

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SECOND 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, December 20, 2012, at 8:00

Friday, December 21, 2012, at 1:30

Saturday, December 22, 2012, at 8:00

Jaap van Zweden Conductor

Christopher Martin Trumpet

Shostakovich

Festive Overture, Op. 96

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert performances

Rouse

Heimdall's Trumpet

(In four movements)

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

Commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by the Edward F. Schmidt Family
Commissioning Fund

World premiere

INTERMISSION

Tchaikovsky

Manfred Symphony, Op. 58

Lento lugubre

Vivace con spirito

Andante con moto

Allegro con fuoco



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Died August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia.

Festive Overture, Op. 96

In March 1956, six months before his fiftieth birthday, Shostakovich fretted: “I’ll soon start to feel like a Rossini. As everybody knows, that composer wrote his last composition at the age of forty, after which he lived until the age of seventy without composing another note. That’s small comfort for me.” To anyone who knew Shostakovich, renowned for the phenomenal speed at which he could write his compositions, and who indeed remained productive to the last months of his life, his worry that he was bound to creatively “dry up” might appear histrionic and rather absurd. Yet Rossini’s brilliant facility until he “retired” from composition clearly resonated in Shostakovich’s mind: it seems no coincidence that his very last

symphony, composed in 1971, includes an obvious quotation from Rossini’s overture to his last opera, *William Tell*.

And the circumstances in which Shostakovich composed his *Festive Overture* in 1954 seem rather akin to Rossini, who famously had to be locked into his hotel room until he composed the required overture to his opera *The Thieving Magpie*; Shostakovich, again, composed his overture against the clock, providing the work within a day. But in Shostakovich’s case, it was not a situation of his own making. The conductor, Vasily Nebolsin, had found himself with no opening work ready for the planned concert to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution, and had approached Shostakovich in

COMPOSED

1954

FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 6, 1954; Moscow, Russia

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first subscription concert performances

FIRST CSO

PERFORMANCE

November 23, 1974, Orchestra Hall (Popular concert). Arthur Fiedler conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

July 1, 2006, Ravinia Festival. James Conlon conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, three oboes, three clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

6 minutes

some panic just two days before the dress rehearsal asking him to fill the breach.

Shostakovich's friend, Lev Lebedinsky, recalls how Shostakovich asked him to stay and keep him company while he composed the overture. The composer "was able to talk, make jokes, and compose simultaneously." In due course, Nebolsin telephoned and asked if Shostakovich had anything ready for his copyists—should he send a courier? A slight hesitation, and then Shostakovich replied: "Send him!" Lebedinsky then

witnessed one courier after another collecting manuscript pages from Shostakovich, the ink still wet, to be transcribed into individual orchestral parts by Nebolsin's team of copyists.

The result, as Lebedinsky recalls, is "this brilliant effervescent work, with its vivacious energy spilling over like uncorked champagne." In its bubbling high spirits, it seems to foretell Bernstein's overture to *Candide*, composed just two years later. ■

—Daniel Jaffé

Symphony Center Information



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Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses. PLEASE NOTE: Some programs do not allow for latecomers to be seated in the hall.



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Christopher Rouse

Born February 15, 1949, Baltimore, Maryland.

Heimdall's Trumpet

Ragnarök is Armageddon in Norse mythology—or *Götterdämmerung*, the twilight of the gods, in Wagner parlance. It is signaled by the sound of a trumpet. That is the subject of Christopher Rouse's new work for the Chicago Symphony and its principal trumpet, Christopher Martin. It is Heimdall, the Norse god, who calls the heroes to the field where the last battle will be fought, marking the end of the world of gods and men. In some accounts, his call can be heard throughout the heavens, the earth, and the lower world.

Rouse has long been drawn to weighty subjects. Many of his early works probe the troubled human condition in bleak and unsparing language. "Most of my music deals with pain," he told a *New York Times* reporter back in 1992. "If your modus vivendi as a composer," he continued, "is to explore organizational techniques, you have revealed yourself as an intelligent,

rational, Apollonian type of person. If, on the other hand, you're exposing the wounds of a lifetime and perhaps some kind of embracing view of how you function as part of a wounded species, that makes you more vulnerable." Even in a later work such as *Rapture*, the 2000 score that the CSO played in 2006, which reflected a shift toward a more tonal music and attempts to "project a sense of spiritual ecstasy," Rouse is still grappling with serious, substantive ideas.

Rouse was largely self-taught as a composer when he entered the Oberlin Conservatory. He received a bachelor's degree there in 1971 and subsequently studied at Cornell University; his teachers include George Crumb and Karel Husa. He has been on the faculty of the Eastman School of Music since 1981. (In 1983, he taught the school's first course in the history of rock and roll.) From 1986 until

COMPOSED

2011–12

Commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund

These are the world premiere performances

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, three oboes, three clarinets, three bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, two bass trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

22 minutes

1989, Rouse served as composer-in-residence of the Baltimore Symphony. His Symphony no. 1, written for that orchestra, received the prestigious Kennedy Center Friedheim Award in 1988. Since 1997, he has taught composition at the Juilliard School. This year, he began a two-year appointment as composer-in-residence of the New York Philharmonic.

In 1993, Rouse was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in music for his Trombone Concerto; written in memory of Leonard Bernstein, it quotes from Bernstein's *Kaddish* Symphony. Rouse's sphere of reference is wide and very personal. *Iscariot* (1989), for chamber orchestra, uses the chorale tune "Es ist genug" that has figured prominently in works by Bach and in Alban Berg's Violin Concerto. *Bonham*, scored for eight percussionists, is a tribute to the late John Bonham, drummer of Led Zeppelin. His Cello Concerto incorporates a song by William Schuman and Arnal'ta's lullaby from Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*, and it quotes music by Stephen Albert and Andrzej Panufnik, whose deaths partly inspired the work. *Der gerettete Alberich* (Alberich saved), which was premiered in 1998, is a fantasy for percussion and orchestra on themes by Wagner.

In recent years, Rouse has been particularly drawn to writing works for a solo instrument with orchestra, but these scores are not pure, abstract concertos in the classical sense. *Kabir Padavali* is an orchestral song cycle with texts by

the fifteenth-century Indian mystic poet Kabir; *Seeing*, a piano concerto that is also a meditation on madness as seen in the tragic lives of Robert Schumann and the rock guitarist-songwriter Skip Spence; and *Concert de Gaudí*, a guitar concerto inspired by the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí. Rouse's preoccupation with concertos and concerto-like works spans thirty years, from his Violin Concerto of 1991 through a series of orchestral works featuring solo trombone, cello, flute, percussion, piano, guitar, oboe, and clarinet—former CSO principal clarinet Larry Combs and the Orchestra gave the world premiere of the Clarinet Concerto here in 2001—and now, with this new work for the Chicago Symphony, the trumpet.

Heindall's *Trumpet* is the latest of Rouse's scores inspired by myth, including *Gorgon* and *Phaeton*, two orchestral works from the 1980s, and *Morpheus*, a solo cello piece—all based on Ancient Greek mythology. *Der gerettete Alberich* (Alberich saved), a fantasy for percussion and orchestra on themes by Wagner that was premiered in 1998, brings us closer to the Norse legends that generated *Heimdall's Trumpet*.

The Chicago Symphony and Martin chose Rouse for this commission largely because of his flair for writing big dramatic pieces for large orchestra, and the desire to produce a concerto that is, as Martin puts it, a "real conversational ensemble piece" rather than a solo showcase pure and simple.

This kind of interaction is evident from the beginning of the work, which unfolds as a kind of call and response between the solo trumpet and first the brass section, and then the winds. Despite the complexity and importance of the orchestral writing through the four-movement work, the solo trumpet inevitably has the most challenging role to play, one that not only stretches the trumpet's expressivity, but, quite literally, its range as well. At the end of the third movement, Rouse writes the lowest fundamental C on the instrument—on the piano it's the note one octave up from the bottom, down in the trombone's register. (Lying in what trumpeters call the pedal range, this note doesn't appear in any of the standard literature, and, as Martin notes, it is normally played only in the privacy of the practice room.) Rouse's second movement uses octatonic scales (built out of eight rather than seven notes), which are more common to jazz than orchestral music (Martin remembers practicing them when he studied jazz at Eastman).

The ending of *Heimdall's Trumpet*, where myth and music become one, is, appropriately, high drama. A passage for solo trumpet, in cadenza-like phrases, and two bass trumpets—an instrument one rarely hears—drives the piece toward the moment of Heimdall's fateful call, the moment of Ragnarök. The last expression marking that Rouse writes, over the trumpet's final

phrase, is *stentoreo*, after Stentor, the mythological figure who was known for his booming voice.

Christopher Rouse offers these comments about *Heimdall's Trumpet*:

Cast in four movements, the title of the piece refers properly to the finale, which attempts in a general way to depict these mythological events as I imagine them. The onset of Ragnarök occurs only at the very end of the work, in a very short orchestral fortissimo outburst followed by an extended silence. The first movement is declamatory in nature and gives way to a whirlwind scherzo that utilizes a variety of mutes for both the soloist and the orchestral brass section. The third movement is a largo that swings like a pendulum between sections of substantive dissonance and straightforward consonance. The aforementioned finale, more specifically dramatic and programmatic in nature, returns to the more aggressive world of the first movement. The solo trumpet part requires much of the player, who must possess enormous technical prowess, including the ability to produce pedal tones at some length. ■

—Phillip Huscher



Piotr Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia.

Died November 6, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Manfred Symphony, Op. 58

In the winter of 1867–68, during his tour of Russia, Berlioz conducted a performance of *Harold in Italy*, his work for orchestra and viola obbligato based on Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This deeply impressed both Mily Balakirev, founder of the so-called Mighty Handful (whose members included Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, and Mussorgsky), and the art critic and historian Vladimir Stasov, the group's intellectual godfather. Indeed, Stasov was inspired to draft a program for a four-movement symphony based on Byron's dramatic poem *Manfred*. It is widely thought that Byron's poem was part autobiographical, the exiled hero's feelings of guilt for an unspecified romantic transgression reflecting Byron's own feelings while in exile for his incestuous love affair with his half-sister Augusta. Stasov

deliberately kept this subtext vague, simply suggesting a hero whose "life is broken, his obsessive, fateful questions remain unanswered."

Stasov had originally hoped that Balakirev might make this into a symphonic work, but Balakirev turned the project down; Stasov's subsequent attempt to interest Berlioz himself was definitively quashed by the French composer's death early in 1869. Balakirev, having for a while appeared the most vital figure on the Russian musical scene, suffered a nervous breakdown in 1872 and withdrew completely from all musical activity for almost two years.

And there it might have rested if Tchaikovsky had not written to Balakirev in 1881. Back in 1869, Balakirev had persuaded Tchaikovsky to compose the fantasy overture *Romeo and Juliet*,

COMPOSED

1885

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 23, 1886; Moscow, Russia

FIRST CSO

PERFORMANCE

December 23, 1898, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

November 12, 1983, Orchestra Hall. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, three bassoons, four horns, two trumpets and two cornets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

56 minutes

not only providing a thorough ground plan of the work including key signatures, but also giving stringent and invaluable criticism of the work-in-progress. Tchaikovsky was fully mindful of his debt to Balakirev in composing this early masterpiece, and now—having extensively reworked *Romeo and Juliet* for republication— anxiously wrote to Balakirev asking if he had received a copy of the revised score: “I want you to know that I have not forgotten who was responsible for this score’s appearance in this world, that I vividly recall the friendly sympathy you showed at the time, which I hope even now is not completely extinguished.”

Balakirev, who had gradually been reestablishing himself in the music world, and was perhaps hoping to regain his former mastery through an association which had proved so fruitful, seized his opportunity and urged Tchaikovsky



Tchaikovsky (right) and violinist Iosif Kotek

to take up the *Manfred* project. “Your *Francesca [da Rimini]* suggested to me that you would be able to tackle this subject brilliantly,” he wrote to his former protégé; “provided, of course, you *make an effort*, that you apply to your work just a little more criticism, allow your fantasy to mature in your

head, and don’t hurry to finish at all costs.” Tchaikovsky, though in principle open to the idea, initially revolted at the idea of working to Stasov’s synopsis. However, he soon came under Balakirev’s spell—it seems that an intense and candid conversation on spiritual matters played a large part in this—and was persuaded to compose *Manfred*.

In their correspondence, Balakirev—for all his recognition of such achievements of Tchaikovsky’s as the Second and Third symphonies and the tone poem *Francesca da Rimini*—appears quite oblivious to the fact Tchaikovsky was no longer a budding composer of some promise, but already a well-established composer of such works as the Fourth Symphony, Piano Concerto no. 1, and *Eugene Onegin*. Notwithstanding these achievements, Balakirev—rather like a doting parent stuck in a time warp—seems to have assumed that Tchaikovsky would gratefully receive advice on such details as what key each movement of the symphony should be and which compositions he should use as models, ranging from works by Liszt and Berlioz to pieces by a certain young Tchaikovsky. Yet Tchaikovsky seems to have meekly paid some heed to Balakirev’s prescriptions, and at least to have made some study of Berlioz’s works.

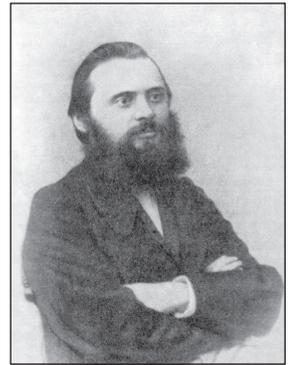
Tchaikovsky began work in April 1885, after a visit to Switzerland to attend his dying friend, the violinist Iosif Kotek; while there, Tchaikovsky had read Byron’s *Manfred*, hoping that the Alpine environment would

stimulate him to begin the symphony. At first, Tchaikovsky found it hard to start, confessing to his friend Sergey Taneyev: “It’s a thousand times pleasanter to compose without a program.” However, the project eventually seized his imagination, and before too long he was writing to another friend, the singer Emiliya Pavlovskaya: “Now I can’t stop. The symphony’s come out enormous, serious, difficult, absorbing all my time, sometimes wearying me in the extreme; but an inner voice tells me that I’m not laboring in vain, and that this will be perhaps the best of my symphonic compositions.”

Certainly it was one of his most ambitious—the most extended of his symphonic works and requiring the largest orchestral force. The *Manfred* Symphony’s premiere held in Moscow on March 23, 1886, seemed to confirm Tchaikovsky’s assessment of his work, though he gloomily predicted: “because of its difficulty, impracticability, and complexity it is doomed to *failure and to be ignored*.” Contrary to his expectations, *Manfred* was quickly taken up, and before the year was out it had been performed in Saint Petersburg and even New York. Sadly, Tchaikovsky, in little over two years, took strongly against the work, telling the grand duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, “it is an abominable piece . . . I loathe it deeply, *with the one exception of the first movement* . . . the finale in particular is something loathsome.”

The finale is indeed the one movement which has received the most criticism, Tchaikovsky

biographer David Brown noting “the feebleness of the melodic material” and that its bacchanal lacks “the spice of true villainy or the relish of an honest hellish debauch.” It is perhaps this movement which has prevented Tchaikovsky’s *Manfred* from being better known or more frequently performed; which is greatly to be regretted, since not only the first movement, but also the second and third movements include some of Tchaikovsky’s most brilliantly orchestrated and affecting music, as demonstrated by the scherzo second movement and the pastoral third movement. It was in an attempt to rescue the symphony that the great Russian conductor Yevgeny Svetlanov prepared an edition which has since been taken up by several conductors, and will be heard in tonight’s concert: this cuts such sections of the finale as the fugue, and, instead of the original “happy” death scene apotheosis for organ solo, finally takes us back to the doom-laden coda from the first movement—far more faithful to the spirit of Byron’s original.



Mily Balakirev

Tchaikovsky’s opening movement presents Manfred, brooding and despairing. In Tchaikovsky’s

own description of the first movement, he clearly nudges closer to Byron's original than had Stasov in the original scenario, describing the hero as "tortured by the burning anguish of hopelessness and memory of his guilty past Memories of his ruined Astarte, whom once he had passionately loved, gnaw and eat at his heart, and there is neither Grace nor an end to Manfred's boundless despair." One may hear echoes of Wagner's Tristan in Tchaikovsky's portrayal of the doomed hero. After Manfred's musings reach an inconclusive climax, and some tormented musings (surely recalled by Elgar for his First Symphony), we are introduced to his beloved Astarte through a tender theme played by muted strings.

The second movement scherzo presents the Alpine fairy, appearing "in a rainbow from the waterfall's spray," depicted by Tchaikovsky in an intricate web of sparkling and gently flashing textures by upper strings and woodwinds. A central trio section presents a hauntingly songful theme which foretells the main theme of the following slow movement.

The pastoral slow movement opens with the bucolic sound of an oboe. Episodes of enchantment follow, in which birdsong and the "sweet bells of the sauntering herd"

appear to intermingle. Manfred's relatively brief intrusion is an effective foil to this pastoral idyll.

Stasov's specified "wild, unbridled allegro" for the finale was realized by Tchaikovsky in an extended bacchanal. Svetlanov's edition tightens this considerably, reducing the finale by over a third of its original length. The bacchanal as a result is more clearly a prelude to Manfred's own despairing theme, and we can also hear how the orgy is both part of Manfred's corrupt nature and something he despises. We hear a tender recollection of Astarte's theme in muted strings and harp—now seemingly quite beyond Manfred's reach. Then, accompanied by pulsating horns, Manfred dies in despair and his requiem is not the complacent organ apotheosis (Tchaikovsky having mistakenly believed that Manfred is finally forgiven), but the coda from the first movement. ■

—Daniel Jaffé

Daniel Jaffé is a regular contributor to *BBC Music Magazine* and a specialist in English and Russian music. He is the author of a biography of *Sergey Prokofiev* (Phaidon) and the *Historical Dictionary of Russian Music* (Scarecrow Press).

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