

**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

**Bank of America**   
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Thursday, December 9, 2010, at 8:00

Saturday, December 11, 2010, at 8:00

**Xian Zhang** Conductor

**Stephen Hough** Piano

**Music by Piotr Tchaikovsky**

Concert Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 56

Quasi rondo: Andante mosso

Contrasts: Andante cantabile—Molto vivace

STEPHEN HOUGH

Suite No. 4 in G Major, Op. 61 (*Mozartiana*)

Gigue

Minuet

Prayer, after a transcription by Liszt

Theme and Variations

**INTERMISSION**

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, Op. 44

Allegro brillante e molto vivace

Andante non troppo

Robert Chen *violin*

John Sharp *cello*

Allegro con fuoco

STEPHEN HOUGH

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**Saturday's concert is sponsored by Mayer Brown LLP.**

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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## PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTIETH SEASON

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra

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Friday, December 10, 2010, at 1:30

**Xian Zhang** Conductor

**Stephen Hough** Piano

### Music by Piotr Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 75

Allegro brillante—Cadenza—Tempo 1—Vivacissimo

STEPHEN HOUGH

First Chicago Symphony performance

Suite No. 4 in G Major, Op. 61 (*Mozartiana*)

Gigue

Minuet

Prayer, after a transcription by Liszt

Theme and Variations

### INTERMISSION

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Allegro brillante e molto vivace

Andante con troppo

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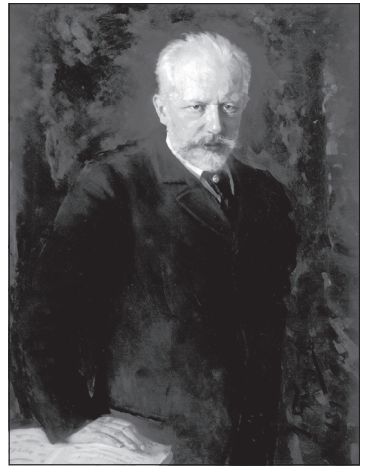
Allegro con fuoco

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**A**lthough he wrote piano music throughout his career, Piotr Tchaikovsky is not remembered for his many solo piano pieces, but for a handful of large-scale works for piano and orchestra. The first of these, his iconic Piano Concerto no. 1, written on the same scale as his mature symphonies, quickly became one of his most performed works (after a rocky start) and eventually one of the most popular pieces in the repertoire. Theodore Thomas chose it for the Chicago Symphony's very first concert, in October 1891—the concerto was just sixteen years old at the time and already a great public favorite—and it was performed here nearly every season during the first decades of the twentieth century. But Tchaikovsky's subsequent works for piano and orchestra—two more concertos and a concert fantasy—have long been overshadowed by the towering First Concerto, despite their wealth of musical riches and novel ideas about form and substance—and despite Tchaikovsky's own belief in their worth. This week, we concentrate on those little-known works: Piano Concerto no. 2, which the Chicago Symphony has only programmed three times in 119 downtown seasons; the Concert Fantasy, performed in Orchestra Hall just once before, during the Orchestra's inaugural season; and Piano Concerto no. 3, which is receiving its CSO premiere.



An oil portrait of Piotr Tchaikovsky by Nikolay Kuznetov, 1893



## Piotr Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia.

Died November 6, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

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### Concert Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 56 (December 9 & 11 only)

**O**f all Tchaikovsky's works for piano and orchestra, none is more original and adventurous than this piece, which is neither full-blown concerto nor straightforward one-movement fantasia. It is difficult to know what Tchaikovsky's objectives were exactly, but, having recently finished his Second Piano Concerto, perhaps he simply sensed that it was time to try something different. "I am feeling a surge of energy, and an impatience to set about something new," he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck in March 1884, just before he began work on the piece. His diary entries that spring are a litany of false starts and frustrations, with ideas proposed and then rejected for a symphony, a piano concerto, a suite, and finally, in July, "a concert piece for piano in two

movements"—in other words, the concert fantasy we hear this week. Yet even after that, he sometimes referred to the piece as a piano concerto. Only after the score was completed did he actually call it a fantasy.

The new work was clearly designed as a showcase for a virtuoso pianist—the heart of the first of its two movements is a grand rhapsody for piano alone, as big and as flashy as anything in the concertos. We know that he began thinking about the piece shortly after hearing the nineteen-year-old German pianist Eugen d'Albert, a student of Franz Liszt, in Moscow early in 1884. At the end of July, after he had already been working on the fantasy for a month or so, he wrote to von Meck of "a certain d'Albert," whom he had by then

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#### COMPOSED

1884

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 6, 1885; Moscow

#### FIRST CSO

##### PERFORMANCE

March 4, 1892; Auditorium Theatre; Julie Rivé-King, pianist; Theodore Thomas conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCE

August 10, 1980; Ravinia Festival; William Tritt, pianist; Erich Kunzel conducting

#### INSTRUMENTATION

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

#### APPROXIMATE

##### PERFORMANCE TIME

26 minutes

heard on many occasions: “In my opinion, he is a pianist *of genius*.” But although d’Albert was the original inspiration for the fantasy, he was not picked to give the premiere the following March. That honor went instead to Sergei Taneyev—he had already played Tchaikovsky’s first and second concertos—who had a huge audience success with the piece both in Moscow and in Saint Petersburg a month later. The Concert Fantasy remained highly popular during the composer’s lifetime, but quickly fell into obscurity in the years immediately after his death. The fact that it has not been performed in Orchestra Hall in 119 years—the Chicago Symphony played it twice at the Ravinia Festival—is symptomatic of its neglect in concert halls worldwide today. In recent years, it has, at long last, begun to enjoy a revival.

Tchaikovsky’s Concert Fantasy has two movements. The first is misleadingly titled *Quasi rondo*, despite the fact that its structure bears no relationship to traditional rondo form. (Perhaps Tchaikovsky simply meant to suggest the high spirits of many classical rondo finales he admired.) It is more of a big and expansive sonata form movement, with a magnificent cadenza for the soloist in place of the conventional development section. We know that Tchaikovsky took his time scoring this movement, and his care shows in the subtly changing orchestral sonorities and

wealth of instrumental detail. The piano part, which ranges from delicate filigree to racing octaves, is sheer, non-stop bravura.

The second movement is titled *Contrasts*, a carryover from its original role as part of his third orchestral suite. This music, with its

two polar-opposite themes, had seemed all wrong to Tchaikovsky to open the suite, but here it makes a thrilling finale to the fantasy. Now Tchaikovsky seems to relish the dualism of his two main ideas—a slow melody over strumming arpeggios and a fast folklike dance tune—dramatically juxtaposing them and ultimately combining them to great effect. The entire fantasy is a novel way of writing a big showpiece for piano and orchestra outside the grand concerto tradition, but Tchaikovsky continued to worry over its design. At one point, he even wrote a new ending for the first movement (it is based on the *Contrasts* material) so that it could be performed separately. But for many decades, and partly because of its idiosyncratic form, the concert fantasy was rarely played at all. ■



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

## Piano Concerto No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 75 (December 10 only)

In 1889, Tchaikovsky said he wanted to write one final symphony to bring his career to a close. It would be dedicated to the tsar, he announced. He didn't begin drafting the piece until the spring of 1891, at the time of his first trip to the U.S. (During his return home that May, Tchaikovsky wrote in his diary: "Walking below deck, working, reading . . . made sketches for a future symphony.") It was the following year before he actually composed the opening and closing movements of a new symphony in E-flat. That October, newspapers in Saint Petersburg announced that Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony would receive its premiere during the coming season.



Sergei Taneyev

Then in December, Tchaikovsky decided to destroy his new symphony. He wrote to a friend merely that he had been "grappling with second thoughts," and that "this decision is irreversible and absolutely my last word." But Tchaikovsky didn't destroy his

manuscript, and, in the summer of 1893, he began to recycle the rejected symphonic material into a piano concerto—his third. That same year, he also began *another* new symphony which did, in fact turn out to be his last—the one that would be known as *Pathétique*. At first, he apparently intended to make the new piano concerto another large-scale work in three movements, like his first two, but after considerable effort he reconsidered—"it has turned out to be disgracefully long," he wrote to his former student, Alexander Siloti—and he opted instead for a concise piece in one unbroken stretch of music, based on the discarded symphony's opening movement. Work was finished in October 1893, the same month the *Pathétique* was given its premiere in Saint Petersburg, to a lukewarm reception. Nine days later, Tchaikovsky died.

The following year, Tchaikovsky's brother Modest asked Sergei Taneyev to sort through the composer's manuscripts, and Taneyev quickly began to make plans to publish the unknown Third Concerto—the compact yet rhapsodic virtuoso

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### COMPOSED

1893

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

January 19, 1895;  
Saint Petersburg

These are the first CSO performances

### INSTRUMENTATION

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

### APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME  
13 minutes

showpiece that is performed at today's concert. Taneyev intended to play the concerto on the first anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death, but since the score and parts weren't yet ready, the premiere was postponed until January 1895. Perhaps because it lacked the composer's official blessing, the work never caught on, and it remains one of the least-known products of Tchaikovsky's final years.

A postscript. Taneyev also polished up Tchaikovsky's abandoned sketches for the second and third movements of the concerto and published them as an Andante and Finale. And in the 1950s, Semyon Bogatiryov attempted to return to Tchaikovsky's initial idea, reworking the entire batch of sketches, in their various incarnations, into an unofficial Symphony no. 7. ■

## Symphony Center Information



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Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses.



Please use perfume, cologne, and all other scented products sparingly, as many patrons are sensitive to fragrance.



Please turn off or silence all personal electronic devices (pagers, watches, telephones, digital assistants).



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**Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.**

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## Suite No. 4 in G Major, Op. 61 (*Mozartiana*)

**T**chaikovsky loved Mozart above all composers. “I don’t just like Mozart, I idolize him,” he wrote to Madame von Meck, whose musical tastes, aside from her steady faith in his own works, continued to irritate him. *Don Giovanni*, he assured her, is “the most beautiful opera ever written.” Performances of the Adagio from the String Quintet in G minor invariably left him seeking the “farthest corner of the room so that others might not see how deeply this music affects me.” It was because of Mozart that he decided to devote his life to composing: “He gave the first jog to my musical powers; he made me love music above all things in this world.”

Although Madame von Meck remained steadfast in her dismissal of Mozart’s music—and in her financial support for Tchaikovsky’s output—Tchaikovsky made his love of Mozart itself the subject of a new composition. A glance at the Mozart works he arranged into a suite he called *Mozartiana*, however, suggests that the Mozart Tchaikovsky worshipped is not

exactly the Mozart we revere today. Tchaikovsky’s was a nineteenth-century view: “He was devoid of self-satisfaction and boastfulness,” Tchaikovsky wrote, a century before Peter Schaeffer’s *Amadeus* made a meal out of proving just the opposite. “He is a genius whose childlike innocence, gentleness of spirit, and virginal modesty are scarcely of this earth.”

Tchaikovsky intentionally picked four “practically unknown” pieces—works he wanted the public to learn and, like him, to love. (In the nineteenth century, even Mozart lovers actually knew surprisingly little of his music.) The first—although not the first piece Tchaikovsky worked on—is an orchestration of the extraordinary Gigue in G major that Mozart composed for piano late in his short career. It was originally written into the personal album of Karl Immanuel Engel, the organist in Leipzig, the place where Mozart’s own idol, J.S. Bach, lived and worked. (Mozart discovered Bach’s music, not widely known at the time, in 1782, and it dramatically changed the way he

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### COMPOSED

June–August 1887

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 26, 1887,  
Saint Petersburg, the  
composer conducting

### FIRST CSO

#### PERFORMANCE

March 18, 1892; Auditorium  
Theatre; Theodore  
Thomas conducting

### MOST RECENT

#### CSO PERFORMANCE

May 5, 1999; Orchestra Hall  
(Special Concert); Yaron  
Traub conducting

### INSTRUMENTATION

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

### APPROXIMATE

#### PERFORMANCE TIME

25 minutes

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composed, particularly the way he came to integrate complex counterpoint into his own works.)

The second selection is an earlier Minuet in D major, filled with the kind of chromaticism and powerful harmonies Tchaikovsky knew from the G minor string quintet. It is followed by an orchestration of *Ave verum corpus*, a work Mozart composed in the very last year of his life and a piece as near perfection as anything in the catalog of his works he dutifully maintained. Mozart's work—sparse, simple, with not a note too many nor too few—is written for mixed chorus and string orchestra. Perhaps finding it untouchable, Tchaikovsky bases his

orchestration not on the original, but on the fanciful transcription Franz Liszt made for organ in 1862. The finale—the movement Tchaikovsky arranged first—is an orchestration of Mozart's piano variations on a tune from *Le recontre imprévenue* (The unforeseen encounter), a once-popular operetta by Gluck. Mozart had first played variations on this theme for Gluck himself, when the distinguished composer, then nearly eighty, came to Vienna in 1783. It was Mozart's way of paying a compliment to one of the greatest of his predecessors, and Tchaikovsky's version, coming little more than a century later, does the same. ■

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- 1875** Premiere of Piano Concerto no. 1, Boston, October 25
- 1878** Symphony no. 4
- 1879** *Eugene Onegin*
- 1880** Piano Concerto no. 2 finished, May
- 1881** Violin Concerto  
Premiere of Piano Concerto no. 2, New York City, November 21
- 1882** 1812 Overture
- 1884** Concert Fantasy for piano and orchestra composed
- 1885** premiere of Concert Fantasy, Moscow, March 6
- 1886** *Manfred* Symphony
- 1887** premiere of Suite no. 4 (*Mozartiana*), Saint Petersburg, November 26
- 1888** Symphony no. 5
- 1890** *The Sleeping Beauty*
- 1892** *The Nutcracker*
- 1893** Piano Concerto no. 3 derived from sketches for first movement of new symphony in E-flat  
Symphony no. 6 (*Pathétique*)  
Tchaikovsky dies, November 6, Saint Petersburg
- 1895** posthumous premiere of Piano Concerto no. 3, Saint Petersburg, January 19
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## Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, Op. 44

Late in 1879, with his first piano concerto already well on its way to surpassing popularity, Tchaikovsky felt unproductive and restless. “Today,” he wrote to his brother Modest on October 22, “I began to create something, and the boredom vanished as if by magic.” This was the start of his second piano concerto. Now convinced that he was a workaholic—though not of the 24/7 variety; he tended to work only in the mornings—Tchaikovsky threw himself into his new project and finished the sketches for the first movement little more than a week later. By mid-December, he had drafted the other two movements as well—writing the finale before the slow movement—in each case, finding that once he got started, the ideas flowed freely. He began to luxuriate in the creative process: “I work with pleasure,” he wrote to Madame von Meck, “and I am also trying to curb the habitual haste that has so often been damaging to my efforts.”

The new concerto was composed wherever Tchaikovsky’s travels took him—Berlin, Paris, Rome—as well as at home in Russia, where he finished the orchestration in the spring of 1880. The premiere was given in November 1881 in New York City—six years after the First Piano Concerto had been given its first performance in Boston. (The conductor was Theodore Thomas, who would become the first music director of the new Chicago Symphony a decade later.) Even then, the popularity of the First Piano Concerto stood in the way of an unbiased appraisal of the Second. *The New York Times* was cool and dismissive, and, in Boston two months later, where the premiere of the first concerto had already become the stuff of legend, the new piece was, by comparison, found “wearisome.” Audiences at the Moscow premiere in May 1882 were enthusiastic, standing and cheering at the end, but even there the critics raised reservations.

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### COMPOSED

October 1879–May 1880

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 1881, New York City, Theodore Thomas conducting

### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

December 2, 1910; Orchestra Hall; Yolanda Mero, pianist; Frederick Stock conducting

### MOST RECENT

#### CSO PERFORMANCES

December 13, 1988; Orchestra Hall; Shura Cherkassky, pianist; Gunther Herbig conducting

August 12, 1990; Ravinia Festival; William Tritt, pianist; Erich Kunzel conducting

### INSTRUMENTATION

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

### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

29 minutes

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Tchaikovsky was incensed, confident that he had not only provided a worthy sequel to the First, but a work of greater architectural integrity and bold new features, such as the extensive solos for violin and cello in the slow movement, nearly turning it temporarily into a triple concerto. When Taneyev, who played the Moscow premiere, wrote to thank Tchaikovsky for the opportunity, he could not help grumbling that the first two movements were too long and that the all-important piano part got lost in the “trio” of the middle movement. Tchaikovsky’s response is a model of scarcely concealed ire, thanking Taneyev for his “superb performance of the concerto in its present, so imperfect form.”

But when Tchaikovsky himself conducted performances in Saint Petersburg late in 1888, he made a number of revisions to the score, obviously having taken the criticism to heart. Around the same time, Tchaikovsky’s former student, Alexander Siloti, began a more extensive, often insensitive revision of the score—the cadenza was lifted intact and moved to the very end of the first movement—without the composer’s permission. “I am grateful to you for your concern and interest, for your desire that my pieces should be made easier and more rewarding” Tchaikovsky shot back, “but emphatically I can’t agree with your cuts and especially with your reordering of the first movement.” Nevertheless, that was not the end of the matter—just three months before his death, Tchaikovsky was still arguing with

Siloti over these issues—and with the score that was printed after the composer died, Siloti finally got his way. As a result, the version of the Second Piano Concerto that is still often performed is a mutilated score Tchaikovsky would hardly have recognized as his own. We have since learned—most dramatically from the experience of restoring Bruckner’s symphonies to their original dimensions—that cutting expansive works of music doesn’t necessarily make them seem shorter, simply choppier and more chaotically structured. (Bruckner and Tchaikovsky are contemporaries; Bruckner’s Fourth Symphony and Tchaikovsky’s Second Piano Concerto both had their premieres in 1881.) This week’s performances return to Tchaikovsky’s original intentions, proving that Siloti’s corrective surgery was not only unnecessary and largely botched, but that it has not held up well over time.

**T**he drama of Tchaikovsky’s opening movement is created more by keeping the piano and orchestra apart than pitting them against each other. Later, while he was working on the Concert Fantasy, Tchaikovsky made an offhand remark that he disliked the sound of piano and orchestra together. That instinct clearly explains the design of his unorthodox development section here, written in two large chapters for orchestra, each followed by a piano cadenza.

The remarkable slow movement finds yet a different way around the

conventions of concerto form with its unusual and unexpected scoring for piano trio—solo violin, cello, and piano—and orchestra. In its own way, Tchaikovsky's decision to open this movement with an expansive solo for violin, continued by the solo cello, must have seemed as startling to audiences then as had Beethoven's idea to open his Fourth Piano Concerto with piano alone. Eventually the piano enters and all three soloists share the material, but the piano never really steals the spotlight, even in the cadenza. Only in the haunting

final pages, when the violin and cello discreetly step aside, does Tchaikovsky seem to acknowledge that he is, after all, writing a piano concerto.

Under the circumstances, the dancelike finale seems particularly straightforward, but Tchaikovsky understood that after so much novelty and structural ingenuity, it was high time for traditional gestures and fireworks. ■

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