

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE ■ SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
GEORGE SHANGROW, MUSIC DIRECTOR
2009-2010 SEASON

CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

Sunday, March 14, 2010 ■ 3:00 PM
Meany Theater

Orchestra Seattle
George Shangrow, *conductor*

MICHAEL TORKE
(b. 1961)

Saxophone Concerto 1993 (rev. 2000)

I.

II. Slowly

III.

Erik Ibsen-Nowak, *soprano saxophone*

RICHARD STRAUSS
(1864-1949)

Four Last Songs (1948)

Frühling

September

Beim Schlafengehen

Im Abendrot

Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox, *soprano*

INTERMISSION

BÉLA BARTÓK
(1881-1945)

Concerto for Orchestra (1944)

Andante non troppo (Introduzione)

Allegro scherzando (Giuoco delle Coppie)

Andante non troppo (Elegia)

Allegretto (Intermezzo Interrotto)

Pesante-Presto (Finale)

Please disconnect signal watches, pagers and cellular telephones. Thank you.
Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.

Michael Torke

(b. Milwaukee, WI, September 22, 1961)

Saxophone Concerto

"The idea that rhythm is intrinsically human — not just primitive — that we all have hearts that beat at a steady rate and don't stop . . . reminds me of life itself. In that sense my music is like certain popular music where the rhythm drives from beginning to end." —

Michael Torke

Long-time aficionados of "serious music" and people who are just beginning to explore it are often intimidated by works produced by contemporary composers who belong to the "wrong-note school"—music that assaults the ear with harsh dissonances, seems tuneless and structurally incomprehensible, and is generally unpleasant and "unlistenable." In contrast, contemporary American composer and virtuoso pianist Michael Torke, one of the most successful composers of his generation, has written attractive and enthusiastically-received works that combine various musical styles, including romantic, jazz, popular, dance, and minimalist (an experimental American style dating from the 1960s that is characterized by slowly-shifting consonant harmonies, a relentless beat, long drones, and the seemingly- ceaseless repetition of small figures and motifs). Audiences enjoy his compositions' arresting instrumental colors, concise formal structures based on the reiteration of small musical patterns, alluring melodies, and infectious, spirited rhythms (that have made his music very appealing to choreographers), and if his music is new to you, you are certainly in for a treat!

Michael Torke's music has been called "some of the most optimistic, joyful and thoroughly uplifting music to appear in recent years" (*Gramophone*). In the mid 1990s, the *Financial Times of London* called him a "vitaly inventive composer," while the *New York Times* recognized him as "a master orchestrator whose shimmering timbral palette makes him the Ravel of his generation." The *Los Angeles Times*' chief music critic, Mark Swed, wrote in 1994: "Like Deconstructive architecture, Torke's music doesn't hesitate to take the familiar stuff of pop music and break up and reassemble it into a wondrously unpredictable bustle. Like Postmodern literature and painting, Torke lets striking musical imagery grab the senses and carry them along with a rhythmic bravado that has struck many as irresistible."

The composer grew up in the world of conventional classical music, discovering jazz, pop, and rock only after entering the Eastman School of Music in 1980, and his enthusiasm for popular music has remained undiminished as he has continued to infuse concert music with the energy of rock music. His early works were influenced by those of Stravinsky and Bartok (whose virtuoso *Concerto for Orchestra* is part of this afternoon's program), and they won for him prizes in composition at the Interlochen Academy in 1977 and 1978. He played principal bassoon in the Milwaukee Music for Youth ensemble, and wrote his first orchestral work, *Statement*, for the group in 1979. After earning degrees in piano performance and composition at the Eastman School, he produced, in 1985 while at Yale, two notable works in which classical form and technique were joined with "popular" content: *Bright Blue*

Music, and *The Yellow Pages* (in such "Color Music," Torke associates specific chords or keys with his interpretations of the moods and characters of different hues, and these works inaugurated a series of color-themed works written over the next six years that include *Ecstatic Orange, Green, Purple, Copper, Red*, etc). The composer left Yale in 1985 and moved to New York to further his composing career, and the following year he won a Rome Prize Fellowship and started a five-year collaboration with Peter Martins and the New York City Ballet. Torke was appointed the first Associate Composer of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in 1998, and in 2003, having acquired the rights to re-issue the complete Decca/Argo recordings of his works, he founded Ecstatic Records. Among his current and upcoming compositional projects are the opera *Senna*, and a rock version of Monteverdi's famous *Coronation of Poppea*.

Torke has written in nearly every musical genre. His highly varied works include *Mass* (for baritone, chorus, and chamber orchestra), *King of Hearts* (an opera for television), *Four Proverbs* (a "post-minimalist" piece for female voice and instrumental ensemble), the "sonic Olympiad" *Javelin* (one of the composer's most popular pieces commissioned by the 1994 Olympic Committee to celebrate the 50th season of the Atlanta Symphony), *Four Seasons* (a 65-minute symphonic oratorio for vocal soloists, two choruses, and large orchestra commissioned by the Walt Disney Corporation to commemorate the beginning of the new millennium), *Strawberry Fields* (a critically-acclaimed one-act opera), two evening-length story ballets, *The Contract* and *An Italian Straw Hat, December* (for string orchestra), *Nylon* (for guitar and orchestra), *Bronze* (for piano and orchestra), *July* (for saxophone quartet), *Rapture* (a percussion concerto), the tone-poem; *An American Abroad*, and the string quartet, *Chalk* (for which Torke provides the striking image of "the chalky smoke of rosin lifting from the bridges of stringed instruments due to the intensity of the player's bow strokes").

Michael Torke composed the three-movement *Saxophone Concerto* quite quickly during December of 1993 at the request of saxophonist John Harle, who needed one more concerto to fill an album he was recording for Argo records. The work, for soprano saxophone and an orchestra of flutes, clarinets, oboe and English horn, bassoon, horns, bass trombone, percussion instruments, vibraphones and marimbas, harp, and strings, was first performed on January 14, 1994, at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall in Troy, New York, with Harle as soloist and David Alan Miller conducting the Albany Symphony Orchestra, and it was recorded the next day. It was very well-received by audience and critics alike: "It is a work of deceptive simplicity but beneath the surface are treasures galore...[it is] ingeniously conceived," stated the *South Wales Echo*, while *Gramophone* observed that "... the music is disarmingly unaffected, with economical scoring and a finely honed style of thematic development," and *Classic CD* commented that "... both the flickering orientalism of the opening movement's main motif, and the sweetly-breathed rhapsody spun by the soloist in the slow middle movement, are evidence that Torke's gift for melody is richer than his large-scale 'colour' works for orchestra suggest."

If a musical theme is short, simple, and striking, like a commercial jingle, it generally makes a stronger impression on the listener, who will thus be able to trace more easily the reappearances and the development of that theme throughout a work. In the “post-minimalist,” rhythmically playful first movement of the *Saxophone Concerto*, which is strongly reminiscent of the music of the famous Jewish-American minimalist composer, Steve Reich (b. 1936), the soloist presents a jaunty two-measure theme featuring a rising interval of a third. This soon appears in the orchestra where it is harmonized by pairs of winds and pitched percussion instruments and is accompanied by chords in the strings. The saxophone then plays a slight variation of the theme to which the orchestra replies. In his own notes on this movement, Torke mentions that he likes “to insert decorative 16ths within an 8th-note melody. Then, I restore the original 8th durations, but include the new 16ths in between, which results in a variation slightly longer than the original, undecorated version. When I combine both versions, an interesting counterpoint emerges.” Thematic presentation, orchestral coloration, elaboration, and then expansion of the orchestration characterize the movement as a whole, and, in Torke's words, “. . . everything tightly relates to itself, and the intended result is not only cohesion, but an identifiable sound or 'voice.'”

After the scampering saxophone cadenza that closes the concerto's first movement, softly-murmuring horns open the dreamily romantic and lyrical second movement, in which the saxophone sings a gently-flowing melody that is clothed with vari-colored instrumental and harmonic garments. The saxophone sometimes presents the melody and at other times accompanies it. The composer states that “the second movement, with its long, plaintive melody (inspired by lush arrangements I heard on Natalie Cole's 1991 album, 'Unforgettable'), is also developed by inserting decorative eighths where before there were only quarters.”

In the restlessly energetic third movement, a three-note figure that rises stepwise over the space of a third in a “short-short-LONG” rhythmic pattern remains prominent. The music, which brings to mind the sounds of a busy city street seen and heard from an open window, is based, according to Torke, on “two alternating three-note chords in the strings, which is a grid from which short melodic bits are selected . . . This movement features waves of musical activity, structured in three large sections: the original, its inversion, and finally an open-voiced variant of the original.” At the end of the movement, the window is suddenly closed and the street sounds somewhat unexpectedly cease.

The *Saxophone Concerto* is not a work that endeavors to make a profound philosophical statement, but demonstrates Torke's appreciation of the forms and techniques of “the classical tradition (“Why waste money on psychotherapy when you can listen to the b minor Mass [of Bach]?” Torke once asked) and of the rhythms, timbres, and styles of contemporary popular music, and of his remarkable ability to blend them into a vibrantly delightful, distinctive and delicious musical dish that whets the listener's appetite: “Please, Sir, I want some more!”

Richard Georg Strauss

(b. June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany; d. September 8, 1949, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany)

Vier letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs)

“I may not be a first-rate composer, but I am a first-class second-rate composer.” — Richard Strauss, 1947

The son of the principal horn player in the Court Orchestra in Munich, Richard Strauss, conductor and late Romantic/early modern composer, wrote in nearly every musical genre, but is best known for his colorful operas and tone poems, and for his approximately 200 songs. The talented youth received an excellent musical education from his father, wrote his first music at age six, was trained in piano and violin, theory, harmony, composition, and orchestration, and continued to compose until shortly before his death at the age of 85. His eclectic musical style incorporated the contradictions, conflicts, and ambiguities that he perceived in the lives of “ordinary modern people” and between their everyday existence and that of “the artist,” and thus anticipated the stylistic experimentation of the closing years of the 20th century. Bryan Gilliam states in his article on the composer in Grove's Dictionary: “No one was more aware of the disjunction between man and artist than Strauss himself, who reveled in conducting his most expressive musical passages with minimal body gestures and a face devoid of emotion.”

Beginning in 1882, Strauss studied philosophy, aesthetics, and art history (though not music) at the University of Munich, but left in 1883 for Berlin, where he became assistant to the famous pianist, teacher, and conductor of the Meiningen Court Orchestra, Hans von Bülow. On the basis of Strauss' *Serenade for 13 Winds*, Op. 7, written when he was 17, von Bülow declared him to be “by far the most striking personality since Brahms”), and Strauss succeeded von Bülow when he resigned his post later in 1885, thus initiating a professional career of composing and conducting that spanned some 64 years and carried him across Europe, South America, and the U.S. In 1894, Strauss married Pauline de Ahna, a soprano to whom he had given voice lessons who had a reputation for being unorthodox, domineering, bad-tempered, and blunt, but their relationship appears to have been generally happy, and Pauline was an ever-flowing font of inspiration for her husband. From his earliest songs to his *Vier letzte Lieder*, written at the end of his life, Strauss remained enamored of the high voice--nearly all of his major operatic roles were written for sopranos.

From the late 1880s into the early years of the 20th century, Strauss produced a number of popular tone poems (symphonic compositions usually based on and descriptive of a story (often a folk tale) or a scene from Nature): *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Til Eulespiegel's Merry Pranks*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (famous because of the use of its opening measures in the film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*), *Don Quixote*, *A Hero's Life*, and *An Alpine Symphony*. Near the close of the 19th century, however, he began to concentrate on the composition of operas. His *Salome*, written in 1905 and based on Oscar Wilde's play, created a sensation (the artists involved in the work's premiere are reported to have taken over 38 curtain

calls), but when it opened at New York City's Metropolitan Opera, the audience's reaction to the subject matter and to the dissonant harmonies was so extreme that it closed after a single performance. His opera *Elektra* was even more dissonant, but in his later works Strauss returned to a more conventional harmonic language, and works such as *Der Rosenkavalier* were great successes. Until 1940, Strauss continued to compose operas, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* being among the best-known.

The nature of Strauss' activities in Nazi Germany remains a subject of controversy. According to some scholars, he attempted to remain apolitical, and his cooperation with the Nazis was minimal, while others emphasize the fact that he was an official of the Third Reich. A number of prominent musicians disapproved of his conduct during the Nazi years, among them the conductor Arturo Toscanini, who stated: "To Strauss the composer I take off my hat; to Strauss the man I put it back on again." In 1933 he was selected to replace Bruno Walter and Toscanini in various conducting roles, and was made president of the *Reichsmusikkammer* (the State Music Bureau) by Joseph Goebbels without consultation. Strauss decided to retain his post but to remain "neutral," and he **was** able to obtain full copyright protection for all German composers, which he had been unable to do during the Weimar period. While in this position he produced the *Olympische Hymne* for the 1936 Summer Olympics, and befriended some prominent Nazis, possibly to protect his daughter-in-law Alice, who was Jewish; in 1935, however, Strauss was forced to resign his position with the *Reichsmusikkammer* after refusing to remove from the playbill for a new opera the name of his Jewish librettist. Strauss used his connections in Berlin to assure the safety of his daughter-in-law, Alice, and his grandsons (officially classified as "grade-one half-breeds") when Alice was placed under house-arrest in 1938, and he seems to have tried to use his official status to shield other Jewish colleagues and friends. Strauss was not able to protect his Jewish relatives completely, however, and during his absence early in 1944, Alice and Strauss' son were imprisoned for two nights by the Gestapo. Only Strauss's personal intervention was able to save them, but they remained under house-arrest until the war's end. While Strauss' actions during the 1930s ranged between collaboration and dissidence, his resistance to the Nazis was evident mostly in his music (e.g., in the "peace-opera," *Friedenstag*, written in 1936 and performed in 1938).

In 1945, Strauss composed *Metamorphosen* for 23 solo strings, probably to lament the bombings of the Dresden, Vienna, and Munich opera houses (the *Hoftheater*, in Munich, was Strauss' favorite), which he referred to as "the greatest catastrophe that has ever disturbed my life." He was apprehended by American soldiers in April of that year at his Garmisch-Partenkirchen estate, and told Lieutenant Milton Weiss that he was "Richard Strauss, the composer of *Rosenkavalier* and *Salome*;" the officer was a musician, and is said to have nodded his recognition and to have set an OFF LIMITS sign on Strauss' lawn to protect him.

In 1948, when he was 84, Strauss wrote his last (completed) work, *Vier letzte Lieder* (*Four Last Songs*), for a soprano (probably Kirsten Flagstad) and a large orchestra of piccolo, 3

flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets in B-flat and A, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, celeste, and strings. The songs, composed about a year before Strauss died, rank among his best works of any type, and contemplate death, anticipating it with a gentle and wistful sense of acceptance, peace, and fulfillment. All four songs feature gloriously sweeping, passionately expressive melodic lines for the soprano (perhaps in appreciation of Strauss' wife, who was a professional soprano), and prominent horn parts (possibly in tribute to his horn-player father, Franz).

The poem *Im Abendrot* (*At sunset*), by Joseph von Eichendorff, held special significance for Strauss, and he composed music for it in May 1948. He had recently received a copy of the complete poems of Hermann Hesse, and by the end of September he had set three of them – *Frühling* (*Spring*), *September*, and *Beim Schlafengehen* (*Going to Sleep*) – for soprano and a lavish orchestra (perhaps a fifth song remained unfinished at Strauss' death). There is no evidence that Strauss thought of these songs as a single set; the three Hesse songs were initially listed in dictionaries as a group, separate from the earlier setting of Eichendorff's poem. Strauss' friend, Ernst Roth, chief editor at Boosey & Hawkes, provided the title, *Four Last Songs*, and gave them the order that is now followed in most performances: *Frühling*, *September*, *Beim Schlafengehen*, and *Im Abendrot* (Professor Timothy L. Jackson, a Strauss expert, thinks that the song, *Ruhe, meine Seele*, a wedding song which Strauss orchestrated in June of 1948, the month in which he was exonerated by a de-Nazification tribunal in Munich, should be added to the four as a prelude to *Im Abendrot*).

Neither Richard Strauss nor Pauline lived to hear the songs' first performance on May 22, 1950, at London's Royal Albert Hall, with Kirsten Flagstad as soloist and Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. Strauss had conducted for the last time in June of 1949 after the celebration of his 85th birthday, and following a heart attack in August and six weeks of sickness, he passed away peacefully, probably of kidney failure, at Garmisch on September 8, 1949. During the composer's memorial, Georg Solti, who had organized Strauss's 85th birthday celebration, also conducted an orchestra in the final trio of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Pauline died on May 13, nine days prior to the songs' premiere. Near the close of *Im Abendrot*, just as the soprano's final intonation of "der Tod" ("death") dies away, the strings quote Strauss' own symphonic poem, *Death and Transfiguration*, written 60 years earlier. Here, as in the orchestral work, the soaring six-note "transfiguration theme" brings hope and light to departing souls, including those of one of the finest of all composers for the orchestra and the wife whose soprano voice inspired his compositional one.

- notes by Lorelette Knowles

Frühling

In dämmrigen Grüften
träumte ich lang
von deinen Bäumen und blauen Lüften,
von deinem Duft und Vogelsang.

Nun liegst du erschlossen
in Gleiß und Zier,
von Licht übergossen
wie ein Wunder vor mir.

Du kennest mich wieder,
du lockest mich zart,
es zittert durch all meine Glieder
deine selige Gegenwart!

September

Der Garten trauert,
kühl sinkt in die Blumen der Regen.
Der Sommer schauert
still seinem Ende entgegen.

Golden tropft Blatt um Blatt
nieder vom hohen Akazienbaum.
Sommer lächelt erstaunt und matt
in den sterbenden Gartentraum.

Lange noch bei den Rosen
bleibt er stehen, sehnt sich nach Ruh.
Langsam tut er die großen
müdigewordnen Augen zu.

While Going to Sleep

[Nun]¹ der Tag mich [müd]² gemacht,
soll mein sehnliches Verlangen
freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.

Hände, laßt von allem Tun,
Stirn, vergiß du alles Denken,
alle meine Sinne nun
wollen sich in Schlummer senken.

Und die Seele unbewacht
will in freien Flügen schweben,
um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
tief und tausendfach zu leben.

In Twilight

Wir sind durch Not und Freude
Gegangen Hand in Hand:
Vom Wandern ruhen wir beide
Nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler neigen,
Es dunkelt schon die Luft,
Zwei Lerchen nur noch steigen
Nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her und laß sie schwirren,
Bald ist es Schlafenszeit,
Daß wir uns nicht verirren
In dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter, stiller Friede!
So tief im Abendrot,
Wie sind wir wandermüde -
Ist dies etwa der Tod?

Spring

In dusky vaults
I have long dreamt
of your trees and blue skies,
of your scents and the songs of birds.

Now you lie revealed
in glistening splendour,
flushed with light,
like a wonder before me.

You know me again,
you beckon tenderly to me;
all of my limbs quiver
from your blissful presence!

September

The garden is mourning,
the rain sinks coolly into the flowers.
Summer shudders
as it meets its end.

Leaf upon leaf drops golden
down from the lofty acacia.
Summer smiles, astonished and weak,
in the dying garden dream.

For a while still by the roses
it remains standing, yearning for peace.
Slowly it closes its large
eyes grown weary.

Beim Schlafengehen

Now that the day has made me so tired,
my dearest longings shall
be accepted kindly by the starry night
like a weary child.

Hands, cease your activity,
head, forget all of your thoughts;
all my senses now
will sink into slumber.

And my soul, unobserved,
will float about on untrammelled wings
in the enchanted circle of the night,
living a thousandfold more deeply.

Im Abendrot

We've gone through joy and crisis
Together, hand in hand,
And now we rest from wandering
Above the silent land.

The valleys slope around us,
The air is growing dark,
And dreamily, into the haze,
There still ascends two larks.

Come here, and let them flutter,
The time for sleep is soon.
We would not want to lose our way
In this great solitude.

O vast and silent peace!
So deep in twilight ruddiness,
We are so wander-weary -
Could this perchance be death?

Béla Bartók

(b. March 25, 1881, Nagyszentmiklos, Austria-Hungary ((now Romania)), d. New York City, September 26, 1945)

Concerto for Orchestra

Béla Bartók and his wife Ditta arrived in New York in October 1940, having fled their native Hungary due to the war in Europe. They had hoped to earn income playing duo-piano concerts, but audiences and critics did not warm to Bartók's unfamiliar music, so within a year their concert engagements dwindled considerably. Columbia University awarded the composer an honorary doctorate and offered him a part-time job as a musicologist, but the position was tenuous—in fact, the university's funds ran out and only through the covert intervention of some of Bartók's friends did his meager salary continue to be paid. Bartók stopped composing and his health was failing: his weight dropped to a mere 87 pounds, the result of previously undiagnosed leukemia. Confined to a hospital, his medical bills would have gone unpaid had ASCAP not stepped in to help.

Hoping to bolster the composer's spirits and provide him a bit of income, two of Bartók's fellow countrymen—violinist Joseph Szigeti and conductor Fritz Reiner—arranged (in secret) for the Koussevitzky Foundation to commission an orchestral work. Boston Symphony Orchestra music director Serge Koussevitzky visited Bartók in his hospital room to deliver a check for half of the amount up front—a mere \$500. Reluctantly, Bartók accepted, unsure that he could find the strength to compose music once again.

The commission did wonders for the composer's spirits, however, and his health improved enough for him to spend the summer of 1943 at New York's Saranac Lake, where he was able to complete the work. The first performance took place just over a year later, on December 1, 1944, with Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony. Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra achieved instant acclaim, sparking a renewed interest in the composer and his music. Although new commissions flooded in, Bartók was only able to complete a third piano concerto and (most of) a viola concerto before succumbing to his illness in September 1945.

At the time of the work's premiere, Koussevitzky told Bartók that his Concerto for Orchestra was "the best orchestral piece of the last 25 years." It now stands as one of the undisputed masterpieces of 20th century music, a rare combination of musical substance, immediate accessibility and bravura showmanship.

Bartók was not the first to write a work under the title "Concerto for Orchestra," a modern reimagining of the Baroque concerto grosso form. Paul Hindemith, Walter Piston and Zoltán Kodály had written such pieces in the 1920s and '30s, and notable compositions by Michael Tippett, Elliott Carter and Roger Sessions (among others) have followed. Yet only Witold Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra has achieved even a fraction of the fame of Bartók's.

For the 1944 BSO premiere, Bartók wrote the following:

"The general mood of the work represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death song of the third to the life assertion of the last one.

The title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat single instruments or instrumental groups in a concertante or soloistic way. The "virtuoso" treatment appears, for instance, in the *fugato* sections of the development of the first movement (brass instruments) or in the *perpetuum mobile*-like passage of the principal theme in the last movement (strings), and, especially, in the second movement, in which pairs of instruments consecutively appear with brilliant passages.

As for the structure of the work, the first and fifth movements are written in a more or less regular sonata form. The development of the first *fugato* contains sections for brass; the exposition in the finale is somewhat extended, and its development consists of a fugue built on the last theme of the exposition.

Less traditional forms are found in the second and third movements. The main part of the second movement consists of a chain of independent short sections; I used here wind instruments, which are consecutively introduced in five pairs (bassoons, oboes, clarinets, flutes and muted trumpets)... A kind of trio—a short chorale for brass instruments and side drum—follows, after which the five sections are repeated in a more elaborate instrumentation.

The structure of the third movement is also chain-like; three themes appear successively. These constitute the core of the movement, which is enframed by a hazy texture of rudimentary motifs. Most of the thematic material of the movement derives from the introduction of the first movement. The form of the fourth movement—*Intermezzo interrotto*—could be rendered by the letter symbols A-B-A-Interruption-B-A."

The fourth movement's "interruption" is a burlesque treatment of the endlessly repeated theme from the opening movement of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, which Bartók heard on the radio at the time he was composing his Concerto for Orchestra. Writers have often claimed that Bartók found the Shostakovich work banal and was thus parodying it, but Bartók's son Péter later insisted that the melody had reminded his father of a Viennese cabaret tune, and it was this cabaret song to which Bartók referred.

The overall shape of the work is palindromic, the large-scale outer movements bookending the more lighthearted second and fourth movements, which themselves surround the highly atmospheric central slow movement. Just as Bartók builds the third movement out of musical material from the slow, quiet opening of the first, other such allusions and cross-references abound throughout the Concerto.

The finale opens with a declamatory horn statement marked by an opening octave leap. Scurrying string passages then quicken the tempo, interrupted by Hungarian dance tunes, until bassoons attempt to begin a fugue based on the opening horn motive. Instead, a tranquil woodwind interlude ensues, leading to another energetic string passage over which trumpets introduce a heroic new theme, which horns then play in inverted form; this melody undergoes a *fugato* development, building to a slightly slower fugal section initially dominated by strings. Material from the opening of the movement then returns, ushering the work to its inexorable conclusion.

- notes by Jeff Eldridge

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE

VIOLIN

Eugene Cho
Lauren Daugherty
Dean Drescher
Stephen Hegg
Sue Herring
Manchung Ho
Maria Hunt
Fritz Klein**
Wendy Lee
Mark Lutz
Andrew Morgan
Gregor Nitsche
Susan Ovens
Robert Redman
Elizabeth Robertson
Theo Schaad
Janet Showalter*
Randie Sidlinger
Kenna Smith-Shangrow
Nicole Tsong
Sharon Wherland

VIOLA

Deborah Daoust
Audrey Don
Katherine McWilliams
Margaret Olson
Lorraine Perrin*
Karoline Vass

Ella Wallace
Sam Williams

CELLO

David Boyle
Inez Boyle
Kaia Chessen
Peter Ellis
Priscilla Jones
Erica Klein
Katie Messick
Annie Roberts
Valerie Ross
Matthew Wyant*

STRING BASS

Jo Hansen*
Taylor Kent
Kevin McCarthy
Steve Messick
Al Smith

PICCOLO

Virginia Knight
Melissa Underhill*

FLUTE

Jenna Calixto
Shari Müller-Ho*

OBOE

David Barnes*
Beth Wren

ENGLISH HORN

John Dimond

CLARINET

Steve Noffsinger*
Cheryl Hutchinson

BASS CLARINET

Alan Lawrence

BASSOON

Jeff Eldridge
Judith Lawrence*
Brian Rolette

HORN

Barney Blough+
Don Crevie
Laurie Heidt<
Jim Hendrickson
Matthew Kruse

TRUMPET

David Cole
Dan Harrington
Janet Young*

TROMBONE

Paul Bogataj
Moc Escobedo*
David Holmes

TUBA

David Brewer

HARP

Naomi Kato
Melissa Shaw

PERCUSSION/ TIMPANI

Shane Henderson
Chia-hao Hsieh
Dan Oie*
Memmi Ochi

* *principal*

** *concertmaster*

+ *Bartók principal*

< *Strauss principal*

SOLOISTS

Saxophonist **Erik Ibsen-Nowak** shares with composers Michael Torke (as well as Olivier Messiaen, Franz Liszt, Alexander Scriabin, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov and others) the ability to "see" and "feel" sounds as colors and textures – a condition known as synesthesia. When he performed in Boston at Jordan Hall on the radio program *From the Top*, pianist and radio host Christopher O'Riley said this about his interpretation of Robert Muczynski's *Sonata for Alto Saxophone*: "You bring a great sense of color to it."

As a student of saxophonist Tracy Knoop, and the 1st Prize Winner of the Northwest Sinfonietta Youth Concerto Competition in 2001, he performed the Glazunov Concerto for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra with that group under the direction of Christophe Chagnard. He continued his studies with Gary Louie at the Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University, and is furthering his musical education in conducting in discussion with George Shangrow. His synesthesia also contributes to his work as a professional pyrotechnician, a position he has engaged in for the past decade. In addition he is a commercially licensed pilot with a degree in biochemistry.

Eleanor Stallcop-Horrox is a familiar face to Northwest audiences. A Seattle native, she returned to this area after studies in Ellensburg, Philadelphia, and Colorado Springs. A member of the Seattle Opera Regular Chorus since 1997, she has also appeared in principal roles with Bellevue Opera, Willamette Concert Opera, Bel Canto Northwest and Kitsap Opera & Bremerton Symphony and, this past October, as the Fifth Maid in *Elektra* with Seattle Opera, which garnered favorable mention for her in the Metropolitan Opera News. She maintains an active career as a soloist and has appeared with Orchestra Seattle, Choir of the Sound, Lake Union Civic Symphony and Cascadian Chorale.

She was the 1989 Winner of the Bel Canto Foundation competition and sang at their Buon Viaggio Gala in Chicago. She has also been heard in recital at the Teatro Rozzi in Siena, Italy where she coached with Maestro Walter Baracchi of La Scala. Here at home, she was a student of the late Ellen Faull.

Remaining Concerts in our 2009 – 2010 SEASON

Sunday, April 11, 3 PM

First Free Methodist Church

Handel: Alexander's Feast

Sunday, May 2, 7 PM

First Free Methodist Church

Sanders: "She Runs Hot and Cold"

world premiere

Castelnuovo-Tedesco: Guitar Concerto No. 1

Michael Partington, guitar

De Falla: The Three-Cornered Hat Ballet

Sunday, June 6, 7 PM

First Free Methodist Church

Edstrom: Concerto for Jazz Piano & Orchestra

Brent Edstrom, piano

Bernstein: Choruses from "The Lark"

Beyer: "The Turns of a Girl"

Jessica Robins-Milanese, soprano



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