Juraj Valčuha Conductor
Christian Tetzlaff Violin

Haydn
Symphony No. 85 in B-flat Major (*The Queen*)
  Adagio—Vivace
  Romanze: Allegretto
  Menuetto: Allegretto
  Presto

Szymanowski
Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35
  (In one movement)
  CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF

INTERMISSION

J. Strauss, Jr.
*Emperor Waltz*, Op. 437

R. Strauss
Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Op. 59
Joseph Haydn
Born March 31, 1732; Rohrau, Austria
Died May 31, 1809; Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 85 in B-flat Major (The Queen)

Symphonies named after famous living people are rare. Among the many nicknames in Haydn’s vast symphonic output—a full quarter of his 108 symphonies have subtitles—only no. 48, Maria Theresa, and no. 85, La reine (The queen), honored important figures of the day. Beethoven, for political reasons, would decide against calling his third symphony Bonaparte. In our time, John Adams’s opera Nixon in China originally caused a stir for treating a living subject, Richard M. Nixon, who stated that he did not plan to see “his” opera. In 1787, the issues were musical, not political, and Marie Antoinette gladly attended the first performance of Haydn’s new B-flat symphony, openly declared it her favorite symphony, and approved the nickname it still bears—La reine de France, normally shortened to La reine.

Haydn’s Symphony no. 85 comes from the first set of six Paris Symphonies written on commission for performance in a city that had long shown its admiration for his work. The request came from the comte d’Ogny, a French aristocrat still in his twenties, who was one of the backers of the celebrated concert organization, Le Concert de la Loge Olympique. Haydn agreed to accept twenty-four louis d’or for each of the six symphonies, described in the contract itself as a “colossal price,” an assessment Haydn may not have shared.

Parisian orchestras were significantly larger than those of the Austrian and German courts. For Haydn, accustomed to a band of twenty-four musicians at Eszterháza, writing for the Paris forces must have been a great luxury. The Concert de la Loge Olympique boasted forty violins and ten double basses—more strings than we are used to hearing in virtually any music today. (Mozart, in one of his letters, said he preferred an orchestra of this size.)

Haydn wrote this and at least one of the other Paris Symphonies in 1785; the rest date from 1786, and all six were premiered in 1787. The Salle de Spectacle, where the concerts were presented, was a luxurious, tiered theater regularly attended by nobility (although only Marie Antoinette came away with a symphony named in her honor). The musicians wore elegant sky-blue dress coats trimmed in white lace, and they played with swords at their sides. They were among the best musicians in Paris (we have no report of their swordsmanship) and included, as the chef d’orchestre (conductor), the prolific composer Joseph Bologne, the chevalier de Saint-Georges; Luigi Cherubini was one of the violinists. Haydn’s success in Paris was but part of his general conquest of Europe; after Mozart’s death in 1791, he was readily acclaimed as the greatest of living composers.
The B-flat symphony opens with a brief, solemn bow to the old French overture, with its stately rhythms and geriatric pace, and continues with a rapid-fire movement full of wit and brilliance. Haydn, as usual, is a master of economy, making complex and enthralling music out of the simplest of materials and writing a “second” theme that is merely a rerun of the first rescored for oboe. (At one point, Haydn even appears to quote himself, imitating the aggressive descending minor-mode arpeggios that open his Farewell Symphony.)

The second movement is a set of variations on an old French folk song, “La gentille et jeune Lisette” (The charming and young Lisette), that sounds no less like Haydn than anything else in the symphony. One of the extraordinary hallmarks of Haydn’s mature style is the way it smoothly accommodates the popular music of the day without any signs of forced “crossover.”

The minuet is energetic and hearty. Its trio features a theme, given to the bassoon, which was later arranged for one of the mechanical musical clocks at Prince Esterházy’s palace. (It figured in the scheme of twelve pieces—one per hour—for an elaborate clock built in 1792.)

The finale is a characteristic tour de force—an ingenious, complex, and endlessly captivating essay on a commonplace but catchy theme which, as Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon said, “anyone could memorize in two or three hearings.”

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**Karol Szymanowski**

Born October 6, 1882; Tymoszówka, Ukraine

Died March 24, 1937; Lausanne, Switzerland

**Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35**

When the Polish violinist Paweł Kochański first appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1921, this violin concerto, which Karol Szymanowski had written for him five years before, was still unperformed. (Kochański played Brahms here instead.) Szymanowski’s First Violin Concerto was to have been premiered in Saint Petersburg, Russia, in February 1917, but war and revolution intervened. By the time the work was introduced in Warsaw in November 1922, Kochański had immigrated to the United States, and the solo was played by the concert-master of the Warsaw Philharmonic instead.

“The sound is so magical that people here were completely transfixed,” Szymanowski wrote to Kochański from Warsaw, obviously hoping he would still perform the work. “And just imagine, Pawelczek, the violin comes out on top the whole time!” Kochański—now Paul, not Paweł—did take up the piece, giving the U.S. premiere in 1924 in Philadelphia under Leopold Stokowski.

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**Above: Szymanowski, George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division**

### COMPOSED

1916

### FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 1, 1922; Warsaw, Poland

### INSTRUMENTATION

solo violin, three flutes and piccolo, three oboes and english horn, three clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, two harps, piano, celesta, timpani, triangle, bass drum, smaller drums, cymbals, bells, strings

### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

23 minutes

### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

February 10 and 11, 1928, Orchestra Hall. Paul Kochanski as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting

### MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

March 5, 6, and 7, 2009, Orchestra Hall. Frank Peter Zimmermann as soloist, Pierre Boulez conducting

March 9, 2009, Carnegie Hall. Frank Peter Zimmermann as soloist, Pierre Boulez conducting
and introducing it to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra four years later, with second music director Frederick Stock conducting. Oddly, although Szymanowski’s First Violin Concerto (a second followed seventeen years later, shortly before the composer’s death) was quickly acknowledged as a masterpiece, it still hasn’t received the attention of the other twentieth-century landmarks in the form—works by Bartók, Stravinsky, and Berg, for example.

Born the year after Bartók, four months after Stravinsky, and two years before Berg, Szymanowski was Poland’s most adventuresome and gifted composer of the early twentieth century. He enjoyed a childhood of privilege and culture. Of the five Szymanowski children, three became professional musicians. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, a poet who later worked on the libretto for Szymanowski’s opera King Roger, recalled fancy costume balls at the family home, for which Karol and his brother Felix wrote music. Their sister Stasia became an opera singer and created the role of Roxana in King Roger. Karol started composing at the dawn of the new century, beginning with piano miniatures indebted to Chopin and quickly moving on to larger works for full orchestra. He studied formally in Warsaw, where he met Arthur Rubinstein, who later played his music, and then in Berlin, where he helped found the Polish Composers’ Publishing Company, better known as “Young Poland in Music.”

Growing up in the seclusion of his father’s estate had not made Karol timid, self-absorbed, or provincial: he was influenced mostly by foreign composers such as Wagner, Strauss, Debussy, and Scriabin; he was fascinated by ancient Greece, the Orient, Norman Sicily, and the Arab world. As early as 1911, he wrote songs on lyrics by the Persian classic poet Hafiz (using the German translations by Hans Bethge, who provided the Chinese texts for Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde, completed just two years earlier). Szymanowski’s Third Symphony, finished the year he wrote this violin concerto, sets poetry by the thirteenth-century Persian mystic Rumi. Szymanowski was well dressed and well traveled; in addition to the major European capitals, he visited North Africa in 1911 and again in 1914. He returned to Poland on the eve of World War I; exempted from military service because of a childhood injury, he now turned all his energies to composition. The war years, spent in isolation in a gardener’s hut on the family property, were his most productive.

Szymanowski’s musical language is one of synthesis—late romanticism, sensuous chromaticism, delicate impressionism, and polytonality all play their part. He spent the summer of 1914 in Paris, and the sound world of Debussy and Ravel still lingers over the violin concerto he wrote two years later. He once recalled, “I shall never cease in the conviction [that] a true and deep understanding of French music, of its content, its form, and its further evolution, is one of the conditions for the development of our Polish music.” Over the years, Szymanowski’s style underwent a deeply personal evolution, leading him ultimately to embrace the ideas of Bartók and Stravinsky, and finally, near the end of his life, Polish folk music as well. Yet, throughout his career, his works sounded like no one else’s.

Szymanowski wrote several pieces for the violin, all composed for Kochański, and in the process the two developed “a new style, a new mode of expression for the violin,” as he told Kochański’s wife. “All other composers related to this style (no matter how much creative genius they revealed) came later, that is through the direct influence of Myths and the [First] Violin Concerto, or else through direct collaboration with Paweł.” In a sense, Szymanowski and Kochański were collaborators themselves, not just colleagues, and as a result, it’s fitting that the nearly two-minute
cadenza near the end of this concerto was composed entirely by the violinist.

Szymanowski’s First Violin Concerto was inspired by a poem by Tadeusz Miciński, who had translated Rumi’s verses for the Third Symphony. The concerto doesn’t follow or duplicate the poem, yet Szymanowski’s ecstatic, sumptuous music is an ideal companion to Miciński’s language:

All the birds pay tribute to me, for today I wed a goddess.
And now we stand by the lake in crimson blossom,
in flowing tears of joy, with rapture and fear,
burning in amorous conflagration.

The design of Szymanowski’s First Violin Concerto is truly sui generis—it recalls no standard form and yet it is far from formless. Unlike the other prominent violin concertos of the twentieth century—from Elgar’s, Bartók’s, Schoenberg’s, and Berg’s to Elliott Carter’s and John Adams’s, all of which are divided into contrasting movements—Szymanowski’s is a single continuous expanse of constantly shifting tempos and moods. It never suggests the pattern of sonata—or any other textbook—form, and it bears no relation to the four-movements-in-one conceit that Schoenberg, for example, perfected early on.

Szymanowski calls for a large orchestra, but he uses it judiciously; the textures are often delicate and shimmering, the effect, no doubt, of Szymanowski’s study of Debussy and Ravel. The orchestra begins, providing Miciński’s “setting” of a forest filled with birds and fireflies; this is music of rich atmosphere and exoticism. The solo violin enters quietly, on a long-held high note, and as it weaves its ecstatic, flowing song, it rarely descends to safer altitudes. “The violin comes out on top the whole time,” was how Szymanowski put it, and the sustained, high-flying lyricism of this concerto is one of the hallmarks of the piece.

Szymanowski and Kochański were reunited one last time, in 1933, to work together on a second violin concerto. Kochański, then a member of the Juilliard faculty, was so eager to have a sequel to “his” violin concerto that he cut short his vacation to join Szymanowski in Poland. He gave the premiere of the new work in Warsaw that October. Kochański died in New York in January 1934, three years before Szymanowski, his “dear and unforgettable friend.”

Johann Strauss, Jr.
Born October 25, 1825; Vienna, Austria
Died June 3, 1899; Vienna, Austria

Emperor Waltz, Op. 437

Even Brahms and Wagner, the two competitive, heavyweight composers of the era, shared a great fondness for the music of Johann Strauss, Jr. It’s difficult today to imagine music that is so popular with average people and connoisseurs, liberals and conservatives, young and old alike, and to realize that, in the nineteenth century, this music was serious business, if not serious music.

Johann Strauss, Sr., a gifted composer who started the family dynasty, tried to dissuade his three sons from the music business, but he lost on all three counts, and before he died in 1849, at the age of forty-four, he saw his eldest son, Johann, Jr., surpass him in fame and fortune. At the height of his popularity, the younger Strauss employed several orchestras (all bearing his name) and dashed from one ballroom to another to put in a nightly appearance with each. Eventually, Johann
Strauss, Jr., would be acclaimed as the Waltz King, although, in fact, he wrote nearly as many polkas as waltzes and could have earned his reputation on the basis of his sixteen operettas alone.

Johann Strauss, Jr., wasn’t a particularly happy man—he married three times in an age when such behavior was exceptional, and he was regularly given to dark moods—but the music he wrote projects an aura of an almost hypnotic cheer and frivolity. That innocent facade was important at the time, when social unrest was beginning to simmer, and ever more so in the twentieth century, after Austria’s darkest hour. The durability of the waltzes and polkas, however, is not simply due to an ever-present nostalgia—this is brilliant and irresistible music. The best of the pieces are really tone poems: the dance floor meets the concert hall.

The Emperor Waltz, a glorious, extended set of symphonic waltzes, is named for Franz Josef, who reigned over old Vienna until long after Strauss’s death. Although it’s one of Strauss’s last works, Brahms thought it his best waltz in years.

A parting word on the family name. When Richard Strauss, no relation, began to startle audiences with his noisy new tone poems during the 1890s, the joke ran: “If it must be Richard, let it be Wagner; if Strauss, then Johann.”

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**COMPOSED**
1889

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**
1889; Berlin, Germany

**INSTRUMENTATION**
two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, side drum, bass drum, harp, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**
11 minutes

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
December 25, 1930, Orchestra Hall.
Frederick Stock conducting

July 17, 1936, Ravinia Festival.
Willem van Hoogstraten conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**
September 20, 2002, Orchestra Hall.
Daniel Barenboim conducting

August 2, 2009, Ravinia Festival.
Christoph Eschenbach conducting

**CSO RECORDINGS**
1930. Frederick Stock conducting. RCA

1957. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

Salome made Richard Strauss the most famous composer alive. It also made him rich. Shortly after the Dresden premiere in 1905, Strauss built himself a villa in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, which he paid for with royalty checks. He moved in at the beginning of June 1908, and the first work he completed there, at a large oak desk positioned for a postcard view of the mountains, was Elektra, based on an adaptation of Sophocles’s play by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. But it was Strauss’s next opera, Der Rosenkavalier, with an original libretto by Hofmannsthal, which made the two of them the most celebrated composer-poet team since Mozart and Da Ponte, and brought Strauss his greatest popular success. To accommodate the public, special Rosenkavalier trains ran from Berlin to Dresden following its premiere there in January 1911. (Fifty performances were given in Dresden within the year.) Later, Rosenkavalier brands of champagne and cigarettes were sold. In 1926, a silent film was made—the opera was so popular that, even without singing, it had an audience.

“We were born for one another and are certain to do fine things together,” Strauss wrote to Hofmannsthal before they had even settled on the eighteenth-century Viennese tale that became their “comedy for music,” Der Rosenkavalier. These two made an unlikely pair. A poet of exquisite and refined tastes, Hofmannsthal tended to be withdrawn and aloof. (He lived outside Vienna in a small rococo castle, which he refused to equip with modern bathrooms or central heating.) Strauss was a showman and a good businessman; he could be crass, but he was eminently practical, and he possessed a shrewd sense of theater—what would play and what wouldn’t. They were, in other words, a perfect match; their professional relationship lasted twenty–three years and produced six operas. They did nearly all their communicating by mail—partly because Hofmannsthal disliked Strauss’s wife, whom he thought loud and pushy—and even at the end of two decades they still weren’t on a first-name basis (Strauss’s letters are usually addressed to “Lieber Freund,” Hofmannsthal’s to “Lieber Doktor Strauss”).

After the premiere of Elektra, with its searing dissonances, powerhouse orchestra, and Wagnerian voices, Strauss felt the need for a change of pace, and he was overheard saying, “Now I shall write a Mozart opera.” Hofmannsthal knew precisely what Strauss wanted, and the new libretto he mailed in installments practically set itself to music, as the composer later commented. Nevertheless, it took Strauss a year and a half to complete the score. It was a labor of love, and Strauss worked

Above: Strauss, ca. 1910
Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.