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, February 3, 2011, at 8:00
Friday, February 4, 2011, at 1:30
Saturday, February 5, 2011, at 8:00
Tuesday, February 8, 2011, at 7:30

Riccardo Muti Conductor
Mitsuko Uchida Piano

Cherubini

Overture in G Major

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

Schumann

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54
Allegro affettuoso
Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso—
Allegro vivace

MITSUKO UCHIDA

INTERMISSION

Shostakovich

Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47
Moderato—Allegro non troppo—Largamente
Allegretto
Largo
Allegro non troppo—Allegro

Saturday evening's concert is generously sponsored by an anonymous donor.

CSO Tuesday series concerts are sponsored by United Airlines.

Steinway is the official piano of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

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Luigi Cherubini

Born September 14, 1760, Florence, Italy.
Died March 15, 1842, Paris, France.

Overture in G Major

In 1841, shortly before Luigi Cherubini died, he had his portrait painted by his close friend, the popular neoclassical artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. The painting now hangs in the Louvre, where it is admired by millions of visitors each year; it has become the lasting image of a major composer who is regularly overlooked, if not nearly forgotten today.

Born four years after Mozart, and outliving Beethoven by fifteen years, Cherubini was a name to be reckoned with for a good half century. Beethoven, remarkably, said that Cherubini was the greatest composer among his contemporaries (which, just for the record, boasted a fair number of luminaries, including Rossini). Beethoven had written him an outright fan letter about the opera *Médée* a decade before they finally met. When Cherubini's opera *Faniska* was staged in Vienna in 1806, both Beethoven and Haydn were in the audience and spoke glowingly of the work. Mendelssohn admired Cherubini the opera composer for "his sparkling fire, his clever and unexpected transitions, and the neatness and grace with which he writes." Bruckner learned how to write his own sacred music by copying out movements of Cherubini's masses to study. Brahms, the most historically aware composer of the nineteenth century, revered Cherubini, and he put a copy of the Ingres painting on the wall of his apartment (a large white bust of Beethoven, the only other composer so honored, sat over the piano). And Schumann, whose music follows that of Cherubini on this week's program, said that "the more we come to understand him the more we come to respect him"—perhaps anticipating that one day people would make snap judgments on Cherubini's importance based

COMPOSED
1815

FIRST PERFORMANCE
1815, London

These are the first CSO performances

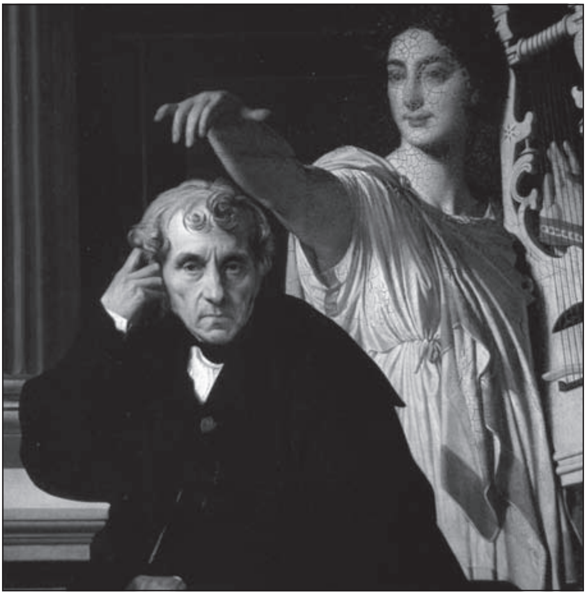
INSTRUMENTATION
one flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
12 minutes

on knowing a mere fraction of his large output. In one of Schumann's most important essays as a critic, written around the time he composed his piano concerto, he ranked Cherubini as "superior as a harmonist to all his contemporaries," calling him the "refined, scholarly, interesting Italian whose severe reserve of strength and character sometimes leads me to compare him with Dante."

Cherubini was born in Florence, and he enjoyed success with both serious and comic operas in Italy and in London before moving to Paris in 1788. There he had a string of hits, including *Lodoïska* in 1791 and *Médée* in 1797 (decades later Brahms still singled it out as "the work we musicians recognize among ourselves as the highest peak of dramatic music"). His fame continued to spread. *Les deux journées* was so popular in Vienna that it was staged by two rival theaters on successive nights. His most celebrated works were his so-called rescue operas, which were particularly apt during revolutionary times, when hairbreadth escapes were everyday occurrences. In the first years of the nineteenth century, when Beethoven decided to write an opera, Cherubini's works were the obvious models. In fact, it was Emanuel Schikaneder's staging of *Lodoïska* in Vienna in 1802 that served as the immediate inspiration for Beethoven's *Fidelio,* the only rescue opera that is still performed today.

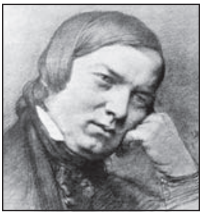
By the early years of the nineteenth century, Cherubini had already become that rarest of musical figures at the time, an international celebrity. So it is hardly surprising that the new Royal Philharmonic Society in London asked him to write three works—an overture, a symphony, and an Italian vocal piece—for its second season in 1815 and to come to London to oversee their performance. The society had been founded "to promote the performance, in the most perfect manner possible of the best and most approved instrumental music," and its members wanted to prove



Luigi Cherubini and the Muse of Lyric Poetry.
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1842

their seriousness by commissioning the most important composers of the day. (Their track record is remarkable: both Beethoven's Ninth and Mendelssohn's *Italian* symphonies were written at their request.) Cherubini was apparently the first composer the society approached—at the instigation of Muzio Clementi, the Roman-born piano sensation who then lived in England, and Giovanni Viotti, the famed violin virtuoso, who had first met the composer in Paris in the 1780s.

When Cherubini arrived in London on February 25, 1815, he had the overture and the vocal work with him. (The symphony was written in March and April.) The vocal piece, a cantata, *Inno alla primavera,* is almost never performed today; the Symphony in D major, Cherubini's only work in the signpost classical form, was not a great success in London and was later reworked as a string quartet; it remains a rare visitor on concert programs in either version. The concert overture in G major that is played this week—for the first time by the Chicago Symphony—is one of Cherubini's finest works, a distillation of all he had learned writing overtures for the opera house. It is dramatic—as "theatrical" as any opera overture—passionate, impeccably crafted (this was a Cherubini hallmark), and highly inventive—a reminder of how creativity flourished endlessly within the supposedly limited framework of classical style. It is a perfect curtain-raiser for a concert, which is what Cherubini had in mind, but it also opens a window for concertgoers today on a distinguished career that has largely slipped from view. ■



Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810, Zwickau, Saxony, Germany.
Died July 29, 1856, Endenich, near Bonn, Germany.

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54

When, in 1828, at the age of eighteen, Robert Schumann began his piano studies with Friedrich Wieck, Wieck's daughter Clara was just nine and already a prodigy. Perhaps she peeked in on her father's lessons as Robert played Hummel's A minor concerto, his first assignment. Eighteen years later, Robert Schumann would unveil his own A minor piano concerto, played by his young bride, the same Clara, now grown up and a major talent. We wouldn't know from this effortless and exuberant music that their wedding in September 1840 met with her father's fierce disapproval, or that Schumann had been struggling to write a concerto for nearly twenty years.

As early as 1827, Schumann's diary mentions the "beginnings of a piano concerto in F minor." That piece was completed in 1830 in a version for piano alone and published as his op. 1, the *Abegg* Variations (named for the young woman who held Robert's affections before Clara). There's evidence of work on another piano concerto, in D minor, the year before his marriage to Clara. Then, secure in the strength of his love, following the extraordinary outpouring of song in the months surrounding his wedding, Schumann dashed off a fantasy in A minor for piano and orchestra—a one-movement work

COMPOSED
1841 (first movement), 1845 (second and third movements

FIRST PERFORMANCE
January 1, 1846; Leipzig, Germany; Clara Schumann, piano

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
April 22, 1898; Auditorium Theatre; Laura Sanford, piano, with Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
April 21, 2007; Orchestra Hall; Hélène Grimaud, piano, with Andrey Boreyko conducting

July 15, 2009; Ravinia Festival; Garrick Ohlsson, piano, with James Conlon conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
31 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS
1959; Bryon Janis, piano, with Fritz Reiner conducting; RCA

1960; Van Cliburn, piano, with Fritz Reiner conducting; RCA

1967; Artur Rubinstein, piano, with Carlo Maria Giulini conducting; RCA written in little more than a week. Clara played through the piece at a reading rehearsal in the Leipzig Gewandhaus in August 1841. (She gave birth to their first child, Marie, barely two weeks later, establishing the balance of career and family she would maintain for many years.)

The first year of his marriage was a remarkably productive period for Schumann—within a matter of weeks he wrote his first two symphonies, began other orchestral works, and turned his attention to opera and then chamber music, while the fantasy sat on a shelf, unpublished, for some time. In the summer of 1845, Schumann composed a rondo-finale and a middle movement to go with the fantasy to complete the piece we now know as his Piano Concerto in A minor. Clara gave the first performance of the concerto at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on New Year's Day, 1846.

Clara Schumann, about 1853

This A minor concerto owes a debt to the concertos by Moscheles and Hummel rather than to the Viennese models of Mozart and Beethoven. Schumann calls it "something between symphony, concerto, and grand sonata." It's not any of those, but an extensive work for piano solo with an indispensable orchestral commentary. Schumann ignores the powerful drama and delicate balance of orchestra and piano favored by Mozart and Beethoven—his orchestration is conveniently transparent, allowing the spotlight to fall on the piano in the opening measures and never shift thereafter. The concerto reflects the ebullient, unforced lyricism that marks Schumann's work at its best. It is, in Donald Tovey's admiring opinion, "recklessly pretty."

Although it relies on sonata form, the first movement was written as a fantasy, not as the opening of a concerto, and so it doesn't feature the double exposition (one for orchestra alone, another in which the solo joins) common to early nineteenth-century concertos. It opens with a flamboyant piano flourish that establishes the prominence of the piano solo and continues with a plaintive four-note descending motif that will tie all three movements together. Although this is essentially the same motif often associated with longing and farewell in Schumann's other music from this period, here it finds a home in one of the sunniest, most untroubled works ever written in a minor key.

The texture is a tapestry of brilliant, endless filigree in the piano part woven with the strong strands of melody which periodically emerge in other instruments. After the first orchestral outburst, the piano ventures into the unexpected key of A-flat to meditate at length on the first motif, now as expansive and eloquent as a Chopin nocturne (Schumann had already done an outright Chopin imitation in one section of *Carnaval).* After a fairly standard recapitulation, the piano gathers momentum and plays on, right through music designed for orchestra alone, into a grand, written-out cadenza. Finally, orchestra and piano march off together with a snappy version of the main theme, which retreats into the distance, though the piano lingers to provide the final cadence.

RES SEVERA VERUM GAUDIUM

The Leipzig Gewandhaus, where Clara Schumann gave the premiere of her husband's A minor piano concerto in 1846

The second movement begins with awkward exchanges between piano and orchestra—the halting, careful conversation of recent acquaintances. A lovely swinging theme that appears in the cello brings the movement to life. The conversation starts up again but is interrupted by ghostly reminders of the concerto's opening four-note motif, and then, without pause, by the full force of the finale's rondo theme.

The finale has nearly a thousand measures of music, but it flies by as one coherent, nearly breathless statement. In addition to the boldly assertive rondo theme itself, Schumann tosses out a number of felicitous tunes, some, like his most characteristic melodies, rhythmically playful enough to discourage a tapping foot. After a final orchestral reprise of the rondo theme, the piano launches an extensive coda, which seems quite reluctant to bring such exuberance to an end. ■

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906, Saint Petersburg, Russia.
Died August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia.

Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47

Dmitri Shostakovich first came to the United States in March 1949. Before a crowd of 30,000 people in Madison Square Garden, he sat at a piano and played the scherzo from his Fifth Symphony. He arrived here as an official participant in the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, and he came, against his better judgment, because Stalin had telephoned him and asked him to come.

It is a disturbing and symbolic image: this great man, so shy and unassuming behind his thick glasses, being trotted out to perform his best-known symphonic music on a piano in a sports arena. This was but one of many battles Shostakovich fought in his war between the public platform and his private thoughts. A photograph taken at the time shows Shostakovich, his eyes avoiding the camera, standing uneasily between Norman Mailer and Arthur Miller.

Dmitri Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is perhaps the best-known work of art born from the marriage of politics and music. In 1949, when the Soviet composer came to America, the circumstances of its creation were as famous as the music itself. The facts are few, but telling. On January 28, 1936, while Shostakovich was working on his Fourth Symphony, *Pravda* denounced his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in an article

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COMPOSED
1937

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 21, 1937; Leningrad, Russia

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
July 17, 1941; Ravinia Festival; Nicolai Malko conducting

February 10, 1944; Orchestra Hall; Désiré Defauw conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE
October 4, 2008; Orchestra Hall; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting

August 1, 2009; Ravinia Festival; Christoph Eschenbach conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and E-flat clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, bells, xylophone, two harps, celesta, piano, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
46 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS
1977, André Previn conducting, Angel

2006, Myung-Whun Chung conducting, CSO Resound download called "Muddle instead of Music." Although the opera had been triumphantly received in both Moscow and Leningrad during the previous two years—and in more than 175 performances—it was suddenly and decisively attacked as fidgety, screaming, neurotic, coarse, primitive, and vulgar. Although Shostakovich himself was not the recipient of such well-chosen adjectives, there was no question of where he now stood in the eyes of Soviet authorities.

Shostakovich went ahead and finished his Fourth Symphony—a vast, exploratory, tragic work—but when it came time to unveil it in public, he had second thoughts and withdrew the score. (It waited twenty-five years to be performed.) Then, after a long silence, came his official response, written in just three months. Shostakovich now issued "the creative reply of a Soviet artist to justified criticism," the astonishing phrase that is forever linked with the work's official title, Symphony no. 5.

Sorting fact from fiction is no mere pastime in discussing Soviet music. On such distinctions hangs our understanding of important musical impulses. Many a listener, as well as political historian, has pondered the justification for the Soviet criticism and the motivation for the reply. For the record, we can consider the composer's own words, written at the time, although they are less than fully enlightening: "The theme of my Fifth Symphony is the making of a man. I saw man with all his experiences in the center of the composition, which is lyrical in form from beginning to end. In the finale, the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements are resolved in optimism and joy of living." There is, of course, some incontrovertible evidence, like the wild success of the Fifth Symphony when it was introduced on November 21, 1937, in Leningrad under the baton of Eugene Mravinsky, and the subsequent official embrace of Shostakovich, speedily returned to favor.

In the end, the music must speak for itself. In place of the "screaming," "primitive" music that got him into trouble, Shostakovich now gives us clarity and brilliance. And, despite intermittent tensions, we have a happy ending. Like Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler before him, Shostakovich has written a fifth symphony that sets out to triumph over adversity, with the major key supplanting the minor in the final movement. The power of this music is undeniable, although not everyone was satisfied that its deeper content was really politically correct—after hearing Shostakovich's new symphony for the first time, the great novelist Boris Pasternak wrote, "He went and said everything, and no one did anything to him for it."

Clarity of form and texture is the hallmark of the large—and not uncomplicated—first movement. From the jagged *Grosse Fuge*–like opening theme to the climatic, grotesque march over a relentless snare-drum rhythm, Shostakovich takes pains not to lose us in intricate lines of counterpoint or disorienting harmonies. For every page of the score that calls on the full resources of the orchestra, there are countless others on which few notes are written. The second theme, for example, is a serene, soaring violin melody of wide leaps—we are never quite certain where it will land next—over simple chords that slowly change colors as they repeat their "tum ta-ta" pattern.

The Allegretto that follows (a traditional scherzo and trio form) is as merry and good-natured as any music that came from Shostakovich's pen. If this were the only music of his that we knew, we might not be so quick to read a note of irony into the solo violin's teasing melody in the trio. But this is music in a singularly untroubled vein, and that is precisely what the Madison Square Garden crowd was meant to hear.

Shostakovich claimed he wrote the Largo at white heat in three days—information that is hard to digest once one hears this calm and controlled music, moving slowly over vast, wide-open spaces. The lucid, thin textures occasionally turn spartan—a solo oboe melody against a single sustained violin note, a flute duet accompanied by a quiet harp—but every phrase carries meaning and we hang on each note.

If darkness blankets the eloquent Largo, the finale erupts with power and brilliance. A triumphant conclusion was mandatory—particularly after the troubled thoughts of the preceding slow movement. When the D minor struggles finally shift into an affirmative D major blast, it is only our hindsight—our knowledge of the undeniable sorrow and despair of Shostakovich's last works—that suggests this happy ending is somehow forced. ■

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

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