

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2023-2024 Grand Classics Series

November 24 and 26, 2023

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR
RANDALL GOOSBY, VIOLIN

Gloria Isabel Ramos Triano

Joy
World Premiere

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35

- I. Moderato nobile
- II. Romance: Andante
- III. Finale: Allegro assai vivace

Mr. Goosby

Intermission

Franz von Suppé

Overture to *Light Cavalry*

Josef Strauss

Woman's Heart, Polka-Mazurka, Op. 166

Forward!, Polka schnell, Op. 127

Transactions, Waltzes, Op. 184

Sport Polka, Op. 170

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson

Louisiana Blues Strut (A Cakewalk) for Solo Violin

Mr. Goosby

Josef Strauss

Without a Care!, Polka Schnell, Op. 271

CLEF NOTES

CONVERSATIONS

with Associate Conductor Moon Doh

Friday at 7:05 PM

Sunday at 1:35 PM

Heinz Hall Stage

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

GLORIA ISABEL RAMOS TRIANO

Joy (2022)

WORLD PREMIERE

Gloria Isabel Ramos Triano was born in Venezuela in 1964 and studied piano, composition and conducting in Barcelona and Zurich. Ramos Triano made her conducting debut in Spain with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia in 1996, and quickly established her reputation with engagements with other Spanish orchestras. In June 1998, she won First Prize in the National Competition for Young Conductors sponsored by the Orquesta Ciudad de Granada and a month later received First Prize in the International Conducting Competition in Cadaqués, Spain; her additional honors include prizes in conducting competitions in Besançon, France and Braşov, Romania. With her appointment as Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Orquesta de Córdoba in 2001, Ramos Triano became the first woman in Spain to hold that position with a state orchestra. That same year she received the *El Ojo Crítico* award for classical music from Radio Nacional de España, and in 2003 was named Personality of the Year in Córdoba, Spain. She made her debut in Germany in 2005 with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Leipzig, and has since conducted many noted orchestras in Europe and South America in both standard and contemporary repertory, including her own compositions. Ramos Triano has also appeared at numerous European festivals in concert and opera, recorded several albums of mostly Spanish music, and is currently Music Director and Conductor of the chamber orchestra Weltsaiten Sinfonietta, which she founded in Switzerland. Ramos Triano began composing while still a student, and has produced a considerable catalog of works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, choir and voice.

Ramos Triano wrote, “I composed *Joy* in 2022 , and then put it aside for other projects. In reviewing the score and preparing the orchestral materials for the premiere, I recalled the reason that moved me to compose this music, and perhaps it will inspire listeners, as well.

“*Joy* dates from July 2022, when the Covid pandemic was declared over and the restrictions were lifted, and I wished to capture the resulting general relief in the music. *Joy* is a kind of celebration, a symbol of liberation, an invitation to reflect upon and appreciate the joy of life. As the title suggests, *Joy* is meant to recall and nurture in the listener a range of emotions, from lightness of spirit, thankfulness, cheerfulness, fulfillment and deep inner satisfaction, to exultation, tears of joy, profound happiness and the sublime bliss of spirituality.”

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35 (1945)

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (his middle name honored Mozart) was the younger son of Julius Korngold, one of Vienna’s most influential music critics at the turn of the 20th century. By age five, Erich was playing piano duets with his father; two years later he began composing, and at nine he produced a cantata (*Gold*) that convinced his father to enroll him at the Vienna Conservatory. When Mahler heard Erich play his cantata the following year, he proclaimed the boy “a genius” and arranged for him to take lessons with Alexander Zemlinsky. Korngold made remarkable progress under Zemlinsky — his Piano Sonata No. 1 was published in 1908, when he had ripened to the age of eleven. The following year he wrote a ballet, *Der Schneemann* (“*The Snowman*”), which was staged at the Vienna Royal Opera at the command of Emperor Franz Josef. In 1911, the budding composer gave a concert of his works in Berlin, in which he also appeared as piano soloist. Korngold was an international celebrity at thirteen.

In 1915 and 1916, Korngold wrote the first two of his five operas: *Der Ring des Polykrates*, a comedy, and *Violanta*, a tragedy. Following a two-year stint in the Austrian army playing piano for the troops during World War I, Korngold turned again to opera, producing his dramatic masterpiece, *Die Tote Stadt* (“*The Dead City*”), which was premiered simultaneously in Hamburg (where he served as conductor for three years after the World War I) and Cologne on December 4, 1920; *Die Tote Stadt* was the first German opera performed at the Met following the war. After Korngold returned to Vienna in 1920, he was appointed professor of opera and composition at the Staatsakademie.

In 1934, the Austrian director Max Reinhardt was conscripted by Warner Brothers in Hollywood to film a version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He chose to use Mendelssohn's incidental music as background, and took Korngold along to arrange the score. Korngold, who, as a Jew, felt increasingly uneasy in Austria, accepted other offers in Hollywood, and, when the Nazi Anschluss in 1938 prevented him from returning home, he settled permanently in California. (He became a United States citizen in 1943.) For the next seven years, he devoted his talents to creating a body of film music unsurpassed by that of any other composer in the genre, and won two Academy Awards (for *Anthony Adverse* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*). His father's death in 1945, however, caused him to re-evaluate his career, and he returned to writing concert music with concertos for violin and cello, and a large symphony. Korngold died on November 29, 1957, and his remains were interred in the Hollywood Cemetery, within a few feet of those of Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., D.W. Griffith and Rudolf Valentino.

Korngold borrowed themes for his Violin Concerto from four of his finest film scores. The haunting first theme of the opening movement is from the 1937 picture *Another Dawn*, a desert-outpost drama whose most memorable component is Korngold's music. To provide a contrasting element in this loosely woven sonata form, the composer used the gently yearning love theme from *Juarez*, the 1939 film biography of the Mexican statesman and hero. The *Romance* is initiated by a poignant melody from the Academy Award-winning score for *Anthony Adverse*, the 1936 film about an orphan who struggles to overcome the adversities of life in early-19th-century America. The finale is a sparkling rondo whose witty main theme is from *The Prince and the Pauper*, the 1937 screen recreation of Mark Twain's well-known story.

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ

Overture to *Light Cavalry* (1866)

Just as Jacques Offenbach, the great innovator of French comic opera, was an immigrant from Germany, so one of the seminal figures in the development of Viennese operetta came from what is now Croatia. Francesco Suppé Demelli was born in 1819 on a ship off the Adriatic coast city of Spalato, Dalmatia (now Split, Croatia) to Austrian parents, sent to Italy to study law, and moved with his mother after his father's death in 1835 to Vienna, where he became Franz von Suppé and took up music in earnest as a student of Ignaz Seyfried. Seyfried helped him get a job — initially unpaid — as Third Kapellmeister at the Josefstadt Theater, where his first stage work appeared in 1841. More than twenty theater scores followed in the next five years. He moved on to other, more lucrative, positions in Vienna's light-opera theaters, and continued to conduct until 1883, all the while turning out a steady stream of well-received musical farces. *Das Pensionat* of 1860, the first successful Viennese response to the growing local popularity of Offenbach's Parisian operettas, established the form with which Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár and others were to charm the world in later decades.

The Overture to *Light Cavalry* was composed for the comic operetta that Suppé premiered at Vienna's Carl Theater in March 1866. The piece took its title and delightfully descriptive nature from the elaborately uniformed Hussars, the skilled horsemen who were lightly armed to promote their agility in battle, who figure in the plot.

JOSEF STRAUSS

Papa Johann Strauss tried to discourage his sons from following him into the music business, but only Josef, the second-born, initially took his advice. Josef also rejected his father's advice to join the military, and instead trained as an engineer and architect and started a promising career in those fields. Older brother Johann, however, was working himself into a nervous exhaustion with his feverish activity with the Strauss Orchestra at the time — he came home late one night and collapsed at his mother's feet. Young Eduard was only eighteen, so the sole choice to take over the family business seemed to be Josef. He was brought into the family discussion and at first refused to take over, pleading lack of training and ability, the duties of another occupation, and an awkward personal public appearance. His objections were finally overcome when Johann, from his sickbed, told him, "You are the most talented of us all." Josef acquiesced, and, after some lessons in music theory and violin, he made his debut as conductor of the Strauss Orchestra on July 23, 1853. For this initial appearance, he wrote his first set of waltzes, which he titled *Die Ersten und die Letzten* ("The First and the Last"). Hardly the last. He found a real talent for composition, and wrote some 283 works, including 222 waltzes, during the remaining seventeen years of his life.

Woman's Heart, Polka-Mazurka, Op. 166 (1864)

Unlike brother Johann, Josef reluctantly accepted his role as a leading figure in Viennese musical life and always valued his quiet home life with his wife, Caroline Pruckmayer, his childhood sweetheart, whom he married in June 1857. As a wedding gift for her, Josef composed the waltz *Perlen der Liebe* ("Pearls of Love"), and seven years later wrote the "polka-mazurka" *Frauenherz* ("Woman's Heart") as a musical farewell to her before he left for an extended engagement in Wrocław, Poland. He premiered *Frauenherz* in the Vienna Volksgarten on September 6, 1864. The "polka-mazurka" is a stylistic hybrid that adapts the dance movements of the quick, duple-meter polka to the moderate tempo and triple-meter music of the Polish mazurka.

Forward!, Polka Schnell, Op. 127 (1862)

The Strauss Brothers devoted most of the summers during the 1860s to entertaining the fashionable set at the Russian resort of Pavlovsk, south of St. Petersburg. Josef premiered his "fast polka" *Forward!* at his concert at Pavlovsk on September 26, 1862, and introduced it to Vienna on November 9th. The high-spirited *Forward!* was appropriately included on the November 22nd program that marked brother Johann's first appearance in Vienna since his marriage to the talented mezzo-soprano Jetty Treffz on August 27th.

Transactions, Waltzes, Op. 184 (1865)

The *Transactions Waltzes*, premiered in Vienna's Volksgarten on August 2, 1865 under the composer's direction, distills Josef Strauss' musical personality — thoughtful, sometimes even melancholy in mood; almost weightlessly graceful; airy in texture and orchestration; and spacious in its unforced lyricism. The title is ambiguous. The principal definition of "transaction" is a "business deal," and the Viennese moneyed classes, always obsessed with the city's stock exchange (one of the oldest in the world, founded 1771), could have assumed that the title made that reference. The cover artist for the score's first edition, however, interpreted the term in an

amorous vein, depicting a young, hand-holding couple, but leaving the exact nature of their personal “transactions” to the imagination of the observer.

Franz Mailer, author of the authoritative biography of Josef Strauss and cataloger of his complete works, saw *Transactions* rooted in a deeper place in the composer’s life: “During the Carnival season of 1865, the 38-year-old Josef Strauss collapsed in the middle of the ball season because of a seizure caused by his serious and — as it would turn out — incurable brain disease, and had to stay away from the dance halls for some time. Seriously ill, he probably knew how to interpret the signs, but he did not give up and appeared soon again at the helm of the orchestra. At a concert on August 2, 1865 in the Volksgarten, he presented a work that reflected his frightening experience during the Carnival season. It is a waltz that, while danceable, borders on symphonic music of impeccable beauty which is permeated by the premonition of another even more luminous sphere — beyond all earthly affairs. Therefore, Josef Strauss called the work *Transactions*.”

Sport Polka, Op. 170 (1864)

The explosive growth of the middle class and the concomitant availability of leisure time in the late 19th century allowed for an unprecedentedly wide enjoyment of sports and entertainment. The Strausses, as adept at marketing as they were at music, seldom let an opportunity pass to capitalize on the social life of Vienna in their performances or their compositions, and in 1868 Josef wrote the *Sport Polka* to evoke the speed and delight of athletic pastimes. He did not indicate exactly which sport he intended his piece to represent, but the cover of the first edition shows a jockey in a whirlwind dance with a female partner, perhaps suggesting his own favorite, horse racing.

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON

Louisiana Blues Strut (A Cakewalk) for Solo Violin (2001)

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was born in 1932 into a musical family in New York City — his mother was a professional pianist, organist and director of a local theater — and he seemed destined to musical prominence by his very name, given after the London-born composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), the son of a white English woman and a physician from Sierra Leone, who became a cultural hero to American audiences. (New York orchestral players described him as the “black Mahler” on his visit to that city in 1910.) Perkinson early demonstrated musical gifts, and he was admitted in 1945 to New York’s prestigious High School of Music and Art. He began composing while still a teenager, and received the LaGuardia Prize from the school for his choral work *And Behold* upon his graduation in 1949. He entered New York University as an education major in 1949, but transferred to the Manhattan School of Music two years later to study composition with Charles Mills and Vittorio Giannini and conducting with Jonel Perlea; he received his baccalaureate in 1953 and his master’s degree the following year. He went on to teach at Brooklyn College and Indiana University, hold conducting positions with the Dessoff Choirs and Brooklyn Community Symphony Orchestra, serve as music director for Jerome Robbins’ American Theater Lab, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey’s American Dance Theater, and co-found the Symphony of the New World, the first integrated symphony orchestra in the United States and serve as both its Associate Conductor (1965-1970) and Music Director (1972-1973). In 1998 Perkinson was appointed Artistic Director of the Performance Program at the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago. At the time of his death, in 2004, Perkinson was also serving as Composer-in-Residence for the Ritz Chamber Players of Jacksonville, Florida.

In 1962, violinist Sanford Allen, a graduate of Juilliard and the Mannes College of Music, was appointed by Leonard Bernstein as the first African-American musician in the New York Philharmonic. Allen performed with the Philharmonic for fifteen years, and then led a distinguished career as a soloist, chamber player, conductor and advisor. In 1972, Perkinson composed the three-movement *Blue/s Forms* for Allen, who premiered it in Carnegie Hall in 1972 and recorded it for Cedille Records in 2005. Perkinson had originally planned to add a fourth movement to *Blue/s Forms*, but it took him until 2001 to write *Louisiana Blues Strut* and then he decided that the piece was fine by itself; the score was dedicated to Allen.

Perkinson subtitled *Louisiana Blues Strut* a “cakewalk,” a dance that originated in the 1840s among American and Caribbean slaves as a strutting promenade mocking the manners of their owners at their grand balls. Festive competitions of the dance were judged by the white masters, who awarded a cake as the prize. The cakewalk was assimilated into the minstrel shows of the day and became fashionable as a social dance at the turn of the 20th century; it was one of the seeds from which American jazz sprouted. The words that David Wolman wrote in a review of Sanford Allen’s recording of *Blue/s Forms* for *Fanfare* magazine — “it creates a deep reverie of Black experience as seen through the filter of Paganiniesque violin writing” — apply equally well to *Louisiana Blues Strut (A Cakewalk)*.

JOSEF STRAUSS

Without a Care!, Polka Schnell, Op. 271 (1869)

In 1869, Johann Strauss announced that he no longer wanted to return the Russian resort in Pavlovsk for his orchestra’s annual concerts, and he tried to convince Josef to take over the operation. Josef pleaded illness (“I do not look well, my cheeks are hollow, I have lost my hair, I am becoming dull, and I have no motivation to work,” he lamented in a letter to his wife), and then went ahead and composed the spirited *polka schnell Without a Care!*, which he introduced at the resort on September 22, 1869.

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