



HARVARD RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

MUSIC DIRECTOR - FEDERICO CORTESE

FRIDAY MARCH 4
SANDERS THEATRE, 8 PM

STRAVINSKY
FIREBIRD SUITE

TCHAIKOVSKY
PIANO CONCERTO 1

Damon Meng '13, piano
2010 James Yannatos
Concerto Competition Winner

TCHAIKOVSKY
ROMEO & JULIET

conducted by
Nico Olarte-Hayes '11

HISTORY OF THE HRO



The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra (HRO) is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States. It traces its history back to the night of March 6, 1808, when six Harvard men first formed the Pierian Sodality, an organization dedicated to the consumption of brandy and cigars, as well as to the serenading of young ladies. Its midnight expeditions were not confined to Cambridge, but rather extended to Watertown, Brookline, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Boston – in short, wherever dwelt celebrated belles. Among the Sodality's other activities included the serenading of Harvard College President John Kirkland in 1819. According to a June 29, 1840 entry in the Sodality's record book, the group's late-night music-making antics earned them fame that "did wax exceedingly great, and did reach all the places round about Cambridge."

The early Pierians had so much spirit that in the 1830s, the Faculty of Harvard College publicly admonished the Sodality for absenting themselves from Cambridge for a whole night, serenading. Administration censure was so great, in fact, that in 1832 the Pierian Sodality was reduced to one man: Henry Gasset³⁴. According to a March 29, 1943 issue of *Time* magazine, Gasset held meetings with himself in his chair, paid himself dues regularly, played his flute in solitude and finally persuaded another flautist to join in duets. It seemed the Sodality was in danger of disappearing. Gradually, however, other members were elected, and the Sodality played on. The Sodality not only persisted, but also profoundly influenced the development of music in Cambridge and Boston over the next fifty years. In 1837, Sodality alumni formed the Harvard Musical Association with an aim to foster music at the college. The Harvard Glee Club and the Boston Symphony Orchestra both owe their existence to the early Pierians.

As a musical organization, the Pierians were also interested in performance. In 1860, shortly after Harvard President James Walker made Harvard the first institution to add music as a regular subject of study in the curriculum, the Pierian Sodality was given permission to "hire a hall and give a public concert, on condition that no tickets be sold." Thus began the performing career of the Pierians. They began to give regular concerts, and

rehearsed to prepare for them. Eventually, the orchestra's performances garnered enough attention to be reported in the *New York Times*, which wrote in 1891, "The Pierian Sodality is especially strong this year... containing some of the best musical talent of the university."

By the turn of the century, the Pierian Sodality could at last justly refer to itself as the Harvard University Orchestra. It had grown into a serious musical organization and had become the largest college orchestra in America. It deemed itself ready for its first out-of-state tour, the Centennial Tour of 1908. This took the Orchestra through New York state, and was so successful that other tours quickly followed. In 1921, the Sodality toured New York City, Providence, and even played in Washington DC's National Theatre for First Ladies Mrs. Warren Harding and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge. The orchestra gradually built an international reputation and played for many distinguished audiences in the country.

It was not until November 1936 that members of the Pierian Sodality finally condescended to assist the Radcliffe Orchestra in some of its larger concerts. Joint concerts became more frequent in the late thirties, and in 1942, the Pierians suggested that the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra be formed. Since the Sodality's membership was depleted during the years of World War II, and since the Radcliffe Orchestra lacked certain instruments, both groups benefited from the merger. Thus the men and women of Harvard and Radcliffe united in their music-making efforts, and the HRO as it is today was born.

It is said that around 1950, HRO stopped making history and started making music with a degree of seriousness never before seen at the university. The Orchestra continued to improve in quality and reputation as it took tours to Mexico (1962), Washington, DC (1966), and Canada (1972). It performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall and, in 1978, placed third in the Fifth Annual International Festival of Student Orchestras. The 1980s and 1990s saw tours to the Soviet Union (1984), Asia (1985 and 1988), Europe (1992), and Italy (1996). Most recently, HRO conducted successful tours of Brazil in 2000, Canada in 2004, and South Korea in 2008.

The Harvard Pierian Foundation, Inc.

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HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

203rd Season, 2010-2011

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concertmaster (Romeo & Juliet, Firebird)
Ariel Mitnick '13
concertmaster (Piano Concerto)
Victoria Bartlett '14
Julia Berg '14
David Bracher '11
Jeremy Stein Cushman '12
Benjamin Dobkin '12
Eric Lin '12
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Sydney Sawyier '13
Benjamin Sun '14
Saki Takahashi '11
Emily Wong '14
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principal
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Lawrence Chiou '14
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Aviva Hakanoglu '14
Nicola Harris '12
Yunsoo Kim '11
Alexis Medina '13
Ryan Murphy '14
Michelle Suh '14
Jonathan Tan '14
Arpi Tavit-Shatlyan '13
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VIOLA

Lucy Caplan '12
principal
Elizabeth Adams '10 †
Nora Murphy '12
Miriam Fogel '12
Brandon Jones '13

Norah Liang '14
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Theodoretus Breen '14
principal
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Zachary Nestel-Patt †
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piccolo

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PIANO

Benjamin Woo '13

† guest performer

The HRO's Tour to Cuba

— Summer 2011 —

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra is thrilled to announce that we have been approved for a performance license by the United States government to give a seven-day concert tour in Cuba this summer!

During the trip, the HRO will spend most of its time in Havana, with day trips to Pinar del Río and Matanzas. We will engage in many meaningful musical experiences, including collaborating with the Coro Nacional de Cuba to perform Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at the historic Teatro Amadeo Roldán. We are also excited about interacting with music students at Cuban universities and immersing ourselves in their musical traditions. Likewise, we intend to widely share our concerts, which will be free and open to the Cuban public. We hope that our tour will have a broad reach and are excited that the HRO is the orchestra making these important culturally diplomatic leaps. We are eager to serve as ambassadors of orchestral music in Cuba.

Students in the HRO are working hard to plan the tour, but we need the support of our families, friends, and alumni to ensure that each orchestra member has the opportunity to participate in this unique and meaningful experience. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the HRO this year. Checks may be written out to the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and sent to the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, Music Building, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138. If you have questions or comments about matching donations, corporate sponsorship, foundation giving, or anything else related to the tour, please contact Diana Tsen '11 at ysdtsen@fas.harvard.edu.

HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

— 203rd Season, 2010-2011 —



FEDERICO CORTESE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Friday, March 4, 2011, 8:00 P.M.
Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

Program

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Romeo and Juliet fantasy overture (1880)
Nico Olarte-Hayes '11, Assistant Conductor

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Firebird suite (1919)

- I. Introduction—The Firebird and its Dance—Variations of the Firebird
- II. The Princesses' Round Dance
- III. Infernal Dance of King Kastchei
- IV. Berceuce—Finale

~ Intermission ~

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B minor (1875)

- I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso
- II. Andantino semplice
- III. Allegro con fuoco

*Damon Meng '13, Piano **

**Winner of the 2010 James Yannatos Concerto Competition*



FEDERICO CORTESE

Conductor



From the moment of his debut in September 1998, stepping in at short notice to conduct Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in place

of an ailing Seiji Ozawa, Federico Cortese's work as Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was widely praised. Serving in that position from 1998-2003, Mr. Cortese led the BSO several times in Symphony Hall and at Tanglewood. His conducting of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at Symphony Hall was particularly heralded. Additionally, he has served as Music Director of the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras since 1999 and is currently Music Director of the New England String Ensemble and Associate Conductor of the Asian Youth Orchestra. Other appointments have included Music Coordinator (in lieu of Music Director) and Associate Conductor of the Spoleto Festival in Italy, Assistant Conductor to Daniele Gatti at the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and Assistant Conductor to Robert Spano at the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

Mr. Cortese has conducted operatic and symphonic engagements throughout the United States, Australia, and Europe. Recent engagements in the US include, among many others, conducting the Dallas and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras, San Antonio and New World Symphonies, and

the Louisville Orchestra; as well as many operatic productions including Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Boston Lyric Opera, Puccini's *La bohème* with Opera Theater of Saint Louis and at the Yale Opera program, and Previn's *Streetcar Named Desire* with the Washington National Opera. In Europe, his opera experience includes conducting productions of Verdi's *Il trovatore* in Parma, Italy as part of the Verdi Centennial Festival; Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Spoleto Festival in Italy; Niccolò Piccinni's *La bella verità* at the Teatro Comunale, Firenze, with the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; and a new production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki. Recent successes include guest conducting Britain's Opera North, BBC-Scottish Symphony, Slovenian Philharmonic, Oslo and Zagreb Philharmonics, and Göttingen Symphony Orchestra, to name just a few.

In Australia, he has conducted the Sydney and Tasmanian Symphonies, Australian Youth Orchestra, West Australia Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Orchestras, and a production of *Madama Butterfly* for Opera Australia in Melbourne.

Mr. Cortese studied composition and conducting at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome and at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna. In addition, he has been a conducting fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. In 2009, he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Harvard music department. In addition to music, Mr. Cortese studied literature, humanities, and law, earning a law degree from La Sapienza University in Rome.

NICO OLARTE - HAYES

Assistant Conductor



As a cellist, Nico Olarte-Hayes has given solo recitals at Lincoln Center, the Neue Galerie, and the Williams House in New

York City, in the Belz-Parker Artists Ascending Concert Series in Memphis, Tennessee, and at the Young Musicians Forum in Schenectady, New York, and has been featured on Live From Lincoln Center (PBS) and The Kennedy Center Honors (CBS) with violinists Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman. He has performed with Itzhak Perlman on numerous other occasions as well: multiple times in each of Carnegie Hall's three venues, in Sarasota's Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, and, most recently, at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. for the "Grand Opening" concert of The Kennedy Center Family Theater.

Nico's other chamber music engagements include performances with mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves in Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and with pianist Christopher O'Riley in Boston's Jordan Hall, broadcast on PBS and NPR, respectively. His tour of Japan was documented by Japan's Fuji TV and resulted in sold-out performances across the United States with recital partner, violinist Ryu Goto. In 2007, Nico was awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award for his accomplishments.

Nico began studying the cello at the age of six with pedagogue Cassia Harvey in Philadelphia. He continued his studies at the Juilliard Pre-College Division in New York, where his primary teachers were David Soyer and Harvey Shapiro, and at the Perlman Music Program, where he studied extensively with Ronald Leonard.

In recent years, Nico has begun to seriously pursue his passion for conducting, which he began studying while at Juilliard. He has studied with Larry Rachleff, Kenneth Kiesler, Hugh Wolff, and Harold Farberman, and has attended the International Conducting Workshop and Festival, the Conductors Retreat at Medomak, and the Conductors Institute at Bard College. At Harvard, as well as currently being Assistant Conductor of the HRO, he was previously Music Director of the Dunster House Opera Society, where he made his debut in 2010 conducting the company's fully staged production of Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring*.

A senior at Harvard College, Nico maintains his busy schedule as both cellist and conductor while working towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in physics (with a secondary concentration in music). Concurrently, he is a candidate for the Master of Music degree in cello performance at the New England Conservatory, where he studies with cellist Laurence Lesser through the Harvard/New England Conservatory Dual-Degree Program.



DAMON MENG

Piano



Born in China, Damon Yuqing Meng began his piano studies at age four and won his first competition at age six.

Shortly after, he moved to the US and became one of the youngest students ever to enter the Pre-College Division of The Juilliard School. He has since performed throughout the US, China, and Mexico.

Damon's recital debut at age nine and orchestral debut at age 12 with the New York Philharmonic were followed by invitations to China to perform with the Shanghai Youth Symphony Orchestra and Guangxi Symphony Orchestra. Additional orchestral engagements include performances with the Maryland Youth Symphony Orchestra, Little Orchestra Society in New York, and the China Opera and Dance Symphony Orchestra; Damon also won first prize in competitions that resulted in performances with the Juilliard Pre-College Chamber Orchestra, Juilliard Pre-College Symphony, Summit Symphony Orchestra in New Jersey, Montgomery Symphony Orchestra (Blount-Slawson Young Artists Competition), and Victoria Symphony in Texas (Kingsville International Isabel Scionti Piano Competition). He was awarded first prize in the 16th Annual International Young Artist Piano Competition, and in July 2007, became the First Prize Winner of the 13th Oberlin International Piano Competition and was the

subject of a nationally televised documentary produced by China Central Television.

Damon's commitment to bringing music to local and national audiences has been recognized by numerous institutions. After the Sichuan Earthquake in May of 2008, he organized a concert that raised over \$16,000 and was honored at the Chinese Consulate for his service. In 2007, Damon was named a Davidson Fellow in Washington D.C. by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development for his work on music education for youths. In his hometown in New Jersey, Damon was honored for his music commitments to the local community by the mayor with the creation of a "Yuqing Meng Day" on December 10. In addition, he received the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award and was subsequently featured on the National Public Radio program *From the Top*. Further accolades include the National Foundation for the Arts Award, and being named Elaine Ehlers Arts Scholar and Sokokis Institute Scholar in Mexico.

Damon currently studies with Wha Kyung Byun and is enrolled in the Harvard/New England Conservatory Dual-Degree Program. A former Honor Student at The Juilliard School, Damon has studied piano with Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky, Zitta Zohar, Olegna Fuschi, Ernest Barretta, and Richard Fabre. He has also studied composition with Dr. Andrew Thomas and chamber music with Constance Moore. Damon is a sophomore studying Economics and Government and has been involved with Model UN, the Harvard Crimson, and Harvard Association for US-China Relations.

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Tchaikovsky - Romeo and Juliet



Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, begun in 1869 and completed in 1880, is the primary product of Tchaikovsky's collaboration with composer Mily Balakirev, the progenitor of Russian nationalist music and the head of the Russian Musical Society at the time. In 1869, Tchaikovsky was a newly appointed Professor of Music Theory at the Moscow Conservatory and a young composer seeking wider recognition, while Balakirev was an established musical figure, leader of The Mighty Five, the group of nationalist composers Balakirev, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Alexander Borodin. Though Tchaikovsky was an independent-minded composer whose academic background set him apart from The Five, who eschewed the conservatism of academia, he greatly respected Balakirev and understood the political importance of their professional relationship.

In 1868, Tchaikovsky dedicated his symphonic poem *Fatum* to Balakirev, sending him a copy to conduct and asking for advice. Balakirev was highly critical of the piece but appreciated the dedication, writing:

Your *Fatum* has been performed [in St. Petersburg] reasonably well ... There wasn't much applause, probably because of the appalling cacophony at the end of the piece, which I don't like at all. It is not properly gestated, and seems to have been written in a very slapdash manner. The seams show, as does

all your clumsy stitching. Above all, the form itself just does not work. The whole thing is completely uncoordinated.... I am writing to you with complete frankness, being fully convinced that you won't go back on your intention of dedicating *Fatum* to me. Your dedication is precious to me as a sign of your sympathy towards me—and I feel a great weakness for you.

Tchaikovsky, though usually quite sensitive to criticism, accepted Balakirev's critique, and they continued to correspond, Tchaikovsky sending musical ideas and material to Balakirev, and Balakirev providing further criticism and advice. In 1869, Balakirev suggested that Tchaikovsky write a concert overture based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Tchaikovsky, a great admirer of Shakespeare's work and well acquainted with the play, began preliminary sketches.

The overture begins with a solemn evocation of Friar Laurence's cell—a quiet wind chorale that unfolds into a lyrical exchange of chromatic harmonies between winds and strings. Suspensions create rich sonorities that ebb and flow until a sudden *accelerando* interrupts the calm and the scene changes to the streets of Verona, where cymbal crashes and energetic explosions in the winds depict a sword fight between the Montagues and the Capulets. When the chaos subsides, the famous "love theme" is introduced, at



NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Tchaikovsky - Romeo and Juliet

first intimate and tender, then growing passionately, a throbbing undertone in the horns suggesting the heartbeats of Romeo and Juliet, beating in sync. However, it is not until the recapitulation, after a quick development section on the battle theme and the return of the original *Allegro giusto*, that the full potential of the second theme is realized. It returns, finally in the home key of D major, in *forte* and then *fortissimo*, rising to greater heights than before and with the entire orchestra taking part in an explosion of youthful passion. The overture then ends with a tempered funeral march that unites the melodies of Friar Laurence with the overture's second theme and that encapsulates the tragic beauty of Shakespeare's play, in which piety, love, and death are so closely intertwined.

Romeo and Juliet, titled a "fantasy overture" for its final publication in 1881, was Tchaikovsky's first great success and brought him international recognition from audiences

and musicians alike. Its union of emotive power and technical mastery won the respect of conductors such as Nikolai Rubenstein, Hans von Bülow, and Hans Richter, who would all go on to give important premieres of Tchaikovsky's work, and of The Mighty Five themselves, whose support would be invaluable throughout Tchaikovsky's career. Balakirev is said to have played it at the piano at every meeting of The Five, so many times that he had it memorized, and The Five regularly discussed the possibility of adding Tchaikovsky to their group. Its popularity has not waned since, and it is widely considered to be one of Tchaikovsky's masterpieces. After 130 years, audiences continue to be moved by its profound beauty and charmed by its youthful exuberance. It is among the most performed works of the symphonic repertoire, and it has infiltrated popular culture as few other pieces of art music have.

—Nico Olarte-Hayes '11

HRO'S FINAL CONCERT OF THE 203RD SEASON

Friday, April 29th & Saturday, April 30th, 2011

Adams – *On the Transmigration of Souls**

Beethoven – *Symphony No. 9*

In collaboration with the Harvard Holden Choirs

*Conducted by Andrew Clark, Director of Choral Activities

Concert begins at 8PM in Sanders Theatre | Tickets available at the Harvard Box Office | <http://www.boxoffice.harvard.edu> | 1350 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge, MA 02138 | Hours: 12pm-6pm Tuesday-Sunday | 617.496.2222

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Stravinsky - Firebird suite



In 1909, 27-year-old Igor Stravinsky's reputation as a composer was largely unremarkable. He was unknown in Europe; even in his native Russia, he was considered but one of Rimsky-Korsakov's gifted students. The composer had spent his twenties in St. Petersburg, composing pieces in the style of Glazunov and Tchaikovsky, and dutifully attending the ever more formulaic Russian Symphony concerts with his teacher and other favored pupils. Under the shadow of the self-congratulatory and conservative Rimsky-Korsakov, the young Stravinsky quite simply lacked rebelliousness.

However, 1909 marked a turning point in Stravinsky's career. His beloved teacher had passed away just a year earlier, and Stravinsky, though devastated, went on to work as an orchestral arranger for Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. Discouraged by Russia's domestic turmoil on the eve of World War I, Diaghilev had assembled the greatest dancers and choreographers from the Russian Imperial Ballet and had simply moved dance productions to Paris. There, *Ballets Russes* enjoyed a sensational first season, but was criticized by the Parisian press for lacking music as comparably novel and brilliant as the company's dance and design. Yet Diaghilev was hardly one to be deterred by criticism; he resolved to commission an original ballet score on the most exotic and fantastical Russian folktale he and his collaborators could think of: "Zhar'-ptitsa" — The Firebird. Diaghilev, however, did not have much luck with the coterie

of older and more established Russian composers. Tcherepnin, Glazunov, and Arkimenco all turned him down; Lyadov accepted the commission but was too neurotically self-critical to ever make substantial progress on the work. In a flash of daring, the frustrated Diaghilev finally handed the commission to his young and obscure orchestrator, Igor Stravinsky.

Stravinsky tackled his first major commission enthusiastically, halting all other projects to focus exclusively on *Firebird*. Though the commission was not confirmed until December of 1909, the young composer mailed the complete score to Paris by mid-April of 1910. The music proved to be indeed novel: at orchestra rehearsals, Stravinsky had to explain the music to the bewildered players, and during the first full rehearsal, the sonorities were so unexpected that dancers missed their entrances. But Diaghilev was deeply impressed with Stravinsky's work. "Mark him well," he told leading ballerina Tamara Karsavina during rehearsals, "he is a man on the eve of celebrity." Diaghilev was right: *Firebird* premiered at the Paris Opera on June 25, 1910 to critical acclaim, catapulting Stravinsky's international career. Claude Debussy was one of the first to rush backstage and congratulate the young composer following the premiere. For Diaghilev and *Ballets Russes*, Stravinsky would go on to compose *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*.

Firebird proved to be so enduringly popular that



NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Stravinsky - Firebird suite

Stravinsky went on to arrange several orchestral concert suites from the ballet score. Tonight, the HRO will perform the 20-minute 1919 suite.

Stravinsky opens this suite with the murky and enigmatic *Introduction*. Foreboding scales in muted low strings and aggressive trombone snarls delineate the darkly ominous castle of Kastchei the Deathless. But then, natural harmonics in the strings announce the presence of the Firebird by evoking the eerie rush of wings. In *The Firebird and its Dance and Variations of the Firebird*, Prince Ivan, lost at nightfall, finds himself in an enchanted garden and witnesses the striking dance of the Firebird. Amidst darting rhythms and ethereal colors from the high woodwinds, Ivan succeeds in capturing the Firebird; in return for her release, she gives him a magic feather with which he may summon her when needed of aid or protection.

In *The Princesses' Round Dance*, Prince Ivan finds himself in the garden of Kastchei's castle, where thirteen princesses dance the *khorovod*, a traditional Russian round dance. The theme of the princesses' *khorovod* is that of the folk tune "In the garden," which Rimsky-Korsakov had used in his own *Sinfonietta on Russian Themes*. The prince instantly falls in love with the most beautiful of the princesses, and learns that

they are held captive by Kastchei. Less fortunate knights have been turned into stone while attempting to save the Princesses. Meanwhile, Kastchei has locked away his soul in a secret place—he is invincible so long as his soul remains hidden.

The princesses disappear after performing their round dance, and Prince Ivan attempts to enter the castle. He is confronted by Kastchei and his minions in the electrifying *Infernal Dance of King Kastchei*; they struggle in an explosive dance built on rhythmic vitality and syncopations. Just as Kastchei is about to bewitch him, Prince Ivan summons the Firebird.

With the lulling and hypnotic *Berceuse*, a lullaby led by solo bassoon, the Firebird puts Kastchei and his retainers to sleep. Prince Ivan then finds Kastchei's soul in a buried egg and destroys it. A horn solo—bearing the majestic *khorovod* song, "By the gate a pine tree swayed"—heralds the *Finale*. The melody spreads through the orchestra as the princesses break free from Kastchei's enchantment, the petrified knights return to life, and the castle disappears to reveal a forest clearing flooded by sunlight. The Prince weds his Princess, and the piece ends in a magnificent flash of bell-tolling Russian splendor.

—MengRuo Yang '12

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NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Tchaikovsky - Piano Concerto No. 1



Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky composed his first piano concerto in his early thirties. As a young man, he was known only to a limited public and struggled to achieve financial independence. 1874 saw him mired in unwanted responsibilities: to make a living, Tchaikovsky taught at the Moscow conservatory and wrote music criticism for a local journal. But the young composer was eager to establish his name and devote his energies entirely to composition. And so he began working on a piano concerto that same year, hoping to further his reputation with the form that Mozart and Beethoven had used to display their own talents so well.

Having completed the score by December of 1874, Tchaikovsky brought the piece to his teacher and friend, the well-respected pianist Nikolai Rubinstein. Not an outstanding pianist himself, Tchaikovsky wanted Rubinstein's input on the technical suitability of his work. He also hoped that Rubinstein would premier the work and had consequently dedicated the concerto to his mentor. However, the young composer's plans turned into a complete disaster. Upon first hearing, Rubinstein dismissed the concerto as "worthless, unplayable, clumsy, badly written, and vulgar. Only two or three pages are worth preserving—the rest must be entirely rewritten." Tchaikovsky, already deeply insecure as a young man, afterwards wrote that he felt like "a maniac, a senseless hack who had come to submit his rubbish to an eminent musician."

But even in his insecurity Tchaikovsky was obstinate. Though bitterly disappointed, he told Rubinstein he would "not change a single note" and will "publish the work exactly as it is." The concerto eventually found a more receptive audience in Hans von Bülow, a German pianist who took the piece on tour and premiered it in America with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1875. The concerto proved to be enormously popular; audiences in Boston and New York enthusiastically demanded encores of the first and final movements. Even Rubinstein came to appreciate the piece, and would go on to champion the concerto with frequent performances later in his career.

The opening movement, *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso*, is lengthier than the two remaining movements combined. It opens with powerful horn calls interrupted by full orchestral chords. While the piano thunders away with massive chords, the first theme is carried sweepingly by the violins and cellos in D-flat major. After an unconventional cadenza, the first theme is reiterated in a grander setting, after which it is never heard again. The cadenza, set so early in the piece, is a surprise in terms of form, but the material that follows is more or less a full-scale sonata-allegro treatment of two themes. The piano, following a crescendo and pause, introduces the snapping second theme in B-flat minor, which is based on a folk tune Tchaikovsky heard sung by



NOTES ON THE MUSIC

Tchaikovsky - Piano Concerto No. 1

beggar-musicians at a Ukrainian street fair. The piano and woodwinds engage in a musical dialogue, and the clarinet then presents the lyrical third theme, which is answered by the violins. A recapitulation revisits these two themes in altered settings, as the oboe replaces the clarinet to carry the second theme. An energetic coda finally closes the movement.

While the first movement is formally lopsided and dramatic, the *Andantino semplice* is lovely in the elegance of its three-part ABA structure. It opens tenderly, with the strings whispering gentle *pizzicato* chords as a lilting flute solo descends over the orchestra. The piano takes over the main theme, trades it with the woodwinds, and passes it on to the cellos. A second theme, based on the French song, "Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire," provides a contrast to the first theme with its bold playfulness. The piano skips around, coyly chased by the orchestra until one loud bang sends both back to the languid first theme. This central *prestissimo*,

like the first movement cadenza, is unconventional and innovative; Bartók would later borrow this idea in the two "Nachtmusiken" of his piano concertos.

The *Allegro con fuoco*, like the second movement, favors a more stable formal structure: the classic rondo pattern in ABABA. The movement takes off with a robust and energetic piano theme reminiscent of a Cossack dance. The piano dominates the movement with crisp rhythmic figures before extending the invitation for a stomping orchestral response. A contrasting and lyrical second theme, carried by the violins, sweeps in above the virtuosic piano line, and the piano answers in response. The fiery first theme then makes a reappearance. The two themes struggle back and forth before an infamously difficult octave storm in the piano leads to a rousing orchestral *tutti* to close the piece.

—MengRuo Yang '12

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Kirchner - Music for Orchestra No.2
Chopin - Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Kendric Tam '12, piano)
Brahms - Symphony No. 3

December 4, 2009

Mozart - Symphony No. 35, "Haffner"
O'Connor - *Call of the Mockingbird*
Shostakovich - Symphony No. 5

April 18, 2008

Beethoven - *Lenore* Overture No. 3
Mahler - Symphony No. 5

March 7, 2008

Brahms - Tragic Overture (John Kaputsa '09, assistant conductor)
Gershwin - *An American in Paris*
Mahler - *Songs of a Wayfarer* (with John Kaputsa '09, baritone)
Bernstein - Dances from *West Side Story*

November 30, 2007

Harbison - Overture to *The Great Gatsby*
Dvorak - Cello Concerto (with Bong-Ihn Koh '08, cello)
Beethoven - Symphony No. 3

May 5, 2007

Mahler - Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection" (with the Harvard Holden Choirs; Kevin Leong as chorus director; Shadi Ebrahimi as soprano, Jamie Van Eyck as mezzo-soprano)

April 20, 2007

Mendelssohn - Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Brahms - Symphony No. 2

March 2, 2007

Smetana - Moldau (Aaron Kuan '09, assistant conductor)
Barber - Violin Concerto (with Ariel Jeong '07, violin)
Stravinsky - Firebird Suite

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Ives Three Places in New England, S.7, Version 2
Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Yuga Cohler '11,
music director



friday, november 19, 2010 | paine hall, 8pm

Ravel Pavane pour une Infante Défunte
T.B.D. Concerto Competition Winner
T.B.D. Composition Competition Winner
Stravinsky "Pulcinella" Suite

friday, march 25th, 2011 | sanders theatre, 8pm

Mendelssohn Overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
Tchaikovsky Concerto for Violin in D Major, Op. 35
Ryu Goto '11, violin
Brahms Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73



friday, april 22nd, 2011 | paine hall, 8pm

T.B.D. Music Director-Elect Piece
Copland Concerto for Clarinet in C Major, Op. 15
Jonathan Cohler '80, clarinet
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