

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, April 21, 2011, at 8:00

Friday, April 22, 2011, at 1:30

Saturday, April 23, 2011, at 8:00

James Conlon Conductor

Leonidas Kavakos Violin

Golijov

Sidereus

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and a consortium of orchestras from the United States and Canada in honor of Henry Fogel

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

Sibelius

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47

Allegro moderato

Adagio di molto

Allegro, ma non tanto

LEONIDAS KAVAKOS

INTERMISSION

Shostakovich, arranged by James Conlon

Suite from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

At the Ismailov Estate (Adagio)—Largo—Interlude (Allegro con brio)—Allegro—Katerina and Sergei I (Allegro molto)—Adagio—Passacaglia (Largo)—Katerina and Sergei II (Andante)—The Drunkard (Allegro)—Interlude: Circus Polka (Allegretto)—The Police (Presto)—Exile to Siberia (Adagio)

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription performances

Friday's matinee concert is endowed in part by Elaine Frank in memory of Zollie Frank.

These programs are part of the citywide festival *The Soviet Arts Experience*.

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.



Osvaldo Golijov

Born December 5, 1960, La Plata, Argentina.

***Sidereus*, Overture for Small Orchestra**

Although *Sidereus* was commissioned by thirty-five orchestras and first performed in Memphis last October, it has unusually strong ties to the Chicago Symphony, since it was written to honor Henry Fogel, who was president of the CSO for eighteen years beginning in 1985, and was composed by Osvaldo Golijov, who was this orchestra’s Mead Composer-in-Residence from 2006 to 2010. The unusual consortium commission was designed to pay tribute to Fogel, a tireless and passionate champion of classical music, who entered the orchestra management field in 1978, after fifteen years in classical radio station, and quickly became one of the most influential people in the business, working with the New York Philharmonic and National Symphony before coming to the Chicago Symphony. Once Fogel stepped down as president of the CSO in 2003 and became president and CEO of the

League of American Orchestras, he further strengthened his ties with this country’s network of orchestras, large and small, to which he had long devoted much of his so-called spare time. *Sidereus* is a way of acknowledging his devotion to the world of American orchestras—and of adding a new work to the repertoire that Fogel knows in unusual depth and loves with contagious enthusiasm.

Golijov says he accepted the League’s commission because of his admiration for Fogel’s “long-term thinking, his love for what orchestras represent in our society, and his wisdom in helping orchestras not only to survive but to thrive, through strategies that are specific to each of the orchestras’ communities and conditions.” Golijov took his title from a book by Galileo, *Sidereus Nuncius* (“It’s more commonly translated as ‘Starry messenger,’” Golijov says, “but to me the word ‘sidereal’ is more beautiful.”)

COMPOSED

2010

Commissioned in honor of Henry Fogel

FIRST PERFORMANCE

October 16, 2010,
Memphis, Tennessee

These are the first CSO performances

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, oboe and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, two horns,

two trumpets and piccolo trumpet, two trombones and tuba, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

9 minutes

The observations of Galileo included new discoveries on the surface of the moon. With these discoveries, the moon was no longer the province of poets exclusively. It had also become an object of inquiry: Could there be water there? Life? If there was life, then the Vatican was scared, because, as Cardinal Bellarmino wrote to Galileo: How were the people there created? How would their souls be saved? What do we do about Adam? Wasn't he supposed to be the first man? How do we explain the origin of possible life elsewhere? What about his rib? It's the duality: the moon is still good for love and lovers and poets, but a scientific observation can lead us to entirely new realizations.

Exploration and discovery have long been the heart of Golijov's music. When he was a boy, his uncle gave him a desk with a map of the world on top. What began in childhood as an imaginary adventure—roaming the globe instead of doing homework—eventually became a personal journey with a deep, lasting impact on his life and work—one that has traversed three continents, from his native Argentina to Israel, where he lived in the early 1980s, to the United States, where he settled in 1986. Works like his breakthrough *Passion According to Saint Mark* and *Ainadamar*, his opera, established his reputation for writing music deeply rooted in the cultures and

traditions of his own complex identity. With works like *Azul*, which was inspired, after a trip to the planetarium in New York City, by the sight of the earth as simply a “beautiful blue dot in space,” and *Sidereus*, Golijov lifts his eyes to the sky.

For the “moon” theme in *Sidereus*, Golijov used a melody with

a beautiful, open nature, a magnified scale fragment that my good friend and longtime collaborator accordionist Michael Ward-Bergeman came up with some years ago when we both were trying to develop ideas for a musical depiction of the sky in Patagonia. I then looked at that theme as if through the telescope and under the microscope, so that the textures, the patterns from which the melody emerges and into which it dissolves, point to a more molecular, atomic reality—like Galileo with his telescope.

Since its premiere in Memphis in October, *Sidereus* has been making the rounds. It was performed last month by the Reno Chamber Orchestra and the Stockton Symphony in California; next week it will be performed by two orchestras on the same day—by the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in Ontario, Canada, and by the Kansas City Symphony. It will eventually be played by all thirty-five commissioning orchestras, crisscrossing the map from Vermont to Oregon. ■



Jean Sibelius

Born December 8, 1865, Tavastehus, Finland.

Died September 20, 1957, Järvenpää, Finland.

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47

Unlike many composers who wrote famous violin concertos, Sibelius himself was a violinist. The violin was his first instrument, and his earliest composition was a little piece for violin and cello called *Water Drops*, which he wrote when he was ten. After he began serious violin study at the age of fourteen, he was hooked: “the violin took me by storm, and for the next ten years it was my dearest wish, my overriding ambition, to become a great virtuoso.” When he moved to Vienna in 1890 to study composition, Sibelius played in the conservatory orchestra and ultimately couldn’t resist auditioning for the philharmonic. He broke down and wept when he got back to his room, then went to the piano and

began practicing scales. Even as late as 1915, long after he had put the violin aside and was a highly regarded composer, he wrote in his diary: “Dreamt I was twelve years old and a virtuoso.”

Sibelius was a natural to write violin concertos, but in the end he wrote only one, and he spent enormous time and energy on it before he was satisfied. No doubt it was, in some deep sense, his own concerto, even though he would never attempt to play it. Perhaps this explains not only the great pains he took in writing the piece, but also the way he treated the man who had asked him for it. Willy Burmester had known Sibelius briefly in Finland before his career as a violin virtuoso took off. It was

COMPOSED

1902–1904

FIRST PERFORMANCE

February 8, 1904, Helsinki, Finland

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 25, 1907, Orchestra Hall. Maud Powell, violin, with Frederick Stock conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

November 4, 2007, Orchestra Hall. Arabella Steinbacher, violin, with Christoph von Dohnányi conducting

July 9, 2008, Ravinia Festival. Joshua Bell, violin, with Leonard Slatkin conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

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

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

32 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1959. Jascha Heifetz, violin, with Walter Hendl conducting. RCA

1996. Maxim Vergerov, violin, with Daniel Barenboim conducting. Teldec

Burmester who persuaded Sibelius to write the concerto in the first place; the piece was tailor-made for him, and he assumed he would give the premiere. Sibelius began the score in 1902 and finished a completed draft in the autumn of 1903. He sent the work to Burmester, who responded: “Wonderful! Masterly! Only once before have I spoken in such terms to a composer, and that was when Tchaikovsky showed me his concerto.”

But when Burmester suggested that he needed time to master the work, Sibelius hired Viktor Nováček, a musician of no particular distinction who is remembered only for this one day in his life, to give the first performance. After the premiere, Burmester again offered to play the concerto, promising that “all my twenty-five years’ stage experience, my artistry and insight will be placed to serve this work.” But Sibelius, who had extensively reworked the concerto, picked Karl Halir, a former member of the Joachim Quartet, to give the premiere of the revised version in October 1905, under the baton of Richard Strauss. And when the score was published, it was dedicated to Ferenc von Vecsey, a Hungarian violinist who was one of the concerto’s first champions.

The work Burmester inspired but never played is a violinist’s dream. In fact, the first version was particularly criticized for the way the solo part consistently overshadowed the orchestra, and much of Sibelius’s

subsequent reworking tried to restore that balance. Still, from the very first measures, it is the solo voice, rather than its dialogue with orchestra, that commands our attention. In September 1902, Sibelius had written to his wife about “a marvelous opening idea” for the concerto. What he ultimately put on paper is truly unforgettable, with the violin entering almost at once on a sustained mezzo-forte *G* quite at odds with the orchestra’s shimmering *D* minor. From there, the violin takes off on a long, rhapsodic theme; allows the orchestra one extended statement of its own; and then banishes it entirely from the central development section, which Sibelius, against all tradition, treats as a brilliant cadenza. This is but one masterstroke in a bold and inventive design.

Though less imaginatively conceived, the *Adagio* is deeply haunting: a broad melody begins low in the violin register and then takes off. (It is particularly lovely how Sibelius later accompanies that melody, now in the clarinet and bassoon, with pianissimo scales.) Donald Tovey called the spirited finale “a polonaise for polar bears.” The folksy main theme, over an excited drum beat, comes from a very early string quartet that Sibelius did not publish. The way the violin dances around the melody, however, teasing its insistent rhythms and recklessly walking the high wire, turns circus music into high art. ■



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Died August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia.

Suite from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

Arranged by James Conlon

The emergence of a major young operatic composer is a rare and extraordinary event in any era.

Shostakovich's first opera, *The Nose*, based on a short story by Nikolai Gogol, suggested that he was someone to watch, for already at twenty-one he revealed the essential musical and theatrical instincts of a born opera composer. When Shostakovich's second effort, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, opened four years later, in January 1934, it was immediately acclaimed as the most impressive operatic achievement since Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* and as the first great musical drama of the Soviet period. Over the next two years, both in Leningrad, where it opened, and in Moscow, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was staged nearly two hundred times, always to packed houses, and it was

performed in far-off Buenos Aires, New York, Zurich, and Cleveland. In December 1935, the Bolshoi Theater unveiled a new production in Moscow—an unusual tribute for so new an opera.

On January 26, 1936, Joseph Stalin and an entourage of high-ranking officials attended the Bolshoi production. They did not stay for the fourth act. Shostakovich was in the theater that night—he had received a phone call saying that Stalin was planning to attend—and he immediately grew uneasy. Two days later, an unsigned editorial in the government newspaper *Pravda*, with the now-famous title, “Muddle instead of Music,” put an end to *Lady Macbeth's* reign, and, at the same time, to Shostakovich's future as a great opera composer.

COMPOSED

1930–1932, revised
1956–1963

FIRST PERFORMANCE

January 22, 1934, Leningrad
(now Saint Petersburg)
January 8, 1963, Moscow,
revised as *Katerina Ismailova*

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

July 15, 1989, Ravinia
Festival. Suite arranged and
conducted by James Conlon

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

May 28, 1999, Orchestra Hall.
Five Interludes, Mstislav
Rostropovich conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and two piccolos,
two oboes and english horn,
two clarinets, E-flat clarinet
and bass clarinet, two
bassoons and contrabas-
soon, four horns, three
trumpets and two cornets,
three trombones and tuba,

timpani, triangle, side drum,
log drum, cymbals, bass
drum, tam-tam, xylophone,
two harps, celesta, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

42 minutes

“From the very first moments,” the editorial began, “listeners are stunned by the deliberately dissonant and confused stream of sounds.” The graphic seduction scenes, in particular, drew special rebuke: “the music quacks, hoots, pants, and gasps in order to express the love scenes as naturally as possible.” The anonymous writer went on to denounce the opera’s subject matter and musical language, and to attack the composer himself with a viciousness that was unprecedented in the history of music criticism.

With this one short column in a Soviet newspaper, a great composer was mercilessly disgraced in ways that would affect nearly everything he did in his remaining thirty-nine years. Shostakovich was not yet thirty, but his opera career was over.

Shostakovich immediately abandoned his original plan to write a cycle of operas on women throughout Russian history. For the next three decades, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* suffered a fate far worse than mere neglect—it was marked, it would seem for

THE WHOLE TRUTH: NOTES ON SHOSTAKOVICH'S *LADY MACBETH*

by James Conlon

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk is the most important Russian opera of the twentieth century. Considered from a host of viewpoints, Dmitri Shostakovich's achievement is staggering. He realistically depicted the lowly status of Russian women and laid bare the hypocrisy and brutality of Soviet society; in one great gesture he created a musical vocabulary all his own, using the orchestra with novel mastery and virtuosity.

No modern opera has had greater political repercussions. Although operatic works often became symbolic political rallying cries (Verdi's *Risorgimento* operas, *Nabucco* in particular), censorship historically has limited the scope of political statements. Given the climate he lived in, Shostakovich's sardonic portrayal of the Stalinist police network in *Lady Macbeth* was an act of outrageous bravery. He was

to pay the price the rest of his life.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that the world was deprived of what clearly could have been a giant of Russian opera. When one compares the twenty-six-year-old Verdi of *Oberto* with the composer of *Falstaff*, one is faced with the painful question of how far Shostakovich—only twenty-seven when *Lady Macbeth* had its premiere in Leningrad—could have developed as an opera composer had he not been abruptly silenced by Stalin's criticism a year later.

The title character, Katerina, is a less than holy trinity—criminal, victim, and lover. She is brutalized and humiliated by her environment. Married young to a rich landowner, subjected to constant abuse from her father-in-law, she is desolate in a loveless marriage and surrounded by a corrupt

society. She murders twice and incites to murder. She marries her accomplice, causing his and her condemnation. She yearns, desires, and loves with a passion that disdains all boundaries and defies all obstacles. It is clearly Shostakovich's intention that she win and retain our sympathy, even our admiration.

Le crime passionnel (almost always committed by a man) has been at the basis of *opera seria* since its origins. This story has been told often before. So why should *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* fascinate us? The answer lies not so much in the similarities to other librettos as in the differences—and above all in the eyes (and ears) through which we experience it. The compositional faculties of Shostakovich have put it in a unique context. Alexander Preis, drawing the substance from a short story by Nikolai

life, by its condemnation and by being banned.

After Stalin's death in 1953, Shostakovich picked up the score to his doomed and defiled opera and began to revise and sanitize it. The new version, now called *Katerina Ismailova*, premiered in 1963 in Moscow. But in the late seventies, the original *Lady Macbeth* was staged again for the first time in more than four decades, to great acclaim, and since then this version has slowly established itself in the repertory of Western

opera companies.

Shostakovich borrowed the subject of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* from a famous horror story by the nineteenth-century writer Nikolai Leskov. In the original tale, Katerina Ismailova, the young wife of a provincial merchant, takes a lover, and, in rapid succession, murders her father-in-law, her husband, and her husband's nephew. In adapting the tale for the opera house, Shostakovich and his librettist Alexander Preys streamlined the action (eliminating the

Leskov (1831–1895), has surrounded the domestic drama with an environment that is specifically nineteenth-century czarist, tacitly Soviet circa 1930, and metaphorically universal. No other opera score has so successfully fused “bourgeois drama,” social commentary, satire, high passion, tragedy, and what Aldous Huxley called the “Whole Truth”: “the great ocean of irrelevant things, events, and thoughts stretching away endlessly in every direction,” which twentieth-century art sought to acknowledge.

Lady Macbeth is not a tragedy either in Huxley's or in the classical sense. These characters are neither high-born nor morally enlightened. They are not meant to fulfill great destinies. The opera's universality lies more in its striking a chord that resonates with the mythical/biblical stories of the futility of the pursuit of power. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a tragedy because the moral potential of a man

born to lead is corrupted and damages the lives of his people. But no character in *Lady Macbeth* is “great,” so there is no fall from heroic heights.

Katerina's “greatness” lies in her overwhelming desire to love and be loved. In act 1, she plaintively observes that all other living creatures seem to have someone, and a poignant solo cello echoes her belief that “No love will be my fate here.”

Katerina commits murder solely to attain love. She is driven by sexual desire, and once she finds an adequate partner (she tells Sergei to “Kiss me so it hurts my lips . . . and the icons fall from their shelves”) she cannot help herself. This is the reason she incites pity as well as reprobation. We can feel simultaneously compassion and disgust. Katerina's environment does not provide any area to sublimate her drives. (This is Shostakovich's main social critique.) She never sells her soul—she alienates herself

from society, from which she is inwardly alienated already. She is closer to Isolde and Salome than to Ortrud or Herodias. . . .

Shostakovich's harsh view of the characters in *Lady Macbeth* comes across memorably in his musical treatment of sex. When Katerina goes to bed with Sergei in act 2, the score reaches a *Tristan*-like peak of erotic rapture. . . .

The famous pornographic trombone glissando (which apparently shocked Stalin) is explicit in its upward thrust and its detumescence. Shostakovich pays the weak husband, Zinovy, the ultimate insult of making him a secondary tenor and assigning the alto flute, with its flaccid timbre, to follow him around. The driving two-note motif for the workers' molestation of Aksinya, the cook, is closely related to the later theme for Sergei and Katerina's violent lovemaking. . . .

In *Lady Macbeth*, every opera convention is to be

murder of the nephew, because, as Shostakovich wrote, “killing a child always makes a bad impression”), and turned Katerina into something of a feminist heroine, who commits acts of violence in order to liberate herself from her patriarchal surroundings. (It is easy, of course, to read into this work messages about other kinds of oppression as well.)

The suite of music from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* that has been selected and arranged by James Conlon offers a generous, panoramic view of Shostakovich’s complete score. The excerpts

include stretches of the opera’s most important dramatic scenes (with vocal parts reassigned to instruments), as well as several of the great orchestral interludes that link various sections by commenting on the action (and sometimes foreshadowing the events that follow). At the heart of this suite, as in the opera itself—separating the two murder scenes, it is the pivotal point of the drama—lies the massive and relentless passacaglia, unforgettable music of tragedy and despair. ■

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

found—arias, love songs, yearning monologues, love duets, a ghost, an interrupted wedding feast, lamenting choruses, and the typical adulterous love triangle (tenor loves soprano, with evil baritone nemesis).

Nothing is allowed to escape Shostakovich’s icy gaze. Whenever a situation approaches operatic cliché, just when the listener might become swayed by pathos or melodrama, the satiric ax falls. When the lecherous Boris thinks about Katerina lying sleepless in her bed, Shostakovich evokes Richard Strauss’s Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier*; even the revered Mussorgsky is quoted. Shedding crocodile tears for the father-in-law she has just murdered, Katerina cites the chorus that has to be goaded into urging the throne upon Boris Godunov.

Leskov’s reflection on a quotation from the Book of Job, “Curse the day that thou wast born, and die,” seems

to articulate the essence of Shostakovich’s musical concept. As Leskov sees it,

Those who do not wish to pay heed to these words, those to whom the thought of death, even in this sorry situation, appears not a blessed release but a cause for fear, must try to drown out these wailing voices with something even uglier than they. The ordinary man understands this perfectly: at such times he gives free rein to all his brutish ordinariness and proceeds to act stupidly, jeering at his own feelings and at those of other people. Not particularly soft-hearted even at the best of times, he now becomes positively nasty.

Shostakovich’s orchestra becomes positively nasty. It screams, storms, repulses, excites, bites back. It shifts

at will from tone-painting to editorializing, from expressivity to parody. . . . Whereas Wagner’s orchestra has been likened to the inarticulate voice of the subconscious, Peter Conrad writes that Shostakovich’s “orchestra pit is the cellar where the stinking body . . . has been discarded.” Its angry violence is akin to the early, iconoclastic Stravinsky and Bartók. It is an orchestra meant to overwhelm, pummel the stage into submission. But then it also can evoke deep pathos, loneliness, yearning, despair. . . .

In *Lady Macbeth*, even before Stalin’s reprimand, Shostakovich delivered himself of an enigmatic, paradoxical work that simultaneously reveals and obfuscates, confesses and denies, equivocates and speaks truths, accuses and finally forgives.

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A brief synopsis of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

ACT 1

Scene 1

Katerina, the wife of Zinovy Ismailov, a rich merchant, is bored and perpetually depressed. Her father-in-law Boris berates her for failing to produce a child after five years of marriage. When Zinovy leaves on business, Boris forces Katerina to swear her faithfulness to her husband.

Scene 2

Workers amuse themselves in the Ismailov yard by abusing the cook. Katerina rushes to her defense, but is intercepted by Sergei, who has a reputation as a great seducer. Boris arrives to find them in each other's arms.

Interlude: Allegro con brio

Scene 3

Katerina prepares for bed. Sergei arrives, asking to borrow a book. He seduces her.

ACT 2

Scene 4

Boris goes to visit Katerina and overhears the lovers. Boris accuses Sergei, locks him in the storeroom, and then asks Katerina for some food. She brings him mushrooms laced with rat poison. As Boris dies, Katerina frees Sergei.

Interlude: Passacaglia (Largo)

Scene 5

Sergei and Katerina make love. She promises to marry him. Zinovy returns. Katerina strangles him while Sergei holds him down. They hide the body in the cellar. She now embraces Sergei as her husband.

ACT 3

Scene 6

The wedding day of Katerina and Sergei. They depart for the church. A peasant breaks into the cellar, looking for vodka, and discovers Zinovy's corpse.

Interlude: Allegretto

Scene 7

The peasant reports the body to the police.

Interlude: Presto

Scene 8

During the wedding feast at Katerina's house, she notices the broken lock on the cellar. She and Sergei try to escape, but they are intercepted by the police.

ACT 4

Scene 9

Katerina and Sergei are among a group of convicts being led through the forest. Sergei flirts with a pretty young prisoner, Sonetka. He gives her Katerina's stockings as a present. Numb with grief, Katerina examines her conscience. Katerina pushes Sonetka into the lake; she throws herself in after. They are swept away by the current.