The Chicago Symphony Orchestra welcomes Gianandrea Noseda, who has graciously agreed to conduct this week's performances to allow Maestro Muti additional time to recover from surgery.

Please note that Borodin's Polovtsian Dances replace Varèse's *Arcana.*

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

Global Sponsor of the CSO

Thursday, February 17, 2011, at 8:00
Friday, February 18, 2011, at 8:00
Saturday, February 19, 2011, at 8:00

Gianandrea Noseda Conductor
Leif Ove Andsnes Piano

Stravinsky
Divertimento, Suite from *The Fairy's Kiss*
Sinfonia
Danses suisses
Scherzo
Pas de deux

Borodin
Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor*

INTERMISSION

Brahms
Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83
Allegro non troppo
Allegro appassionato
Andante
John Sharp, *cello*
Allegretto grazioso

LEIF OVE ANDSNES

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.

Igor Stravinsky

Born June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum, Russia.
Died April 6, 1971, New York City.

Divertimento, Suite from *The Fairy's Kiss*

Igor Stravinsky caught his only glimpse of Tchaikovsky when he was just eleven years old. Stravinsky and his mother had gone to the Mariinsky Theatre to hear Igor's father, the acclaimed bass Fyodor, sing in the fiftieth anniversary production of Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila*. During the first intermission, when they stepped from their box, his mother suddenly said: "Igor, look—there is Tchaikovsky." As Stravinsky later recalled, "I looked and saw a man with white hair, large shoulders, a corpulent back, and this image has remained in the retina of my memory all my life."

When Tchaikovsky died two weeks later, Stravinsky was deeply moved (when he broke the news of Tchaikovsky's death to his fellow classmates, one of them asked what grade he was in). Igor would always remember the program book for a memorial concert he and his mother attended, which had Tchaikovsky's portrait, framed in black, on the cover. It may well have reminded him of the photograph signed by Tchaikovsky that hung in his father's studio, "the most treasured object" among many musical treasures. He also knew that, in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky had praised the elder Stravinsky's singing.

COMPOSED
1928: *The Fairy's Kiss*, complete ballet
1934: Divertimento, suite drawn from ballet

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 27, 1928; ballet

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
January 17, 1935; Orchestra Hall; the composer conducting

CSO PERFORMANCE, STRAVINKSKY CONDUCTING
July 8, 1965; Ravinia Festival; the composer conducting the complete ballet score

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE
April 21, 2007; Orchestra Hall; Andrey Boreyko, conductor

INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, bass drum, harp, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
23 minutes

CSO RECORDING
1958; Fritz Reiner, conductor; RCA

In fact, Igor's father was one of Tchaikovsky's pallbearers, the one who placed the wreath on the grave.

Stravinsky had known and loved Tchaikovsky's music from childhood—certainly ever since he was taken to *The Sleeping Beauty* for the first time at the age of seven or eight. Some thirty years later, acting on a suggestion from Diaghilev, Stravinsky even orchestrated two passages from *The Sleeping Beauty* that Tchaikovsky had cut before the first performance. Stravinsky's next work, the opera *Mavra,* was dedicated to "the memory of Tchaikovsky, Glinka, and Pushkin," and prompted by Diaghilev's *Sleeping Beauty* revival. And so, in 1928, when Stravinsky was asked to compose a ballet inspired by Tchaikovsky's music for Ida Rubinstein's new company, Stravinsky jumped at the challenge. The ballet was to be produced in November 1928, on the thirty-fifth anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death.

For his subject, Stravinsky turned to Hans Christian Andersen, whose powerful and fantastic tales had been part of Stravinsky's childhood, along with Tchaikovsky's music. He picked Andersen's "The Ice Maiden," apparently finding in Tchaikovsky's creative life (branded by the Muse's kiss) a parallel with the tale of a boy who is doomed by the kiss of the Ice Maiden. The ballet was described as an allegory.

Having already breathed new life into music by Pergolesi in *Pulcinella,* here Stravinsky decided to use music by Tchaikovsky, limiting himself only to works not written for orchestra. But where *Pulcinella* fashioned something purely Stravinskian out of old music he held in no particular regard, *The Fairy's Kiss* is a loving homage to his favorite Russian composer. Later, Stravinsky claimed he could no longer remember "which music is Tchaikovsky's and which mine," but at various times he identified (not always accurately) a number of Tchaikovsky's songs and piano pieces that he had borrowed. (Lawrence Morton eventually narrowed the debt list to some fourteen works.)

Sergei Diaghilev (left) and Igor Stravinsky, 1921

Stravinsky set to work with untiring enthusiasm (once, when his train was stalled for four hours, he sat in his compartment quietly writing, determined to lose no time). He rented a room in a mason's cottage where he could work undisturbed, although the potent aroma of the family's lunch disrupted his thoughts every day at noon. The music was barely completed in time for the premiere, which the composer conducted, on November 27, 1928; Stravinsky wasn't entirely pleased with

Nijinsky's choreography (the public evidently shared his view), but he had been too busy finishing the music to check out the dancing.

The music is prime Stravinsky, largely based on lesser Tchaikovsky. Only two Tchaikovsky works are used complete; the rest are excerpts. Most are taken from little-known songs and piano miniatures. Stravinsky's handling of borrowed material runs the gamut: he merely assigns instruments to the notes of Tchaikovsky's popular *Humoresque* for piano, but much of the original music is so totally transformed that it's easy to understand Stravinsky's not remembering which music was whose.

As early as 1931, Stravinsky approved playing excerpts from the forty-five-minute ballet score as a concert-hall suite. In 1945, he finally settled on his own suite, which he called the Divertimento, cutting out nearly half of the music, but including substantial chunks from the first three of the ballet's four scenes.

In 1962, Stravinsky returned to Russia after nearly fifty years. The Stravinskys, along with Robert Craft, arrived in Moscow on September 21. On October 4, they flew to Leningrad, where Stravinsky was met by Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov (the youngest son of the composer), who was then living in the apartment where Stravinsky had written *The Firebird* more than half a century before. On October 8, Stravinsky conducted a concert of his own music. Before the performance, Stravinsky addressed the crowd, saying that he had attended his first concert in this hall: "Sixty-nine years ago I sat with my mother in that corner," he said, pointing, "at a concert conducted by Napravnik to mourn the death of Tchaikovsky." He then conducted music from *The Fairy's Kiss*. ■

THE FAIRY'S KISS: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE COMPLETE BALLET

The Divertimento draws music from the first three scenes. The first movement includes most of scene 1; the second movement is identical with the opening of scene 2; the third movement is a shortened version of the beginning of scene 3; the fourth movement consists of the last three numbers of the pas de deux in scene 3 with a concert ending.

SCENE 1 (PROLOGUE). Pursued by spirits in a storm, a mother is separated from her child, who is found and kissed by a fairy. A group of villagers passing by discovers the abandoned child and takes him away.

SCENE 2. Eighteen years later, the young man and his fiancée are taking part in a village fête. They join in the country dances. When his fiancée and the villagers have gone home, the young man is approached by the fairy disguised as a gypsy. After reading his hand and promising him great happiness in the future, she takes him to a mill.

SCENE 3. There he finds his fiancée surrounded by her friends. The lovers dance together, but when his fiancée retires to put on her bridal dress, the fairy reappears disguised as the bride and carries him off to her everlasting dwelling place.

SCENE 4 (EPILOGUE). She then kisses him again, this time on the sole of his foot.

Alexander Borodin

Born November 12, 1833, Saint Petersburg, Russia.
Died February 27, 1887, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor*

On December 3, 1953, a musical called *Kismet* opened on Broadway at the Ziegfeld Theater. It ran for 583 performances and made hit songs out of several melodies by Alexander Borodin, although it was Robert Wright and George Forrest who reaped the profits, since they were the ones who borrowed Borodin's music, unprotected by international copyright, less than seventy years after his death.

This was the unfortunate fate—kismet, if you like—of Alexander Borodin. He was not a professional composer; he earned his living and much of his fame as a scientist and a professor at the Academy of Medicine in Saint Petersburg. Borodin was highly regarded in the scientific community, and he was acknowledged as a pioneer in organic chemistry. He became surprisingly famous as a composer, since he only wrote some forty works—in fact, it is remarkable that he found time to compose at all. Borodin worked intermittently for eighteen years on *Prince Igor,* a vast opera in a prologue and four acts; it was the central musical achievement of his career.

Borodin began *Prince Igor* in 1869, but put it aside almost immediately to compose his second symphony. He picked up the opera again in 1874 and worked on it in fits and starts until his death. Progress was repeatedly stalled by the demands of his "other" career and by his insistence on writing his own libretto, which, like the music, became a perpetual work in progress, often altered or refined but never actually

COMPOSED
Prince Igor: 1869–1887

FIRST PERFORMANCE
Polovtsian Dances: March 11, 1879; Saint Petersburg, Russia

Prince Igor: November 16, 1890; Saint Petersburg, Russia

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
October 17, 1924; Orchestra Hall; Frederick Stock, conductor

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
April 17, 1994; Orchestra Hall; Valery Gergiev, conductor

July 20, 1997; Ravinia Festival; Erich Kunzel, conductor

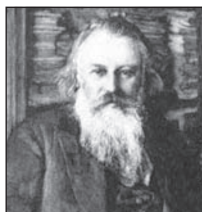
INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, triangle, tambourine, cymbals, snare drum, bass drum, glockenspiel, harp, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
14 minutes

completed. At the time of his death, *Prince Igor* was still unfinished and large portions of the score weren't yet orchestrated. Although Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov filled out the instrumental writing and pieced together the third act, which was left in a particularly sketchy state, *Prince Igor* never found sufficient popularity to justify Borodin's great hopes and protracted labor.

Composer Anatoly Liadov

The opera tells the story of an expedition undertaken in 1185 by Prince Igor and his son Vladimir against the Polovtsi, a tribe of nomads. They are taken prisoner, and, in traditional operatic fashion, Vladimir falls in love with the daughter of the enemy. The Polovtsian Dances crown the lavish second-act banquet scene, where the tribal chief and his slaves entertain the prisoners. Borodin finished writing the dances in 1875, but didn't get around to orchestrating them; when Rimsky-Korsakov decided to perform them on a concert in Saint Petersburg in 1879, he, Borodin, and composer Anatoly Liadov had to work through the night to finish the scoring. (The completed pages were hung up to dry on a clothesline stretched across Rimsky's study.) The dances achieved their first international success outside the opera house when Sergei Diaghilev choreographed them for his Paris troupe in 1909. Several separate dances, both lovely and savage, are presented in an uninterrupted flow. They slowly gain in momentum as they proceed, and then they are combined in a grand finale. Their melodic flair and exotic orchestral color have made them a favorite in the concert hall—without the chorus that Borodin originally called for—although the famous oboe melody is still known to many concertgoers as *Kismet's* biggest hit, "Stranger in Paradise." ■



Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany.
Died April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83

Like Dürer, Goethe, and a number of German composers before him, Brahms found inspiration in Italy. His first trip was in the spring of 1878, and, as he wrote home to his publisher Fritz Simrock, it was filled with "magical days." Brahms made eight Italian sojourns over the next few years (he liked to spend his birthday there if possible), preparing each time with his characteristic compulsion by reading guidebooks and studying treatises on art. His personal guide on the first trip was Theodore Billroth, a prominent Viennese surgeon, a devoted amateur musician (he played piano duets with the composer), and a walking Baedeker. During their travels, Brahms was moved to put pen to paper, not to record the pleasures of the trip—at least not in the form of a conventional diary—but to begin sketching a new piano concerto in B-flat.

At home, Brahms put this music aside, as if, finding himself stuck in Vienna, he couldn't continue with music conceived in the warm Italian sun. Soon his attention was diverted by his violin concerto, a work that sublimated some of the ideas for the piano concerto, and, at the same time, gave birth to new ones that he would use when he returned to it. Back in Italy

COMPOSED
1878–July 7, 1881

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 9, 1881; the composer as soloist

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
March 1, 1895; Auditorium Theatre; Rafael Joseffy, piano; Theodore Thomas, conductor

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
October 27, 2007; Orchestra Hall; Emanuel Ax, piano; Bernard Haitink, conductor

July 7, 2009; Ravinia Festival; Yefim Bronfman, piano; James Conlon, conductor

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

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
48 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS
1958; Emil Gilels, piano; Fritz Reiner, conductor; RCA

1960; Sviatoslav Richter, piano; Erich Leinsdorf, conductor; RCA

1961; Van Cliburn, piano; Fritz Reiner, conductor; RCA

A 1977 performance with Daniel Barenboim, piano, and Carlo Maria Giulini, conductor, is included in *Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years*

several months later, Brahms was filled with feelings he could hardly name; he returned to Vienna noting that it seemed "wrong" to call it home after days of such unexpected contentment elsewhere. He immediately turned to his sketches, and, in one virtually uninterrupted sweep, forged his most magnificent concerto, one of the largest—both grand and long—in the literature.

We could read all of Brahms's letters and learn very little about his music. Like many composers, he said what he had to say in the pages of his scores. His few, sporadic comments about composition were often either self-deprecating or teasing. He introduced this concerto to his dear friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg as "a tiny little piano concerto with a tiny little wisp of a scherzo"—words contradicted by a cursory glance at the score. Another letter more accurately calls it "the long terror," which most pianists will readily confirm. But of the actual details of composition, its unprecedented scale, or wide emotional range, Brahms said nothing. When Billroth asked the most obvious question—why he had added a fourth movement to the customary three, all of extraordinary size and scope—Brahms only said that the first movement was so harmless *(simpel)* that another movement seemed in order before the Andante.

Billroth was with the composer when he drafted the concerto, and he was present the evening Brahms first played through the finished work for a group of friends. Like the composer's first piano concerto, it was designed for his own hands, and most pianists since have found it somewhat unwieldy. Brahms played the solo at the premiere on November 9, 1881, in Budapest, and in many additional performances that season—in Stuttgart, Zurich, Breslau, Leipzig, Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Utrecht, among others. Soon Franz Liszt's curiosity was aroused, particularly because the distinguished conductor Hans von Bülow (who had been married to Liszt's daughter Cosima before Wagner took her) was a strong supporter of Brahms's music, and he asked to have a copy of the new work sent to him. Probably only a composer whose own wildly virtuosic piano concertos had turned heads a quarter century before could find this concerto "a little gray in tone," but Liszt cautiously admitted his admiration for this music, "in which thought and feeling move in noble harmony." Brahms had long known that he and Liszt were of radically different musical temperaments—probably since the day they met during the summer of 1853, when Brahms was twenty, and Liszt, forty-one, whipped through the young composer's piano music at sight.

Liszt surely didn't think that it was novel to bring the soloist in at the start of a concerto, as Brahms does here, but Liszt also knew enough about Brahms to know that novelty is seldom at the heart of his achievements. In its general plan, the opening of the B-flat concerto suggests no one more

than Beethoven, who in his fifth and unfinished sixth concertos introduces the pianist early on, with a cadenza-like flourish. The beginning of this concerto is pure, characteristic Brahms, however: the lone call of the horn (a sound Brahms grew to love from his earliest days, when he often heard his father practicing the instrument) answered by slowly blossoming phrases from the piano.

With this magical introduction, the impassioned "cadenza" that follows, and another fifteen minutes of strong and demanding music, Brahms's first movement is far from "harmless." Donald Tovey was perhaps the first to point out that, although it's conventional in a concerto for the orchestra to deliver "with massive force what the solo player can make subtle and delicate with eloquence and ornamentation," Brahms switches roles, allowing the piano some grand and powerful statements where we least expect them. Tovey also notes that Brahms lets the orchestra borrow material from the soloist, rather than the reverse. Brahms has decisively placed his soloist on equal footing with the orchestra.

Brahms contemplated inserting a scherzo in his violin concerto—written while the B-flat piano concerto sat on the shelf—but thought better of it. Here, however, he very shrewdly placed something energetic and tempestuous between the broad, magnificent expanses of the first movement and the serene and spacious Andante. The slow movement surely benefits from the delay. Coming some twenty-five minutes into the concerto, and following so much brilliant and dramatic music, the breathtakingly beautiful cello solo with which the Andante opens is music from another world—and temporary consolation for the fact that Brahms never wrote a cello concerto. (After hearing Dvořák's, Brahms admitted he was sorry he had never tried, and then made partial amends with the *Double* Concerto.)

The finale is a lilting dance of uncertain Hungarian heritage, transparently scored and filled with sparkling effects from the piano. In lesser hands, such childlike happiness might have seemed inappropriate or simply too lightweight after so much serious and even tragic music, but Brahms's touch is very sure—he easily convinces us that the only thing that can follow some of the most sublime slow music ever written is a gypsy dance. ■

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

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