

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
2017-2018 Mellon Grand Classics Season

February 9, 10 and 11, 2018

OSMO VÄNSKÄ, CONDUCTOR  
VILDE FRANG, VIOLIN

DMITRI KABALEVSKY

Suite from *The Comedians*, Opus 26

- I. Prologue
- II. Comedians' Galop
- III. March
- IV. Waltz
- V. Pantomime
- VI. Intermezzo
- VII. Little Lyrical Scene
- VIII. Gavotte
- IX. Scherzo
- X. Epilogue

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra (1961 revision)

- I. Toccata
- II. Aria I
- III. Aria II
- IV. Capriccio

**Ms. Frang**

Intermission

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA

*A Requiem in Our Time* for Brass, Timpani  
and Percussion, Opus 3

Hymnus: Festivamente  
Credo et dubito: Vivace — Grave  
Dies Irae: Allegro  
Lacrymosa: Larghetto tranquillo

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Allegro —
- IV. Allegro

## PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

### DMITRI KABALEVSKY

Suite from *The Comedians*, Opus 26 (1938, suite arranged in 1939)

**Dmitri Kabalevsky was born in St. Petersburg, Russia on December 30, 1904, and died in Moscow on February 14, 1987. He composed the incidental music for the Mark Daniel's play *The Inventor and the Comedian* in 1938, and later arranged the music into the an orchestral suite in 1939. The work was premiered at Moscow Central Children's Theater in 1938. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony's first performances of the suite in its entirety. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, trombone, timpani, percussion, piano and strings. Performance time: approximately 14 minutes**

Dmitri Kabalevsky, one of the most prominent figures in Soviet music, was born in St. Petersburg on December 30, 1904. Though Kabalevsky showed considerable talent from his earliest years as a self-taught pianist, his father, a mathematician in government service, provided him with a general rather than a specifically musical education that also uncovered abilities in painting and poetry, activities he continued throughout his life. In 1918, the family moved to Moscow, where Dmitri furthered his liberal training while studying piano at the Scriabin Musical Institute. During the following years, he concentrated on the piano by giving lessons, serving as accompanist, and providing background music for silent movies. Short etudes that he wrote for his pupils ignited his interest in composition, and he entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1925 as a student of Nikolai Miaskovsky. His first important compositions (a piano sonata, a string quartet and a piano concerto) date from the late 1920s; they received enough recognition that he graduated from the Conservatory in 1930 with special honors.

After writing articles for the journal *Sovremennaya Muzika* ("Contemporary Music") beginning in 1927, Kabalevsky became a significant contributor and spokesperson in Russian musical life: he was a charter member of the Union of Soviet Composers, a senior editor in the music publishing house of Musgiz, principal editor of *Sovetskaya Muzika*, professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory and, in 1956, a cultural representative of his country to the United States. In 1940, he became a member of the Communist Party; that same year he was awarded the Order of Merit, and six years later received the Stalin Prize. He died in Moscow on February 14, 1987.

In 1938, Kabalevsky contributed incidental music to a production of Mark Daniel's play *The Inventor and the Comedian* staged by the Central Children's Theater in Moscow. (The Theater must have been an impressive operation. Two years earlier, the ensemble's director, Natalie Satz, had convinced Prokofiev to write a piece introducing the instruments of the orchestra to her youngsters — it was called *Peter and the Wolf*.) Kabalevsky derived a suite, titled *The Comedians*, from the score in 1939, and the music was first heard in that form in Leningrad the following year. "The composer's aim," according to Harold Sheldon, who edited the score of *The Comedians* for its American publication, "was to create a number of gay, characteristic pieces and genre pictures, depicting the life of an itinerant company of comedians." Humor abounds. Indeed, the suite contains one of the funniest pieces in the entire orchestral repertory — a "Waltz" that can never quite get its melody and its accompaniment synchronized, and finally just gives up all together, rather like a five-year-old who has forgotten the lines of his poem for the holiday pageant and shuffles, thoroughly bemused, off stage. *The Comedians* more than lives up to its title.

### IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra (1931, revised in 1961)

**Igor Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg on June 17, 1882, and died in New York City on April 6, 1971. He composed his Violin Concerto in 1931, and later revised it in 1961, the edition heard this weekend. The concerto was premiered by the Berlin Radio Orchestra with Stravinsky conducting and Samuel Dushkin as soloist on October 23, 1931. The Pittsburgh Symphony premiered the work at Syria Mosque with William Steinberg conducting and Arnold Steinhardt as soloist on December 18, 1959. Most recently, John Adams conducted the concerto with Andres Cardenes as soloist in Heinz Hall on October 5, 1997. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat and two B-flat clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings. Performance time: approximately 22 minutes**

Late in 1930, Willy Strecker, co-owner and director of Schott, the prestigious German publishing house, suggested to Igor Stravinsky that a violin concerto might make a welcome addition to the catalog of his music, and that the violinist Samuel Dushkin was willing to offer technical advice for the project. The composer was, however, reluctant to accept the proposal. On the one hand, he still lacked full confidence in writing for the violin as a solo instrument, despite the challenging part he had included for it in *The Soldier's Tale*. On the other, he was worried that Dushkin might be interested only in a virtuoso showpiece, with little concern for the musical niceties inherent in the form. It was the composer Paul Hindemith who reassured him on the first point. He told Stravinsky that his unfamiliarity with the violin might actually be a benefit since he could apply fresh ideas to the use of the instrument rather than just composing what Hindemith said would be "suggested by the familiar movements of the fingers." Stravinsky listened to this argument with some attention because Hindemith, in addition to being a master composer and teacher, was also one of the finest string players of his day. Stravinsky's second concern was allayed by Dushkin himself. Before they met, Stravinsky thought that Dushkin might be one of those performers interested only in "immediate triumphs ... [through] special effects, whose preoccupation naturally influences their taste, their choice of music, and their manner of treating the piece selected." Their first meeting, however, proved to be warm and friendly. Their initial contact blossomed into sincere friendship; the Violin Concerto was the offspring of that mutual admiration.

The Concerto opens with a "motto" gesture, a widely spaced chord that Stravinsky called "a passport to the music," and which returns at important structural junctures throughout the work, most notably at the beginning of each subsequent movement. The body of the first movement (titled *Toccata*) commences with a jaunty main theme in precise rhythm delivered by the trumpets. Contrasting ideas are presented, all wedded together in a pellucid texture by the motoric rhythm. The two *Arias* (both in three-part, A-B-A form) follow: the first uses an angular melody in its outer sections but turns scherzo-ish for its central portion; the second is slower in tempo and doleful in expression. The concluding *Capriccio*, a dazzling showpiece for the soloist despite Stravinsky's disavowal of virtuoso pyrotechnics, returns the dancing motion of the opening movement.

## EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA

*A Requiem in Our Time* for Brass, Timpani and Percussion, Opus 3 (1953)

**Einojuhani Rautavaara was born in Helsinki on October 9, 1928, and died there on July 27, 2016. He composed A Requiem in Our Time in 1953, and it was premiered in Cincinnati by the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Brass Choir and conductor Ernest N. Glover on October 10, 1954. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of the piece, and only the second performance of a composition by Rautavaara. The score calls for four horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani and percussion. Performance time: approximately 10 minutes**

Among the heirs of Sibelius who have given Finland one of today's most dynamic and distinctive musical cultures is Einojuhani Rautavaara. Rautavaara was born in Helsinki on October 9, 1928, and studied composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with Aarre Merikanto and musicology at Helsinki University before being selected in 1955 by Sibelius himself to receive a Koussevitzky Foundation scholarship awarded to a young Finnish musician in honor of that venerable composer's ninetieth birthday. Rautavaara used the grant to study with Vincent Persichetti at the Juilliard School and Roger Sessions and Aaron Copland at Tanglewood during the following two years. After further study in Ascona,

Switzerland with Wladimir Vogel and in Cologne with Rudolf Petzold, Rautavaara returned to Finland to compose and to serve as librarian of the Helsinki City Orchestra (1959-1961), director of Helsinki's Käpylä Music School (1965-1966) and faculty member of the Sibelius Academy (1966-1991). His many awards included the Finnish Artist Professor of State (an honorific without fixed duties, modeled on the government grant Sibelius received as a young composer to support his creative work), Sibelius Prize, Arnold Bax Society Medal, membership in the Royal Swedish Academy and Commander in the Order of the Finnish Lion. Rautavaara composed steadily and prolifically throughout his life — nine operas (including *Vincent*, based on the life of Van Gogh; *Thomas*, which tells the story of Finland's first bishop; and *Rasputin*), a ballet, film and incidental music, eight symphonies, twelve concertos, much music for orchestra, chamber ensembles and chorus, piano pieces, songs — passing first through the influences of Stravinskian neo-classicism and then Schoenbergian serialism before arriving at the luminous, timeless, mystical idiom that characterized much of his creative output since the early 1970s. "It is my belief," Rautavaara explained, "that music is great if, at some moment, the listener catches 'a glimpse of eternity through the window of time.' This, to my mind, is the only true justification for all art. Everything else is of secondary importance."

"*A Requiem in Our Time*," wrote Rautavaara, "composed when I was still a student in 1953, has been called my 'breakthrough composition'; it won an American competition for composers [i.e., the 1954 Thor Johnson Brass Composition Competition, founded by and named for the Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and administered by the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music; the distinction brought Rautavaara to the notice of Sibelius, who chose him to receive the Koussevitzky Foundation scholarship honoring his ninetieth birthday]. My relationship to the title of this work and to the names of its parts (*Hymnus*, *Credo et dubito*, *Dies Irae* and *Lacrymosa*) was very personal, even autobiographical. The most severe tragedy of my life had been the death of my Mother during World War II and as a victim of it. That had been a traumatic experience, which had rocked my worldview in any ways. It had been difficult to find a balance. *Requiem* was dedicated to Mother because for me it meant precisely a Mass for her soul. Therefore, '*A Requiem*' and '*in Our Time*,' not '*of*' — as the name has sometimes been mistranslated."

*Hymnus* provides a surprisingly festive opening for a work titled after the Catholic Mass for the Dead. Seen in the context of the following *Credo et dubito* ("*Faith and Doubt*"), however, it might indicate Rautavaara's suggestion of a happy time before his Mother's death, which is undermined as the nervous, skittering music of "faith" gives way to the solemn chorale of "doubt." Both the character and the thematic material of the *Dies Irae* were inspired by the most dramatic portion of the Requiem liturgy: *This day of wrath shall consume the world in ashes. Oh, what great trembling there will be when the Judge will appear to examine everything in strict justice!* The inherent grief of the Requiem Mass is distilled in the closing *Lacrymosa* ("*Oh, this day full of tears*").

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

### Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67 (1804-1808)

**Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770, and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. He composed his Fifth Symphony from 1804 to 1808, and it was premiered in at the Theater an de Wien in Vienna on December 22, 1808, with the composer conducting. The Pittsburgh Symphony gave its first performance at Carnegie Music Hall on March 12, 1896, with Frederic Archer conducting. Most recently, the Pittsburgh Symphony performed the Fifth Symphony on subscription with Gustavo Dudamel on April 9, 2017. The score calls for woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo and contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings. Performance time: approximately 33 minutes**

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, more than any work in the musical repertory, is the archetypal example of the technique and content of the form. Its overall structure is not one of four independent essays linked simply by tonality and style, as in the typical 18th-century example, but is rather a carefully devised whole in which each of the movements serves to carry the work inexorably toward its end. The progression from minor to major, from dark to light, from conflict to resolution is at the very heart of the "meaning" of this work. The triumphant nature of the final movement as the logical outcome of all that preceded it established a model for the symphonies of the Romantic era. The psychological progression toward the

finale — the relentless movement toward a life-affirming close — is one of Beethoven's most important technical and emotional legacies, and it established for following generations the concept of how such a creation could be structured, and in what manner it should engage the listener.

The opening gesture is the most famous beginning in all of classical music. It establishes the stormy temper of the *Allegro* by presenting the germinal cell from which the entire movement grows. Though it is possible to trace this memorable four-note motive through most of the measures of the movement, the eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey has pointed out that the power of the music is not contained in this fragment, but rather in the “long sentences” that Beethoven built from it. The key to appreciating Beethoven's formal structures lies in being aware of the way in which the music moves constantly from one point of arrival to the next. The gentler second theme derives from the opening motive, and gives only a brief respite in the headlong rush that hurtles through the movement. It provides the necessary contrast while doing nothing to impede the music's flow. The development section is a paragon of cohesion, logic and concision. The recapitulation roars forth after a series of breathless chords that pass from woodwinds to strings and back. The stark hammer-blows of the closing chords bring the movement to its powerful end.

The second movement is a set of variations on two contrasting themes. The first theme, presented by violas and cellos, is sweet and lyrical in nature; the second, heard in horns and trumpets, is heroic. The ensuing variations on the themes alternate to produce a movement by turns gentle and majestic.

The *Scherzo* returns the tempestuous character of the opening movement, as the four-note motto from the first movement is heard again in a brazen setting led by the horns. The *fughetta*, the “little fugue,” of the central trio is initiated by the cellos and basses. The *Scherzo* returns with the mysterious tread of the plucked strings, after which the music wanes until little more than a heartbeat from the timpani remains. Then begins another accumulation of intensity, first gradually, then more quickly, as a link to the finale, which arrives with a glorious proclamation, like brilliant sun bursting through ominous clouds.

The finale, set in the triumphant key of C major, is jubilant and martial. The sonata form proceeds apace. At the apex of the development, however, the mysterious end of the *Scherzo* is invoked to serve as the link to the return of the main theme in the recapitulation. It also recalls and compresses the emotional journey of the entire Symphony. The closing pages repeat the cadence chords extensively as a way of discharging the work's enormous accumulated energy.

Concerning the effect of the “struggle to victory” that is symbolized by the structure of the Fifth Symphony, a quote that Beethoven scribbled in a notebook of the Archduke Rudolf, one of his aristocratic piano students, is pertinent. The composer wrote, “Many assert that every minor [tonality] piece must end in the minor. *Nego!* On the contrary, I find that ... the major [tonality] has a glorious effect. Joy follows sorrow, sunshine — rain. It affects me as if I were looking up to the silvery glistening of the evening star.”