

Concerts of Thursday, November 7, and Friday, November 8, 2013, at 8:00p, and Saturday, November 9, 2013, at 7:30p.

Carlo Montanaro, Conductor

Pascal Rogé, Piano

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Capriccio italien, Opus 45 (1880)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Concerto No. 5 in F Major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 103, “Egyptian” (1896)

I. Allegro animato

II. Andante

III. Molto allegro

Pascal Rogé, Piano

Intermission

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Opus 95 (“From the New World”) (1893)

I. Adagio; Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Molto vivace

IV. Allegro con fuoco

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

Capriccio italien, Opus 45 (1880)

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg, Russia, on November 6, 1893. The first performance of the *Capriccio italien* took place in Moscow, Russia, on December 18, 1880, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. The *Capriccio italien* is scored for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, bass drum, cymbals, orchestra bells, triangle, tambourine and strings. Approximate performance time is sixteen minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performance: December 1, 1946, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: March 13, 14 and 15, 2009, Nicola Luisotti, Conductor.

On December 17, 1879, Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky traveled to Rome. Tchaikovsky made the journey at the invitation of his brother Modest, with whom he stayed during the winter of 1879-80. While in Rome, Tchaikovsky spent his time admiring the artistic treasures of the Eternal City, as well as studying English.

Of course, there were musical pursuits as well. Tchaikovsky had a piano delivered to his room in the Hotel Costanzi, where he enjoyed playing the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, as well as joining his brother for some duets. While in Rome, Tchaikovsky penned revisions to his Symphony No. 2 (“Little Russian”), originally composed in 1872.

Tchaikovsky also turned his attentions to Italian music. On December 27, he wrote to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck: “Yesterday I heard a delightful folksong which I shall certainly use.” In the beginning of February, Tchaikovsky was able to report to von Meck: “I have already completed the sketches for an Italian fantasia on folk tunes for which I believe a good future may be predicted. It will be effective, thanks to the delightful tunes which I have succeeded in assembling partly from anthologies, partly through my own ears on the streets.”

Tchaikovsky informed von Meck that he modeled his “Italian fantasia” (which he later titled the “Italian Capriccio”) on the “Spanish fantasias” of Russian composer Mikhail Glinka. From 1845-47, Glinka visited Spain. Glinka’s experiences there provided the inspiration for two orchestral works based upon Spanish folk melodies, *Capriccio Brillante on the Jota Aragonesa*, and *Recollection of a Summer Night in Madrid*.

Tchaikovsky composed his *Capriccio italien* in the period of about a week, beginning toward the close of January. He completed the orchestration that May. The work received its premiere in Moscow on December 18, 1880, conducted by Nikolai Rubinstein. Some critics found the *Capriccio italien* lacking in musical substance, an

opinion shared to some degree by the composer. Nevertheless, the piece received a warm ovation from the Moscow audience, leading to a repeat performance a few weeks later. Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio italien* has remained a concert favorite ever since.

Musical Analysis

The *Capriccio Italien* opens with an extended slow introduction (*Andante un poco rubato*). The opening fanfare is based upon a bugle call that sounded from military barracks located near Tchaikovsky's Rome hotel. Toward the conclusion of the introduction, this fanfare returns with even greater force. The *Capriccio italien* features a series of evocatively-scored melodies, some of which make telling return appearances during the course of the work. The *Capriccio*'s whirlwind concluding section is based upon a popular tarantella entitled "Cicuzza."

Concerto No. 5 in F Major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 103, "Egyptian" (1896)

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris, France, on October 9, 1835, and died in Algiers, Algeria, on December 16, 1921. The first performance of the Piano Concerto No. 5 took place at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on June 2, 1896, with the composer as soloist and Paul Taffanel conducting. In addition to the solo piano, the Concerto No. 5 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, tam-tam and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-nine minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performances: April 10, 11 and 13, 1969, Lorin Hollander, Piano, Robert Shaw, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: November 7, 8 and 9, Stephen Hough, Piano, Zdeněk Mácal, Conductor.

In addition to his genius as a composer, Camille Saint-Saëns was an organ and piano virtuoso of the highest order. On May 6, 1846, the 10-year-old Saint-Saëns made his formal concert debut at the Paris Salle Pleyel. On that occasion, Saint-Saëns performed concertos for piano and orchestra by Mozart and Beethoven, as well as solo compositions by Hummel, Bach, Handel and Kalkbrenner. Saint-Saëns played all of these works from memory. For his encore, Saint-Saëns offered to play (again from memory) any of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas.

Saint-Saëns's incredible ability to assimilate scores upon first glance, impressive technical facility and superb musicianship earned the praises of such discriminating musicians as Richard Wagner and Hans von Bülow. Throughout a great portion of his life, Saint-Saëns continued to concertize successfully, performing both his own repertoire and that of other composers. During a particularly renowned series of concerts in London, Saint-Saëns performed all of Mozart's Piano Concertos.

Saint-Saëns was the soloist in the first performances of each of his Five Concertos for piano and orchestra. Saint-Saëns premiered his Fifth and final Piano Concerto at a June

2, 1896 concert at the Salle Pleyel, held in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his debut.

Musical Analysis

I. *Allegro animato*—After a brief, hushed introduction by the winds and pizzicato strings, the soloist introduces the lilting first principal melody, marked *dolce* (“sweetly”). The orchestra repeats the melody, with the soloist adding playful commentary. The soloist also presents the second principal melody, wide-ranging, flowing, and again played *dolce*. In the development section, the first theme takes on a far more imposing guise; the second becomes more melancholy. In the recapitulation, the initial melody returns as a dialogue between the winds and strings, with filigree accompaniment by the soloist. The opening movement, notable throughout for its elegant restraint and interplay between soloist and orchestra, resolves to a *pianissimo* close.

II. *Andante*—Throughout his adult life, Saint-Saëns was a frequent and enthusiastic traveler. The French composer made several visits to Algeria and Egypt. The slow movement of the Fifth Concerto, a reflection of his visits, inspired the work’s “Egyptian” nickname. Middle Eastern folksong abounds in the *Andante*. In the slow movement’s central portion (*Allegro tranquillo quasi andantino*), the soloist introduces a *cantabile* melody; according to Saint-Saëns, “a Nubian love song that I heard sung by the boatmen on the Nile as I went down the river in a dahabieh (an Egyptian sailing boat).” At the conclusion of this episode, the pianist suggests the chirping of crickets in the night air. The *Andante* closes with the soloist’s hushed ascending passage.

III. *Molto allegro*—The lyrical introspection of the Concerto’s first two movements yields to the virtuoso fireworks of the brief, whirlwind finale. The soloist immediately presents a gruff, repeated rhythmic motif, an evocation of a ship’s propellers churning the waters. From here to the “Egyptian” Concerto’s triumphant conclusion, the soloist remains at center stage.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Opus 95 (“From the New World”) (1893)

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 “New World” Symphony took place at Carnegie Hall in New York on December 16, 1893, with Anton Seidl conducting the New York Philharmonic. The Symphony No. 9 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals and strings. Approximate performance time is forty-one minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performance: March 16, 1947, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances, November 4, 6 and 7, 2010, Itzhak Perlman, Conductor.

Dvořák in New York

On September 21, 1885, Jeannette Meyer Thurber founded the National Conservatory of Music of America. Mrs. Thurber hoped that the Conservatory, located in New York City, would foster the development of important American concert music.

Jeannette Thurber realized that in order for the National Conservatory to thrive as a major institution, it would require a musician of international renown for its Director. Mrs. Thurber considered two composers for the position—Jean Sibelius and Antonín Dvořák. Mrs. Thurber was not inclined to make the long journey to Sibelius's homeland of Finland. Because her family lived in Vienna, Mrs. Thurber decided that it would be far easier to contact Dvořák—either in the Austrian city, or the composer's home in Prague.

In June of 1891, Mrs. Thurber offered Antonín Dvořák the position of Director of the National Conservatory. Dvořák, who was then a Professor of Composition at the Prague Conservatory, politely declined. However, Jeannette Thurber was not to be denied. After several cables to the Czech composer, Mrs. Thurber sent Dvořák a contract setting forth the generous terms of his employment with the National Conservatory. Only Dvořák's signature was required. In December of 1891, Dvořák accepted Mrs. Thurber's proposal.

Dvořák's duties as Director of the National Conservatory commenced in the fall of 1892. On September 26 of that year, Dvořák, his wife, and two of his six children arrived from Europe at the port in Hoboken, New Jersey. While on board, Dvořák enjoyed his first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty. Awed by the magnificent sight, he exclaimed, "In the head alone there is enough room for sixty persons!"

Dvořák and his family took up residence near the Conservatory, which was located at E. 17th Street and Irving Place. Dvořák's contract with the National Conservatory dictated that he would teach three composition classes and conduct semiweekly orchestral rehearsals. In his spare time, Dvořák preferred to avoid social functions. Instead, he paid frequent visits to the docks, the railway station and Central Park—the latter providing Dvořák with a reminder of the countryside he so enjoyed in his native land. Dvořák's homesickness was somewhat alleviated when, in the summer of 1893, he and his family vacationed in Spillville, a northeast Iowa town populated by Czech immigrants.

Dvořák had always taken a keen interest in the folk music of his native Bohemia, and indeed, acknowledged: "I myself have gone to the simple, half forgotten tunes of Bohemian peasants for hints in my most serious works. Only in this way can a musician express the true sentiment of his people. He gets into touch with the common humanity of his country."

It's not surprising that when Dvořák arrived in America, he began to study the music of the "New World." Dvořák concluded that America's great folk tradition was rooted in the music of African-Americans (it should be noted that in May of 1893, the National Conservatory opened its doors to African-American students). Dvořák also

acknowledged the importance of the folk music of Native Americans, which, the Czech composer felt, was “virtually identical” to “Negro melodies.”

The “New World” Symphony

On May 24, 1893, Dvořák completed his Symphony in E minor, begun the previous December. The work received its premiere at New York’s Carnegie Hall on December 16, 1893, with Anton Seidl conducting the New York Philharmonic. A month earlier, Dvořák gave the E-minor Symphony its famous nickname, “From the New World.”

In an article published in the *New York Herald* the day before the premiere, Dvořák offered this analysis of his “New World” Symphony:

Since I have been in this country I have been deeply interested in the national music of the Negroes and the Indians. The character, the very nature of a race is contained in its national music. For that reason my attention was at once turned in the direction of these native melodies...It is this spirit which I have tried to reproduce in my new Symphony (“The New World”). I have not actually used any of the melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the...music and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythms, harmony, counterpoint and orchestral color.

The premiere of the “New World” Symphony was an unqualified success. Dvořák proudly informed his publisher, Simrock: “The papers say that no composer ever celebrated such a triumph. Carnegie Hall was crowded with the best people of New York, and the audience applauded so that, like visiting royalty, I had to take my bows repeatedly from the box in which I sat.”

Musical Analysis

I. *Adagio; Allegro molto*—The “New World” Symphony begins with a slow introduction (*Adagio*). The rather pastoral mood of the opening measures is shattered by a thunderous orchestral outburst. Then, almost as if rising out of the mists, hints of the *Allegro*’s opening theme appear in the horns, violas and cellos. A final crescendo, a massive timpani explosion, and a tremolo passage for violins serve as a bridge to the *Allegro molto*’s dramatic opening theme, first played by the horns. The playful second theme (with hints of “Turkey in the Straw”) features the flutes and oboes. A solo flute sings a lovely theme with, as many commentators have noted, a kinship to a spiritual Dvořák loved—“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” The brief development features a stirring juxtaposition of the first and third themes. A varied recapitulation of the principal themes and a stormy coda round out the opening movement.

II. *Largo*—Dvořák envisioned the second movement of his “New World” Symphony as “a study or sketch” for an opera or cantata based upon Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*—a project that never came to fruition.

After a brief, somber introduction, the solo English horn, over muted strings, sings the unforgettable principal melody (Dvořák's pupil, William Arms Fisher, later adapted this haunting melody for the song, "Goin' Home"). The flutes and oboes inaugurate the melancholy central section (*Un poco più mosso*). Suddenly, a jaunty woodwind interlude leads to a grand proclamation of the first movement's principal theme. The English horn returns for a reprise of the opening melody. A restatement of the *Largo*'s introduction, an ascending string passage, and solemn bass chords bring the *Largo* to a poignant close.

III. *Molto vivace*—The composer noted that the third movement scherzo "was suggested by a scene at the feast in 'Hiawatha' where the Indians dance, and is also an essay which I made in the direction of imparting the local color of Indian character to music."

After a brief introduction, the flutes and oboes, echoed by the clarinets, present the animated principal theme, soon thundered by the entire orchestra. The first trio section (*Poco sostenuto*), highlighting the winds, has a far more relaxed quality. A reprise of the scherzo follows, the conclusion offering hints of the opening movement's principal theme. The second trio section emerges as a bright ray of sunshine. A repeat of the scherzo and initial trio leads to the *Coda*, again presenting echoes of the Symphony's opening movement, before resolving to a *fortissimo* conclusion.

IV. *Allegro con fuoco*—The strings launch a vigorous introduction to the announcement by the horns and trumpets of the forceful, principal theme. A solo clarinet offers a plaintive, contrasting melody. Dvořák reprises principal themes from the first three movements, treating the material, according to his description, "in a variety of ways." The magnificent coda features a synthesis of the principal themes of the outer movements. The closing orchestral fanfare is capped by an extended *diminuendo*, leading to a *ppp* close.