

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIRST 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 12, 2012, at 8:00

Friday, January 13, 2012, at 1:30

Saturday, January 14, 2012, at 8:00

Sunday, January 15, 2012, at 3:00

Sir Mark Elder Conductor

Chicago Shakespeare Theater guest artists

Barbara Gaines artistic director

Greg Vinkler actor

Delius

The Walk to the Paradise Garden FROM *A Village Romeo and Juliet*

Readings from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*

GREG VINKLER

Elgar

Falstaff, Op. 68

INTERMISSION

Rimsky-Korsakov

Musical Pictures from *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*

Introduction: In Praise of the Wilderness—

Fevroniya's Wedding Procession—

The Battle of Kerzhenets—

The Blessed Death of Fevroniya—The Road to the Invisible City

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription performances of the last three

Tchaikovsky

Romeo and Juliet



Frederick Delius

Born January 29, 1862, Bradford, England.

Died June 10, 1934, Grez-sur-Loing, France.

The Walk to the Paradise Garden

Delius is an odd figure in English music. Born in England to German parents, he came into his own as a composer in the United States (while working as an orange grower in Florida, where the pickers' songs drifting across the Saint John River profoundly affected him), enjoyed his first taste of success in Germany and Norway, and ultimately settled in rural France. Although he studied for a year and a half at the esteemed Leipzig Conservatory in the late 1880s, Delius always said that he learned everything he needed to know the previous year from his more informal lessons with Thomas Ward, a transplanted New Yorker who lived in Jacksonville. The main

benefit of Leipzig apparently was his contact and eventual friendship with Edward Grieg, whose letter to Delius's father convinced him that his son was destined for a career in music.

In the summer of 1888, Delius moved to Paris, where he came to know Fauré and Ravel, artists Gaughin and Munch, and the Scandinavian writer Strindberg; became intoxicated with grand opera; met his future wife, Helene "Jelka" Rosen, a German painter; and contracted the syphilis that would later shut down his career and eventually take his life. Despite his international itinerary, Delius has come to be closely identified with England, a country he rarely

COMPOSED

1906

FIRST PERFORMANCE

February 21, 1907, Berlin, as entr'acte in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 11, 1934, Orchestra Hall. Sir Hamilton Harty conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

January 11, 1969 (Popular concert), Orchestra Hall. Irwin Hoffman conducting

July 27, 2002, Ravinia Festival. Andrew Litton conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

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

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

8 minutes

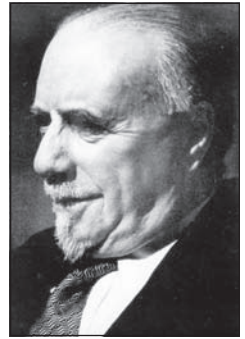
visited and later said he hated. Part of his reputation both in his native land and abroad was due to the advocacy of the great British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, who called Delius “the last great apostle of romance, emotion, and beauty in music.” Delius’s work was almost unknown in England at the time he and Beecham first met, in 1907. (He was then just beginning to make a name for himself in Germany, where several conductors had started playing his compositions.) But in the years that followed, Beecham regularly programmed Delius’s pieces (he organized major festivals of his music in 1929 and in 1946). In Beecham, Delius found that he had both a close friend—they took a month-long walking tour of Norway together in 1908—and the kind of champion most composers can only dream of.

It was Beecham who first extracted *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* from Delius’s opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* and began to play it as an independent concert

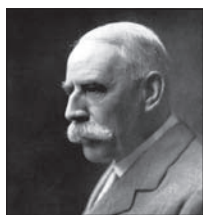
piece. (Beecham conducted it here when he appeared with the Orchestra in February 1959.)

Delius composed this interlude long after the opera itself was completed and shortly before the 1907 Berlin premiere, when it was clear he needed extra music to cover the last scene change from an outdoor fair to the interior of the country inn known as the Paradise Garden.

The opera tells the story of a young man and woman from quarreling families who dance together one evening at the inn and are found dead in a nearby meadow the next day. *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, even though a late addition, is a high point in the score, in the way that it gathers together several of the opera’s musical themes and sets the scene for the final tragedy. ■



**Sir Thomas Beecham,
Delius’s friend
and champion**



Edward Elgar

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath, near Worcester, England.

Died February 23, 1934, Worcester, England.

***Falstaff*, Symphonic Study in C Minor with Two Interludes in A Minor, Op. 68**

Edward Elgar learned to love Shakespeare from a carpenter, Ned Spiers, who worked as a handyman for Elgar Bros., his father's piano-tuning shop. Spiers had done carpentry in many theaters, and he had seen all the great actors of the day perform Shakespeare; he would quote from the plays around the shop, and eventually got young Edward to join him in reciting the famous speeches.

Falstaff is the only one of Elgar's major works that was inspired by his lifelong admiration for Shakespeare. (It is not his only composition to show the bard's influence: when Elgar wrote the march that is known by its tune, if not by name, to generations of Americans

graduating high school, he turned to Shakespeare for his title—*Othello*, act 3, scene 3: "Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!") Elgar had considered a work about Shakespeare's Falstaff for years and wrote the knight's name atop some sketches as early as 1901. But Elgar's *Falstaff* might have become another idle dream, like Verdi's *Lear* or Tchaikovsky's *Othello*, had he not received a commission from the Leeds Festival in May 1912 for a new orchestral work. Elgar recently had completed two symphonies and a violin concerto; he felt it was time for something programmatic. The work was to have its premiere on October 2, 1913, and by May 25 of that year, a day when the novelist Henry James came to tea, Elgar

COMPOSED

1913

FIRST PERFORMANCE

October 2, 1913, Leeds Festival, England. The composer conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

October 26, 1972, Orchestra Hall. Daniel Barenboim conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

October 24, 1995, Orchestra Hall. Daniel Barenboim conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contra-bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, triangle, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

35 minutes

was “beginning to turn to Falstaff.” (Seeing James reminded him of a passage in *Curiosities of Law and Lawyers*, which he underlined: “His stop for a word, by the produce, always paid for the delay.”)

Work on *Falstaff* progressed smoothly; on July 17, Elgar told a reporter, “I have, I think, enjoyed writing it more than any other music I have ever composed, and perhaps, for that reason, it may prove to be among my best efforts. . . . I shall say ‘good-bye’ to it with regret, for the hours I have spent on it have brought me a great deal of happiness.” As it turned out, he bid farewell with haste as well; the Elgars planned to leave for a vacation in Wales on August 5, and Elgar got up at four in the morning to finish the score.

The Leeds Festival premiere, under the composer’s baton, was a disappointment. Lady Elgar thought that her husband “rather hurried it & some of the lovely melodies were a little smothered, but it made its mark and place.” Elgar himself was depressed at the unenthusiastic applause, and perhaps at the suggestion in the *Daily Telegraph* that he was responsible: “I do not think even Elgar has ever written more complicated music, and it is for this very reason that I wish a greater conductor than he had explained his complications last night.” But when it was performed in London under Landon Ronald, its dedicatee, there were many empty seats, and the response was no better.

Falstaff won acceptance slowly, but eventually it was recognized

as a masterwork. When Elgar conducted it in London several years after the premiere, Bernard Shaw thought it magnificent and “perfectly graphic to anyone who knows his Shakespeare.” He found the musical storytelling superior to Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote*—“This ought to be played three times to their once”—and



Falstaff

felt that Elgar had created an ideal work of explicit, programmatic music. “Composing operas is mere piffle to a man who can do *that*,” he said. “It is the true way to set drama to music.”

During the month before the premiere, Elgar wrote a lengthy analysis of *Falstaff* which was published in *The Musical Times* as a guide for the concertgoer. The composer emphasized that his Falstaff was based on the historical plays, the two parts of *Henry IV*

and *Henry V*, and not the later and better-known “caricature” of Sir John that appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Elgar’s Falstaff is the one described in a 1777 essay by Maurice Morgann: “at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality; a knave without malice, a liar without deceit; and a knight, a gentleman, and a soldier, without either dignity, decency, or honour.” When Elgar learned that Ernest Newman was to write program notes for the premiere, he told him, “*Falstaff* (as the programme says) is the name but Shakespeare—the whole of human life—is the theme . . . & over it all runs—even in the tavern—the undercurrent of our failings & sorrows.”

Elgar describes the work as falling into “four principal divisions which run on without break.” The first introduces Sir John Falstaff and Prince Hal, the former in

music that aptly fits Morgann’s description: “in a green old age, mellow, frank, gay, easy, corpulent, loose, unprincipled, and luxurious.” The main Falstaff theme, quixotic and swaggering, opens the score and reappears throughout the work, knitting together the musical fabric. The prince is accompanied by a self-important, striding theme, courtly and genial in Elgar’s words. “As the scene is mainly a conversation,” he writes, “the music consists of a presentation and variation of these themes.” At the conversation’s end, “Sir John is in the ascendant.”

The extended second part begins at the Boar’s Head Tavern in Eastcheap. The music was suggested by a sentence in Edward Dowden’s guide to Shakespeare: “From the coldness, the caution, the convention of his father’s court, Prince Henry escapes to the teeming vitality of the London streets and the tavern where Falstaff is monarch.” We also briefly meet Mistress Quickly, the hostess, and several of her honest gentlewomen,

FALSTAFF, SYMPHONIC STUDY IN C MINOR WITH TWO INTERLUDES IN A MINOR, OP. 68

Elgar’s *Falstaff* is composed as one continuous movement, but the following divisions, based on the composer’s own analytical essay, provide an outline of the music’s course.

I. Falstaff and Prince Henry

II. Eastcheap—Gadshill—
The Boar’s Head, revelry
and sleep

Dream Interlude: Jack
Falstaff, now Sir John, a
boy, and page to Thomas
Mowbray, duke of Norfolk I
(Poco allegretto)

III. Falstaff’s march—
The return through
Gloucestershire

Interlude: Gloucestershire.
Shallow’s orchard
(Allegretto)—The new king—
The hurried ride to London

IV. King Henry V’s progress—
The repudiation of
Falstaff, and his death

in music of lighthearted cheer. Elgar then leaves the tavern for the midnight exploit at Gadshill, initiated by a “cheerful, out-of-door, ambling” theme and filled with furtive, suspenseful sounds until Falstaff and his gang are attacked and robbed, in eight noisy measures, of their booty. We now repair to the tavern, where Falstaff, his cohorts, and the honest gentlewomen all partake in a jolly scherzo. After considerable mayhem, Falstaff grows sleepy; the music slumps, and Falstaff snores.

The following Dream Interlude apparently was a late addition, for Elgar does not mention it in his first outlines, and even while he was scoring the work, he told the Austrian conductor Ferdinand Löwe that the entire piece should last about twenty minutes, a timing that cannot have included the two interludes. The first is primarily quiet, “simple in form and somewhat antiquated in mood,” and delicately scored with a prominent role for a solo violin. It is a dream “of what might have been” for Falstaff.

In the third section, Elgar conflates Henry IV’s battles of 1403 and 1405 into a single attack, launched by fanfares, bustling activity, and Sir John’s jaunty march. The battle itself is noisy, graphic, and blessedly swift. The skirmish over, Falstaff rides on through fields and past apple trees to Gloucestershire.

The second interlude, gentle and outdoorsy—“some sadly-merry pipe and tabor music,” in the composer’s words—is interrupted by the shocking word of Henry IV’s death.

Pistol breaks the news to Falstaff: “Sir John, thy tender lambkin, now is King. / Harry the Fifth’s the man, I speak the truth.” After a pause, Falstaff rejoices, believing that his fortune is truly made, and sets off for London: “I know the young King is sick for me. Let us take any man’s horses: the Laws of England are at my commandment.”

The final section begins near Westminster Abbey on the new king’s coronation day. Henry V enters to triumphal music. He appears in his original theme, now richly turned out: “Glittering in golden coat . . . and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer.” But Falstaff is inexorably swept aside by the king’s brazen music, and is cut down by his words “I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers: / How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!” Elgar now shows us a pitiful Falstaff, broken and abandoned. His death is relatively swift but painful, comforted only by fleeting memories of the orchard and the tavern. The music exposes, sometimes with a single note, his sorrow and decline. “Softly, as intelligence fades,” Elgar writes, “we hear the complete theme of the gracious Prince Hal, and then the nerveless final struggle and collapse.” To a sustained pianissimo brass chord, Falstaff dies. In the distance, we hear the veiled sound of a military drum. “The king’s stern theme is curtly thrown across the picture,” writes Elgar, “the shrill drum roll again asserts itself momentarily, and with one pizzicato chord the work ends; the man of stern reality has triumphed.” ■



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Born March 18, 1844, Tikhvin, Russia.

Died June 21, 1908, Liubensk, near Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Musical Pictures from *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*

Igor Stravinsky began to study composition with Rimsky-Korsakov just as the older master was beginning to compose his fourteenth—and next-to-last—opera, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*. He saw the work at every stage in its development, marveled that an opera with a religious subject could be written by a serious atheist, and led the applause at the premiere at the Mariinsky Theater in Saint Petersburg. (Stravinsky attended on the arm of his mother—the widow of the theater's most famous bass, just three months before the premiere of his own first significant work, the Symphony in E-flat, op. 1.)

The story of *The Invisible City of Kitezh* is taken from Russian folklore. The two lovers, Fevroniya, who is abducted during an invasion of Tartars, and Prince Vsevolod, who is killed in battle, are reunited in the mystical city of Kitezh, which is hidden behind the clouds and visible only as a reflection in the Shining Lake. (The mysterious allure of Kitezh continues into our own time: in 1992, the acclaimed director Werner Herzog himself went in search of the legendary Kitezh as part of the filming of his 1992 documentary, *Bells from the Deep: Faith and Superstition in Russia*.)

The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh is sometimes called the Russian *Parsifal*, and Wagner was

COMPOSED

1903–1904

FIRST PERFORMANCE

February, 20, 1907 (complete opera), Saint Petersburg

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

May 21, 1932, Ann Arbor, Michigan (complete opera). Earl V. Moore conducting

July 12, 1991, Ravinia Festival (Introduction only). Gennady Rozhdestvensky conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

April 13, 1999, Orchestra Hall (Introduction only). Yuri Temirkanov conducting

These are the first Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert performances of the last three “musical pictures”

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, bells, glockenspiel, balalaikas, two harps, celesta, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

23 minutes

clearly among Rimsky-Korsakov's chief models. (The ostinato from the Good Friday Spell in *Parsifal* is prominently used.) But there are also echoes of earlier Russian music and Mussorgsky's shadow looms large at times. Maximilian Steinberg, the Russian composer who married Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter and edited several of his works for posthumous publication, made the orchestral suite of "musical pictures" drawn from the opera that is performed at these concerts. (The music of the suite, like that of the opera itself, is continuous.) The opening Introduction is often justifiably compared to the celebrated Forest Murmurs from the second act of Wagner's *Siegfried*. Subtitled "In Praise of the Wilderness," Rimsky-Korsakov's tiny tone poem is a magical depiction of a forest setting, with bird calls and the sound of rustling leaves. But its harmonic compass and the shape of its big melody, as well as its rich and somber colors, is thoroughly Russian. (Rimsky-Korsakov was a man given to dark moods; once, when he apologized to Tolstoy after they had spent an awkward evening together, the great novelist commented, "For me it has been very interesting to come face to face with gloom.")

The second musical picture comes from the opening of the second

act of the opera, as the Princess Fevroniya's wedding procession passes through the village of Lesser (that is to say, Lower) Kitezkh. The depiction of the fierce battle at Kerzhenets, with music representing the warring soldiers and Tartars set over racing hoofbeats, is the entr'acte between the two scenes of the opera's third act. The final musical picture, the entr'acte before the last scene of the opera, reveals the transfiguration of Fevroniya's soul on the journey to the Invisible City.

A footnote. Stravinsky quickly recognized the brilliance of Rimsky-Korsakov's achievement in this score and—especially since he had assisted the composer in copying out long passages of the piano vocal score of the complete opera—he later realized how deeply the entire work had influenced him. (Rimsky-Korsakov lived just long enough to see his student blossom under his influence, but he barely glimpsed the extraordinary direction Stravinsky's career would soon take.) The night of the premiere, Stravinsky had an enormous wreath delivered to the theater; it was handed up to Rimsky-Korsakov from the pit at the end of the opera, amidst cheers from the audience and members of the orchestra. ■



Piotr Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Viatka, Russia.

Died November 6, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

***Romeo and Juliet*, Fantasy-Overture after Shakespeare**

No other play by Shakespeare has inspired as many composers as *Romeo and Juliet*. Throughout the romantic era in particular, the drama held an enormous—and sometimes nearly fatal—attraction. After Berlioz saw *Romeo and Juliet* in a Paris theater and fell desperately in love with Harriet Smithson, who played Juliet, he announced his intention to marry the actress and to write a dramatic symphony (now known as the *Symphonie fantastique*) based on the play—and did both within a decade. The marriage was a mistake, however, and they later separated, but the symphony is one of his greatest works.

More than twenty operas have been written on *Romeo and Juliet*,

including Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, with a mezzo-soprano as Romeo (in the tradition of trouser roles), and Gounod's enduring treatment, with the ending rewritten so that the lovers die at the same moment, singing in unison. Bernstein's urban *West Side Story* suggests that the fascination with this subject hasn't waned in our own time. And Prokofiev's 1940 ballet is now recognized as a twentieth-century classic, although the composer originally wrote a happy ending because he couldn't imagine how dying lovers could dance. But none of these works has surpassed the popularity of Tchaikovsky's fantasy-overture.

COMPOSED

October 7–November 27, 1869; revised 1870, 1880

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 16, 1879, Moscow

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

February 3, 1893, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

September 19, 2010, Millennium Park. Riccardo Muti conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

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

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

21 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1954. Antal Doráti conducting. Mercury

1981. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

1986. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

1988. Claudio Abbado conducting. CBS

1995. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Teldec

The Russian composer Mily Balakirev apparently first suggested the play to Tchaikovsky as early as the summer of 1869. He continued to push the subject and, when Tchaikovsky wavered, he prodded him. In a letter dated October 6, 1869, he offered literary observations, suggested general guidelines for treating the subject, and even dictated four measures of music to open the work. Before Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* was finished (and it was another ten years before it reached its final form), Balakirev had approved and rejected a number of themes, recommended a new introduction in the style of a Lisztian chorale, and presented his preferred tonal scheme, based on a fondness for keys with five flats or two sharps.

Surprisingly, Tchaikovsky found his own voice with this work; *Romeo and Juliet*, a "Fantasy-Overture after Shakespeare," is his first masterpiece. The original version, composed in just six weeks, was performed in March 1870, with Nicolai Rubinstein conducting. A new version, completed that summer, incorporated Balakirev's idea of a slow chorale at the beginning. It was played in Saint Petersburg in early 1872. Although Tchaikovsky and Balakirev had a falling out that year, Tchaikovsky continued to turn to Shakespeare for inspiration: in 1873, he fashioned a symphonic fantasy from *The Tempest*, and late in 1876 he complained of losing sleep over *Othello*, which he was determined to turn into an opera. He dropped the project early in the new year—two years before

Verdi and Boito first conceived their *Otello*. (Hamlet was the last Shakespearean subject to interest Tchaikovsky: he composed a fantasy-overture on it in 1888 and three years later contributed incidental music to a staging of the play in Saint Petersburg.)

In 1878, while he was recuperating from his failed marriage at his brother Modest's house, Tchaikovsky turned to *Romeo and Juliet* and was struck by its potential as a great operatic subject. (One night that May, when Modest and Sasha went to the theater to see *Romeo and Juliet*, Tchaikovsky stayed home, put his nieces and nephews to bed, and then read the Shakespeare play for himself.) "Of course I'll compose *Romeo and Juliet*," he

wrote to Modest from Brailov in June, excited by the prospect of writing a new opera. "It will be my most monumental work. It now seems to me absurd that I couldn't see earlier that I was predestined, as it were, to set this drama to music." But instead of writing an opera, Tchaikovsky put the finishing touches on the fantasy-overture two



Mily Balakirev, who first suggested that Tchaikovsky write music for *Romeo and Juliet*

SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC

There was music in Shakespeare's plays right from the start. The texts include some one hundred songs and many cues for instruments—a march, a dance, and sometimes simply the direction: music. Since the poet's death nearly four hundred years ago, his works have enticed composers time and time again into the tough and often treacherous challenge of writing music to accompany, illustrate, or replace his words. *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, published in 1991, lists 21,362 pieces of music written to Shakespearean works—operas, songs, overtures, symphonies, tone poems, and, of course, incidental music designed to fulfill the numerous cues for music in the plays.

Many composers have tried their hand at writing incidental music for Shakespeare's work—Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich for *Hamlet*, Sibelius and Sir Arthur Sullivan for *The Tempest*, Mendelssohn for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Humperdinck for *Twelfth Night*, Flotow for *A Winter's Tale*, and Korngold for *Much Ado About Nothing*. But

none of these are regularly performed in the theater and only Mendelssohn's has become a concert-hall staple.

It is remarkable how few good operas have been made from Shakespearean drama. But as Anthony Burgess has pointed out, "take the poetry and the incredible psychological insight away, and you have artificial plots that were not Shakespeare's own to start with, full of improbable coincidences and carelessly hurried fifth-act denouements." Many composers, however, have been unable to resist the challenge



William Shakespeare

(at least twenty operatic versions of *Hamlet* have been staged), and a few have written works that achieved modest, though usually not enduring popularity, such as Thomas's *Hamlet*, Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, or Rossini's *Otello*. (Some of the lesser-known operas—Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—are, in fact, better works of music theater.) Only Giuseppe Verdi, who loved Shakespeare above all

writers, was able to make the translation from play to opera successfully (with the inspired help of his librettist, Arrigo Boito), and his *Otello* and *Falstaff* are among the great treasures of opera.

The increasing interest in Shakespeare in the early nineteenth century coincided with the rise of programmatic music, a movement that inspired some of the finest Shakespearean treatments, beginning with Mendelssohn's Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1826 and Berlioz's dramatic symphony, *Romeo and Juliet*, in 1839. The twentieth century continued to add to the list, with works as different as Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, William Walton's film scores (for *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*, all with Lawrence Olivier), and Vaughan Williams's lovely *Serenade to Music*, a setting of the homage to music from the last act of *The Merchant of Venice*.

This week's concert concludes with what is perhaps the most familiar Shakespearean music of all, Tchaikovsky's fantasy-overture *Romeo and Juliet*, and includes Elgar's too-little-known symphonic study of Falstaff, which is arguably the greatest orchestral treatment of a Shakespearean subject.

—P.H.

years later. (It's this last version that is now regularly played.) The idea of composing the opera cropped up in 1881 and again in 1893, and on one of those occasions he sketched a duet for the lovers based on material from the fantasy-overture. But he never orchestrated it and ultimately gave up on the project, perhaps realizing how difficult it would be to surpass his orchestral work on the same subject.

Seldom in Tchaikovsky's music are form and content as well matched as in *Romeo and Juliet*. The contrast between family strife and the lovers' passion ideally lends itself to sonata form, with two dramatically contrasted themes; the conflict assures a fierce and combative development section.

Tchaikovsky begins as Balakirev recommended, with solemn and fateful chords that suggest the calm, knowing voice of Friar Lawrence. The street music is noisy and action-packed. The famous love theme begins innocently in the english horn and violas; it was one of Tchaikovsky's boldest moves to save the big statement of this great melody, fully orchestrated and greatly extended—the way most listeners remember it—for much later, at the climax of the recapitulation. The lovers' music returns once again in the coda, signaled by the timpani's dying heartbeat, but there it sounds cold and lifeless. ■

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