Friday, September 22, 2017, at 7:00

Riccardo Muti Conductor
Anne-Sophie Mutter Violin

Rossini
Overture to William Tell

Mozart
Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219 (Turkish)
Allegro aperto
Adagio
Rondo: Tempo di menuetto

Tchaikovsky
Suite from The Sleeping Beauty, Op. 66a
Introduction: Dance of the Lilac Fairy
Adagio
Puss in Boots and the White Cat
Panorama
Waltz

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Gioachino Rossini
Born February 29, 1792; Pesaro, Italy
Died November 13, 1868; Passy, a suburb of Paris, France

Overture to William Tell

Time has not been kind to Rossini. Today he is identified with a handful of comic operas (often dismissed as implausible and silly, and frequently staged as sophomoric slapstick) and a dozen or so overtures, the most famous of which brings to mind a television cowboy who rode high in the ratings from 1949 until 1965 instead of the heroic figure of William Tell. The opening sentence of the late Philip Gossett’s article in The New Grove offers a healthy corrective: “No composer in the first half of the nineteenth century enjoyed the measure of prestige, wealth, popular acclaim, or artistic influence that belonged to Rossini.”

Rossini was born less than three months after the death of Mozart (“He was the wonder of my youth,” Rossini later wrote, “the despair of my maturity, and he is the consolation of my old age”), was a professional contemporary of Beethoven and Schubert (as well as the young Mendelssohn and Berlioz), and lived into the era of Wagner and Brahms. But he retired in 1830, at the height of his career, leaving behind the world of opera where he had reigned since 1812, when his La pietra del paragone (The touchstone) triumphed at La Scala. During the remaining four decades of his life he didn’t write another opera (for a while he contemplated a treatment of Goethe’s Faust), choosing instead to preside over his celebrated salon (one of the most famous in all Europe) and to putter in the kitchen (tournedos Rossini are his most famous concoction). Only occasionally did he put pen to manuscript paper.  

William Tell was his last opera. It is a vast, imposing, and richly beautiful work in four acts, and in its day it was extravagantly praised (Donizetti said act 2 was composed not by Rossini but by God) and frequently staged, though seldom complete. (Once, when the head of the Paris Opera encountered Rossini on the street and boasted that the second act of Tell was being performed that very night, the composer replied, “Indeed! All of it?”) In our time, productions of William Tell are almost unheard of—Rossini’s serious operas, more important historically than the comedies, are relatively unknown to us today. Ironically, the overture to William Tell has become one of the most popular pieces in the orchestral repertory.

The opera is based on Friedrich Schiller’s retelling of the story of the Swiss patriot William Tell and his famous bow and arrow. A complex tale with a strong political theme (the scene is

**Above:** Rossini, from a lithograph by Charlet Ory, engraved by Pierre-Louis Henri Grevedon, 1828

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<th><strong>COMPOSED</strong></th>
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<td><strong>FIRST PERFORMANCE</strong></td>
<td>August 3, 1829; Paris, France</td>
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<td><strong>INSTRUMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>flute and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, strings</td>
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<td><strong>APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME</strong></td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
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<td><strong>FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES</strong></td>
<td>October 22, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting; July 1, 1937, Ravinia Festival. Gennaro Papi conducting</td>
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<td><strong>MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES</strong></td>
<td>August 2, 1992, Ravinia Festival. Erich Kunzel conducting; March 23, 24, 25, and 28, 2006, Orchestra Hall. Charles Dutoit conducting</td>
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<td><strong>CSO RECORDING</strong></td>
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Switzerland during the Austrian occupation), it first attracted Goethe, who contemplated writing an epic poem on the tale, and then Schiller, who made it the subject of his last completed play. (Tell’s status has fallen in our day: an exhibition in Lausanne in 1994 downgraded him from national hero to the purely fictional creation of Swiss folklore.)

Rossini’s overture was immediately popular and it often was played independently from the opera during the composer’s lifetime. When Berlioz wrote a long and detailed review of William Tell in 1834, he could not disguise his admiration for Rossini’s music. He noted that the overture was in an entirely new, enlarged form, and had “in fact become a symphony in four distinct movements instead of the piece in two movements usually thought to be sufficient.”

The overture opens unexpectedly with music for solo cellos, one of Rossini’s greatest masterstrokes. “It suggests the calm of profound solitude,” Berlioz wrote, “the solemn silence of nature when the elements and human passions are at rest.” A mountain storm blows up, its turbulence and erupting tension suggesting that both bad weather and patriotic war lie just over the horizon. “The inevitable decrescendo of the storm is handled with unusual skill,” Berlioz writes of the magical passage that leads the listener directly down to the mountain valley, where an English horn plays an Alpine herdsman’s melody. Then the galloping allegro vivace begins—a dazzling finale, full of brilliant, incisive effects and irresistible energy. Even in 1834 Berlioz commented, with a touch of envy, that its brio and verve “invariably excite the transports of the house.”
Wolfgang Mozart  
Born January 27, 1756; Salzburg, Austria  
Died December 5, 1791; Vienna, Austria  

**Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219 (Turkish)**

“Wolfgang had a little violin that he got as a present in Vienna . . . .” So begins one of the most celebrated anecdotes about the young Mozart, a child in everything but musical talent. Johann Andreas Schachtner, a friend of the family, continues:

We were going to play trios, Papa [Leopold] playing the bass with his viola, Wenzl the first violin, and I was to play the second violin. Wolfgang had asked to be allowed to play the second violin, but Papa refused him this foolish request, because he had not yet had the least instruction in the violin, and Papa thought he could not possibly play anything.

Wolfgang said, “You don’t need to have studied in order to play second violin,” and when Papa insisted that he should go away and not bother us any more, Wolfgang began to weep bitterly and stamped off with his little violin. I asked them to let him play with me. Papa eventually said, “Play with Herr Schachtner, but so softly that we can’t hear you, or you will have to go.” And so it was. Wolfgang played with me. I soon noticed with astonishment that I was quite superfluous. I quietly put my violin down, and looked at your Papa; tears of wonder and comfort ran down his cheeks at this scene.

Schachtner places the evening in January 1763; Wolfgang turned seven that month. It astonished even Leopold, who never could be said to have underestimated his son’s talent. The full range of Mozart’s abilities still amazes us today, even though we know he played the clavier, with grace and fluency, at four; began to compose at five; and went on to write music of an emotional depth and cerebral level often at odds with his age and behavior and comprehensible only as the work of absolute genius.

A month after Wolfgang played with Herr Schachtner, he performed on both violin and harpsichord in concert for the Salzburg court. From then on he played second fiddle to no one. Often during the 1770s, Mozart appeared as a violin soloist in Salzburg, Vienna, Augsburg, and Munich. In 1777, he wrote home to his father from Munich, “I played as if I were the greatest fiddler in all of Europe.” Leopold wrote back that if he would only apply himself, he might indeed sound like the first violinist of Europe, and pointed out that “many people do not even know that you play the violin, since you have been known from childhood as a keyboard artist.”

Above: Mozart, from a copy of a portrait commissioned by Giovanni Battista “Padre” Martini for his gallery of famous musicians in Bologna, 1777

**COMPOSED**

Autograph score dated December 20, 1775

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Unknown

**INSTRUMENTATION**

solo violin, two oboes, two horns, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**

31 minutes

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**

March 17 and 18, 1916, Orchestra Hall. Maud Powell as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting

July 27, 1947, Ravinia Festival. Miriam Solovieff as soloist, William Steinberg conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**

July 6, 2007, Ravinia Festival. Pinchas Zukerman as soloist, James Conlon conducting

November 12, 13, and 14, 2015, Orchestra Hall. Augustin Hadelich as soloist, Edo de Waart conducting

**CSO RECORDING**

1961. Erica Morini as soloist, George Szell conducting. VAI (video)
player.” Shortly after that, Wolfgang dropped the violin in favor of the keyboard for concertizing—and the viola for playing chamber music—partly to spite his father, who had made his name as a violinist and who had published an influential and popular treatise on violin playing the year his son was born. Wolfgang rightly knew that he was the more precious product of 1756.

Although Mozart wrote music for solo violin throughout his career—sonatas, sets of variations, mini-concertos embedded within orchestral serenades—the centerpiece of this output is the set of five concertos he composed in the mid-1770s in Salzburg and no doubt designed to perform himself. It used to be assumed that these five works were written in the span of just eight months—the earliest is dated April 14, 1775; the last December 20, 1775. But recent scholarship suggests that the last two digits of those dates were tampered with more than once, first adjusting them to read 1780, and then to 1775. It now seems likely that the last four do date from 1775, but the first concerto may have been written as early as 1773. In any event, all five concertos are early Mozart—they predate his first significant piano concerto, in E-flat major (K. 271), by more than a year—but they aren’t immature works in any sense. In Mozart’s hands—hands that enriched and transformed nearly every form they touched—even these five works composed in a relatively short span of time demonstrate growth in his understanding of the concerto. The last three, which mark an advance over the more decorative first two, have long been part of the repertory, and the concerto performed this evening, the so-called episode from the A major concerto is even secondhand: Mozart had already used the theme in his ballet Jealousy in the Harem of 1772.

The first two movements of the Turkish Concerto are more conventional in design—Mozart follows the broad outlines of sonata form in the first movement and the da capo aria in the second (the Adagio bears a striking resemblance to Belmonte’s aria “O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig” in The Abduction from the Seraglio). There’s nearly an embarrassment of melody in both movements. “New ideas succeed each other in blissful insouciance of each other and of any strict formal pattern,” H.C. Robbins Landon, the devoted Mozart scholar, once wrote. The entire concerto is generously proportioned. “If I have time,” Wolfgang wrote to his father in 1778, “I shall rearrange some of my violin concertos, and shorten them. In Germany we rather like length, but, after all, it is better to be short and good.” Mozart, however, was alone in thinking he had provided too much of a good thing. ■
Pyotr Tchaikovsky
Born May 7, 1840; Votkinsk, Russia
Died November 6, 1893; Saint Petersburg, Russia

Suite from *The Sleeping Beauty*, Op. 66a

“*The Sleeping Beauty* is a ballet that cannot be revived,” wrote former *New Yorker* critic Arlene Croce, “it can only be rediscovered.” As much as any work written for the ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty* is a classic—“the grandest classic a company can own,” is how Croce put it—and it has always held a special place in the repertoire. The true magic of *The Sleeping Beauty*, even for dancers, is created by Tchaikovsky’s music—“The score is the ballet,” Croce wrote. Tchaikovsky was intrigued by the idea of a ballet based on Charles Perrault’s *La belle au bois dormant* from the moment it was first proposed to him in May 1888. (Perrault’s tale of Prince Charming and the Awakening Kiss was one of the *Mother Goose* stories first published in 1697.) He began to write music that fall, as soon as he received a meticulously detailed scenario from Marius Petipa, the French-born choreographer and director of the Imperial Ballet in Saint Petersburg. By January 9 of the new year, he was so deep at work that he told his brother Modest that “there is no time left for letters.” Tchaikovsky finished the score on May 26. He spent the summer orchestrating the music. It was his first major work since the Fifth Symphony.

The premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty*, in January 1890, was a great success, and it was an immediate hit with the press and the public. Tchaikovsky himself thought it one of his best works, a “dancing symphony” about fate and life woven from an old tale of a princess who pricks her finger and is put under a hundred-year spell to be awakened by a handsome prince. Stravinsky later said it was “the convincing example of Tchaikovsky’s great creative power.”

The suite of selections from *The Sleeping Beauty* performed this evening includes some of the most beloved music from the ballet, including the brilliant introduction; the sumptuous, soaring Adagio; and the big dazzling waltz, with its famous sinuous melody, a seemingly unpredictable sequence of half steps and whole steps.

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.

Above: Tchaikovsky, photographed by Franciszek de Mezer (François de Mezer), Kiev, 1890

**COMPOSED**
1888–89

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**
January 15, 1890; Saint Petersburg, Russia

**INSTRUMENTATION**
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tibia, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**
20 minutes

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
November 16 and 17, 1894, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting (Waltz)

August 6, 8 & 10, 1957, Ravinia Festival. Royal Danish Ballet as soloists, Robert Zeller conducting (Aurora’s Wedding)

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**
August 13, 1989, Ravinia Festival. Erich Kunzel conducting (Adagio and Waltz)

February 3 and 4, 2017, Orchestra Hall. Bramwell Tovey conducting (Act 2)

**CSO RECORDINGS**
1916. Frederick Stock conducting. Columbia (Waltz)

1953. Fritz Reiner conducting. VAI (Waltz) (video)

1965. Morton Gould conducting. RCA (Waltz)