

# SEASON FINALE: PICTURES at an EXHIBITION

Friday and Saturday, June 21-22, 2019 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 23, 2019 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

**MICHAEL STERN**, *conductor*

**BENJAMIN GROSVENOR**, *piano*

## BRAHMS

Concerto No. 1 in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 15

I. Maestoso

II. Adagio

III. Rondo: Allegro non troppo

**BENJAMIN GROSVENOR**, *piano*

## INTERMISSION

**JOHN CORIGLIANO** *Snapshot: Circa 1909* for Two Violins and String Orchestra

## MUSSORGSKY/ ORCH. RAVEL

*Pictures at an Exhibition*

*Promenade*

*I. Gnomo*

*Promenade*

*II. Il vecchio castello*

*Promenade*

*III. Tuileries*

*IV. Bydlo*

*Promenade*

*V. Ballet of Little Chicks in their Shells*

*VI. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle*

*VII. The Market Place in Limoges*

*VIII. Catacombae — Cum mortuis in lingua mortua*

*IX. The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba-Yaga)*

*X. The Great Gate of Kiev*

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Brahms composed his First Piano Concerto in the wake of the death of his mentor, Robert Schumann.

The concerto is notable for both its solo virtuoso fireworks and rich symphonic writing.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

### Concerto No. 1 in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 15 (1854-58) 42 minutes

Solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

The premiere of Brahms' First Piano Concerto took place in Hanover, Germany, on January 22, 1859. The composer was the soloist, and Joseph Joachim conducted. The audience reception was rather cool, but it proved to be far preferable to the reaction five days later at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. Julius Rietz conducted and Brahms was again the soloist. The audience, confused by the Concerto's epic length and implacable, stormy character, voiced its disapproval. Edward Bernsdorf, critic for the *Signale*, characterized the work as "a composition dragged to its grave ... For

more than three quarters of an hour one must endure this rooting and rummaging, this straining and tugging, this tearing and patching of phrases and flourishes!"

The following day, Brahms wrote to Joachim:

My Concerto has had here a brilliant and decisive — failure ... At the conclusion three pairs of hands were brought together very slowly, whereupon a perfectly distinct hissing from all sides forbade any such demonstration ... In spite of everything, the Concerto will meet with approval when I have improved its form and the next one will be quite different.

Brahms did, in fact, revise his First Piano Concerto, and the score was published in 1861. The composer received his vindication four years later, when he played the concerto at a triumphant Mannheim concert led by Hermann Levi. Since then, the eminence of this challenging, magnificent work has remained secure.

The concerto is in three movements. The first, by far the longest, opens with a stormy orchestral introduction that, according to Joachim, expresses Brahms's despair when he learned of Robert Schumann's suicide attempt. The beautiful second movement, in A-B-A form, is an affectionate tribute both to Schumann and his wife, Clara. The Rondo finale is based on a vigorous theme, introduced at the outset by the soloist.

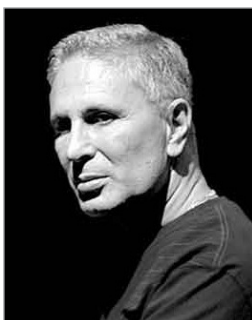
### RECOMMENDED RECORDING

#### BRAHMS PIANO Concerto No. 1

Clifford Curzon, *piano*

London Symphony / George Szell, *conductor*

Label: London/Decca Legends Catalog # 466376



John Corigliano originally composed *Snapshot* for string quartet. This concert features the composer's version for two violins and string orchestra.

### JOHN CORIGLIANO (b. 1938)

**Snapshot: Circa 1909 for Two Violins and String Orchestra (2003) 6 minutes**

“When the Elements Quartet asked me to write a piece inspired by a photograph, I immediately thought of one I have had since I was a child. It was taken in Greenwich Village in my grandparents’ Sullivan Street apartment, which I have only seen in photos.

The photographer came to do a group shot of my grandparents, whom I never met, and their six children. After taking that picture, the photographer was coaxed into doing a shot of my father and his brother Peter performing on violin and guitar.

The picture has never ceased to move me.

My father looked about eight years old, wearing knickers and earnestly bowing his violin, while my uncle, then a teenager, held a guitar in an aristocratic position and stared at the camera.

In the short quartet inspired by the photo, the second violin plays a nostalgic melody, while the other strings pluck their instruments in a guitar-like manner. This solo is obviously the boy violinist singing through his instrument.

After the melody is completed, however, the first violin enters, muted, in the very highest register. In my mind, he was playing the dream that my 8-year-old father must have had — of performing roulades and high, virtuosic, musing passages that were still impossible for him to master.

This young violinist grew into a great soloist — my father, John Corigliano, concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic for over a quarter century. He, as an adult, performed the concerti and solos that as a child he could only imagine.

The two violins, boy and dream, join together at the end as the guitar sounds play on.”

— John Corigliano



**RECOMMENDED RECORDING**

**JOHN CORIGLIANO** *Snapshot: Circa 1909*

Corigliano String Quartet

Label: Naxos Catalog # 8559180



Modest Mussorgsky composed *Pictures at an Exhibition* as a memorial tribute to his friend, the artist Viktor Hartmann.

Maurice Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's original solo piano version is one of the most beloved showpieces in the repertoire.

## MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)

### *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874)

(orch. Maurice Ravel) 30 minutes

Piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, cymbals, gong, orchestra bells, ratchet, slapstick, snare drum, triangle, xylophone, 2 harps, celesta and strings.

In 1873, the Russian artist Viktor Hartmann died at age 39. After Hartmann's death, the St. Petersburg Society of Architects presented an exhibition of Hartmann's works. Among the attendees was Hartmann's dear friend, the Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky.

Mussorgsky was as profoundly impressed with the quality of Hartmann's works as he was saddened by the sudden loss of a dear friend. Mussorgsky decided to offer a tribute to Hartmann in the form of a musical representation of several of the pieces of art featured at the St. Petersburg

exhibit. In 1874, Mussorgsky completed his work for solo piano, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, published after the composer's death in 1881.

Conductor Serge Koussevitsky commissioned Ravel's orchestration of the Mussorgsky piano composition for the annual Paris Concerts Koussevitsky, where it premiered to great acclaim on May 3, 1923. Since then, the Mussorgsky/Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition* has been celebrated as a quintessential showpiece for orchestras and conductors alike. It is one of the most performed and recorded works in the concert repertoire.

**Promenade.** Depicting the composer moving about the exhibition, the *Promenade* serves as a connecting motif between musical portrayals of the various pictures.

**I. Gnomus.** Hartmann's sketch is now lost, but according to a critic of the era it depicted a gnome "clumsily running with crooked legs."

**Promenade**

**II. Il vecchio castello.** Hartmann's painting is of an old Italian castle, before which a lute-bearing troubadour stands.

**Promenade**

**III. Tuileries.** The painting depicts the Parisian Tuileries gardens, where children play under the watchful eye of their nurses.

**IV. Bydlo.** "Bydlo" is the Polish word for "cattle." Hartmann's watercolor features an ox-drawn cart with massive wooden wheels.

**Promenade**

**V. Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells.** A sketch of costumed children impersonating newly hatched chicks inspired this delightful miniature scherzo.

**VI. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle.** This episode appears to be based on a Hartmann drawing of the Sandomir ghetto.

**VII. The Market Place in Limoges.** Hartmann's watercolor portrays the façade of the Limoges Cathedral. Mussorgsky focused on a small portion of the watercolor showing market women engaged in lively conversation.

**VIII. Catacombae, Sepulchrum Romanum.** Hartmann and a friend stand in a Paris catacomb, observing a pile of skulls illuminated by a guide's lantern.

**Cum mortuis in lingua mortua** (With the dead in a dead language)

**IX. The Hut on Hen's Legs** (*Baba-Yaga*). Baba-Yaga is a mythical Russian witch who lured victims into her hut. There, she ground her prey's bones with a giant mortar, which she also used to transport herself through the air.

**X. The Great Gate of Kiev.** The final picture represented Hartmann's entry in a competition to erect a gateway in Kiev. The gateway was intended to serve as a memorial to Tsar Alexander II's escape from assassination.

**RECOMMENDED RECORDING**

**MUSSORGSKY/RAVEL *Pictures at an Exhibition***

Chicago Symphony Orchestra / Seiji Ozawa, conductor

Label: Sony    Catalog # 69100

**BRITISH PIANIST BENJAMIN GROSVENOR IS INTERNATIONALLY**

recognized for his electrifying performances and insightful interpretations. His virtuosic command over the most strenuous technical complexities underpins the remarkable depth and understanding of his musicianship. He is renowned for his distinctive sound, described as “poetic and gently ironic, brilliant yet clear-minded, intelligent but not without humour, all

translated through a beautifully clear and singing touch” (The Independent), making him one of the most sought-after young pianists in the world.



Grosvenor first came to prominence as the winner of the Keyboard Final of the 2004 BBC Young Musician Competition at age 11. Since then, he has become an internationally regarded pianist performing with orchestras across the world, including the Boston and Chicago

symphonies, Filarmonica della Scala, Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne, the London Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, led by such esteemed conductors as Riccardo Chailly, Mark Elder, Emmanuel Krivine, Gianandrea Noseda, François-Xavier Roth, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Nathalie Stutzmann and Michael Tilson Thomas. A BBC New Generation Artist from 2010 to 2012, Grosvenor has performed at the BBC Proms on a number of occasions and in 2015 starred at the Last Night, performing Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop.

In 2011, Grosvenor signed to Decca Classics, becoming the youngest British musician ever to sign to the label and the first British pianist to sign to the label in almost 60 years. During his sensational career to date, he also has received Gramophone’s Young Artist of the Year and Instrumental Award, a Classic Brits Critics’ Award, UK Critics’ Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent, a Diapason d’Or Jeune Talent Award and a Fellowship from the Royal Academy of Music. In 2016, he was announced as the inaugural recipient of the Ronnie and Lawrence Ackman Classical Piano Prize with the New York Philharmonic. ■