Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony

2021 BLOSSOM MUSIC FESTIVAL

Week 7

Sunday evening, **August 15**, 2021, at 7 p.m.

The Cleveland Orchestra
Karina Canellakis, *conductor*
Behzod Abduraimov, *piano*
Michael Sachs, *trumpet*

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)
The Wood Dove, Opus 110

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)
Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Opus 35
(*for solo piano, trumpet, and string orchestra*)

1. Allegretto — Allegro vivace — Allegretto — Allegro — Moderato —
2. Lento —
3. Moderato —
4. Allegro con brio

INTERMISSION

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)
Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

1. Andante sostenuto — Moderato con anima
2. Andantino in modo di canzona
3. Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato
4. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Please turn your phone to silent mode during the performance.

This concert is dedicated to the following donors in recognition for their extraordinary support of The Cleveland Orchestra:

Mr. and Mrs. Alex Machaskee
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Introducing the Concert

"FOR THE FIRST TIME *in my life I have attempted to put my musical thoughts and forms into words and phrases,"* Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote to his benefactor Nadezhda von Meck on March 1, 1878. He recounted in dire terms toiling away on the Fourth Symphony, pouring his soul into lush music.

"I was horribly out of spirits all the time I was composing this symphony last winter," he continued, *"and this was a true echo of my feelings at the time. But only an echo. How is it possible to reproduce it in clear and definite language?"*

How is it possible to imbue music with feeling, reproducing the agony, remorse, humor, and joy of human experience? This evening's concert, featuring conductor Karina Canellakis in her Cleveland Orchestra debut, brings together three distinct and affecting responses from a trio of composers adept at stirring and strumming the heartstrings.

Late in his career, Antonìn Dvořák became enamored with the most expressive of musical forms, the symphonic poem. Inspired by the romantic folktales of Karel Jaromír Erben, he started writing a series of emotive one-movement symphonic works. Premiered in 1898, his fourth such work, *The Wood Dove*, delves into the anguish of a woman, who kills her husband, falls in love again, but becomes racked by guilt when a wood dove reminds her of her misdeeds.

Shostakovich infamously encoded his music with the discomfit he felt toward Stalin and the Soviet apparatchik of the mid-20th century. But his Piano Concerto No. 1, written in 1933, comes before all that, with the composer full of humor and youthful bravado. His music has not yet been condemned in the Soviet mouthpiece *Pravda*. Careful listeners will find quotes of Haydn, Beethoven and Shostakovich's own works, cleverly embedded throughout. Pianist Bezhod Abduraimov joins The Cleveland Orchestra and principal trumpet Michael Sachs for what the composer called a "heroic, spirited, and joyful" concerto.

This emotional rollercoaster of an evening, comes to an impassioned close with Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, premiered in 1878. In this piece the composer lays out a landscape at first filled with the looming and oppressive weight of fate. He illustrates the yearning of the past with fleeting glimpses of memories from brighter days. Those darkened skies eventually melt away with comforts of companionship, and turn into a rousing affirmation of communal celebration. As we all come together for a bucolic evening of music, Tchaikovsky's words provide a fitting proposal: *"Why not rejoice through the joys of others? One can live that way, after all."*

—Amanda Angel and Eric Sellen

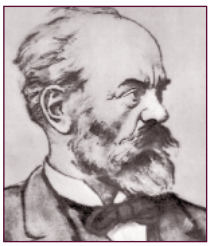
The Wood Dove [*Holoubek*], Opus 110

by **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904)

Composed: 1896

Premiered: March 20, 1898, in Brno (in what is today the Czech Republic)
conducted by Leoš Janáček

Duration: nearly 20 minutes



AFTER COMPLETING his Ninth Symphony, nicknamed "From the New World," in 1893, Dvořák composed no more symphonies. In the last ten years of his life, he turned his attention instead toward opera, writing three over that period of time, as well as symphonic poems, of which he wrote five from 1896 to 1897.

It is somewhat surprising that Dvořák had not written symphonic poems before. Franz Liszt had realized the potential of the genre forty years earlier, compressing the expressive range of a symphony into a single movement and stuffing it full with romantic ideas and sounds. French and Russian composers wrote symphonic poems in abundance, and in Bohemia both Smetana and Zdeněk Fibich had contributed a number of works to the form, including Smetana's strongly nationalist cycle of six symphonic poems, *Má Vlast* [*My Homeland*], completed in 1880.

The first four symphonic poems Dvořák embarked on, including *The Wood Dove*, were based on narrative folk-ballads by the Czech poet Karel Jaromír Erben (1811-70). By this time, Richard Strauss had created a sensation with such pieces as *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel*, both with vivid action depicted in orchestral language. Dvořák was also intending to create pieces with a story depicted in the music, and it is possible that he intended a set of six symphonic poems based on Czech folk stories to match Smetana's half dozen.

The first three Erben-inspired symphonic poems were sketched in rapid succession between January 6 and 22, 1896, and the fourth, *The Wood Dove*, followed in October and November of the same year.

The Erben stories are graphic and sometimes gruesome tales of kings, princesses, magic castles, and golden rings. At times Dvořák set Erben's lines to music and then simply removed the words. In other parts, he represented the narrative purely through his music. For *The Wood Dove* he employed the latter technique,

The story of *The Wood Dove* concerns a young widow who sorrowfully follows her husband's coffin to the grave. She then meets a young man who distracts her from her grief. They are married, but when she hears a wood dove cooing in an oak tree above her husband's grave, she is smitten with remorse and drowns herself. Erben reveals at the end that she had poisoned her first husband.

Most of Dvořák's musical themes in *The Wood Dove* have a similar outline, rising a few notes and then falling, so the five episodes are represented in the work primarily through the tempo changes in the score.

The opening represents the husband's funeral. Soon after the trumpet enters, we hear the widow's crocodile tears in the flutes and violins. The young man is announced by a distant trumpet, and their wedding is a boisterous scherzo with strong hints of the composer's popular *Slavonic Dances*. The festivities over, the couple are alone (strings) when the wood dove can be heard (flutes, oboe, and high harp), answered by a sinister bass clarinet. Driven to distraction by her conscience, the new bride drowns herself. An epilogue portrays a second funeral march, watched over by the now satisfied wood dove.

The Wood Dove was first performed under the direction of Leoš Janáček, who had asked Dvořák if he had a new piece that his orchestra in Brno could play. The premiere was swiftly followed by performances abroad — conducted by Mahler in Vienna, Oskar Nedbal in Berlin, Henry Wood in London, and Theodore Thomas in New York.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2021

SCORED FOR: *2 flutes plus piccolo, 2 oboes plus english horn, 2 clarinets plus bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, cymbals, tambourine, bass drum), harp, and strings.*

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA TIMELINE: *The Cleveland Orchestra has performed this tone poem on only one previous set of concerts, as part of a weekend in May 2016 led by Franz Welser-Möst.*

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Opus 35

by **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975)

Composed: 1933

Premiered: October 15, 1933, with the Leningrad Philharmonic under the direction of Fritz Stiedry

Duration: about 20 minutes; the four movements are played "attaca" (without breaks or pauses)

SHOSTAKOVICH COMPLETED his second opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, at the end of 1932. Ready for a change of direction, he immediately embarked on twenty-four preludes for solo piano, a series of short pieces that allowed him to impose a variety of styles on an essentially Bach-like frame. The revolutionary spirit of the 1920s was still strong and the fatal effects of Stalin's grip on power (and life) in the Soviet Union had not affected the arts too severely. And Shostakovich was not yet displaying the sullen exterior that would allow him — when his livelihood, even his life, was threatened by the regime — to conceal his real feelings as he channelled them privately into his music.

The extroverted character of the First Piano Concerto, which followed right after the composition of the Twenty-Four Preludes, is free of the dissembling and mystery that envelops the composer's later music. This was partly because Shostakovich, an introvert in real life, was a young, brilliant pianist who was not shy to play in public. He gave the first performance of the Preludes while still at work on the concerto, and then followed with the premiere of this new piano concerto in the autumn of 1933. It was an immediate success, and he performed it often in the following years. Twenty years later, he added a Second Piano Concerto, which he also played himself, although it was written for, and first performed by, his son, Maxim.

There is some evidence — and even comments by Shostakovich — that suggests the First Piano Concerto was initially planned as a trumpet concerto in a somewhat neo-Baroque style. The trumpet is, indeed, unusually coupled with the strings in the accompanying group. The finished piece, however, does little to support such an origin, with the trumpet's part so secondary to that of the piano and so neatly complementary to the soloist's part. (The composer changed his early title for the piece, "Concerto for Piano with the Accompaniment of String

Orchestra and Trumpet," to the straightforward and traditional Piano Concerto.) Certainly one motive for featuring a trumpet was Shostakovich's admiration for Alexander Schmidt, the principal trumpet in the Leningrad Philharmonic, who played in the first performance with the composer.

Musically, the concerto has provided a happy hunting ground for those who like to spot quotations and allusions, of which it is full. Shostakovich slyly slipped in tunes from the classics as well as from his own works, some of which are difficult to spot even for those who know his music well. A sense of parody reinforces the high-spirited tone of the first and last movements. Snippets of Haydn and Beethoven appear, as well as citations from his own recent works and popular songs.

It is not all fun, however. The slow movement is profoundly reflective, only introducing the trumpet when it is time for the opening tune, originally heard in the violins, to be repeated. Yet there is still space for the piano to take over the closing section of the movement with a new theme.

The third movement is largely subdued, too, being more of an introduction to the finale than a movement in its own right. The severe spirit of Bach is present at many points throughout the concerto, yet it is the exuberance of the first movement, and especially of the fourth-movement finale, that leaves the strongest impression — and gives listeners full satisfaction from this concerto for piano and strings . . . and trumpet.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2021

SCORED FOR: *string orchestra, plus solo piano and featured trumpet.*

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA TIMELINE: *The Cleveland Orchestra first performed Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto in November 1936, when music director Artur Rodzinski conducted and Eugene List was the piano soloist with principal trumpet Louis Davidson playing the featured brass role. It has been programmed on only four occasions since then, in 1964, 1978, 2003, and most recently March 2015 when Jahja Ling led a weekend of concerts featuring Daniil Trifonov as the solo pianist along with principal trumpet Michael Sachs.*

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893)

Composed: 1877-1878

Premiered: February 22, 1878, in Moscow

Duration: about 40 minutes

FEW WORKS in the orchestral repertoire carry such a strong emotional charge as Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. The capacity of this music to move us to the depths is by design. Tchaikovsky admitted as much.

"There is not a note in this symphony . . . " he wrote, *"which I did not feel deeply, and which did not serve as an echo of sincere impulses within my soul."*

To his patroness Nadezhda von Meck, with whom he kept up a close correspondence for over fourteen years, only ever meeting twice (both briefly, and by accident), he explained the program of the Fourth Symphony in great detail. According to his first-hand analysis, the gloomier parts of the work are concerned with fate (represented in the opening passage for brass) and depression, and the eternal struggle to rise above it. There are some brighter moments, and the finale supposedly presents a shared joy of community, a cure for the self-hatred and despair that otherwise invades the soul.

It can be argued (and many have) as to whether Tchaikovsky intended for Madame von Meck (or us) to take this program literally. Certainly we should not assume that the symphony is merely a record of the emotional and psychological crisis that he suffered at the time of its composition. The year 1877 brought the composer to a point where suicide was at least a possibility, and he was filled with agitated emotions, which doubtless are reflected in the symphony's music. But the process of creating art is not a simple translation of life into another medium — a transformation occurs in the creative mind. How specifically the music mirrors actual events is not easy to determine. Nor do we need to know in order to enjoy this musical masterpiece.

In the summer of 1876, Tchaikovsky declared his determination to get married, without anyone in particular in mind as his partner. That winter, he started work on the Fourth Symphony, completing the draft of the first three movements before he met the young lady who was to become his wife. The bizarre circumstances of their meeting, their almost immediate marriage, and the composer's

appalling realization that instead of curing him of his homosexuality as he perhaps hoped, marriage turned out to be a hell even worse than Dante's version, which he had so recently depicted with great vividness in his musical tone poem *Francesca da Rimini*.

Tchaikovsky fled, first to his relatives in the Russian countryside, then to Switzerland and Italy, where he completed the symphony and finished the orchestration. Tchaikovsky's muse never let up. Not only did he complete the Fourth Symphony at this time, he also composed his finest opera, *Eugene Onegin*, and the exquisite Violin Concerto soon after. There were occasional fallow periods in his career, but the year 1877, however dramatic in domestic affairs, was not one of them. To the end of his life, he sustained the habit of composing for several hours every day, producing one of the most varied and appealing bodies of work of any composer of his generation.

THE MUSIC

At the very start of the Fourth Symphony's **first movement**, the forthright statement of horns and bassoons grabs the listener's attention. We are not likely to overlook its recurrence at critical points in this and later movements — and we are not supposed to. But the music settles into a plaintive flow in a halting triple rhythm, overwhelmingly committed to the minor key. The first movement offers some striking contrasts of mood and key, such as the clarinet's gentle waltz-tune with playful responses from the other winds and a swaying figure in the violins accompanied by a pair of drums. But the main theme returns, and the symphonic argument leads to the first of many stupendous climaxes in this work.

The **second movement** is not a profound moment of soul-searching, but a tender intermezzo featuring the solo oboe (later other winds), very lightly accompanied. There is a strong Russian flavor in this movement and no smiles.

The mood lightens in the **scherzo third movement**, one of Tchaikovsky's neatest inventions. The conventional division of orchestras into the three families of strings, woodwinds, and brass gave him the idea of featuring each in turn, each with its own melody, its own tempo, and its own character. The strings, furthermore, are plucked throughout, the entire movement calling for pizzicato. The divisions are not watertight, the themes keep intruding. The impression is of a teasing game, full of humor and free from dark thoughts of any kind.

The noisy **finale fourth movement** features in its midst a Russian folksong based on a descending minor scale answered (sometimes) by two solid thumps. In due course, the solemn main theme makes its dramatic appearance, but it cannot stem the tide of high spirits that close the symphony, leaving Tchaikovsky's depression far behind.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald

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LIsting as of July 2021.

This roster lists the fulltime members of The Cleveland Orchestra. The number and seating of musicians onstage varies depending on the piece being performed.

Karina Canellakis

Conductor Karina Canellakis regularly appears with top orchestras in North America, Europe, United Kingdom, and Australia. She is chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and holds the title of principal guest conductor with both the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. She was a recipient of the Georg Solti Conducting Award in 2016 and is making her Cleveland Orchestra debut with this evening's concert.

Other upcoming debuts include the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony. In Europe, she makes debuts in Bergen, Frankfurt, and with the Orchestre National de France at Festival de Saint-Denis. Her operatic credits include *Die Zauberflöte* and a fully staged production of Verdi's Requiem with the Zurich Opera, *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* with Curtis Opera Theatre, and led the world premiere of David Lang's opera *The Loser* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Behzod Abduraimov

Pianist Behzod Abduraimov made his debut with The Cleveland Orchestra at the 2017 Blossom Music Festival. He has also appeared with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, San Francisco Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, and Concertgebouw.

In 2020, Abduraimov saw the release of two recordings: Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 with Amsterdam's Concertgebouw under Valery Gergiev.

Grand prize winner of the 2009 London International Piano Competition and winner of the 2010 Kissinger KlavierOlymp, Abduraimov was born in 1990 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. He began playing piano at age five as a pupil of Tamara Popovich at the Uspensky State Central Lyceum in his hometown. He is a graduate of Park University's International Center for Music, where he studied with Stanislav Ioudenitch, and now serves as the institution's artist-in-residence.

Piano by Steinway & Sons.

Michael Sachs

Principal Trumpet
Robert and Eunice Podis Weiskopf Endowed Chair

Principal Cornet
Mary Elizabeth and G. Robert Klein Endowed Chair
The Cleveland Orchestra

Michael Sachs joined The Cleveland Orchestra as principal trumpet in 1988. His many performances as soloist with the Orchestra include the world premieres of trumpet concertos by John Williams and Michael Hersch (both commissioned by the Orchestra for Mr. Sachs), the United States and New York premieres of Hans Werner Henze's *Requiem*, and the world premiere of Matthias Pintscher's *Chute d'Étoiles*.

Mr. Sachs serves as head of the trumpet department at the Cleveland Institute of Music and is a member of the faculty at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. In addition he has served as music director of Strings Music Festival in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, since 2015 and presents masterclasses and workshops at conservatories and universities throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia as a clinician for Conn-Selmer instruments.

Michael Sachs holds a bachelor's degree from UCLA, with additional studies at New York's Juilliard School.

BLOSSOM
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