

PROGRAM NOTES

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto in E-flat for chamber orchestra (*Dumbarton Oaks*)

Igor Stravinsky was born June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum (near St. Petersburg), and died April 6, 1971, in New York City. He began composing this concerto at the Château de Montoux, near Annemasse, in the spring of 1937 and completed it in Paris on March 29, 1938. Nadia Boulanger conducted the first performance at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, on May 8, 1938. The work is scored for flute, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, 3 violins, 3 violas, 2 cellos and 2 double basses.

While on an American concert tour in 1937, Igor Stravinsky made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, who subsequently commissioned a work for chamber orchestra for the occasion of their thirtieth wedding anniversary the following year. Stravinsky toured their magnificent home, Dumbarton Oaks (near Washington, DC), where the first performance was to be given. It has been said that the architecture of the home and surrounding gardens may have served as an inspiration for the overall design of the concerto. Certainly the limited space available necessitated a small ensemble, and perhaps this led to Stravinsky's choice of Bach's Brandenburg concertos as his model.

The title "concerto" refers not to our usual notion of soloist pitted against orchestra, but to the Baroque form of *concerto grosso*, where multiple instrumentalists take turns in the spotlight. Although Bach is a model, this is — unlike the Respighi and Strauss works on this program — not a reworking of existing material. Baroque style and form, as exemplified in Bach's Brandenburg concertos, is merely a point of departure; no one would mistake the result for anything but the work of Stravinsky.

While at work on his Concerto in E-flat, Stravinsky had joined his wife and daughter at a sanitarium, where they were being treated (unsuccessfully) for tuberculosis. The discovery that the composer himself had contracted the disease prevented him from returning to America to conduct the premiere. At his behest, the French composer Nadia Boulanger (who had been instrumental in the negotiations surrounding the commission) took his place. (Stravinsky would lead the first public performance of the work, in Paris, the following month.)

Mrs. Bliss took a special interest in the concerto, attending all the rehearsals leading up to the premiere, as well as numerous subsequent performances of the work. (She later deemed Nadia Boulanger's interpretation at the premiere the "most subtly interesting" of the lot.) Mrs. Bliss was sufficiently impressed with the composition to commission another work from Stravinsky, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. (This would result in another great neo-classical creation, the *Symphony in C*.)

The key motivic element in the first movement is a three-note ascending figure, which approximately halfway through develops into a fugue. The movement closes with several bars of quiet string chords. While the opening movement is characterized by counterpoint and fugal exposition, in the second the instruments more often take turns stating thematic material — usually in question-and-answer fashion and occasionally in dialogue with one another. Toward the end, an extended flute solo takes center stage, while underneath strings and clarinet alternate in restating the movement's opening theme. Another series of subdued, chorale-like chords brings the movement to a conclusion, leading without pause to the finale, which also features a fugal development section.

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Ancient Airs and Dances Suite No. 1

Respighi was born July 9, 1879, in Bologna, Italy, and died April 18, 1936, in Rome. The first of his three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances* was composed in 1918 and first performed by the *Augusteo Orchestra of Rome* on March 3, 1919, under the direction of Bernardino Molinari. It is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, harp, harpsichord and strings.

Like Stravinsky, Respighi is most widely known for a trilogy of large-scale orchestral works. In the Russian composer's case, it was the three great ballets he created for Diaghilev (*The Firebird*, *Petrouchka* and *The Rite of Spring*); for the Italian Respighi it was his so-called "Roman

Trilogy" of tone poems: *The Pines of Rome*, *The Fountains of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*. In addition, both Stravinsky and Respighi had studied orchestration under Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and both took an interest in adapting "early" music for modern performance. Stravinsky's most famous such product was the ballet *Pulcinella*, based on music of Pergolesi. Respighi made a particular study of Gregorian chant, composing several works inspired by that style. He also wrote three suites of "Antiche danze ed arie per liuto" (in 1918, 1923, and 1931), scoring the first for chamber orchestra, the second for a larger ensemble, and the third for strings alone.

The modern-notation transcriptions of 16th Century Italian lute music by musicologist Oscar Chilesotti (1848-1916) had first begun to appear in print when Respighi was enrolled at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. These provided the source material for all three of Respighi's suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*. The first movement of the 1918 suite is drawn from a work of Simone Molinaro (ca. 1565-1615), *maestro di capella* of the Cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa. The second, a lively, triple-meter dance known in England as a "galliard," derives from a work of Vincenzo Galilei (ca. 1525-1591), father of the famed astronomer; Respighi adds a slower middle section based on an anonymous *Italiana*. The sources for the final two movements — a somber *Villanella* interspersed with another *Italiana*, and a lively set of dance variations — are likewise anonymous.

ROUPEN SHAKARIAN

Flute Concerto

Roupen Shakarian was born in 1950 in Cairo, Egypt; he currently resides in the Seattle area. His flute concerto was composed between August 1999 and February 2000 and is dedicated to Jeffrey Cohan; this is its first performance. In addition to solo flute, the work is scored for pairs of clarinets, bassoons and horns, timpani, tom-toms, and strings.

An active composer and conductor, Roupen Shakarian is perhaps best known to Seattle audiences as music director of Philharmonia Northwest, where he has been music director for the past fourteen seasons. However, he is also much in demand as a composer: his compositions include *Whimsy* and a chamber symphony, both written for Philharmonia Northwest; *The Turnip, Clock, and the Kid*, commissioned and recorded by the Rainier Chamber Winds; *Five Bagatelles* for wind quintet; *Concertino a Duende* for flute, guitar and orchestra; and many choral works. His *Inner Places*, a piece for brass ensemble and organ, was commissioned by the American Guild of Organists and will be premiered at their National Convention in Seattle in July of this year. At present he is working on a commissioned work for a chamber ensemble for St. Michael's Academy to be performed on October 1, 2000.

George Shangrow and Roupen Shakarian have shared a long professional relationship and an even longer friendship, dating back to the time when they were in seventh and eighth grade, respectively, at Seattle's Marshall Middle School. Flutist Jeffrey Cohan has been performing with George Shangrow for over 25 years, and has also worked with Roupen Shakarian for quite some time, most recently when the two premiered a flute concerto by William O. Smith with Philharmonia Northwest. Thus, it was inevitable that the three would collaborate on a musical venture such as this evening's premiere of Shakarian's flute concerto. The composer has provided the following note for this performance:

This concerto expresses the dramatic and theatrical nature of music. The entire work is operatic in its treatment. Like a tragedy, the main character's fate is lived out in three "acts." In the first movement, a musical dialogue spearheaded by the solo flute sets the stage for "conversations" between the solo flute and various instruments of the orchestra. With an underlying current of tension, the conversations remain cordial but distant, even with slight occasional changes of moods and emotions, and leads to an emotional but internal flare-up. The second movement focuses on the flute in a *recitative* and *arioso* fashion. Here, the flute reveals darker flitting feelings; skittish, nervous and unpredictable. It ends uncertain and spooked by the future, despite a momentary sense of assurance in the middle section. The final movement reveals the nature of uncertainty and the nightmarish obsession of an agitated soul.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Divertimento for Small Orchestra (after Couperin), Op. 86

Strauss was born in Munich on June 11, 1864, and died at Garmisch-Partenkirchen September 8, 1949. He arranged and orchestrated harpsichord pieces of François Couperin for a ballet, *Verklungene Feste*, in 1940, later adding four additional pieces for concert performance. Clemens Krauss led the Vienna Philharmonic in the first performance of the concert version on January 31, 1943. The work is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes (one doubling English horn), clarinets, bassoons and horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, percussion (triangle, tambourine, cymbals and bass drum), celeste, harpsichord, organ, harp and strings.

Richard Strauss is best known for large-scale orchestral showpieces (*Don Juan*, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, *Till Eulenspiegel*) as well as his operatic masterpieces such as *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Salome*. Yet he also took an interest in smaller-scale works, especially in the early and late stages of his compositional career, and on more than one occasion adapted the work of an earlier generation of composers. Perhaps the most famous such example in Strauss' *oeuvre* is the suite *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, which interpolates some of the incidental music Jean-Baptiste Lully wrote for the Molière play of the same name, and was originally intended as part of an evening-long entertainment culminating in the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Less well known are two suites for chamber orchestra which are orchestrations of keyboard pieces by another Frenchman, François Couperin. The first of these was originally conceived as a purely instrumental work, but so many of the pieces Strauss began to select were dances of one sort or another that he decided to write a *Dance Suite*. The work — eight movements comprising 19 different Couperin miniatures — was given as a simple classical ballet at the Vienna State Opera (of which Strauss was director at the time) in February of 1923; the first concert performance took place in Dresden in December of the same year.

One of those present at the Vienna premiere was the young conductor Clemens Krauss; over the next decade and a half he would lead celebrated performances of a number of Strauss' operas and orchestral works. When,

in 1940, he suggested to the aging composer that he orchestrate more of the Couperin pieces, Strauss agreed. The advent of the Second World War had left the premiere of his recently completed opera, *Die Liebe der Danae*, in limbo and the composer had few other projects to keep him occupied. Strauss devised five additional movements, which were added to those of the original *Dance Suite* and performed as the ballet *Verklungene Feste* (or *Bygone Festivities*), with choreography drawn from the work of Le Feuillet, a Parisian dance master who had flourished around 1700. Krauss conducted the premiere at the Munich National Theater on April 5, 1941. Soon after, Strauss devised three additional movements, which were added to the five which had been newly composed for *Verklungene Feste*, to form an eight-movement *Divertimento* for concert performance (the version heard this evening, with one movement omitted).

During his lifetime the great French composer François Couperin *le grand* composed over 300 keyboard works. Undoubtedly the programmatic nature of many of these pieces (and their often evocative titles) helped to attract the interest of Richard Strauss, master of the symphonic tone poem. Not content to merely orchestrate Couperin's keyboard compositions, Strauss took a great many musical liberties, transposing, abbreviating and combining them, even adding new melodies and composing his own codas and connecting passages. A case in point is the third movement: it begins with *Le Tic-Toc-Choc*, Couperin's delightful musical imitation of a clock, to which Strauss adds a melody of his own invention; toward the end, another piece, *La Lutine* ("The Imp"), intervenes, followed by a recapitulation in which *Le Tic-Toc-Choc* and *La Lutine* are played simultaneously! In the movement heard next in this performance, two renditions of *Le Trophée* bookend *L'Anguille* ("The Eel") and *Les Jeunes Seigneurs*, with *La Linotte Effarouchée* ("The Enraged Linnet") as an energetic coda. While the final four pieces are listed as three separate movements in the score, they follow one another without pause: *Les Tours de Passe-Passe* ("The Sleight of Hand"), *Les Ombres Errantes* ("Wandering Shadows"), *Les Brimborions* and *La Badine* ("The Tease").

— Jeff Eldridge

GUEST ARTISTS

Flutist Jeffrey Cohan, who according to the *New York Times* can "play several superstar flutists one might name under the table," has received international acclaim both as a modern flutist and as one of the foremost specialists on transverse flutes from the Renaissance through the early 19th century. He won the Erwin Bodky Award in Boston, and the highest prize awarded in the Flanders Festival International Concours Musica Antiqua for Ensembles in Brugge, Belgium with lutenist Stephen Stubbs. First prize winner of the Olga Koussevitzky Young Artist Competition in New York and recipient of grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music and the French Government, he has performed throughout Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and for the USIA Arts America Program in the South Pacific, South America, Turkey and Portugal. Mr. Cohan resides in Seattle, where he directs the period instrument concert series *Concert Spirituel*, and concertizes frequently with OSSCS music director George Shangrow as the Cohan-Shangrow Duo. Earlier this year he premiered a concerto by William O. Smith with Philharmonia Northwest under the direction of Roupén Shakarian.

Guest conductor Justin Cole has studied conducting with Michael Morgan and Larry Rachleff and is a former member of the conducting faculty at Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He has assisted Mr. Morgan at the Oakland East Bay Symphony and is former assistant conductor of the Orchestra of the Pines. Mr. Cole earned a Bachelor of Music degree in trombone performance from the University of Arizona, where he was awarded the prestigious Presser Scholarship by the School of Music. While in Arizona he received a grant from the University to conduct a concert of 20th century works for chamber orchestra. In 1996 the noted American composer Grace Brown asked that he conduct the world premiere of her work, *To Ancient Evenings and Distant Music*. Mr. Cole has studied trombone with Tom Ervin, Gerrard Pagano, George Krem, and William Stanley, and performed with a variety of ensembles, including the Rapides Symphony Orchestra, the Tucson Jazz Orchestra, the Piney Woods Brass Quintet, the Northwest Mahler Festival, and the Corona Brass Quintet. He has held the post of assistant conductor of Orchestra Seattle since the beginning of this season.

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