

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**Robert Spano**, Music Director**Donald Runnicles**, Principal Guest Conductor

Delta Classical Series Concerts

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, February 2, 3 and 4, 2012, at 8 p.m.

Thomas Wilkins, Conductor

Gabriela Montero, Piano

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)*Ma mère l'oye* (Mother Goose) (1908)I. *Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant* (*Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty*)II. *Petit Poucet* (*Hop-o' My Thumb*)III. *Laideronnette, Impératrice des Pagodes*
(*Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodes*)IV. *Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête*
(*Conversations of Beauty and the Beast*)V. *Le jardin féerique* (*The Fairy Garden*)**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827)

Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 37 (1803)

I. *Allegro con brio*II. *Largo*III. *Rondo. Allegro*

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Opus 88 (1889)

I. *Allegro con brio*II. *Adagio*III. *Allegretto grazioso*IV. *Allegro ma non troppo*

“INSIDE THE MUSIC” preview of the concert, Thursday at 7 p.m., presented by Ken Meltzer, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Insider and Program Annotator.

The use of cameras or recording devices during the concert is strictly prohibited.

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

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Notes on the Program

By Ken Meltzer

Ma mère l'oye (1908)

MAURICE RAVEL was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937. The first performance of the original piano duet version of *Ma mère l'oye* took place on April 20, 1910, at the Paris Salle Gaveau. *Ma mère l'oye* is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, timpani, celeste, orchestra bells, bass drum, xylophone, triangle, cymbals, tam-tam, harp and strings. Approximate performance time is seventeen minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription performances: March 9 and 10, 1961, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most recent ASO Classical Subscription performances (Complete Ballet): February 22 and 24, 2008, Oliver Knussen, Conductor.

Maurice Ravel's *Ma mère l'oye* (*Mother Goose*), subtitled *Five Pieces for Children*, first appeared as a series of miniatures for piano four hands. Ravel composed the duets in 1908 as a surprise gift for Mimi and Jean, children of his dear friends, Ida and Jean Godebski. Ravel loved to play with young Mimi and Jean, and often delighted them with his animated readings of various *Mother Goose* tales.

Three years after composing the original piano work, Ravel orchestrated *Ma mère l'oye*. Finally, Ravel was commissioned to create a *Ma mère l'oye* ballet that received its premiere at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris on January 28, 1912. For the ballet, Ravel added a Prelude, another scene, and interludes connecting the various episodes.

Ravel noted: "(m)y intention of awakening the poetry of childhood in these pieces naturally led me to simplify my style and thin out my writing." Despite Ravel's typically self-effacing posture, there is nothing simple about the magical atmosphere and charm he masterfully conjures in these exquisite miniatures, particularly when heard in their orchestral guise.

This concert features Ravel's orchestration of the original five-movement work.

I. *Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant* (*Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty*) — Twenty bars of the most delicate music, featuring woodwinds and muted strings, set the stage for the remaining tales.

II. *Petit Poucet* (*Hop-o' My Thumb*) — In the preface to this movement, Ravel includes the following excerpt from the Perrault fairy tale:

He believed that he would easily find his way by means of the breadcrumbs that he had strewn wherever he had passed; but he was greatly surprised when he could not find a single crumb; the birds had come and eaten them all.

Muted violins trace Hop-o' My Thumb's footsteps in the forest, as the oboe sings a lovely tune. Ravel recreates the sounds of the ravenous birds through a masterful combination of strings and woodwinds.

III. *Laideronnette, Impératrice des Pagodes (Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodes)* — A beautiful princess is horribly transformed by an evil witch (later she is rescued by a prince). In his score, Ravel includes the following excerpt from the fairy tale:

She undressed and went into the bath. The Pagodas and Pagodines began to sing and play on instruments; some had theorbos made of walnut shells; some had violas made of almond shells, for they were obliged to proportion the instruments to their figure.

Ravel's fascination with Asian music is reflected in the use of pentatonic scales and sonorities that recall gamelan ensembles. Again, the music is of the utmost delicacy.

IV. *Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (Conversations of Beauty and the Beast)* — The Beauty takes note of the Beast's kind heart that makes him, somehow, less unattractive. The Beast pleads with the Beauty to marry him. At first the Beauty declines, but finally agrees. Suddenly, the Beast disappears and is replaced by a handsome prince "more beautiful than Cupid."

The Beauty is portrayed by an elegant waltz, first played by the solo clarinet. A rumbling contrabassoon voices the Beast's entreaties. A shimmering harp glissando depicts the magical transformation of the Beast, now represented in his princely form by a romantic solo violin.

V. *Le jardin féérique (The Fairy Garden)* — *Ma mère l'oye* concludes with a glorious evocation of the awakening of the Fairy Garden. The strings introduce a simple, yet hauntingly affecting melody. The movement grows in splendor, as Ravel's *Mother Goose* reaches its shimmering and elegant resolution.

Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 37 (1803)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN was baptized in Bonn, Germany, on December 17, 1770, and died in Vienna, Austria, on March 26, 1827. The first performance of the Piano Concerto No. 3 took place in Vienna on April 5, 1803, at the Theater-an-der-Wien, with the composer as soloist. In addition to the solo piano, the C-minor Concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-four minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performance: January 18, 1951, Hugh Hodgson, Piano, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: September 25, 27 and 28, 2008, Emanuel Ax, Piano, Robert Spano, Conductor.

Beethoven, Schikaneder and the Theater-an-der -Wien

Vienna's magnificent Theater-an-der-Wien was the creation of actor Emanuel Schikaneder, the librettist for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 1791 opera *The Magic Flute*. Schikaneder also sang the role of the bird-catcher Papageno at the opera's premiere.

While Schikaneder obtained his building permit in 1786, the Theater-an-der-Wien did not open until June 13, 1801. Schikaneder, an astute businessman, sought methods to compete

with the established Burgtheater and Kärntnertor theaters in Vienna. In 1803, Schikaneder scored a massive coup when he convinced Ludwig van Beethoven to present concerts at his Theater-an-der-Wien. Schikaneder also provided Beethoven and his brother Carl with lodgings in the Theater building, commencing in the spring of 1803.

An announcement in the *Wiener Zeitung* on March 22, 1803, heralded Beethoven's inaugural Theater-an-der-Wien concert:

NOTICE

On the 4th of April Herr Ludwig van Beethoven will produce a new Oratorio set to music by him

Christus am Oelberge

in the I.R. Privil. Theater-an-der-Wien. The other pieces to be performed will be announced on the large billboard.

The "other pieces" included Beethoven's First Symphony, as well as the world premieres of his Second Symphony and Third Piano Concerto. The length of this program pales in comparison with the legendary epic December 22, 1808 concert, featuring the world premieres of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, his Fourth Piano Concerto and *Choral Fantasy*, as well as four movements from his Mass in C, and the soprano aria "Ah! Perfido." Still, the program, delayed until April 5, featured two and one half hours of music.

"A terrible rehearsal"

It's not surprising that the energy and patience of the musicians were strained to their limits. Ferdinand Ries described the final rehearsal, which began on the day of the concert at 8:00 in the morning:

It was a terrible rehearsal, and at half past two everybody was exhausted and more or less dissatisfied. Prince Karl Lichnowsky, who had attended the rehearsal from the beginning, sent out for large baskets of buttered bread, cold meat and wine. He warmly invited everyone to help himself, which was done with both hands, with the result that the warm atmosphere was restored.

After tempers had calmed, Lichnowsky convinced the musicians to continue with a rehearsal that lasted almost to the beginning of the concert itself.

Beethoven served as conductor for the entire program. He was also the piano soloist in his C-minor Piano Concerto. A reviewer in the *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt* opined that Beethoven "did not perform (the Concerto) to the complete satisfaction of the public."

If the critic's view was accurate, the explanation may well be found in this account of the performance by Beethoven's pupil Ignaz von Seyfried:

In the playing of the concerto movements he asked me to turn the pages for him; but — heaven help me! — that was easier said than done. I saw almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most on one page or the other

a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me scribbled down to serve as clues for him; for he played nearly all the solo part from memory, since, as was so often the case, he had not had time to put it all down on paper. He gave me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of the invisible pages and my scarcely concealable anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly and he laughed heartily at the jovial supper that we ate afterwards.

Sketches for the C-minor Concerto indicate that Beethoven may have begun composition of the work as early as 1797. The manuscript bears the following notation: “Concerto 1800 da L. v. Beethoven.” Nevertheless, as previously noted, the solo part was not fully transcribed even by the time of the 1803 premiere.

The C-minor Concerto is a work that reflects the transition from the Haydn and Mozart-influenced works of Beethoven’s early period to the more heroic output of the middle portion of his career. The stormy opening movement looks forward to another work in the key of C minor, the immortal Fifth Symphony (1808). The *Largo* recalls first-hand accounts describing Beethoven’s ability to move audiences to tears through the sheer beauty of his playing. The finale, on the other hand, reveals a humorous side of the composer that is too often forgotten.

Musical Analysis

I. *Allegro con brio* — The strings, answered by the winds, softly introduce the ascending and descending opening theme. Soon the orchestra presents a vigorous statement of the theme (this is one of several times in this movement that Beethoven employs sharply contrasting dynamics to great effect). The strings present a more genial second theme. Echoes of the opening theme return to conclude the orchestral exposition. The soloist’s exposition begins with a series of ascending flourishes and a bold statement of the opening theme, again quickly juxtaposed with softer dynamics. Once the soloist enters, he is clearly the focus of the proceedings, but the orchestra hardly serves as mere accompanist, frequently engaging in lively exchanges with the pianist. The mysterious development section — *sotto voce* for the most part — is based upon the opening theme. A vigorous cascade of notes by the soloist introduces a varied recapitulation of the principal themes. The soloist’s cadenza is followed by a brief but highly dramatic coda.

II. *Largo* — The opening of the stunningly beautiful *Largo* — indeed virtually the entire movement — is a tender dialogue for piano and orchestra. The soloist enters with a hushed and expansive statement, to which the orchestra, featuring muted strings, responds. The central section presents the soloist’s flowing arpeggios as counterpoint to statements by the woodwinds. A descending passage by the pianist leads to a reprise of the opening section. The soloist is prominent in the *Largo*’s closing pages, offering a series of scales and a brief cadenza. The concluding *fortissimo* chord disturbs the reverie and prepares the audience for the high spirits of the ensuing *Rondo*.

III. *Rondo. Allegro* — The finale, a beguiling combination of rondo and sonata forms, opens with the soloist’s introduction of the angular principal theme. A series of orchestral

fanfares, in tandem with ascending flourishes by the pianist, seems to portend a grand, dramatic passage. What follows instead is the playful, descending, subsidiary theme. This is just one of many surprises in a remarkably inventive movement — another is the sudden appearance of a rather pastoral interlude. A fugato section leads to a brief passage for the soloist, and finally, a reprise of the principal and subsidiary themes. Beethoven saves his most delicious surprise for the conclusion. A grand orchestral statement and cadenza by the soloist are followed by a transformation of the principal theme into a skipping, 6/8 *Presto*, capped by a joyous race to the finish.

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Opus 88 (1889)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK was born in Mühlhausen, Bohemia (now Nelahozeves, the Czech Republic), on September 8, 1841, and died in Prague on May 1, 1904. The first performance of the Symphony No. 8 took place in Prague on February 2, 1890, with the composer conducting the Prague National Theater Orchestra. The Eighth Symphony is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-six minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performances: October 30, 1951, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: February 25, 26 and 27, 2010, Mei-Ann Chen, Conductor.

“The melodies simply pour out of me”

While working on his Piano Quartet, Opus 87, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák told his friend, Alois Göbl: “It’s going unexpectedly easily and the melodies simply pour out of me.” On August 26, 1889, one week after finishing the Piano Quartet, Dvořák began work on his Symphony in G Major. And it appears a similar level of inspiration attended the new orchestral work. Dvořák began to note ideas for the Symphony, and started the composition sketch on September 6. Dvořák completed the sketches for all four movements by September 23, and finished the orchestration on November 8.

On February 2, 1890, Dvořák conducted the Prague National Theater Orchestra in the premiere of his Eighth Symphony. A few months later, the composer again presented the Symphony in honor of his election as Member of the Franz Josef Academy for Science, Literature and Art in Prague. On June 16, 1891, the University of Cambridge bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Music upon Dvořák, who again offered his G-Major Symphony in commemoration of the event.

The Eighth Symphony proved to be the source of an unfortunate rift between Dvořák and his German publisher, Simrock. Dvořák had previously granted Simrock the right of first refusal for publication of all his works. Despite the success of Dvořák’s Seventh in London, Vienna and Berlin, Simrock was not convinced that the Czech composer’s Symphonies were

profitable. Simrock offered 1,000 marks to publish the Eighth Symphony, one-sixth of the fee paid for the Seventh. Dvořák interpreted this low offer as an outright refusal. Novello in England published Dvořák's G-Major in 1892. Because of the Cambridge performance and publication by Novello, the G-Major has, from time to time, been referred to as Dvořák's "English" Symphony.

Of course, there is nothing particularly English about the music of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony. As with most of his works, the G-Major Symphony is brimming with the influence of Czech folk melodies and rhythms. It is also in many ways highly innovative, suggesting new possibilities for traditional symphonic forms. According to Dvořák biographer, Otakar Sourek, the composer (by his own admission) consciously strove to create "a work different from his other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way." This, Dvořák achieved in the context of energetic and optimistic music, bursting with unforgettable melodies.

Musical Analysis

I. *Allegro con brio* — The Symphony begins with a somber introduction, played by the winds and cellos. This music serves as a unifying force throughout the movement, returning as a bridge to the development and recapitulation of the principal themes. Out of the shadows emerges the sprightly main theme, first played by the solo flute and soon, triumphantly, by the full orchestra. The flutes and clarinets, over triplet string accompaniment, play the minor-key second theme. The woodwinds then introduce a *pianissimo*, chorale-like melody, played with great force by the entire orchestra. A stormy, contrapuntal development leads to the English horn's recapitulation of the initial theme. The other themes return in sequence. The movement concludes with a brief, dramatic coda, prominently featuring the brass and timpani.

II. *Adagio* — The slow movement, in rather free form, presents a series of episodes essentially based on upon the opening four-note motif, consisting of rising sixteenth-note triplets and a quarter note. Especially captivating is an extended C-Major episode with a shimmering *espressivo* violin solo. The *Adagio* explores a variety of moods and colors before achieving its peaceful conclusion.

III. *Allegretto grazioso* — Instead of the scherzo then in fashion, the third movement is in the character of a melancholy waltz. The first violins sing the principal melody, closely related to its counterpart in the *Adagio*. The lilting, major-key trio prominently features the woodwinds. The traditional repeat of the waltz leads to an unexpectedly joyful *Coda* (*Molto vivace*) in 2/4 time, serving as a bridge to the finale.

IV. *Allegro ma non troppo* — A trumpet call heralds the opening of the final movement. The cellos introduce the theme that serves as the basis for a series of diverse and often thrilling variations. In the midst of the variations, the trumpet-call motif returns. A series of lyrical variations finally yields to a jubilant coda (*Tempo I*), as the G-Major Symphony dashes to a rousing close.

THOMAS WILKINS, Conductor

Thomas Wilkins is the music director of the Omaha Symphony, a position he has held since 2005. Additionally, he is principal guest conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and was recently appointed the youth and family concerts conductor for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Past positions have included resident conductor of the Detroit Symphony, the Florida Orchestra (Tampa Bay), and associate conductor of the Richmond Symphony (Virginia). He served on the music faculties of North Park University (Chicago), the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.



Thomas Wilkins

Committed to promoting a lifelong enthusiasm for music, Thomas brings energy and commitment to audiences of all ages. For his significant contribution to the children of Tampa Bay, the Pinellas County Music Educators Association named him a 1998 Friend of the Arts; the Hillsborough County Elementary Music Educators recognized him as 1998 Music Educator of the Year.

During his conducting career, Thomas has been featured with orchestras throughout the United States, including the Dallas Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Houston Symphony and the National Symphony in Washington, D.C. He is also a frequent guest conductor with the Baltimore Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Recently he debuted with the Utah Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Rochester (N.Y.) and Rhode Island philharmonic orchestras.

Thomas serves as a director at large for the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and has served on the board of directors of such organizations as the Center Against Spouse Abuse in Tampa Bay, and the Museum of Fine Arts and the Academy Preparatory Center for Education, both in St. Petersburg. Currently, he serves as chairman of the board for the Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund.

A native of Norfolk, Va., Thomas earned his bachelor of music education degree from the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music in 1978. In 1982, he was awarded a master of music degree in orchestral conducting from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Thomas and his wife, Sheri-Lee, reside in Omaha with their twin daughters, Erica and Nicole.

GABRIELA MONTERO, Piano

Gabriela Montero's visionary interpretations and unique improvisational gifts have won her a quickly expanding audience and devoted following around the world. "I connect to my audience in a completely unique way — and they connect with me. Because improvisation is such a huge part of who I am, it is the most natural and spontaneous way I can express myself." Today, in both recital and after performing a concerto, Gabriela often invites her audience to ask for a melody for improvisations.

**Gabriela Montero**

Ms. Montero's engagements include acclaimed performances with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, Rotterdam Philharmonic, WDR Sinfonieorchester Koln. In recital she has appeared in Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden, Hamburg, Klavier Festival Ruhr, Salzburg Festival, Koln Philharmonie, Tonhalle Dusseldorf, Istanbul International Festival, Kennedy Center and Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Ravinia Festival, National Arts Centre Ottawa, Orchard Hall Tokyo and at the 'Progetto Martha Argerich' Festival in Lugano, where she is invited annually.

Ms. Montero's 2011-12 season highlights include debuts with the Cleveland Orchestra, both in Cleveland and on tour, as well as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. In addition she returns to Pittsburgh for performances with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In Europe she recently toured with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields and performs with Vienna Radio Orchestra and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

She has long had a desire to take her improvisations to the next logical step of composition. Gabriela has enthusiastically embarked on this new phase of her career by composing *ExPatria* for piano and orchestra. Her composition received its premiere performance in London and on tour in Germany with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields orchestra. In these concerts, her multifaceted talents were featured along with her new work as she performed Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* and her legendary solo improvisations.

Ms. Montero's recordings for EMI Classics includes music by Rachmaninov, Chopin and Liszt, and a second of her deeply felt and technically brilliant improvisations. Her EMI CD *Bach and Beyond* is a complete disc of improvisations on themes by Bach, which topped the charts for several months. In February 2008 her follow-up EMI recording of improvisations, *Baroque*, was nominated for a Grammy Award and released with great critical acclaim; it received five-star reviews from BBC Music Magazine and Classic FM. Gabriela's most recent recording, *Solatio*, released by EMI Classics in January, is devoted to works by Latin American composers.

Born in Caracas Venezuela, Gabriela gave her first public performance at age 5. At 8, she made her concerto debut with the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra conducted by Jose Antonio Abreu and was granted a scholarship from the Venezuelan Government to study in the United States. She resides in Massachusetts with her two daughters.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the generous gifts of individuals, corporations, foundations, government and other entities whose contributions help the Orchestra fulfill its mission to be a vigorous part of the cultural fabric of our community. The following list represents the cumulative total of philanthropy of \$1,750 and above to the Orchestra's fundraising campaigns, events and special initiatives from 2011.

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