

2022–2023 | 123rd Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, March 10, at 8:00

Saturday, March 11, at 8:00

Sunday, March 12, at 2:00

Kensho Watanabe Conductor

Brian Sanders' JUNK:

Katherine Corbett Carmencita

Sammy Wong Don José

William Brazdzionis Lucas the Picador

Connor Senning Dominican Friar

Brian Sanders Archeologist

Shchedrin *Carmen* Suite (after Bizet)

a. Introduction—

b. Dance [Studies in Character]

c. First Intermezzo [Novella Review]—

d. Changing of the Guard [Background Check]

e. Carmen's Entrance and Habanera [Pole Dance]

f. Scene [Baristas in Training]

g. Second Intermezzo [Overlooking the Guadalquivir]

h. Bolero [How to Turn a Hopeful Young Tennis Player into a Hardened Criminal]—

i. Torero [Modern Dating]

j. Torero and Carmen [Animal Rites]

k. Adagio [Adagio for Mysticism, Spirituality, and Love]

l. Fortune-Telling—

m. Finale [Finally!]

The Baristas:

Em Godfrey (also Antonio the Guide)

Laura Jenkins

Rachel Neitzke

Kerry Sheehan

Kayliani Sood

Conceived and Directed by **Brian Sanders**

Lighting Design by **Alyssandra Docherty**

Costume Design by **JoAnne Jacobs**

Apparatus Sculpture Design by **John Howell IV and Pedro Silva**

Technical Manager **Andrew Schmitz**

Special thanks to **Garth Shack, Sapsis Rigging, Inc.**

Intermission

Boulanger *Of a Sad Evening*

Stravinsky Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 version)

- I. Introduction—The Firebird and its Dance
- II. The Princesses' Round Dance
- III. Infernal Dance of King Kastchei—
- IV. Berceuse—
- V. Finale

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

These concerts are sponsored by **Elaine Woo Camarda and A. Morris Williams, Jr.**

Kensho Watanabe's appearance is sponsored by the **Salkind Family Foundation.**

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The
Philadelphia
Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

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Photo: Jeff Fusco



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 11th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, in Verizon Hall and community centers, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. In response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Digital Stage, providing access to high-quality online performances, keeping music alive at a time when it was needed most. It also inaugurated free offerings: HearTOGETHER,

a podcast on racial and social justice, and creative equity and inclusion, through the lens of the world of orchestral music, and Our City, Your Orchestra, a series of digital performances that connects the Orchestra with communities through music and dialog while celebrating the diversity and vibrancy of the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as Play!N's; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; School Concerts; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; and All City Orchestra Fellowships.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 12 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor

Andrew Bogard



Kensho Watanabe is fast becoming one of the most exciting and versatile young conductors to come out of the United States. Assistant conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra from 2016 to 2019, he made his subscription debut with the Philadelphians in April 2017, stepping in for his mentor, Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He conducted four more subscription concerts with the ensemble in 2019, debuted at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival, and led numerous concerts at the Mann

Center and in Saratoga. From 2013 to 2015 he was an inaugural conducting fellow at the Curtis Institute of Music, under the mentorship of Mr. Nézet-Séguin.

Mr. Watanabe was recognized with a 2021 Career Assistance Award from the Solti Foundation U.S. Other recent career highlights include debuts with the London, Tokyo, Rhode Island, and Szczecin philharmonics; the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse; and the Jyväskylä Sinfonia and Turku Philharmonic in Finland. He has also enjoyed collaborations with the Houston, Detroit, and Charlotte symphonies; the Royal Scottish National Orchestra; the Brussels Philharmonic; the BBC National Orchestra of Wales; the Sarasota Orchestra; the Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal; and the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival. In addition to these current performances, highlights of the 2022–23 season include debuts with the Minnesota Orchestra and the Edmonton and Pasadena symphonies. He also returns to the Rhode Island Philharmonic, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, and the Tokyo Philharmonic. Equally at home in both symphonic and operatic repertoire, he has led numerous opera productions, most recently at the Spoleto Festival 2022 conducting Puccini's *La bohème*. He served as assistant conductor to Mr. Nézet-Séguin on a new production of Strauss's *Elektra* at Montreal Opera. He also worked with Mr. Nézet-Séguin on Kevin Puts's *The Hours* with The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera; he returns to the Met for Terence Blanchard's *Champion* this spring.

An accomplished violinist, Mr. Watanabe received his Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music and served as a substitute violinist in The Philadelphia Orchestra from 2012 to 2016. Cognizant of the importance of the training and development of young musicians, he has previously served on the staff of the Greenwood Music Camp in Cummington, Massachusetts, as the orchestra conductor. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and also holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Yale College, where he studied molecular, cellular, and developmental biology.

Artists

Since 1992 **JUNK** founder, choreographer, and dancer Brian Sanders has presented work in alternative formats that challenged traditional concepts of how “concert dance” should be presented and experienced. Unpredictable and uncommon in its movement, ideas, and storytelling, the company first connected with young urban audiences by performing in nightclubs and other alternative venues. JUNK uses dance to turn what was thought of as worn out and unwanted into something vital and new. Finding a new way to look at junk—materials, ideas, places—enables people to see creative possibilities in everyday life. So, too, can dance grow out of almost anything. JUNK, which made its Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2019 with Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*, is a nationally recognized dance troupe performing domestically and internationally as well as in Philadelphia and surrounding areas. Mr. Sanders continues to create evening-length works and produce a variety of repertoire on JUNK dancers. This season JUNK is celebrating 30 years of creativity.

Brian Sanders grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, as a brother of six. His reckless fun was easily channeled once he found his love for gymnastics and classical dance. Inspired by shows such as Bob Fosse’s *Dancin’* and *Pilobolus on Broadway*, he resolved to become a choreographer. He would eventually sustain an extensive working relationship with one of the founding members of Pilobolus, Moses Pendleton, who also founded MOMIX. Mr. Sanders choreographed and performed worldwide with MOMIX for 10 years. He has gone on to choreograph and perform nationally and internationally for dance, television, theater, and video. In Italy he choreographed two nationally televised mini-series and a touring show, *NOGRAVITY*, which was performed at the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino. In 1992 Mr. Sanders founded JUNK. His recent creative visions with the company include partnering with renowned mural artist Meg Saligman to launch *Figmago* and choreographing Pennsylvania Ballet’s *Chicken Bone Brain*. He recently launched a new virtual reality and performance experience entitled *2nd Sanctuary* in collaboration with Drexel University, which premiered at the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival.

Katherine Corbett (Carmencita) has her roots in eastern North Carolina where she grew up and began her movement training with gymnastics at a young age. She competed in rhythmic gymnastics, finding a love for acrobatics and working with equipment. Eventually she transitioned into dance training and attended East Carolina University. She received her BFA in dance performance in 2017 and began teaching and creating. She has trained and worked with choreographers and artists at American Dance Festival, BodyTraffic, Koresh Dance Company, and Rubberband Dance. She has spent the past four years in Philadelphia performing with companies such as Brian Sanders’ JUNK, Asya Zlatina + Dancers, and Matter Movement Group.

Artists

Sammy Wong (Don José) grew up in New York City and received a B.A. in dance and environmental studies with honors from George Washington University. He spent a year with the Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program and moved back to New York to work with artists such as Christopher Williams, 10 Hairy Legs, Roschman Dance, and BodyStories. Having won over 10 pole competition titles, including two U.S. National Pole Championships, he has traveled the world performing and teaching. He is currently finishing his final year of law school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is studying energy regulation, electricity markets, and environmental law, and he just finished clerking at the White House.

William Brazdzionis (Lucas the Picador) grew up in the Poconos and began his dance training through theater. He attended DeSales University, which gave him the opportunity to train at the Joffrey Texas Summer intensive on full scholarship. Upon graduation he was given a contract as a dancer for Dorney Parks Grand Carnival. He then began to work with DM Dance Company in New York, while also dancing with Sarah Carlson's DanceLink. He also worked with Angelia Sigley Grossman in a residency in Accord, New York. Following that, he moved to Philadelphia where he has been working with Brian Sanders' JUNK.

Connor Senning (Dominican Friar) is back performing with Brian Sanders' JUNK after being a company member from 2010 to 2014. Originally from Virginia, he is now a Los Angeles-based dancer and CMT. He holds degrees from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts ('09), the University of the Arts (BFA '13), and the University of California Irvine (MFA '20). He was a dancer and associate rehearsal director for Diavolo Architecture in Motion from 2014 to 2019, as well as a finalist with the company on *America's Got Talent* in 2018.

Em Godfrey is a Korean nonbinary performing artist, educator, and choreographer. Their dance training began in Maryland, where they obtained a Bachelor of Arts in dance and psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. They has performed and showcased their choreography at Baltimore Theatre Project, Baltimore Light City/Brilliant Baltimore, Dance Place, and the Kennedy Center, among others. They have continued their training with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Paul Taylor American Modern Dance, Peridance Contemporary Dance Company, and Philadelphia School for Circus Arts. Locally they have performed with SHARP Dance Company, Anne-Marie Mulgrew & Dancers Company, and Equilibrium Dance Company.

Artists

Laura Jenkins choreographed the music video for the David Mayfield Parade's "Human Cannonball," which won Best Music Video in the 2016 New York City Independent Film Festival. She was a Philadelphia Eagles cheerleader from 2007 to 2011, ending her final year as captain. She officially joined Brian Sanders' JUNK in 2012. She then performed and choreographed in Los Angeles, before returning to Philadelphia. She premiered a solo show for the 2018 Philly Fringe Festival, *The Heartbreak of a Serial Monogamist*. She has most recently choreographed and performed a solo with Philadelphia Ballet's Shut Up & Dance. She continues to work as a movement maintenance specialist. She is the owner/founder of Massage Studio of Philadelphia and is the massage therapist for Philadelphia Ballet.

Rachel Neitzke is a dancer, choreographer, and dance educator. She received much of her early professional training at Koresh Dance Company and studied ballet under Alexei and Natalia Charov. Ms. Neitzke holds a BFA in dance from the University of the Arts and has worked with choreographers such as Francesca Harper, Milton Myers, Andrea Miller, Roni Koresh, Meredith Rainey, and Sidra Bell. Upon graduating Ms. Neitzke's passion for teaching and dancing has taken her throughout the United States and abroad. She has served as a teaching artist at the Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School, the School of Philadelphia Ballet, and the Rock School, among others.

Kerry Sheehan is originally from Wallingford, Pennsylvania, where she began her dance training at age eight. She attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, graduating with a degree in contemporary dance. During her time at UNCSA, she had the opportunity to perform works by Robert Battle, José Limón, Yoshito Sakuraba, and Wesley Ensminger, among others. She has attended intensives with Koresh Dance Company, UNCSA Pro Studies, and LA Contemporary Dance Company, where she was on full scholarship. Since moving to Philadelphia, she has been expanding her movement vocabulary into styles such as vogue and hip hop through Urban Movement Arts, where she is on staff. She is also currently a dancer with Asya Zlatina + Dancers.

Kayliani Sood is originally from St. Charles, Missouri. Now a freelance performer and teacher, she is an avid improviser whose practice ranges from ballet to martial arts. She holds a BFA in Dance Performance from the University of the Arts and has worked with artists Sara Shelton-Mann, Mark Haim, Jennifer Nugent, Shayla-Vie Jenkins, and Curt Haworth. Alongside performing with Brian Sanders' JUNK, she is currently training with Vince Johnson at Urban Movement Arts and is in choreographic process with Curt Haworth and Asé Wells.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1910

Stravinsky

The Firebird

Music

Elgar

Violin Concerto

Literature

Forster

Howard's End

Art

Modigliani

The Cellist

History

Japan annexes

Korea

1918

Boulanger

Of a Sad

Evening

Music

Stravinsky

The Soldier's

Tale

Literature

Cather

My Antonia

Art

Léger

Engine Rooms

History

Daylight

saving time

introduced

1967

Shchedrin

Carmen Suite

Music

Rodrigo

Concierto

andaluz

Literature

Stoppard

Rosencrantz

and

Guilденstern Are

Dead

Art

Johns

0 through 9

History

Hanoi attacked

by US

Soon after its premiere in 1875 Georges Bizet's *Carmen* became one of the most beloved operas ever written. Its magnificent melodies and dramatic flair in turn inspired many orchestral suites, arrangements, and movies. One of the most imaginative recastings is the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite*. He wrote it in the mid-1960s to be danced by his wife, the legendary ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. Shchedrin scored the work for a string orchestra and a large battery of percussion instruments. True to *Carmen's* theatrical roots, in this performance we also experience the visual magic of the riveting Philadelphia-based dance company Brian Sanders' JUNK.

The extraordinary French composer Lili Boulanger enjoyed the distinction in 1913 of becoming the first woman to win the coveted Prix de Rome, which had earlier launched the careers of Hector Berlioz, Claude Debussy, and others. The haunting and powerful *Of a Sad Evening* is one of her last compositions, written when she was gravely ill and shortly before her death at age 24 cut short such remarkable gifts.

Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* proved to be the young Russian composer's breakout success in 1910. The impresario Sergei Diaghilev commissioned the work for his Ballets Russes in Paris and its immediate popularity led to two more revolutionary ballets: *Petrushka* in 1911 and *The Rite of Spring* in 1913. All three have found a welcome a place in the concert hall as dazzling orchestral showpieces.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

The Music

Carmen Suite (after Bizet)

Rodion Shchedrin

Born in Moscow, December 16, 1932

Now living in Munich and Moscow



It is hardly surprising that great stories featuring remarkable characters inspire many retellings and continuous reinventions. Countless composers, for example, have been drawn to Shakespeare's plays. Just because Rossini wrote a famous *Othello*, that did not stop Verdi from setting the story in his own way. Versions of Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated love are even more extensive.

The story of the alluring gypsy Carmen has likewise seduced many artistic figures to tell her tale in new ways. It started with French author Prosper Mérimée's popular 1846 novella, which was loosely based on a real-life scandal. The story became much more famous some 30 years later when Georges Bizet's brilliant opera premiered in Paris. His music in turn inspired many arrangements, movies, and theatrical productions.

On today's concert we hear one of the most imaginative progeny of Bizet's opera. In the 1960s the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin became involved with a project to create a *Carmen* ballet starring his wife, Maya Plisetskaya, a legendary prima ballerina at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. He quickly realized that he could not escape the seductive allure of Bizet's music and so, if he could not start from scratch, he decided to reimagine what the French composer had done 90 years earlier and give it a mid-20th-century spin.

From French Opera to Russian Ballet One can imagine that had Bizet lived (he died three months after the opera's disappointing premiere) he would have extracted orchestral excerpts from *Carmen* to fashion into an orchestral concert suite—he had, after all, enjoyed unusual success a few years earlier with suites drawn from his incidental music for the play *L'Arlésienne* (The Girl from Arles). But with his death it fell to the publisher to figure out how to repackage parts of *Carmen* and over time various suites were made as well as all manner of arrangements, adaptations, and famous fantasies.

And that is what gets us to the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Despite being married to one of the greatest dancers of the 20th century, Shchedrin was apparently not her first choice to write a *Carmen* score. Plisetskaya initially tried to enlist Dmitri Shostakovich and after he politely declined, she approached Aram Khachaturian.

Both composers had written successful ballets, but they shied away from this project, the imposing stature of Bizet's opera no doubt causing some of the reluctance. The project was developed with the Cuban choreographer Alberto Alonso, whose Ballet Nacional de Cuba toured the Soviet Union in 1966. Alonso came up with the scenario and Shchedrin began to compose the music. That is when he realized he too could not shake off the shadow of Bizet's music.

Shchedrin, who calls Bizet's score "fantastic, one of the best in the whole history of music," realized it could be the basis for a creative reimagining. He decided it would be scored just for strings and a vast array of percussion instruments. He also deftly adapted some of the harmonic and rhythmic features, giving a modern spin to a Romantic classic. We thus get the familiar—beloved melodies and vibrant rhythms—but made strangely fresh and new.

The *Carmen* ballet premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1967 and caused some controversy. It was officially attacked for its sexuality and Shchedrin's distortions of Bizet's classic opera. Eventually the score went on to become Shchedrin's most performed composition.

A Closer Look The 13 movements of the Suite are played with a wide range of tempos and moods that do not necessarily correspond to the unfolding of the story or the order of the music in the opera. It begins with a soft and mysterious **Introduction** featuring evocative chimes playing one of the opera's principal themes. The mood quickly shifts to a vibrant **Dance** with a distinctive Spanish flavor. The **First Intermezzo** projects a pastoral mood interrupted by the "Fate" motif with ominous drum strokes. The **Changing of the Guard** features a wide range of colorful percussion leading to **Carmen's Entrance and Habanera** with alluring strings first carrying the seductive tune. The sixth movement (**Scene**) is the longest in the Suite as Carmen seduces Don José followed by the **Second Intermezzo**.

The toreador Escamillo (Lucas in the novel) appears in the **Bolero** and **Torero** sections. **Torero and Carmen** shows the couple together before Don José's "Flower Song" appears in the **Adagio**. After impassioned string writing in **Fortune-Telling** the Suite concludes (**Finale**) with juxtapositions of the bustling bullfight and the lover's ominous fate.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Shchedrin composed the Carmen Suite in 1967.

Arthur Fiedler conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the piece, in August 1969 in Saratoga Springs. It has been heard only once on subscription, with Erich Leinsdorf in February 1992. Most recently, Yannick Nézet-Séguin led the Suite with Brian Sanders' JUNK on a Digital Stage concert in March 2021 and in July 2021.

The score calls for timpani, percussion (bass drum, bells, bongos, castanets, claves, cockolo, cow bells, crotales, cymbals, drum, glockenspiel, güiro, high-hat, maracas, marimba, slapstick, snare drums, tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, tenor drum, tom-toms, triangle, vibraphone, wood blocks), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 45 minutes.

The Music

Of a Sad Evening

Lili Boulanger

Born in Paris, August 21, 1893

Died in Mézy-sur-Seine, March 15, 1918



Among the great "what ifs" of music history is what if Lili Boulanger had lived longer than her brief 24 years. It is an obvious question, like wondering about what more Schubert (who died at 31) or Mozart (at 35) might have created had they been given more time. That Boulanger was even younger than those composers and a woman raises both the stakes and interest: She was quickly recognized as a brilliantly promising composer whose gifts should be nurtured. In 1913 she

became the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, the preeminent arts award in France that dated back more than a century and that had helped to bring composers such as Hector Berlioz and Claude Debussy to glory.

A Family of Musicians Lili's father, the composer Ernest Boulanger, had won the Prix de Rome himself in 1835. No, that date is not a typo: He was born in 1815 and had been awarded it at age 19. Ernest went on to become a professor at the Paris Conservatory and married one of his students, a Russian more than 40 years his junior, with whom he raised two daughters: Nadia born in 1887 and Lili six years later. Nadia competed for the Prix de Rome four times and in 1908 came close to winning. But she subversively submitted an instrumental fugue rather than the required vocal one (the theme provided by Camille Saint-Saëns) and it all caused a scandal. She came in third place. Lili, whom Nadia by this point was teaching, entered the fray herself in 1912 and succeeded the following year.

As had Berlioz, Debussy, and other earlier winners, she set off for the Villa Medici to begin her Italian residency and devote herself to composing. The outbreak of World War I forced her to return prematurely to Paris. More consequential was her declining health, which had been fragile since early childhood, a situation exacerbated by volunteer war efforts. She made it back to Rome briefly in 1916 but her final two years were a grim and gradual decline.

Great Expectations Although Lili Boulanger's compositional output is understandably small it includes several large-scale works, among them the cantata *Faust and Helen* that earned her the Prix de Rome; an unfinished opera, *Princess Maleine*; and a marvelous setting of Psalm 130 for large chorus and orchestra. Other pieces are shorter if no less impressive in their impact. As she

grew ever weaker, Lili enlisted her sister to help her, in the end dictating to Nadia her exquisite final work, *Pie Jesu*, for soprano, string quartet, harp, and organ. Not long before that, in 1917–18, she composed two short chamber music pieces for piano trio that she orchestrated (all the manuscripts are in Nadia's hand, leaving open the question of her creative involvement): *Of a Sad Evening* (D'un Soir triste) and *Of a Spring Morning* (D'un Matin de printemps). The trio versions of the pieces were first performed in February 1919 and the orchestral ones in March 1921, both in Paris.

Lili Boulanger died in March 1918. Nadia tirelessly kept her sister's memory alive and passionately promoted her music for the rest of her long life. (She died in 1979 at age 92.) Although she gave up composing herself after Lili's death, Nadia had an extraordinary and influential musical career. Few would dispute that she was the most important music teacher of the 20th century, with devoted students ranging from Aaron Copland to Philip Glass (and by no means limited to Americans). She was an organist and conductor, the first woman to lead The Philadelphia Orchestra (in 1939), the Boston Symphony, and the second to conduct the New York Philharmonic. Lili's works often featured prominently on concerts she conducted.

A Closer Look *Of a Sad Evening* and *Of a Spring Morning*, although very different in tempo and mood, are related by a common musical theme. *Of a Sad Evening* is a beautiful, somber work that begins slowly with throbbing chords in the lower strings, heard throughout much of the piece, before clarinets sound the principal theme having a distinctive dotted (long-short) rhythm. There is no key signature and the piece largely uses the old so-called Phrygian mode, which gives it a somewhat exotic sound. Written the year that Debussy died, the work shares much with Impressionism but is taken to further extremes. The music builds to the first of several loud climaxes as the piece alternates between sections of calm beauty with ones of more animated cataclysm, at times almost militaristic interjections, perhaps related to the on-going war. The richly colorful orchestration makes evocative use of solo instruments, such as the harp and celesta.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Of a Sad Evening was composed from 1917 to 1918.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin led the first, and only other, Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the piece in January/February 2020.

The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, sarrusophone, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam), harp, celesta, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 11 minutes.

The Music

Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 version)

Igor Stravinsky

Born in Lomonosov, Russia, June 17, 1882

Died in New York City, April 6, 1971



On May 19, 1909, the impresario Sergei Diaghilev presented the Parisian debut of his troupe, the astonishing Ballets Russes. This revelatory first night featured both the brilliant dancer Vaslav Nijinsky and a stunning new ballet entitled *La Pavillon d'Armide* with music by Nikolai Tcherepnin and lavish decor by Alexandre Benois. The discriminating aesthete and diarist Count Harry Kessler wrote effusively to the poet Hugo von Hoffmannstahl, "All in all, this Russian

ballet is one of the most remarkable and significant artistic manifestations of our time." The music was not the only aspect of the Ballets Russes to which Kessler reacted, however: The colorful sets and costumes designed by Léon Bakst and the revolutionary choreography by Mikhail Fokine also enthralled him.

A Third-Choice Composer The success of that first season in Paris presented Diaghilev with a pressing problem: How was he to exceed this triumph for the 1910 season? One way was to commission a new ballet based on Russian folktales, *Zhar-ptitsa* (The Firebird). Diaghilev had his subject; his choreographer, Fokine; his set designer, Alexander Golovin; and his costume designer, Bakst. What he needed, urgently, was a composer.

Diaghilev's first choice was Tcherepnin, but he withdrew from the project early on. His second choice was Anatoli Liadov, a student of Rimsky-Korsakov who wrote enchanting tone poems on Russian subjects. Although later accounts claimed that Liadov was feckless about composing *The Firebird*, there is no documentary evidence that he agreed to write it in the first place. Running out of time, Diaghilev convinced one of Rimsky-Korsakov's last pupils, the young Igor Stravinsky, to accept the commission. Stravinsky had a very short time to compose an extended and complex score. He began work in November 1909 and finished the following May. He worked closely with Fokine as he composed, although he did overrule the choreographer's tasteless demand to have a suite of Russian dances conclude the ballet.

After stormy rehearsals, *The Firebird* proved an immense success when it was premiered in Paris on June 25, 1910; it is not an exaggeration to say that it made Stravinsky famous overnight. While the sets, costumes, and choreography received praise, the music elicited an ecstatic response from critics, colleagues,

and audiences alike. Capitalizing on this newfound fame, Stravinsky derived three suites from *The Firebird*: a short one in 1911, a more extended one in 1919 that incorporated revisions to the orchestration, and a final version from 1945. Of these three, the 1919 one is the most often performed.

A Closer Look For the 1919 *Firebird* Suite, Stravinsky excerpted six sections of his ballet score: the **Introduction** that leads directly into **The Firebird and its Dance**, **The Princesses' Round Dance**, and the **Infernal Dance of King Kashcheï** that leads directly into the **Berceuse**—a lullaby—and then without pause to the **Finale**. By so doing, he maintains the outline of the plot, which was drawn from a collection of folktales collected by Alexander Afanasyev. These tales feature both the Firebird and the sinister figure of Kashcheï the Deathless. As Stravinsky's father, the famous bass singer Fyodor Stravinsky, was a bibliophile who had amassed a remarkable collection of Russian folktales, so the composer was surely well aware of Afanasyev's anthology. In addition, Rimsky-Korsakov had written a one-act opera in 1902 entitled *Kashcheï the Deathless*, for which Stravinsky had prepared the vocal score. The influence of this opera upon the plot and music of *The Firebird* is striking.

The action of *The Firebird* is fantastical but straightforward. While out hunting, Tsarevich Ivan strays into the enchanted realm of Kashcheï. He captures the Firebird, who begs for her freedom. Ivan lets her go and in return gives him one of her feathers through which he can summon her aid in times of danger. Ivan happens upon a group of princesses, who have been taken prisoner by Kashcheï, and falls in love with the fairest of them. Confronted by Kashcheï himself, Ivan remembers the feather and waves it to summon the Firebird. She makes Kashcheï's minions dance an Infernal Dance and during the following Berceuse, he and his servants fall into a deep sleep. Ivan smashes the egg that holds Kashcheï's immortality, thus destroying him. The Finale, which begins with a noble horn solo, reveals Ivan and his bride sitting in majesty on glittering thrones as the orchestra evokes the tintinnabulation of Russian church bells.

—Byron Adams

Stravinsky composed The Firebird from 1909 to 1910.

Music from The Firebird was first played by The Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1917, when the 1911 Suite was led by Leopold Stokowski. The most recent subscription performances were in November 2019, when Stéphane Denève conducted the entire ballet music.

The Philadelphia Orchestra has recorded the Firebird Suite seven times: in 1924, 1927, and 1935 with Stokowski for RCA; in 1953 and 1967 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS; in 1973 with Ormandy for RCA; and in 1978 with Riccardo Muti for EMI.

The score for the 1919 Suite calls for piccolo (doubling alto flute II), two flutes (II doubling alto flute), three oboes (III doubling English horn), two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, xylophone), harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings.

The work runs approximately 20 minutes in performance.

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