Zhao
co-principal
Jacob Hinton
assistant principal
Madeline Buchowski
Elinor Dana
Daniel Diringier
Nayeon Ryu
Ellen Spangler
Alexander Unseth
Natalie Van Winkle

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co-principal
Sammie Lee
co-principal
Kai Montgomery
assistant principal
Anushka Dharmasanam
Gabriel Gilbert
Leah Johnson
Hannah Rivas
Benjamin Wang

HARP

Mary Grace Stamos

FLUTE

Abby Grace
Anne Luetkenhaus
Daphne Levy
Colleen McCracken

OBOE

Matthew Barnes
Lauren Carley
Nicholas Karr
Alex Norrenberns

CLARINET

Pema Childs
Zachary Foulks
Sarah Oziemkiewicz
Jacob Reuter
Sam Weinhouse

BASSOON

Daniel Byer
Lawrence Liu
Charles Randall
Benjamin Weppler

HORN

Colin Akers
Rafi Brent
Roshen Chatwal
Grace Kirtley
Jacob Snoko
Nathan Stricker

TRUMPET

Andrew Classen
Sean Gallagher
Ethan Kauffman

TROMBONE

Thomas Gustafson
Daniel Jung
Geoffrey Ladue

BASS TROMBONE

Evan Smith

TUBA

Wyatt Moore

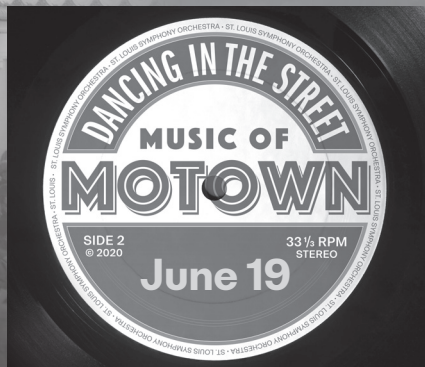
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