

Concert of Sunday, March 18, 2018, at 3:00p

Stephen Mulligan, Conductor

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Overture to *Guillaume Tell* (1829)

Scott Lee (b. 1988)

***Vicious Circles*, for Orchestra (2016)**

Intermission

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39 (1899)

I. *Andante, ma non troppo; Allegro energico*

II. *Andante (ma non troppo lento)*

III. *Scherzo. Allegro*

IV. *Finale (Quasi una Fantasia). Andante; Allegro molto*

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

Overture to *Guillaume Tell* (1829)

Gioachino Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy, on February 29, 1792, and died in Passy, France, on November 13, 1868. The first performance of *Guillaume Tell* took place at the Opéra in Paris, France, on August 3, 1829. The Overture to *Guillaume Tell* is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, and strings. Approximate performance time is twelve minutes.

Gioachino Rossini's final opera, *Guillaume Tell*, is based upon Friedrich Schiller's play, *Wilhelm Tell*. *Guillaume Tell* takes place in 14th-century Switzerland, and relates the story of the Swiss victory over their Habsburg oppressors. With its epic length, spectacle and ballet, *Guillaume Tell* is in the tradition of French Grand Opera. Rossini provided music of extraordinary power and eloquence, departing from the early 19th-century *bel canto* practices that had often featured individual vocal display at the expense of the drama.

Guillaume Tell premiered at the Paris Opéra on August 3, 1829. Rossini was thirty-seven and would live another thirty-nine years. Yet, he composed no operas after *Guillaume Tell*. Between 1812 and 1829, Rossini composed thirty-nine operas, and the years of hard labor had taken a tremendous toll on his physical and emotional health. Rossini spent the remainder of his life enjoying the company of friends, and composing many salon pieces he affectionately referred to as "Sins of My Old Age." In an 1866 letter to composer Giovanni Pacini, Rossini expressed no regrets about his abrupt retirement from opera: "such a presentiment is not given to everyone; God granted it to me and I bless him for it every hour."

The famous Overture to *Guillaume Tell* begins with an extended slow-tempo introduction (*Andante*) that features a magical combination of five solo cellos. The rustlings of the strings and winds (*Allegro*) are prelude to a storm sequence of tremendous power. After the storm abates, the English horn, in tandem with the flute, offers a *ranz des vaches*, the traditional call of the Swiss herdsman to his cattle (*Andante*). Trumpet fanfares launch the triumphant final section (*Allegro vivace*). The music, known (perhaps all too well) for its association with the 1950s television series *The Lone Ranger*, still generates tremendous excitement on its own terms.

Vicious Circles, for Orchestra (2016)

Scott Lee was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, on December 1, 1988. The first performance *Vicious Circles* took place at the Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts in Camden, New Jersey, on January 28, 2017, performed by the Symphony In C. *Vicious Circles* is scored for three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (3), and strings. Approximate performance time is nine minutes.

The music of American composer Scott Lee celebrates both classical and popular music traditions. He has worked with musicians across various genres, from the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, to Chatterbird, to Ben Folds. He has been commissioned to write new works for the Aspen Music Festival and School, Loadbang, the Baltimore Classical Guitar Society, the Occasional Symphony, and the American Craft Council. A James B. Duke Fellow at Duke University, Scott Lee is pursuing his PhD in Composition. Scott Lee has taught music courses at Duke University and the Duke TIP summer program. Mr. Lee also taught composition to middle school boys from at-risk neighborhoods in Baltimore, as part of the Peabody Institute's Junior Bach program. An accomplished pianist, Scott Lee has earned acclaim for performances of his own works, and music by other composers.

The composer provided the following commentary on his *Vicious Circles* (2016):

Vicious Circles is a nine-minute orchestral work that explores a number of cyclical music ideas, each looping back on itself. The title refers to a chain of events in which the response to one difficulty creates a new problem that aggravates the original difficulty, resulting in an endlessly repeating loop. An example from *The Little Prince*:

'I am drinking,' answered the drunkard lugubriously.

'Why are you drinking?' the little prince asked.

'In order to forget,' replied the drunkard.

'To forget what?' enquired the little prince, who was already feeling sorry for him.

'To forget that I am ashamed,' the drunkard confessed, hanging his head.

'Ashamed of what?' asked the little prince who wanted to help him.

'Ashamed of drinking!' concluded the drunkard, withdrawing into total silence.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

<http://scottleemusic.net/viciouscircles.php>

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39 (1899)

Jean Sibelius was born in Tavastehus, Finland, on December 8, 1865, and died in Järvenpää, Finland, on September 20, 1957. The first performance of the Symphony No. 1 took place in Helsinki, Finland, on April 26, 1899, with the composer conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic. The Symphony No. 1 is scored for two piccolos, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, harp, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-eight minutes.

Finnish composer Jean Sibelius completed his First Symphony in early 1899. The premiere of the Symphony No. 1 took place in Helsinki on April 26, 1899, with Sibelius leading the Helsinki Philharmonic. The premiere coincided with a particularly tumultuous period in Finland's history. Despite its acquisition as a Grand Duchy under

the Russian Czar in 1809, Finland enjoyed relative autonomy for the better part of the 19th century. During that period, Finland maintained its own government, army, currency, and postal service. Finnish and Swedish served as official languages, and the Lutheran religion was maintained. However, in February of 1899, a Russian imperial decree ordered that, the Russian State Council would now be responsible for all laws affecting Finland. Russia incorporated the formerly autonomous Finnish postal system. The Finnish army was disbanded, and citizens became liable for conscription into the Russian military.

In 1899, the same year Sibelius completed his First Symphony, he composed the orchestral tone poem, *Finlandia*, depicting the Finnish people rebelling against their oppressors. Unlike *Finlandia*, the First Symphony does not contain a specific program. Still, the work did serve Finland's patriotic cause. In 1900, Finnish conductor Robert Kajanus and the Helsinki Philharmonic began their first European tour. It encompassed several major cities, including Paris, where the World Exhibition was in progress. The artists hoped that by showcasing Finland's rich artistic heritage, they would rally support for their struggle with Russia. The Helsinki Philharmonic concerts featured several works by Sibelius, including *Finlandia* (called "*La Patrie*," in order to avoid the wrath of Russian censorship), and the Symphony No. 1. Sibelius accompanied the performers on the tour and even, on occasion, conducted the orchestra.

Although a relatively early work, the First Symphony's brooding melancholy, explosive drama, and stark, transparent orchestration already reflect the unique voice of Finland's greatest composer. Six years after the Symphony's premiere, the eminent British music critic Ernest Newman was moved to comment: "I have never listened to any music that took me away so completely from our usual Western life, and transported me into a quite new civilization. Every page of (the First Symphony) breathes another manner of thought, another way of living, even another landscape and seascape than ours."

The First Symphony is in four movements. The first opens with a haunting, slow-tempo introduction (*Andante, ma non troppo*), finally resolving to the principal *Allegro energico*. The slow-tempo second movement, *Andante (ma no troppo lento)* features striking juxtapositions of moods. The third-movement *Scherzo (Allegro)* is based upon an insistent, seven-note motif. A slow-tempo interlude precedes the final reprise of the *Scherzo*. The *Finale (Quasi una fantasia)* opens with a reprise of its counterpart in the opening movement. This leads to the principal *Allegro molto*, finally resolving to the triumphant final measures, capped by two pizzicato chords.