



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY



**JOSHUA BELL
AND RAVEL**

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024
HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR
AND CONDUCTOR
JOSHUA BELL, VIOLIN

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PROGRAM

JOSHUA BELL AND RAVEL

Friday and Saturday, May 31 and June 1, 2024 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 2, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR

JOSHUA BELL, VIOLIN

GUILLAUME CONNESSON

Flammenschrift (Flamewriting)

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Symphony No. 59 in A Major, “Fire”

I. Presto

II. Andante o più tosto allegretto

III. Menuet

IV. Allegro assai

KEVIN PUTS

“Earth” from *The Elements*

EDGAR MEYER

“Water” from *The Elements*

JAKE HEGGIE

“Fire” from *The Elements*

Joshua Bell, *violin*

INTERMISSION

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS

Concerto No. 5 in A Minor for Violin
and Orchestra, op. 37

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Cadenza

III. Adagio — Allegro con fuoco

Joshua Bell, *violin*

MAURICE RAVEL

Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé*

I. Lever du jour

II. Pantomime

III. Danse générale

ABOUT MICHAEL STERN



MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Michael Stern's celebrated 19-year tenure as music director of the Kansas City Symphony is remarkable for the orchestra's artistic ascent, organizational development and stability, and the extraordinary growth of its varied audiences. With a determined focus on impeccable musicianship and creative programming, Stern and the orchestra have partnered with Grammy® Award-winning Reference Recordings for an ongoing series of highly praised CDs.

Stern is also music director of the National Repertory Orchestra, a summer music festival in Breckenridge, Colorado, as well as the newly rebranded Orchestra Lumos, formerly the Stamford (CT) Symphony. He was recently named artistic advisor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, one of Canada's foremost orchestral ensembles, and following a 22-year tenure as founding artistic director of Iris Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee, he now serves the newly reimagined Iris Collective as artistic advisor.

Stern has led orchestras throughout Europe and Asia, including the Budapest and Vienna radio symphonies, the Helsinki, Israel, London, Moscow and Royal Stockholm philharmonics, London Symphony, National Symphony of Taiwan, Orchestre de Paris and Tokyo's NHK Symphony, among many others.

In North America, Stern has conducted the Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, Indianapolis, National (Washington, D.C.), Montreal, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Seattle and Toronto symphonies, the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras and the New York Philharmonic. He has been a regular guest at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he also worked with students in the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen.

Stern has also held conducting positions with Germany's Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra as well as France's Orchestre National de Lyon and Orchestre National de Lille.

Stern received his music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his major teacher was the noted conductor and scholar Max Rudolf. Stern co-edited the third edition of Rudolf's famous textbook, "The Grammar of Conducting," and also edited a new volume of Rudolf's collected writings and correspondence. He is a 1981 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a degree in American history.

ABOUT JOSHUA BELL

JOSHUA BELL, VIOLIN

With a career spanning almost four decades, Grammy® Award-winning violinist Joshua Bell is one of the most celebrated artists of his era. Bell has performed with virtually every major orchestra in the world, and continues to maintain engagements as a soloist, recitalist, chamber musician and conductor and as the music director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

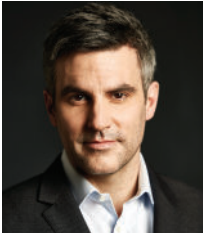


Bell's highlights in the 2023/24 season include an international tour of his newly commissioned project, *The Elements*, featuring works by renowned living composers. The work will receive its premiere performances with the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Hong Kong Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Bell released his new album on Sony Classical, "Butterfly Lovers," in summer 2023. Bell will also lead the Academy of St Martin in the Fields on tour in Australia and throughout the United States. He will appear as artist-in-residence this season with the NDR Elbphilharmonie and as guest artist with the New Jersey Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Philadelphia Orchestra and more.

Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Bell began playing the violin at age 4, and at age 12 began studies with his mentor, Josef Gingold. At age 14, Bell debuted with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and at age 17 made his Carnegie Hall debut with the St. Louis Symphony. At age 18, Bell signed with his first label, London Decca, and received the Avery Fisher Career Grant. In the following decades, Bell has been nominated for six Grammy® awards, named "Instrumentalist of the Year" by Musical America and a "Young Global Leader" by the World Economic Forum, and received the Avery Fisher Prize. He also received the 2003 Indiana Governor's Arts Award and in 2000 was named an "Indiana Living Legend."

Bell has performed for three American presidents and the justices of the Supreme Court. Bell also participated in President Barack Obama's Committee on the Arts and Humanities' mission to Cuba, performing on an Emmy-nominated PBS Live from Lincoln Center special, "Joshua Bell: Seasons of Cuba," celebrating renewed diplomacy between Cuba and the United States.

ABOUT KEVIN PUTS AND EDGAR MEYER



KEVIN PUTS, COMPOSER

Winner of numerous prestigious awards, including the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for his debut opera *Silent Night*, Kevin Puts' works have been commissioned, performed and recorded by leading ensembles and soloists throughout the world, including Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, Jeffrey Kahane, Dame Evelyn Glennie, the New York Philharmonic, the Tonhalle Orchester (Zurich), the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Miro Quartet and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Detroit, Atlanta, Colorado, Houston, Fort Worth,

St. Louis and Minnesota. Puts is currently a member of the composition department at the Peabody Institute and the director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute.

In 2022, Puts' fourth opera, *The Hours*, had its world premiere on the concert stage by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. *The Hours* premiered to sold-out houses as a fully staged production at the Metropolitan Opera in November 2022 starring sopranos Renée Fleming and Kelli O'Hara and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato. Written for Time for Three, his triple concerto *Contact* also had its world premiere in 2022 with the Florida Orchestra and has received additional performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Sun Valley Music Festival and many others. A recording of the piece by the Philadelphia Orchestra led by Xian Zhang was released on the Deutsche Grammophon album "Letters for the Future" and was awarded "Best Contemporary Classical Composition" at the 2023 Grammy® Awards.



EDGAR MEYER, COMPOSER

Hailed by the New Yorker as "the most remarkable virtuoso in the relatively un-chronicled history of his instrument," Edgar Meyer's uniqueness in the field was recognized when he became the only bassist to be awarded the Avery Fisher Prize in addition to a MacArthur Award. He was honored with his sixth and seventh Grammy® Awards this year for the recording entitled "As We Speak" with Béla Fleck, Zakir Hussain and Rakesh Chaurasia.

The ensemble has toured extensively, playing works from the album, with plans for appearances at various upcoming summer festivals in the United States and visits to Asia and Australia in early 2025.

Meyer recently completed a duo recording with Christian McBride as well as a recording of his three concertos with The Knights, conducted by Eric Jacobsen and produced by Chris Thile. In June 2023, he recorded his Concertino for Bass and 14 Strings in the UK with the Scottish Ensemble led by Jonathan Morton, who commissioned and toured the piece with Meyer.

Additionally, Meyer is part of a group of five composers who have each contributed a movement to *The Elements*, a concerto project conceived by violinist Joshua Bell. In fall 2024, his newly formed trio with violinist Tessa Lark and cellist Joshua Roman will tour the U.S., performing string trios he composed in the 1980s as well as a newly commissioned work. Meyer is the subject of an ongoing documentary filmed and produced by Tessa Lark, Andrew Adair and Michael Thurber.

ABOUT JAKE HEGGIE



JAKE HEGGIE, COMPOSER

American composer Jake Heggie is best known for *Dead Man Walking* (2000), the most widely performed new opera of the last 20 years, with a libretto by Terrence McNally, and his critically acclaimed operas *Moby-Dick* (2010), *Three Decembers* (2008) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (2016), all with libretti by Gene Scheer. In addition to 10 full-length operas and numerous one-acts, Heggie has composed more than 300 art songs, as well as concerti, chamber music, choral

and orchestral works. His compositions have been performed on five continents, and he regularly collaborates with some of the world's most beloved artists as both composer and pianist.

Heggie actively seeks out projects that invite a wide range of perspectives and possibilities. A new Ivo van Hove production of *Dead Man Walking*, based on the iconic memoir by Sister Helen Prejean, opens the Metropolitan Opera's 2023/24 season in New York City, starring Joyce DiDonato, Ryan McKinny and Susan Graham, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin on the podium. Heggie's opera *Intelligence* explores the true story of two women who infiltrated the Confederate White House during the American Civil War. Created with Jawole Zollar and Gene Scheer, this work receives its world premiere on opening night of Houston Grand Opera's season, conducted by Kwamé Ryan and starring Jamie Barton, Janai Brugger, J'Nai Bridges and Urban Bush Women. *Before It All Goes Dark*, a one-act opera commissioned by Music of Remembrance and based on a story originally reported by Howard Reich in the Chicago Tribune, will premiere in Seattle and tour to Chicago and San Francisco, while *The Elements: "Fire,"* Heggie's new commission for violinist Joshua Bell, premieres at Germany's Elbphilharmonie and tours to major stages in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Kansas City, Chicago and Hong Kong.

Special Concert

EUROPEAN TOUR SEND-OFF CONCERT

Wednesday, August 21 at 7 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR
CONRAD TAO, PIANO



Matthias Pintscher

Please join us as we perform a uniquely American program of Ives, Gershwin and Copland that we'll later be performing on our European tour of Berlin, Hamburg and Amsterdam. Visit [kcsymphony.org](https://www.kcsymphony.org) for tickets.

PROGRAM NOTES



GUILLAUME CONNESSON (b. 1970)

Flammenschrift (Flame Writing) (2012)

10 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

Guillaume Connesson is one of the most-performed French composers living today. He has been composer-in-residence for multiple French orchestras as well as the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and the Brussels Philharmonic. His music has a wide variety of influences, including Ravel, Messiaen, Stravinsky, minimalism, pop music and silent films.

Flammenschrift (Flame Writing), *E chiaro nella valle il fiume appare* (The River is Clear in the Valley) and *Maslenitsa* (the name of a Russian folk holiday) together make up a trilogy of orchestral works honoring the music and culture of Germany, Italy and Russia, respectively. The work we are performing today was written as a tribute to Beethoven and uses the same instrumental forces as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Flammenschrift was commissioned by Radio France and premiered November 8, 2012 in Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées by l'Orchestre national de France conducted by Daniele Gatti. Since its premiere the piece has been championed by French conductor Stéphane Denève, who has played it (along with other Connesson works) with numerous orchestras.

THE MUSIC

The score is marked "Furieux" (furiously) and begins with jabbing chords in the strings. Swirling woodwinds, frenetic drums and sharp punctuations from the brass create a fiery atmosphere. Brief moments of respite with staccato (detached) or pizzicato (plucked) strings are quickly swept back up into the conflagration. One such episode in the middle is prolonged, with a cinematic singing melody passed back and forth between strings and woodwinds. Toward the end of the piece, several passages build tension toward climaxes that are never quite reached. Raucous exchanges between brass and strings lead to an abrupt end as the flames are extinguished.

— *AJ Harbison*

PROGRAM NOTES



FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

Symphony No. 59 in A Major, "Fire" (1768)

20 minutes

2 oboes, bassoon, 2 horns, harpsichord and strings.

THE STORY

Franz Joseph Haydn spent much of his life working for the Esterházy family at some remove from urban musical centers. He later credited this relative seclusion for his inventiveness, saying, "I was isolated from the world ... and so I had to become original."

A relatively early work, the "Fire" Symphony reflects some of that experimentation. It was not Haydn's 59th symphony — that was a chronological misplacement by Anthony van Hoboken who catalogued Haydn's music in the mid-20th century — but an earlier work dating most likely from 1768. In addition, Haydn did not title the work "Fire." The nickname's origin has been the subject of speculation. We know that portions of the symphony were used as incidental music for a performance of Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann's play, "Die Feuersbrunst" (The Conflagration), at the Esterházy palace sometime between 1774 and 1778. Given the immense amount of music Haydn was required to produce, time constraints would logically lead to his repurposing this symphony. The play's title and the music's fiery character lend themselves to the inference that the nickname resulted from this use.

THE MUSIC

The symphony's four movements would appear to fit the standards that Haydn did so much to codify, but it is in the details that we find the greatest evidence of his creativity. The opening movement is fast per convention, but especially so, marked "presto" instead of the more common "allegro." The bright A major key adds sparkle to the octave leap and repeated notes that begin the work. Melodic direction is provided by the inner and lower voices instead of the first violins as might be expected. The exuberance quickly dissipates and everything comes to a full halt just a few measures into the piece before suddenly resuming with animated leaps, a playful feint Haydn would employ in several other works. The quiet ending to an otherwise energetic movement wryly upends expectations.

While the second movement is conventionally slow, its triple meter suggests a sluggish minuet. Harmonically, the piece moves from A minor to C major and eventually wends its way to A major at which point the winds finally join the strings. One can almost hear Haydn musing to himself, "What if...?" as he moves from idea to idea.

A more graceful minuet follows and the trio section provides a lovely contrast in A minor as the violins play a meandering line in thirds. The horns, heretofore largely in a supporting role, herald the final movement's vigorous romp. Haydn spreads the musical wealth around and everyone scampers about in a most delightful manner. The pulse-quickening pace has occasional moments of relative calm but the overall effect is one of untrammelled energy and excitement. All too soon, the blaze is quenched and the "Fire" Symphony is but a warm memory.

PROGRAM NOTES

THE ELEMENTS

I'm so excited to have the opportunity to premiere my new commissions project, *The Elements*. The idea for this unique endeavor was born during the early moments of the pandemic, and the work consists of five distinct

pieces, each written by composers I greatly admire — Jake Heggie (“Fire”), Jennifer Higdon (“Air”), Edgar Meyer (“Water”), Jessie Montgomery (“Space”) and Kevin Puts (“Earth,” “Earth (Reprise and Finale)”). The process of working with such an incredible collection of talent has been extremely rewarding, and to have them all represented in one epic opus will be truly historic. I am thrilled to have the chance to share this collective work celebrating the beauty of our natural world and look forward to seeing you at an upcoming performance of *The Elements*! — *Joshua Bell*



KEVIN PUTS (b. 1972)

“Earth” (2023)

10 minutes

Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, vibraphone, harp and strings.

“Earth” and “Earth (Reprise and Finale)” are my contributions to the *Elements* project. The piece begins on solid ground, with a repeating four-note ostinato over which the solo violin and the orchestral violins trade lyrical phrases. This opening idea was drawn from my Violin Concerto (2006) but takes a different journey here, eventually “taking flight” for a brief period. Beyond the fundamental sense of stability and endurance the element Earth suggested to me, I hope the music also conveys a more spiritual reverence for the planet Earth itself and, in some minute way, might inspire its protection. — *Kevin Puts*

EDGAR MEYER (b. 1960)

“Water” (2023)

7 minutes

Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, glockenspiel, rainstick, sizzle cymbal, splash cymbal, triangle, xylophone, harp and strings.

This movement deals with both a gentler side of water and a more forceful side. Music early in the movement is non-specific and maybe evocative of a gentle rain. The music later in the movement comes from a specific vision. I thought of being a particle of water in a high South American waterfall, hurled in seconds down into the swirling silt and sludge at the bottom, and onward from there. I'm not sure if it's what I would see if I heard this music for the first time, but it certainly is what I saw when I wrote it. — *Edgar Meyer*

PROGRAM NOTES

JAKE HEGGIE (b. 1961)

"Fire" (2023)

7 minutes

Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, bass drum, crotales, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, tom-tom, vibraphone, xylophone, piano and strings.

My score for "Fire" begins with a spark. Something possibly beautiful and essential emerges, fascinating and elusive. We cannot hold fire, but it can consume us. It is essential for life but can also be the cause of immense destruction. And then, miraculously, for rebirth. We need it. We fear it. We try to tame and contain it, but it can quickly run out of control. I wanted to explore both physical and metaphysical fire: the passion, the flame that is essential to our spirits — to all spirituality. Where will that initial spark lead? We may never know. And that is part of a beautiful, inexplicable chaos. — *Jake Heggie*



HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820-1881)

Concerto No. 5 in A Minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 37 (1859)

19 minutes

Solo violin, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

The Belgian composer Henri Vieuxtemps was better known in his day as a violinist than a composer. He gave his first public performance at the age of 6, and through his brilliant performances

all over Europe he met composers like Robert Schumann, Hector Berlioz and the great violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini. Much of his music, nearly all of it including violin, was written for himself to perform, and it made use of the newly expanded technical possibilities on the instrument. In 1873 he had a stroke that disabled his right arm, and though he seemed to be recovering slowly, another stroke in 1879 left him permanently unable to perform. He was depressed by his inability to play and composed only a few works in the last years of his life.

Vieuxtemps' most famous compositions, in his time and still today, are his seven violin concertos. Despite his virtuosity, his concertos are marked by a concern for substantive musical material instead of shallow showmanship. He was quoted by one of his students as saying, "Not runs for the sake of runs — sing, sing!" His Fifth Violin Concerto was composed in 1858 and 1859, commissioned by Hubert Léonard as an examination piece for violin students at the Brussels Conservatory.

PROGRAM NOTES

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS continued

In addition to performing and composing, Vieuxtemps was known for owning and playing the Guarneri del Gesù violin that we now refer to as the “Vieuxtemps Guarneri.” It is still today one of the best-preserved of all the Guarneri violins that have survived since their construction in the mid-1700s. At Vieuxtemps’ funeral, the violin was carried on a pillow behind his hearse. In January 2012, an anonymous benefactor purchased the violin for an undisclosed amount (some reports put it at around \$16 million) and gave it on lifetime loan to the violinist Anne Akiko Meyers.

THE MUSIC

The concerto ends up with a form similar to many concertos of its time, but Vieuxtemps arrives there in an unorthodox way. Many concertos have three movements, fast-slow-fast, with a cadenza (a flashy, virtuosic passage for the solo instrument by itself) near the end of the first movement. Vieuxtemps gives the cadenza its own short movement, the second, following without a break from the first. Then the cadenza flows without a break into the third movement, which is in two sections, one slow (*Adagio*) and one fast (*Allegro con fuoco* — fast, with fire).

The orchestra begins the work, introducing its themes, and the solo violin stands silent for 61 measures. It finally enters with some languid arpeggios, but then launches into a brilliant fast passage capped by some double- and triple-stops (playing on two and three strings at once) before taking over the themes from the orchestra. It plays almost continuously through the rest of the movement.

The orchestra falls silent for the cadenza, which takes the themes of the first movement and uses them as jumping-off points for virtuosic flights of fancy. Fast runs (but not for the sake of runs), double- and triple-stops, and melodies being played under continuous trills are in abundance. A brief orchestral outburst leads into the third movement, with the violin introducing two melodies, the second of which is borrowed from an opera by Belgian composer André Grétry. Two high trills in the violin lead into the final fast section, lasting only a minute and putting a virtuosic spin on a theme from the first movement. The violin traverses the range of the entire instrument, from the lowest string up into the stratosphere and back down, in the final measures.

— *AJ Harbison*

CELEBRATE MICHAEL STERN

DON'T MISS MUSIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL STERN'S REMAINING CONCERTS IN HIS FINAL SEASON!

MAHLER'S "RESURRECTION" SYMPHONY

Friday and Saturday, June 14-15 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 16 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR

JOELLE HARVEY, SOPRANO

KELLEY O'CONNOR, MEZZO-SOPRANO

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY CHORUS

CHARLES BRUFFY, CHORUS DIRECTOR



GUSTAV MAHLER Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection"

A transcendent experience awaits you — Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony is truly one of his greatest, most deeply emotional works. The stage and choral loft will be filled with musicians bringing you music that touches the soul. The Kansas City Symphony Chorus, soprano Joelle Harvey and mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor give voice to this luminous work. *Tickets from \$29.*

STERN'S FAREWELL WITH SIBELIUS AND BARBER

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

Sunday, June 23 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR

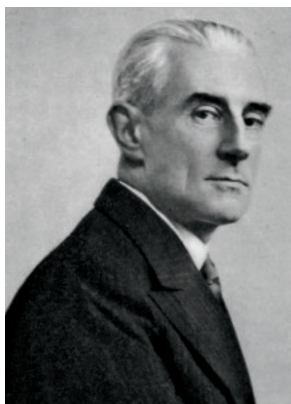
FELIX MENDELSSOHN Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

SAMUEL BARBER Symphony No. 1

JEAN SIBELIUS Symphony No. 2

In his final concert of the season and as music director of the Kansas City Symphony, Michael Stern shares music that inspires him. Stern and orchestra start with Felix Mendelssohn's evocative Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then, delight in Samuel Barber's elegant Symphony No. 1. The concert concludes with Jean Sibelius' glorious and triumphant Symphony No. 2. *Tickets from \$39.*

PROGRAM NOTES



MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909-1912)

16 minutes

2 piccolos, 2 flutes, alto flute, 2 oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, castanets, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tambourine, triangle, 2 harps, celeste and strings.

THE STORY

Maurice Ravel had completed several of his now best-known works when impresario Serge Diaghilev approached him for a ballet for his new Ballets Russes in 1909. The composer of *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, *Rapsodie espagnole*, *Miroirs* and *Ma mère l'Oye* was

delighted at the prospect of working with Russian choreographer Michel Fokine to create a new work. He wrote to a friend in June of 1909, describing initial efforts:

I must tell you that I've had a really insane week: preparation of a ballet libretto for the next Russian season. Almost every night, work until 3:00 a.m. What particularly complicates matters is that Fokine doesn't know a word of French, and I only know how to swear in Russian. Even with interpreters around you can imagine how chaotic our meetings are.

Fokine was enthusiastic about the notion of a ballet based on the ancient Greek story of Daphnis and Chloé. He and Ravel began with a retelling of Longus' 2nd-century C.E. tale by 16th-century French poet Jacques Amyot. The fanciful plot involves infants Daphnis and Chloé abandoned by their respective families. A goatherd discovers Daphnis and raises him; a shepherd finds Chloé and raises her. The two grow up together, herding flocks for their respective foster parents. Of course they fall in love due to the influence of the god Eros. Daphnis is taught lovemaking by a woman from the nearby city and there are several suitors for Chloé. She is abducted by pirates and Daphnis is disconsolate. Nymphs entreat the god Pan to save Chloé, which he does. The young couple consummates their love, are recognized by their birth parents, get married and live happily ever after in the countryside.

Ravel described his concept of *Daphnis et Chloé* as “a great choreographic symphony ... a vast musical fresco, less scrupulous in questions of archeology than faithful to the Greece of my dreams, which identifies quite willingly with that imagined and depicted by late 18th-century French artists. The work is constructed symphonically according to a strict tonal plan, by means of a small number of motifs, whose development assures the symphonic homogeneity of the work.”

Slow and meticulous in his craft, Ravel had many disagreements with Fokine and scene designer Léon Bakst, and the work was continually delayed. Diaghilev was frustrated at the delays and nearly cancelled the work but was persuaded to move forward at the behest of Ravel's publisher, Jacques Durand. Three years after beginning work, the ballet premiered on June 8, 1912, conducted by Pierre Monteux at the Théâtre du Châtelet with Vaslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina dancing the roles

PROGRAM NOTES

of Daphnis and Chloé, respectively. Because the premiere came at the end of the season, the ballet only received two performances initially. Reviewers noted some technical issues, likely attributable to inadequate rehearsal and the challenging 5/4 meter in the concluding Danse générale — not to mention feuding between Fokine and Nijinsky — but were reasonably complimentary about the choreography and music, some more so than others. It was part of the company's repertory for the following season but was not the success Diaghilev envisioned. The production delays gave Ravel time to excerpt two orchestral suites from the ballet music and the second in particular has proven especially popular over the last century.

THE MUSIC

Ravel described the plot of the second suite:

No sound but the murmur of rivulets of dew trickling from the rocks. Daphnis lies still before the grotto of the nymphs. Little by little, day breaks. Bird songs are heard. Herdsmen arrive searching for Daphnis and Chloé. They find Daphnis and awaken him. In anguish, he looks around for Chloé, who at last appears surrounded by shepherdesses ... Daphnis and Chloé mime the story of the nymph Syrinx who was beloved of the god Pan. Chloé impersonates the young nymph wandering in the meadow. Daphnis appears as Pan and declares his love. The nymph repulses him. He grows more insistent. She disappears among the reeds. In despair, he plucks some reeds and shapes them into a flute and plays a melancholy tune. Chloé returns and dances to the melody of the flute. The dance grows more and more animated, and, in a mad whirl, Chloé falls into Daphnis' arms ... A group of young girls, dressed as bacchantes, enters ... A group of young men invade the stage. Joyous tumult. General Dance.

Ravel's music is brilliantly atmospheric, evoking scenes through stunning orchestration. Each section is a kaleidoscope of shimmering orchestral colors and hypnotic rhythms. The travails and triumph of love are finely wrought in sensuous music. From the luxurious sunrise at the opening to the orgiastic closing bacchanal, the musical journey is utterly captivating.

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