

## PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTIETH SEASON

### **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Riccardo Muti** Music Director

**Pierre Boulez** Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

**Yo-Yo Ma** Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Thursday, January 6, 2011, at 8:00

Saturday, January 8, 2011, at 8:00

**Sir Mark Elder** Conductor

**Stephen Hough** Piano

### **Liadov**

*Baba-Yaga*, Op. 56

### **Liadov**

*The Enchanted Lake*, Op. 62

### **Tchaikovsky**

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso—Allegro con spirito

Andantino semplice

Allegro con fuoco

STEPHEN HOUGH

## INTERMISSION

### **Prokofiev**

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100

Andante

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro giocoso

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Steinway is the official piano of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## Anatoly Liadov

Born May 11, 1855, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Died August 28, 1914, Polinovka, Novgorod district, Russia.

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### *Baba-Yaga, Op. 56*

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### *The Enchanted Lake, Op. 62*

Anatoly Liadov is best known for the music he didn't write. He regularly surfaces in music histories not as the composer of a handful of exquisitely crafted orchestral pieces, including *Baba-Yaga* and *The Enchanted Lake*, but as the man who blew his chance to write *The Firebird*, which of course turned out to be a career-making hit for Igor Stravinsky. According to the most familiar—though unsubstantiated—version, Liadov had only just gotten around to buying his manuscript paper when the first installment of the score was due, forcing Sergei Diaghilev, who was

staging the ballet, to fire him from the job. But in fact, Liadov wasn't even Diaghilev's first choice—the assignment had originally gone to Nikolai Tcherepnin, who withdrew—and he declined Diaghilev's offer from the start, for reasons we may never adequately understand.

Early on, Liadov had earned a reputation as a slacker. He regularly cut classes at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory—"he simply could not be bothered," said Rimsky-Korsakov, who was his teacher and found him "irresponsible." Sergei Prokofiev, who later studied with Liadov and admired him greatly,

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## *Baba-Yaga*

### COMPOSED

ca. 1891–1904

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

unknown

### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

November 6, 1908;  
Orchestra Hall; Frederick  
Stock conducting

### MOST RECENT

#### CSO PERFORMANCES

April 17, 1942; Orchestra  
Hall; Frederick Stock  
conducting

August 4, 1990; Ravinia  
Festival; Valery Gergiev  
conducting

### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two  
oboes and english horn,  
two clarinets and bass  
clarinet, two bassoons  
and contrabassoon, four

horns, two trumpets,  
three trombones and tuba,  
timpani, xylophone, cymbals,  
bass drum, strings

### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

3 minutes

### CSO RECORDING

A 1941 performance  
conducted by Frederick  
Stock is included in *Chicago  
Symphony Orchestra: The  
First 100 Years*

admitted in his memoirs that “Laziness was [his] most remarkable feature.” But from the start of his career, Liadov also had drawn attention for the boldness and orchestral brilliance of his compositions. As early as 1873—the time of his first songs, eventually published as his op. 1—Mussorgsky described him as “a new, unmis-takable, original, and Russian young talent.”

Igor Stravinsky, who owed his overnight fame to Liadov’s withdrawing, later said he liked Liadov’s music, but that he “could never have written a long and noisy ballet like *The Firebird*.” (“He was more relieved than offended, I suspect, when I accepted the commission,” Stravinsky said.) Throughout his life, Stravinsky was quick to defend

Liadov, claiming that he was a charming and cultured man—



Sergei Diaghilev (left) and Igor Stravinsky, 1921

“He always carried books under his arm—Maeterlinck, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Andersen: he liked tender, fantastical things”—and, above all, that he was “the most progressive of the musicians of his generation.” Liadov had championed Stravinsky’s own early works before others saw his genius, and once, in Stravinsky’s presence, he defended Scriabin, whose music

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## ***The Enchanted Lake***

### **COMPOSED**

1909

### **FIRST PERFORMANCE**

February 1909; Saint Petersburg, Russia

### **FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE**

November 24, 1911; Orchestra Hall; Frederick Stock conducting

### **MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE**

January 19, 2008; Antonio Pappano conducting

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

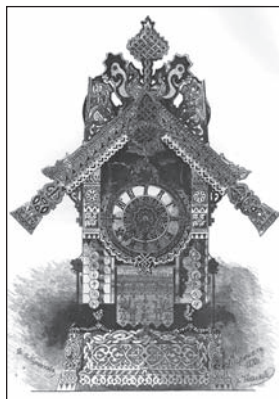
three flutes, two oboes, three clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, strings

### **APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**

7 minutes

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had not yet found an audience. It's hard to know what Stravinsky really thought of Liadov as a composer; he wrote



Victor Hartmann's pencil sketch, *Baba-Yaga's Hut on Hen's Legs*, which Mussorgsky commemorated in *Pictures from an Exhibition*.

admiringly of his sense of harmony and instrumental color, but he also called him “short-winded”—that is to say, in words that Stravinsky could not bring himself to use, a master of the miniature. (This was, after all, the era of the Big Piece: Mahler's Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth symphonies; Strauss's *Sinfonia domestica*; and Schoenberg's *Pelleas and Melisande* all date from the years Liadov was writing the two works performed this week.)

Liadov's catalog is slight: several songs and piano pieces, a handful of choral compositions, and less than a dozen small works for orchestra. His most successful compositions are the three brief descriptive orchestral pieces based on Russian fairy tales—*Baba-Yaga*, *Kikimora*,

and *The Enchanted Lake*—and they clearly demonstrate his mastery, precisely in an art form where Stravinsky made little headway.

*Baba-Yaga* takes as its subject the same witchlike character who flies on a giant pestle or broomstick in order to kidnap children that Mussorgsky had already portrayed in his *Pictures from an Exhibition* for piano. Liadov's wildly colorful rendition rivals Ravel's familiar orchestral transcription of Mussorgsky's piece, which wasn't done for another dozen years. Here, in the span of a mere three minutes, he establishes an otherworldly atmosphere and a vivid sense of action and adventure.

Liadov called *The Enchanted Lake* a fable-tableau. “How picturesque it is,” he wrote to a friend, “how clear, the multitude of stars hovering over the mysteries of the deep. . . . only nature—cold, malevolent, and fantastic as a fairy tale.” Liadov's music vividly suggests the serenity and delicate shadings of the night scene. “One has to feel the change of the colors, the chiaroscuro, the incessantly changeable stillness and seeming immobility.” It may not be the music of a composer ideally suited for *The Firebird*, but as a miniature landscape of unusual intimacy and finesse, it is close to perfection. ■



## Piotr Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840, Viatka, Russia.

Died November 18, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

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### Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

In a famously wrong snap judgment, Nikolai Rubinstein said that Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto—a concerto the composer wanted him to play—was worthless and, in fact, unplayable. Rubinstein, the director of the Moscow Conservatory and normally an ardent champion of Tchaikovsky's works (he conducted the world premieres of the early symphonies and *Romeo and Juliet*), was “not only the best pianist in Moscow but also a first-rate all-round musician,” Tchaikovsky later said, explaining why he had approached Rubinstein in the first place.

Tchaikovsky met with Rubinstein at the Moscow Conservatory on December 24, 1874. After playing through the first movement for

him, the composer was greeted with complete silence. “If only you knew,” he later wrote to Nadezhda von Meck, “what a foolish and unbearable situation it is to offer a friend a dish one has cooked oneself and to have that friend eat and say nothing!” Undeterred, though clearly rattled, Tchaikovsky played on to the end of the concerto. Then Rubinstein didn't mince words, declaring that the concerto was “impossible to play, that the passages were hackneyed, clumsy, and so awkward that there was no way even to correct them, that as a composition it was bad, vulgar.” Except for two or three pages, Rubinstein ventured, the score had to be completely redone. Angry and deeply wounded, Tchaikovsky left the

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#### COMPOSED

November 1874–  
February 21, 1875

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

October 25, 1875; Boston

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

October 16, 1891 (the Orchestra's inaugural concert); Auditorium Theatre; Rafael Joseffy, piano; Theodore Thomas conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCE

November 14, 2008; Simon Trpceski, piano; Ludovic Mortlot conducting

#### INSTRUMENTATION

solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings

#### APPROXIMATE

##### PERFORMANCE TIME

33 minutes

#### CSO RECORDINGS

1955, Emil Gilels, piano; Fritz Reiner conducting; RCA

1985, András Schiff, piano; Sir Georg Solti conducting; London

2003, Lang Lang, piano; Daniel Barenboim conducting; Deutsche Grammophon



**Tchaikovsky's patron,  
Nadezhda von Meck**

room without responding. Later that evening, Rubinstein went to see him at home and, without softening his original appraisal, proposed that if the composer made numerous radical

changes, he would reconsider performing it. Tchaikovsky replied, "I will not change a single note and will publish it exactly as it is now!"

On January 9, Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Anatoly that he had fallen into a "great depression" over the holidays. "There is no one here whom I might call a friend in the true sense of the word," he continued, pointedly referring to Rubinstein, whom until recently he had considered one of his closest friends, and he admitted that he was still recovering from the blow to his composer's pride. That winter, however, he sent the piano concerto to Hans von Bülow, a pianist and conductor best known for his championship of Wagner's music (he led the premieres of both *Tristan and Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger*). "The ideas are so original, so noble, so powerful," Bülow wrote back, "and the details so interesting; though there are many of them, they do not impair the clearness and unity of the work. The form is mature, ripe, and distinguished in style." Although Bülow had retired from

the concert stage during the 1860s (after his wife Cosima left him for Wagner) and had only recently resumed his career, he now became the dedicatee of the concerto and agreed to play the premiere of the work in Boston, where it was advertised as a Grand Concerto. "To Boston is reserved the honor of its initial representation, and the opportunity to impress the first verdict on a work of surpassing musical interest," the local announcement boasted, unaware that Rubinstein had already done so. The day after the premiere, Bülow sent what is thought to have been the first cable ever dispatched from Boston to Moscow, telling Tchaikovsky of the concerto's undisputed triumph with the Boston public.

The concerto has been overwhelmingly popular ever since, and in 1941 it even inspired a hit song, "Tonight We Love," which was rather unscrupulously hacked from its broad opening phrases. The concerto's celebrated introduction, with its radiant string melody riding over the piano's thunderous chords, is both its best-known and most puzzling concept. After a dramatic horn call, Tchaikovsky establishes the "wrong" key of D-flat major and then introduces a theme so splendid, so complete, and so satisfying as it stands that, despite audience expectations, it will never return. Although this makes for a potentially lopsided design (with the most familiar music over before the concerto proper begins), Tchaikovsky's subsequent material is of such dazzling color, flair, and orchestral brilliance

that the remainder of the score is not a letdown, even after such a breathtaking opening chapter.

The main body of the first movement—it begins with nervous, jumpy passagework—introduces a clarinet melody Tchaikovsky said he heard played by an itinerant musician at a local fair. This is a large, finely detailed movement, filled with characteristic Tchaikovskian touches like the barrages of quadruple octaves in the piano solo and capped by an expansive cadenza.

The remaining two movements are brief in comparison. The *Andantino* is part slow movement, part scherzo; it's all lightness and effortless charm. The main theme of the playful midsection is based on "Il faut s'amuser et rire" (Laugh and enjoy yourself), a chanson associated with Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt, whom Tchaikovsky

courted in the late 1860s, and, at least for a few days, even thought of marrying. The finale includes a Russian dance derived from a Ukrainian melody and ends with a majestic coda that manages to match the grandeur and sweep of the concerto's opening without once recalling its main theme.

A postscript on first impressions. It didn't take long for Nikolai Rubinstein to admit his mistake, and shortly after the premiere he began to play the concerto with great success—"What was impossible in 1875 became thoroughly possible in 1878," Tchaikovsky observed. He quickly became a celebrated interpreter of the work, and the composer and the pianist-conductor renewed their friendship. After Rubinstein's death in 1881, Tchaikovsky composed a piano trio in his honor and dedicated it "to the memory of a great artist." ■



## Sergei Prokofiev

Born April 23, 1891, Sontsovka, the Ukraine.

Died March 5, 1953, Nikolina Gora, near Moscow, Russia.

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## Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100

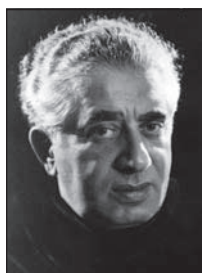
**S**ergei Prokofiev spent the summer of 1944 at a large country estate provided by the Union of Soviet Composers as a refuge from the war and as a kind of think tank.

Prokofiev arrived early in the summer and found that his colleagues included Glière, Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Khachaturian, and Miaskovsky—summer camp for the most distinguished Soviet composers of the time.

Although Ivanovo, as the retreat was called, often was referred to as a rest home, there

was little leisure once Prokofiev moved in. He maintained a rigorous daily schedule—as he had all his life—and began to impose it on the others as well. “The regularity with which he worked amazed us all,” Khachaturian later recalled. Prokofiev ate breakfast, marched to his studio to compose, and scheduled his walks and tennis games by the clock. In the evening, he insisted the composers all get together to compare notes, literally. Prokofiev was delighted, and clearly not surprised, that he usually had the most to show for his day’s work.

It was a particularly productive summer for Prokofiev—he composed both his Eighth Piano Sonata and the Fifth Symphony



Armenian composer  
Aram Khachaturian

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### COMPOSED

1944

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

January 13, 1945; Moscow, the composer conducting

### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

November 21, 1946; George Szell conducting

### MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

February 12, 2005; Orchestra Hall; Lorin Maazel conducting

July 15, 2009; Ravinia Festival; James Conlon conducting

### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, piano, harp, timpani, triangle, cymbals, tambourine, snare drum, woodblock, bass drum, tam-tam, strings

### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

46 minutes

### CSO RECORDINGS

1992, James Levine conducting, Deutsche Grammophon

A 1958 performance conducted by Fritz Reiner is included in *Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years*

before he returned to Moscow. The sonata is prime Prokofiev and often played, but the symphony is perhaps the best known and most regularly performed of all his works. It had been fifteen years since Prokofiev's last symphony, and both that symphony and the one preceding it had been by-products of theater pieces: the Third Symphony is musically related to the opera *The Flaming Angel*, and the Fourth to the ballet *The Prodigal Son*. Not since his Second Symphony, completed in 1925, had Prokofiev composed a purely abstract symphony, or one that he began from scratch.

Although it was written at the height of the war, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony isn't a wartime symphony in the traditional sense—not in the vivid and descriptive manner of Shostakovich's Seventh, composed during the siege of Leningrad and written, in Carl Sandburg's words, "with the heart's blood"—or his Eighth, which coolly contemplates the horrors of war. Prokofiev's Symphony no. 5 is intended to glorify the human spirit—"praising the free and happy man—his strength, his generosity, and the purity of his soul." In its own way, this outlook makes it an even greater product of the war, because it was designed to uplift and console the Soviet people. "I cannot say I chose this theme," Prokofiev wrote. "It was born in me and had to express itself." Nonetheless, such optimistic and victorious music cheered the Russian authorities; it might well have been made to order. In his

1946 autobiography, Prokofiev writes: "It is the duty of the composer, like the poet, the sculptor, or the painter, to serve the rest of



**Prokofiev conducting a rehearsal for a broadcast by Radio Moscow, 1934**

humanity, to beautify human life, and to point the way to a radiant future. Such is the immutable code of art as I see it." It also was the code of art Soviet composers were expected to embrace during the war, but Prokofiev couldn't have written a work as powerful and convincing as his Fifth Symphony if he didn't truly believe those words.

The Fifth Symphony would inevitably be known as a victory celebration. Just before the first performance, which Prokofiev conducted, word reached Moscow that the Russian army had scored a decisive victory on the Vistula River. As Prokofiev raised his baton, the sound of cannons was heard from the distance. Buoyed by both the news and the triumphant tone of the music, the premiere was a great success. It was the last time Prokofiev conducted in public.

Three weeks later he had a mild heart attack, fell down the stairs in his apartment, and suffered a slight concussion. Although he recovered his spirits—and eventually his strength and creative powers as well—Prokofiev continued to feel the effects of the accident for the remaining eight years of his life.

**T**he first movement of the Fifth Symphony is intense and dramatic, but neither aggressive nor violent, like much of the music written at the time. It's moderately

paced (Prokofiev writes *andante*) and broadly lyrical throughout. The scherzo, in contrast, is quick and insistent, touched by a sense of humor that sometimes reveals a sharp, cutting edge. The third movement is lyrical and brooding, like much of Prokofiev's finest slow music. After a brief and sober introduction, the finale points decisively toward a radiant future. ■

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**Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.**

## Symphony Center Information



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