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Beyer
Stravinsky
Tchaikovsky

George Shangrow – Music Director

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Present

Orchestral Feasts 3

March 7, 1993 – Kane Hall – 3:00 pm

Symphony No. 4: Romantic Lines, by Huntley Beyer

"We need the eggs"

"Just lookin' at you hurts more"

"I...now pronounce you man and wife. Proceed with the execution"

"nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands"

Apollon Musagete, Ballet en Deux Tableaux, by Igor Stravinsky

1928 revised 1947

Premier Tableau (prologue)

Naissance d'Apollon

Second Tableau

Variation d'Apollon

Pas d'Action

Variation de Calliope

Variation de Polymnie

Variation Terpsichore

Variation d'Apollon

Pas de Deux

Coda

Apotheose

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in f minor, by Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky

I Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima – Moderato assai, quasi Andante – Allegro vivo

II Andantino in modo di canzone

III Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato. Allegro

IV Finale. Allegro con fuoco

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 4: Romantic Lines **Huntley Beyer**

The title "Romantic Lines" refers primarily to the passionate, yearning nature of much of the melodic material of the music, and also to the psychological structures of the movements, which turn inward, or spiral from the external to the internal. For example, the first movement has two kinds of themes: an energetic, up-beat one, and a darkly humorous one. The dialogue or relationship between these two somewhat extroverted ideas yields a certain sadness or introversion. The energetic idea becomes, in the end, nostalgic and reflective, more internal.

The second movement begins with a coloristic, textural, spatial "description," as of a landscape, or a certain way the light moves. The music does not move forward so much as sideways, the way the eyes might cast about. Out of this, as if some memory has been triggered, comes the emotional, romantic theme, which then dominates the rest of the time of the movement. Once certain feelings arise and take hold, they do not let go; they even color the landscape. This is a romantic structure in that it expresses the dominance or obsession of feelings.

The third movement turns outward, in the scherzo tradition. It is romantic in its structure of imbalance. The music is constantly propelled forward, never seeking balance, but rather moving ahead, towards more excitement, as if running after something. Its structure mirrors the obsession of adventure.

This last movement uses voice, and is set to a poem by e. e. cummings. While the moods and changes in this movement are more complex than those of the second, the same romantic structure is used: mid-way through a lush, emotional theme emerges, takes hold, and dominates. In this case there is some interruption, but the theme returns to claim its central place.

The title "Romantic Lines" refers secondarily, and inconsequentially, to romantic lines from movies. These lines serve simply to mirror, in their own field, an interest in romanticism. They should be delightful in themselves, and not be construed as containing programmatic intent. Titles do not enlighten music, so why not have some fun with them, making something out of them alone? "We need the eggs" is Woody Allen's statement about the heartbreak but necessity of relationships at the end of *Annie Hall* (relationships are crazy and irrational but we go through them because "we need the eggs"). "Just lookin' at you hurts more" is a sizzling line from *Tequila Sunrise*. "I...pronounce you man and wife. Proceed with the execution" is the culmination of the romantic adventure film *The African Queen*. "nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands" is used in Woody Allen's film *Hannah and Her Sisters* to refer to the obsession and love a husband has for his wife's sister. All the quotes are about a particular desire or yearning, so in some sense they reflect the music abstractly.

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond
any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
or which i cannot touch because they are too near
your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose
or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;
nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing
(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

Apollon Musagete Stravinsky

In 1927, Stravinsky (1882 - 1971), in the first stages of his neoclassical style of composition, was asked by the Congressional Library in Washington to compose a ballet. He had for some time been interested in writing a ballet based on Greek mythology, and, as he said, "I chose as the theme Apollo Musagetes — that is Apollo as the master of the Muses, inspiring each of them with her own art. I reduced their number to three, selecting from among them Calliope, Polyhymnia, and Terpsichore," representing poetry and rhythm, mime, and dancing.

The ballet is in two tableaux. The first shows the birth of Apollo and the presentation to him of a lute. The second takes him through his meeting with the muses, after which, in an apotheosis, he leads the Muses, with Terpsichore at their head, to Parnassus, where they are to live.

Despite the number of different movements or tableaux, Stravinsky's work sounds like a single, unified piece. The melodic, rhythmic and harmonic style is very similar throughout. There is a consistent austerity and cleanliness of sound and line. The work, too, is essentially polyphonic, with each string part being important melodically, and not just harmonically. Finally, Apollo's theme, heard in the opening, also occurs at the end, and its characteristics permeate the whole work. The short-long, short-long rhythm of the theme and its wide melodic leaps are transformed in varying proportions to capture the character of each tableau. The whole work is led by the limbs, torso and lute of Apollo.

Symphony No. 4 Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), like many other composers, began his career in the field of his parents' choice, in this case as a government clerk. At 23 he abandoned his post and entered the Conservatory of St. Petersburg, and became a composer and teacher. He married an adoring Conservatory student, but found he could not abide being married. In despair he waded into the icy Moscow River, and subsequently suffered a near-breakdown. The marriage ended. Then Madame von

Meck, a wealthy widow and champion of Tchaikovsky's music, saved him by providing money for him to compose for the rest of his life. The result, both out of despair and gratitude, was the Symphony No. 4, which was dedicated to Mme. von Meck.

While Tchaikovsky says about the fourth symphony that it is a confession of the soul that is beyond words, he yet suggests a psychological subtext.

The opening brass call of the first movement is fate; "It is the Damoclean sword, that hangs over our heads in unremitting spiritual torment." Then, as the music proceeds and "our despair grows even stronger, we try to turn from reality and to sink into the illusion of dreams...Here at last is happiness!...But no, this was only a mirage, and we awaken once more to the call of fate." The contrasting moods of fate, despair and dream-happiness are clearly manifested in the primary themes of the movement.

Tchaikovsky is celebrated for his beautiful, romantic themes, his brilliant orchestration, and his long, climactic lines. All this is in evidence here, for example in the lovely opening theme of the second movement, the unusual orchestration of the third movement, and the long, building lines of the first movement. But to me the real depth of Tchaikovsky's music comes from his rhythmic complexities and his sophisticated use of counterpoint, that is, of having different melodic lines occur at the same time. The first movement is a good place to witness these qualities.

The counterpoint between the themes and accompanimental figures in the first movement suggests a composer who makes every detail relevant. The main theme is chromatic and descending. When the accompaniment is not accented chords in rhythmic contrast to the theme's rhythm, it is a descending chromatic scale, taken from the fabric of the theme. After the first theme is over the clarinets and flutes begin doing quick, dance-like movements. This melody turns out to be not the second theme, but the accompaniment to the second theme, which occurs in the lower strings a few bars later. When the main theme returns, it builds to a climax, and its rhythm at this point then becomes the accompaniment to the

next, "closing" theme in the strings. Late in the movement, the fate theme occurs with an inversion of the main theme. This kind of interplay also takes place in the other movements, for example in the third movement where the brass and woodwind themes are superimposed. It gives the whole composition a layered complexity and unity, and reveals an important aspect of Tchaikovsky's genius as a composer.

The second movement continues the melancholic strain, but the unusual third, with its pizzicato

(plucked) strings, moves into a lighter frame of mind. The fourth movement continues this direction away from self-preoccupation; "it is not right for a man to be wrapped up forever within his own sufferings." The music moves from the self to the world. It is "a picture of a folk-holiday, see how it feels to be jolly. Scarcely have you forgotten yourself before untiring Fate again announces its approach. The other children of men are not concerned with you. Rejoice in the happiness of others, and you can still live."

Program notes by Huntley Beyer

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by Johann Sebastian Bach

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7:00 pm

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