

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
2014-2015 Subscription Series

March 6, 7 and 8, 2015

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR  
NOAH BENDIX-BALGLEY, VIOLIN  
EDWARD R. KELLY, VIOLA

WOLFGANG AMADEUS  
MOZART

Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra  
in E-flat major, K. 320d (K. 364)

- I. Allegro maestoso
  - II. Andante
  - III. Presto
- Mr. Bendix-Balgley**  
**Mr. Kelly**

Intermission

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA  
61

*Cantus Arcticus*, Concerto for Birds and Orchestra, Opus

- I. The Bog
- II. Melancholy
- III. Swans Migrating

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 Version)

- I. Introduction and Dance of the Firebird
- II. Round Dance of the Princesses
- III. Infernal Dance of the King Kashchei
- IV. Berceuse —
- V. Finale

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born 27 January 1756 in Salzburg; died 5 December 1791 in Vienna

Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 320d (K. 364)  
(1779)

PREMIERE OF WORK: unknown

PSO PREMIERE: 11 November 1960; Syria Mosque; William Steinberg, conductor; Leonid Kogan and Godfrey Layefsky, soloists

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 30 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: two oboes, two horns and strings

One of the more popular musical genres used to display artists and instruments during Mozart's day was a hybrid form called the *sinfonia concertante*, which combined the richness of sonority and clarity of structure that were the most attractive features of the symphony with the tunefulness and technical virtuosity of the concerto. Such works, initially popular beginning in the 1760s in the great musical centers of Paris and Mannheim, where the best performers congregated, were scored for a group of two or more soloists with orchestral accompaniment. The solo ensemble ranged in number from two to eleven (!) players, and usually included wind instruments. Several dozen examples are known, most by such now-forgotten performer-composers as Bernhard Henrik Crusell, Georg Abraham Schneider and August Ritter.

From stylistic evidence within the music of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, the date of its composition is placed during late summer 1779, about six months after he returned from his exhausting journey through Germany and France in a fruitless attempt to find a secure position. He came back to his "Salzburg slavery," as he rather injudiciously called his local employment, and reluctantly resumed his hated job as composer, orchestra musician and organist in Archbishop Colloredo's provincial musical establishment. This time, though, when he put on the Archbishop's livery (how demeaning he thought it was to be dressed like a common servant!), he refused to play the violin in the orchestra any longer despite his father's insistence that he could be the best player in Europe if he would just put his mind to it. He chose instead the viola — still a distant second choice to his beloved piano — and it is a charming thought that he might have composed the *Sinfonia Concertante* for a father-son musical outing: Papa on violin, Wolfgang on viola. There is, however, not a shred of evidence to support this or any other conjecture. This beautiful work is not mentioned in his correspondence or in other known records, and its provenance will probably remain forever open to speculation.

The first movement, as was typical of both the *sinfonia concertante* form and of Mozart's works in general, is filled with an abundance of thematic material. The orchestral introduction comprises numerous motives — a bold opening gesture in a distinctive rhythm, a tripping phrase divided between violins and oboes, a martial strain with active rhythmic underpinning, and a rising line intensified by repeated trills. The soloists emerge from the orchestral texture on a long-held note high in the register to introduce a new set of melodies. It becomes clear immediately that violin and viola are equal partners in this musical undertaking, sharing themes in dialogue fashion or playing them together in sweet harmonies. The rising trill motive returns to close out the exposition. The central section is less a development of what has preceded than a spirited conversation between the soloists. The recapitulation commences with the bold opening gesture that began the work, and proceeds with a hearty sampling of much of the movement's previous thematic material. A carefully notated cadenza and a brief coda bring the movement to a close.

The passionate second movement is in C minor, an uncommon tonality in late-18th-century music. It provides the background against which one of Mozart's most moving essays is written, a composition not overshadowed by even the major works of his Viennese period. Its sonata form lends it a weight of utterance that is reinforced by the dark, rich sonority provided by the solo viola and the division of the orchestral violas into two parts. The finale is a rondo whose ingratiating theme is reminiscent of the rising trill motive of the first movement. The two recapitulations of the rondo theme are separated by extended

episodes. After a cadenza-like accompanied stanza that takes the soloists into the highest reaches of their instruments, the piece concludes with a series of bright, cadential harmonies.

## EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA

Born 9 October 1928 in Helsinki

### *Cantus Arcticus*, Concerto for Birds and Orchestra, Opus 61 (1972)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Oulu, Finland, October 18, 1972; Arctic University of Oulu; Oulu Symphony Orchestra; Stephen Portman, conductor

THESE PERFORMANCES MARK THE PSO PREMIERE

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 19 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, trombone, timpani, percussion, recorded tape, harp, celesta and strings

Among the heirs of Sibelius who have given Finland one of today's most dynamic and distinctive musical cultures is Einojuhani Rautavaara. Rautavaara was born in Helsinki on October 9, 1928 and studied composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with Aarre Merikanto and musicology at Helsinki University before being selected in 1955 by Sibelius himself to receive a Koussevitzky Foundation scholarship awarded to a young Finnish musician in honor of that venerable composer's ninetieth birthday. Rautavaara used the grant to study with Vincent Persichetti at the Juilliard School and Roger Sessions and Aaron Copland at Tanglewood during the following two years. After further study in Ascona, Switzerland with Wladimir Vogel and in Cologne with Rudolf Petzold, Rautavaara returned to Finland to compose and to serve as librarian of the Helsinki City Orchestra (1959-1961), director of Helsinki's Käpylä Music School (1965-1966) and faculty member of the Sibelius Academy (1966-1991). Among his many awards are the Finnish Artist Professor of State (an honorific without fixed duties, modeled on the government grant Sibelius received as a young composer to support his creative work), Sibelius Prize, Arnold Bax Society Medal, membership in the Royal Swedish Academy and Commander in the Order of the Finnish Lion. Rautavaara has composed steadily and prolifically throughout his life — a dozen operas (including *Vincent*, based on the life of Van Gogh; *Thomas*, which tells the story of Finland's first bishop; and *Rasputin*), a ballet, eight symphonies, twelve concertos, much music for orchestra, chamber ensembles and chorus, piano pieces, songs — passing first through the influences of Stravinskian neo-classicism and then Schoenbergian serialism before arriving at the luminous, timeless, mystical idiom that has characterized much of his creative output since the early 1970s. "It is my belief," Rautavaara explained, "that music is great if, at some moment, the listener catches 'a glimpse of eternity through the window of time.' This, to my mind, is the only true justification for all art. Everything else is of secondary importance."

*Cantus Arcticus*, Rautavaara's "Concerto for Birds and Orchestra," was composed in 1972 for the first doctoral degree ceremony of the Arctic University of Oulu, the coastal city near the northern end of the Gulf of Bothnia that separates Finland from Sweden. The work, in three evocatively titled movements — *The Bog*, *Melancholy* and *Swans Migrating* — places the haunting cries of wild birds against a stately and mysterious orchestral backdrop.

## IGOR STRAVINSKY

Born 17 June 1882 in Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg; died 6 April 1971 in New York City

### Suite from *The Firebird* (1909-1910; 1919 Version)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Paris, 25 June 1910; Paris Opéra; Ballet Russe; Gabriel Pierné, conductor

PSO PREMIERE: 29 March 1935; Syria Mosque; Antonio Modarelli, conductor

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 22 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings

*Fireworks*. There could not have been a more appropriate title for the work that launched the meteoric career of Igor Stravinsky. He wrote that glittering orchestral miniature in 1908, while still under the tutelage of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and it shows all the dazzling instrumental technique that the student acquired from his teacher. Though the reception of *Fireworks* was cool when it was first performed at the Siloti Concerts in St. Petersburg on February 6, 1909, there was one member of the audience who listened with heightened interest. Serge Diaghilev was forming his Ballet Russe company at just that time, and he recognized in Stravinsky a talent to be watched. He approached the 27-year-old composer and requested orchestral transcriptions of short pieces by Chopin and Grieg that would be used in the first Parisian season of the Ballet Russe. Stravinsky did his work well and on time.

During that same winter, plans were beginning to stir in the creative wing of the Ballet Russe for a Russian folk ballet — something filled with legend and magic and fantasy. The composer Nikolai Tcherepnin was associated with the Ballet Russe and it was assumed that he would compose the music for a plot derived from several traditional Russian sources. However, Tcherepnin was given to inexplicable changes of mood and was losing interest in ballet at the time, so he withdrew from the project. Diaghilev then wrote to his old harmony professor, Anatoly Liadov, and asked him to consider taking on the task, informing him that the date for the premiere of the new work was firmly set for less than a year away. After too many weeks with no word from the dilatory composer, Diaghilev paid him a visit and was greeted with Liadov's report on his progress: "It won't be long now," Diaghilev was told. "It's well on its way. I have just today bought the manuscript paper." Realizing that *The Firebird* would never get off the ground at such a rate, Diaghilev inquired whether Stravinsky had any interest in taking over for Liadov. Though involved in another project (he had just completed the first act of the opera *The Nightingale*), he was eager to work with the wonderful talent that had assembled under Diaghilev's banner, so he agreed. After some delicate negotiations with Liadov, Stravinsky was officially awarded the commission in December, though his eagerness was so great that he had begun composing the music a month earlier.

It is well that Stravinsky had a head start, because he had less than six months to complete the score. In his *Chronicles*, he wrote, "Although alarmed by the fact that this was a commission with a fixed date, and afraid that I should fail to complete the work in time — I was still unaware of my own capabilities — I accepted the order. It was highly flattering to me to be chosen from among musicians of my generation, and to be allowed to collaborate in so important an enterprise side by side with personages who were generally recognized as masters in their own spheres." It soon became clear that Stravinsky belonged to that company of masters. During one rehearsal, Diaghilev whispered into the ear of the prima ballerina, Tamara Karsavina, "Mark him well. He is a man on the eve of celebrity." Diaghilev was as good a prophet as an impresario. *The Firebird*, which Stravinsky regarded as his first mature composition, was a stunning success at its premiere. With this score and *Petrushka* of the following year and the epochal *The Rite of Spring* of 1913, Stravinsky went in just five short years from an obscure student composer in Russia to one of the most famous musicians in the world. With somewhat uncharacteristic understatement, he said, "*The Firebird* radically altered my life."

The story of the ballet deals with the glittering Firebird and the evil ogre Kashchei, who captures maidens and turns men to stone if they enter his domain. Kashchei is immortal as long as his soul, which is preserved in the form of an egg in a casket, remains intact. The plot shows how Prince Ivan wanders into Kashchei's garden in pursuit of the Firebird; he captures it and exacts a feather before letting it go. Ivan meets a group of Kashchei's captive maidens and falls in love with one of them. The princesses return to Kashchei's palace. Ivan breaks open the gates to follow them inside, but he is captured by the ogre's guardian monsters. He waves the magic feather and the Firebird reappears to help him smash Kashchei's vital egg; the ogre immediately expires. All the captives are freed and Ivan and his Tsarevna are wed.

Stravinsky drew three concert suites from *The Firebird*. The 1919 suite includes six scenes from the complete score. The first two, *Introduction* and *The Dance of the Firebird*, accompany the appearance of the magical creature. The *Round Dance of the Princesses* uses the rhythm and style of an ancient Russian dance called the *Khorovod*. The *Infernal Dance of King Kashchei*, the most modern portion of the score, depicts the madness engendered by the appearance of the Firebird at Kashchei's court after the revelation to Ivan of the evil ogre's vulnerability. The haunting *Berceuse* is heard when the thirteenth princess, the one of whom Ivan is enamored, succumbs to a sleep-charm that saves her from the terrible King while Ivan destroys Kashchei's malevolent power. The *Finale*, initiated by the solo horn, confirms the life-force that had been threatened by Kashchei.