

# MAGNIFICENT STRINGS

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2008 – 3:00 PM  
FIRST FREE METHODIST CHURCH

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE and SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS  
George Shangrow, conductor

## PROGRAM

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)  
Apollo: Ballet in Two Scenes (1928)

- I. Prologue: The Birth of Apollo
- II. Apollo's Variation
- III. Pas d'action: Apollo and the Muses
- IV-VII. Variations of Calliope, Polymnia, Terpsichore, and Apollo
- VIII. Pas de deux: Apollo and Terpsichore
- IX. Coda: Apollo and the Muses
- X. Apotheosis: Apollo and the Muses

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)  
Violin Concerto in e minor, Opus 64

*Allegro molto appassionato*  
*Andante -- (Allegretto non troppo)*  
*Allegro molto vivace*  
**Ron Patterson, violin**

– Intermission –

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)  
Flos Campi (1925)  
**Roxanna Patterson, viola**  
(see text inscriptions on next page)

PIOTR ILICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)  
Francesca da Rimini

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

## Flos Campi – Inscriptions before each section, from the Song of Solomon

1. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. . . Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick with love.
2. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
3. I sought him whom my soul loveth, but I found him not . . . 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him I am sick with love' . . . Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.
4. Behold his bed [palanquin], which is Solomon's, three score valiant men are about it . . . They all hold swords, being expert in war.
5. Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return, that we may look upon thee . . . How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter.
6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart.

### ORCHESTRA SEATTLE

#### VIOLIN

Susan Carpenter  
Lauren Daugherty  
Dean Drescher  
Lisa Heckathorn  
Sue Herring  
Jason Hershey  
Emmy Hoech  
Fritz Klein\*  
Pam Kummert  
Mark Lutz  
Gregor Nitsche  
Stephen Provine\*\*  
Elizabeth Robertson  
Theo Schaad  
Janet Showalter  
Kenna Smith-Shangrow

#### VIOLA

Deborah Daoust  
Audrey Don  
Jim Lurie  
Katherine McWilliams\*

### SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

#### SOPRANO

Erika Chang  
Crissa Cugini  
Kyla DeRemer  
Cinda Freece  
Kiki Hood  
Kaye Kofford  
Jill Kraakmo  
Peggy Kurtz  
Jana Music  
Nancy Shasteen  
Melissa Thirloway  
Lila Woodruff May  
Pat Vetterlein

Robert Shangrow  
Ella Wallace

#### CELLO

Peter Ellis  
Patricia Lyon  
Annie Roberts  
Valerie Ross  
Katie Sauter  
Messick  
La Verne Sheu  
Matthew Wyant\*

#### STRING BASS

Jo Hansen\*  
Ericka Kendall  
Kevin McCarthy  
Steve Messick

#### FLUTE/PICCOLO

Jenna Calixto  
Shari Müller-Ho\*  
Melissa Underhill

#### OBOE/ENGLISH HORN

David Barnes\*  
Alicia Hall  
Taina Karr

#### CLARINET

Alan Lawrence  
Steve Noffsinger

#### BASSOON

Jeff Eldridge  
Judith Lawrence\*

#### HORN

Don Crevie\*  
Laurie Heidt  
Jim Hendrickson\*  
Matthew Kruse

#### TRUMPET

David Cole  
Rabi Lahiri  
George Moffat  
Janet Young\*

#### TROMBONE

Moc Escobedo\*  
Scott Higbee  
David Holmes

#### TUBA

David Brewer

#### HARP

Naomi Kato

#### CELESTA

Andrew Kohler

#### PERCUSSION/ TIMPANI

David Brooks  
Kathie Flood  
Andrew Kohler  
Dan Oie\*

\* *principal*

\*\* *concertmaster*

#### TENOR

Ronald Carson  
Doug Kofford  
Jon Lange  
Timothy Lunde  
Tom Nesbitt  
Vic Royer  
Jerry Sams

#### BASS

Stephen Brady  
Andrew Danilchik  
Dennis Moore  
Jeff Thirloway  
Richard Wyckoff

## PROGRAM NOTES

### IGOR STRAVINSKY

Born Oranienbaum, Russia, June 17, 1882; died New York City, April 6, 1971

#### Apollon musagète

Over the span of his nearly eighty-nine year life, Igor Stravinsky mastered more distinct styles of composition than perhaps any other composer in the canon. As the son of distinguished opera baritone Fyodor Stravinsky, young Igor was raised in a musical household but discouraged from pursuing a musical career, although he was allowed piano lessons. It was not until the death of his father, when Igor was twenty years old, that the talented young man's compositional career began in earnest. Through his own initiative (and considerable perseverance) Stravinsky became the student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, a master of orchestral technique and a pioneer in Russian nationalist music. It was under this influence that Stravinsky wrote his celebrated "Russian" works, but later on Stravinsky explored different styles of composition ranging from neoclassicism to serialism, and throughout his life was equally comfortable writing in musical genres ranging from opera to chamber music to solo piano works.

In 1927, Stravinsky received a commission from the Library of Congress to write a ballet for its Music Room. The composer previously had been forced to abandon the elaborate orchestras of his pre-war works such as *The Rite of Spring* by limitations imposed by the War, and had written several successful works with smaller ensembles. (It is for this reason that the ballet *Les Noces* is scored for four pianos and percussion instruments rather than for giant orchestral forces, an example of great innovation borne of necessity.) For the Library of Congress composition, Stravinsky thus used only a moderately sized string ensemble, an unusual scoring for this composer who was so fond of percussion and woodwind sonorities. For subject matter he turned to Apollo and the Muses.

As Robert Greenberg has noted, it is unsurprising that the conclusion of the First World War saw the advent of neoclassicism. After the nightmare of the War it seemed better to retreat to older themes, removed from that horror. This trend is apparent in such works as Arthur Honegger's *Antigone* of 1926, based on Sophocles's play, and the lifelong fascination with medievalism, fairy tales, and antiquity that characterized the work of (the admittedly solipsistic) Carl Orff, who at the age of twenty-two had survived of a World War I trench cave-in that killed many of his comrades.

Stravinsky's interest in neoclassicism began with a commission from Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of the Ballets Russes who had given Stravinsky his fame by commissioning *The Firebird* in 1910. In 1919, a year after Armistice, Diaghilev asked Stravinsky to rework the music of Giovanni Pergolesi's *Pulcinella*, a commedia dell'arte from the first half of the eighteenth century. Between 1922 and 1923 Stravinsky wrote his Octet for wind instruments, another stylistically neoclassical work, and in 1927 (the year of the Library of Congress commission) he wrote *Oedipus Rex*, using a Latin libretto to retell the ancient Greek story. Stravinsky himself said that with his neoclassical works he continued to explore new music but "attached it to the very tradition [he was] so busily, outgrowing a decade before," and thus distrusted "neoclassicism" as an oversimplified term.

The music for *Apollon musagète* was completed in January, 1928, although Stravinsky (as was his wont) revised the score in 1947. For the world premiere in Washington, D.C. on April 27, Adolf Bolm provided the choreography and danced the title role. More significant, however, was the Paris premiere on the following June 12, which drew considerable attention as the first Stravinsky ballet that Diaghilev had produced in five years. (Incidentally, it was Diaghilev who simplified the title to *Apollo*.) This performance used choreography by Georges Balanchine, with which the composer expressed considerable satisfaction. Stephen Walsh describes the event in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

"*Apollo* must have startled a Paris audience that still, in spite of everything, thought of Stravinsky as the composer of *The Rite of Spring*...Here all violence, abrasiveness and even dramatic insistence are stilled, and instead the work coolly and mellifluously depicts the birth and apotheosis of the god of formal perfection...several critics saw it rightly as a defining moment in Stravinsky's recent work."

The ballet is divided into two tableaux, the second of which is the main body of the work, divided into several smaller sections, although all of the music is played continuously. The first, shorter tableau, which Stravinsky describes as a prologue, depicts Apollo's birth. The curtain is raised and Apollo comes to earth, shortly after which two goddesses appear. This first section is characterized by dotted rhythms, which recur throughout the work and contribute to the music's stately elegance.

The scene changes and the second tableau begins with the newly born Apollo alone onstage. By beginning Apollo's dance with only a solo violin, Stravinsky musically depicts the nascent god, initially aware only of himself but emerging into the world as the other instruments enter. At the end of Apollo's first scene three Muses enter. In classical Greek mythology, Apollo (as Stravinsky's title reflects) is the leader of the Muses and the god of music and poetry: a fitting subject for a musical composition. In Stravinsky's ballet, Apollo is joined by Calliope, the chief of the Muses, and, appropriately, two Muses of musical form, Polyhymnia and Terpsichore.

After the initial dance with the god and all three Muses, each of the characters in turn has a "variation," beginning with brief lively dances from Calliope, Polyhymnia, and Terpsichore, respectively. Apollo himself then has a solemn dance to music punctuated by magisterial chords from the full ensemble. This is followed by a Pas

de Deux danced by Apollo and Terpsichore, featuring the ballet's most lyrical music, suggesting that Stravinsky may have viewed this dance as a love duet, with directions for the orchestra to play expressively and with grace. In the upbeat coda, the four dancers join together for a spirited culmination. With abrupt shifts of mood and changing meters (a favorite Stravinsky device), this is the most playful section of the piece.

By definition the coda of a musical composition is an additional section that functions as a conclusion, and so it is somewhat surprising that Stravinsky follows his Coda with yet another movement, the Apotheosis of Apollo. By placing it after the Coda, Stravinsky effectively places Apollo's ascension outside the main action of the ballet. The Apotheosis opens with an abrupt chord from the higher strings that the listener expects to be part of an E major harmony (the key in which the previous section has ended), but the quiet response from cellos and contrabasses establishes instead the relative C-sharp minor. After a disquieting opening of powerful chords, the dotted rhythms from the beginning of the piece return, stated in the first violins and half of the cellos strikingly spaced two octaves apart, above a hushed trembling in the second violins and violas replete with subtle harmonic clashes. As the dotted figures move upward in register, Stravinsky depicts the god's slow and majestic ascent. The tremolos of the inner voices hover around the pitch of F-sharp, cyclically moving up and down by half-step, until finally resting on a mysterious B minor chord that fades away in quiet awe.

-Notes by Andrew Kohler

## SOLO ARTISTS

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Violinist **Ronald Patterson** has been the Professor of Violin at the University of Washington School of Music since 1999. He is the violinist in Duo Patterson and Concertmaster of the New Hampshire Music Festival Orchestra. He was a student of Jascha Heifetz, Eudice Shapiro and Manuel Compinsky.

Mr. Patterson has concertized extensively in the United States and Europe since the age of 11, performing 45 works (including 6 world premieres) in more than 150 solo performances with orchestras such as the Prague Chamber Orchestra in Prague, the MDR in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, UNESCO in Paris, REI Milan, the Dusseldorf Symphony, NY Cosmopolitan Orchestra, Denver Symphony, Austin Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Boston "Pops", Houston Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Duisberg Symphony and the Monte Carlo Philharmonic in Monaco, Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland and the United States. He has been acclaimed for his "skill, authority and imagination" by the New York Times.

From 1965 to 1999, he was Concertmaster of the Monte-Carlo, Houston, Denver, and Miami symphonies, St. Louis Little Symphony and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He was a founder and Associate Professor of the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University (Houston, 1974-1979). Assistant Professor at Washington University (St. Louis, 1967-1971), as well as on the faculty of Stetson University (Florida, 1975-1979), MacMurray College (Illinois, 1966) and the University of Miami (Florida, 1965).

Mr. Patterson has recorded for CRI, ERATO, ORION, VOX, Virgin Classics, Serenus, Philips, EMI, and Ante Aeternum Records (with a new 2004 Duo Patterson release of "Czech Mates"). A five time First Prize Winner of the Coleman Chamber Music Competition, he has performed chamber music with some of the greatest musicians of our day, including Jascha Heifetz, Gregor Piatigorsky and Henryk Szeryng. In 1998 he was named Officier de l'Ordre du Merite Culturel, one of the Principality of Monaco's highest honors.

Violist **Roxanna Patterson** began her professional career at age 16 as a member of the Fort Worth Symphony and the Fort Worth Opera Orchestras. She later attended the Shepherd School of Music (Rice University) and played in the Houston Symphony, Houston Opera Orchestra and served as Concertmaster of the Houston Ballet Orchestra. Her teachers included Ron Patterson, Eudice Shapiro, Wayne Crouse and Karen Tuttle.

In 1979 she moved to Monte Carlo with her husband, Concertmaster Ron Patterson. There she changed from violin to viola and the couple formed the unique violin/viola ensemble Duo Patterson. A chamber music enthusiast, Roxanna has performed extensively in this capacity, recording for Ante Aeternum Records (with a new 2004 Duo Patterson release of "Czech Mates"), CRI, Centaur and VOX labels, and appeared on European and American television.

Roxanna has appeared in recital and as soloist with orchestras in France, Italy, Germany, England, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and the U.S. She has performed in the festivals of Aspen, Marrowstone, Round Top, Flaine and Rasigere, France. In 1984 she received the first Special Award from the Princess Grace Foundation and was recently decorated by Prince Rainier of Monaco with Chevalier de l'Ordre du Merite Culturel. She is Principal Viola of the New Hampshire Music Festival, viola coach of the Seattle Youth Symphony, teaches privately in Seattle and is active in the film and computer game recording industry.

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Born Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; died Leipzig, November 4, 1847

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64

The work is scored for solo violin and an orchestra of pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, timpani, and strings. The autographed score is dated September 16, 1844, and the first performance was given in Leipzig on March 13, 1845, with Niels Gade conducting and Ferdinand David as soloist.

Prolific as well as extremely precocious, Felix Mendelssohn's fabulous gifts as a composer, conductor and pianist made him the most successful musician of the 19th century. He experienced few of the personal tragedies, career vagaries, financial difficulties, and physical ailments that seemed to beset most composers. It may well be, however, that his ceaseless efforts to meet the musical demands of his public contributed to his early death. He wrote exquisite melodies, and made skillful use of orchestral color and of extra-musical elements having literary, artistic, historical, geographical, or emotional associations. His dramatic talents are evident in his oratorios. He combined these romantic elements with the economy of means, emotional restraint, refinement, sensitivity, and clear formal structures of the classical period to produce a highly engaging personal style of music writing that still captivates audiences today.

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was born into a distinguished intellectual and artistic family. An astonishingly gifted musical prodigy whose natural talent probably surpassed even Mozart's, Mendelssohn grew up in Berlin amid a privileged and cultured circle of family and friends. He studied violin and piano while a very young child, painted, and demonstrated significant linguistic gifts as well. He made his public debut as a pianist in 1818 at the age of nine, wrote his first piece of music at age eleven, and at seventeen, composed an enduring masterpiece, the overture to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1826, he entered the University of Berlin, where he studied for three years, and in 1829, at the age of 20, he made the first of ten appearances in London, conducting his first symphony. That same year, he also conducted the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* given since that composer's death. A highly sought-after conductor and music organizer in Leipzig, Mendelssohn founded and directed the city's conservatory of music, and conducted the famed Gewandhaus Orchestra with great success, popularizing the works of many undeservedly neglected composers.

As the most prominent musician of his day in the German states, England, and Austria, Mendelssohn toured, guest conducted, organized music festivals, and composed constantly, producing a wealth of dramatic, vocal, choral, orchestral, chamber, piano, and other music. In 1841, he became director of the Music Section of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. He was required not only to supervise and conduct a large variety of programs, but also to compose upon royal demand. By the end of 1844, unhappiness and exhaustion began to affect his health, and he retired from all official duties. By September of 1845, however, he had recuperated sufficiently to return to Leipzig, where he plunged again into a maelstrom of conducting, composing, piano and composition teaching at the conservatory, editing, and performing on the piano and organ.

When his beloved older sister, Fanny, also an excellent pianist and composer, and always his closest friend and confidante, died suddenly on May 14, 1847, Mendelssohn's own heart and health broke also. Hoping to recover from his grief and illness, he traveled to Switzerland, where, as a talented painter and draftsman, he produced watercolors and drawings of the Swiss landscape. On September 7, he returned to Leipzig, and then went to Berlin to supervise an upcoming performance of his oratorio, *Elijah*. It is said that while in Berlin he was taken to "the room where his sister was attacked by the fit of which she died. One of his *Walpurgisnacht* Choruses still remained at the piano open at the page she had been playing. Nothing had been moved since her death, either in this room or the one where she died. They showed him both. He was excessively agitated, his grief burst out afresh, or more even than before. He told the King that it was impossible for him to superintend *Elijah*, and he returned to Leipzig." He succumbed to a stroke on November 4, 1847, at the age of 38.

In July of 1838 Mendelssohn wrote to his friend, Ferdinand David, soloist and Konzertmeister of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, of which Mendelssohn was the conductor: "I would like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor is running through my head, and the beginning does not leave me in peace." The composer relied heavily on David's advice and assistance while he worked on this concerto over the course of the next six years, and the work was premiered in March of 1845 with the Danish composer, Niels Gade, conducting (Mendelssohn was ill), and with David as soloist. It was successful at once, and is now considered one of the finest and most influential violin concerti ever written. The composition is both technically challenging (it continues to be an essential element of all aspiring concert violinists' repertoire), and dearly loved by listeners because of its emotional expressiveness and its delightful tunefulness.

The concerto consists of three movements, each one based on two contrasting themes, in the customary fast-slow-fast arrangement, but it was innovative in several respects. First, instead of the usual lengthy orchestral opening, we hear the almost instant introduction by the solo violin of the wistful melody

in E minor that haunted its composer, and whose initial repeated-note figure reappears in various guises throughout the concerto. Second, the violin soloist accompanies the playing of thematic material by the orchestra, as in the final section of the first movement. Third, Mendelssohn wrote out the first movement's cadenza and placed it before the reappearance of the movement's initial theme in the movement's closing section, rather than positioning this solo virtuoso passage just before the end of the movement and allowing the soloist to improvise it. Fourth, Mendelssohn precluded any disruptive audience applause between the movements by constructing musical bridges between them: the bassoon sustains its note at the end of the first movement before rising a half-step to introduce the key of the soaring, singing second movement, and the concerto's effervescent finale is linked to the second movement by a brief transitional passage for solo violin and strings in which echoes of the work's opening theme can be heard. The third movement opens with a trumpet fanfare presenting the repeated-note figure on which a secondary theme of the movement's middle section is based. This leads to the airy, lightly-leaping passage work (reminiscent of the sprightly music of Mendelssohn's Overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream") that characterizes the concerto's closing movement.

## **RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**

**Born Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, October 12, 1872; died London, August 26, 1958**

**Flos Campi: Suite for Solo Viola, Small Chorus, and Small Orchestra**

The score calls for flute (doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, harp, celesta, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tabor, twelve violins, four violas, four cellos, two basses, and a small eight-part wordless chorus. Written in 1925, the work was premiered at Queens Hall in London on October 10 of that year with Sir Henry Wood on the podium and the famous violist Lionel Tertis as soloist.

The music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, probably the most distinguished and influential English composer of the 20th century, and a conductor, teacher, writer, lecturer, and mentor to many younger musicians, did much to establish a British national musical style. The son of a churchman, Ralph began to study violin, piano, and other instruments at an early age. He was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Royal College of Music in London, and counted among his teachers two British composers who contributed much to the 20th-century revival of British music, Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. Vaughan Williams also studied in Berlin (1897-98) with the German composer Max Bruch, and in Paris (1909) with the Impressionistic French composer Maurice Ravel. Beginning in about 1903, Vaughan Williams collected English folk songs, making arrangements of them and incorporating their rhythms, scales, and melodic shapes into his own music. English compositions of the 17th century and English hymnody also exercised powerful influences on his musical language. He served as music editor for the English Hymnal (1906), and wrote a number of hymn tunes of his own. After artillery service in World War I, he became professor of composition at the Royal College of Music. He was always deeply interested in the English choral tradition, conducting local choruses at the Leith Hill Music Festival from 1909 to 1953 and composing choral works for such festivals.

Vaughan Williams' many and varied works include nine symphonies, five operas, film music, ballet and stage music, several song cycles, church music, works for chorus and orchestra, and even a tuba concerto and a romance for harmonica and strings! His best-known compositions include nine symphonies, the Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis for double string orchestra, The Lark Ascending for solo violin and orchestra, the operas The Pilgrim's Progress and Sir John in Love, and Job: A Masque for Dancing. The Managing and Artistic Director of the English Music Festival, described Vaughan Williams as "one of the truly outstanding composers of his or any age. One who had all the techniques one could wish for; who could experiment with the best of them; who rejuvenated a nation's musical life; who preserved its musical heritage; and who remained modest and unassuming throughout. This, of course, was part of his greatness." The composer died in his sleep in London two months before his 86th birthday, leaving as his legacy compositions that somehow not only exude the essence of "Englishness," but also exhibit a timeless, visionary quality that uplifts the hearts of his hearers everywhere.

**Flos Campi**, (Latin for "Flower of the Field"), one of its composer's most exotic and atmospheric scores, consists of six sections, each prefaced with a Latin quotation from the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament. This ancient erotic poem was and is often interpreted as a religious allegory depicting the love between Christ and His Church, but Vaughan Williams took it as one of literature's great love epics, and, influenced by his teacher Ravel, he clothed the quotations with the most colorful and unashamedly voluptuous of musical draperies!

The unusual work initially baffled many of Vaughan Williams' friends and admirers, including the composer Gustav Holst, who said that he "couldn't get hold of it," and it is said that some derisive orchestral players called it "Camp Flossie!" In a program note for a 1927 performance, the composer himself admitted that "The title Flos

Campi was taken by some to connote an atmosphere of 'buttercups and daisies. . .'" The suite is, however, a work of wide-ranging emotion that was vital to Vaughan Williams' artistic development, a masterpiece in its own right that provides a foretaste of the experimental sonorities that characterized the compositions of his later years. The suite's immediate appeal is derived from its highly colorful tonal palette, while its structural integrity comes from Vaughan Williams' great gift for melody and his subtle transformation of one tune into another throughout the work.

The sensuously-orchestrated suite as whole has an oriental aura befitting the court of Solomon, where the languishing lover sings with the voice of the viola, given music by Vaughan Williams that is particularly suited to its rich and resonant tone quality. (Vaughan Williams himself played the viola, "an instrument he knew well and loved," according to his second wife, but though his family did not consider the viola an instrument worthy of serious study, and he therefore turned to the organ, the composer never lost his affection for the viola.)

The first movement opens with a dialogue in two tonalities between the oboe and viola; shortly after, the strings begin to throb with the soloist's lovelorn longings, which they soon share with the wordless chorus (employed throughout the work as a source of additional orchestral color). In the second movement, the pastel hues and gentle murmurs of spring accompany the lover as he joins his voice to those of awakening Nature. At the beginning of the third movement, the unaccompanied viola ponders the suite's opening theme, and as the lover laments the absence of the beloved, the voices join in increasingly impassioned cries of loneliness and desire. The lover's entrance to a guarded bedchamber is accompanied, as the fourth movement begins, by a march played by the woodwinds as a counter-theme to the viola's ceremonial dance. The themes of the march and the dance are combined, the chorus becomes part of the rising ecstasy, and as the lovers embrace, the chorus celebrates their union in four climactic measures leading into the fifth and most passionate movement. The lovers revel in the joy of consummation, but seem to experience some uncertainty and even trepidation—will they again experience separation? As the sixth movement opens, however, the lovers' trust in one another is affirmed; the viola introduces the almost hymn-like theme of fulfillment around which is woven a shimmering, multi-layered sonic tapestry before the aching oboe-violita duet that begins the suite reappears. The fulfillment theme, however, sets a seal upon the work as the viola and the voices drift softly into silence.

## **PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

**Born Kamsko-Votkinsk, May 7, 1840; died St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893**

**Francesca da Rimini: Fantasy after Dante, Op. 32**

Scored for 3 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 cornets, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, bass drum, and tam-tam, the work was written in the autumn of 1876 and was first performed in Moscow on March 9, 1877, with Nicholas Rubinstein conducting.

"He was the most Russian of us all!" said Igor Stravinsky of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the melancholy "Romantic" composer of memorable works in nearly every musical genre. Tchaikovsky, whose symphonies and ballets remain among the most popular of all time, was a member of the large family of a mining engineer. Having begun piano studies as a very young child, Piotr soon demonstrated extraordinary intellectual and musical gifts and unusually high emotional sensitivity. He was sent away at age 10 to the aristocratic School of Jurisprudence at St. Petersburg; his parting from his mother was traumatic, and her death from cholera when Piotr was 14 was even more devastating, but that event might have impelled him to find comfort in music. At 19 he took a minor law post at the Ministry of Justice, where he remained for four years even as he became increasingly active in music. In 1863 he entered the Conservatory, three years later moving to Moscow and teaching harmony at the new conservatory there.

By 1874, Tchaikovsky had won recognition with his Second Symphony, but when he returned home in 1876 after a journey west, he found himself in the depths of depression, probably because he was unable to deal with his homosexuality. At the end of the year, however, he was lifted from his despair when he was contacted by a wealthy widow, Nadezhda von Meck, who admired his music and was eager and able to provide him with financial security; she became his benefactress and they corresponded voluminously and intimately for 14 years, but agreed never to meet.

"Truly there would be reason to go mad were it not for music," Tchaikovsky once observed, and he nearly lost his sanity despite his music! He decided that marriage might alleviate his sexual distress, and in 1877, when pursued by a young woman student who was passionate about him and his music, the composer, after initially rejecting her, suddenly suggested marriage. Reduced, however, in a matter of weeks to a state of nervous collapse, he fled from this disastrous situation, attempted suicide by wading into an icy river, was rescued, and went abroad to recover his health. From 1878-85, his existence was a miserable one: he resigned from the

conservatory and, tormented by his sexuality, was unable to write music of much emotional power, so he traveled abroad, conducting and receiving many accolades. The last eight years of his life, however, saw the composition of one of the world's most popular ballets, *Nutcracker*, and in 1891 he conducted some of his own works as part of Carnegie Hall's opening ceremonies. During 1893 he worked on his Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique*, which dealt with passion, love, disappointment, and death; indeed, within nine days of the symphony's premiere, the 53-year-old composer was dead, officially of cholera contracted after recklessly drinking a glass of unboiled water. Some verbal evidence has indicated that, as punishment for his sexual preferences, Tchaikovsky underwent a "trial" by a "court of honor" from the School of Jurisprudence that decreed that he must commit suicide, but the truth about his demise may never be known.

In 1875, Tchaikovsky considered basing an opera on the tragic story of the handsome Paolo and the beautiful Francesca, young lovers who were contemporaries of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, and who were killed in 1285 by Paolo's ugly, deformed, and jealous older brother, to whom Francesca had been married by proxy under false pretenses. This story is the subject of the most famous episode in Dante's epic poem, the *Divine Comedy*, written between 1308 and his death in 1321. Tchaikovsky was initially interested in a libretto he was offered, but abandoned the idea of composing an opera when the librettist tried to convince him to write the work in the style of a Wagnerian music drama. Tchaikovsky's brother Modest suggested, however, that Francesca's story would be an excellent subject for a symphonic work. In August of 1876, having traveled to Vichy on medical advice to "take the waters," Tchaikovsky was journeying by train to Paris when he reread the tale of Francesca and Paolo in Canto V of the first section of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Inferno*. The composer, deeply impressed both by Dante's verses and by Gustave Dore's illustrations, decided to follow his brother's advice and compose a "a symphonic fantasy." He began work a few weeks after his return from hearing Wagner's Ring cycle in Bayreuth, and was able to finish the composition and orchestration in about six weeks. He wrote to Modest, "I have worked on it con amore, and I believe my love has been successful." At its premiere in Moscow in March of 1877, the work's warm reception confirmed his belief.

As a preface to the score of **Francesca da Rimini**, Tchaikovsky wrote: "Dante enters Hell's Second Circle. There he meets the souls of those who in their lifetime abandoned themselves to sensual pleasure, and whose punishment consists in being exposed to raging tempests in eternal darkness, just as they succumbed in life to tempests of sensual lust. Among those tortured ones he recognizes Francesca da Rimini, who tells her story: 'There is no greater misery than to remember happy days in times of wretchedness, and this your Teacher knows; but if you have such a great desire to learn the first root of our love, I shall do it as one who weeps and tells. We read one day for pleasure of Lancelot, how Love enslaved him. We were alone, and without any suspicion. Time and again that reading drew our eyes together and drained the color from our faces; but it was one moment alone that overcame us—when, reading of the desired smile being kissed by so great a lover, he, who will never be parted from me, kissed my mouth all trembling. . . . That day we read no more.' While the one spirit thus related, the other so wept that from pity I fainted away, as if I were dying, and fell, just as a dead body falls."

Tchaikovsky wanted the following titles to be included in the program notes at performances of his fantasy: "I. Introduction: The gateway to the *Inferno* ("Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!"). Tortures and agonies of the condemned. II. Francesca tells the story of her tragic love for Paolo. III. The turmoil of Hades. Conclusion." The fantasy is a large three-part structure whose ominous opening is marked by a menacing three-note brass motif. Tchaikovsky sets a hellish scene indeed: amid percussion-lashed tempests of wildly whirling chromatic scales and screeching dissonances, the agonized cries and groans of the damned, punctuated by woodwind lightning stabs, pierce the gloom. At length the piteous spirit of Francesca, locked forever with Paolo in an embrace devoid of any possibility of love's consummation, emerges with a change of key and mood. A solo clarinet (Francesca herself?) introduces a broad, yearning melody played by the violins, after which first the English horn and then the oboe tell Francesca's heartbreaking tale via an anxious, agitated melody broken by the sighs of the harp. Francesca's theme returns, the love music surges, the horns warn of the approach of the furious husband, the lovers are slain, and the raging chaos of Hades that opens the work returns to engulf the lovers, flogged by savage repeated chords, in its infernal darkness.

-Notes by Lorelette Knowles



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