Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2018-2019 Mellon Grand Classics Season

October 26 and 28, 2018

PABLO HERAS-CASADO, CONDUCTOR
MAXIMILIAN HORNUNG, CELLO

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV — *Capriccio Espagnol*, Opus 34

I. Alborada: Vivo e strepitoso —
II. Variations: Andante con moto —
III. Alborada: Vivo e strepitoso —
IV. Scena e canto gitano: Allegretto —
V. Fandango asturiano

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH — Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 107

I. Allegretto
II. Moderato —
III. Cadenza —
IV. Allegro con moto

Mr. Hornung

Intermission

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY — Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Opus 13, “Winter Dreams”

I. Allegro tranquillo
II. Adagio cantabile ma non tanto
III. Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso
IV. Finale: Andante lugubre — Allegro moderato — Allegro maestoso

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Capriccio Espagnol, Opus 34 (1887)

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was born in Tikhvin, near Novgorod on March 18, 1844, and died in St. Petersburg on June 21, 1908. He composed *Capriccio Espagnol* in the summer of 1887, originally intended as a piece for solo violin and orchestra but later finalized as a showpiece for full orchestra. The work was premiered in St. Petersburg by the Orchestra of the Russian Musical Society with Rimsky-Korsakov conducting in October 1887. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed *Capriccio* at Carnegie Music Hall with conductor Victor Herbert on December 7, 1900, and most recently performed it on subscription with Mariss Jansons in September 2001. The score calls for woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo and English horn, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. Performance time: approximately 15 minutes.

Rimsky-Korsakov visited Spain only once: while on a training cruise around the world as a naval cadet, he spent three days in the Mediterranean port of Cádiz in December 1864. The sun and sweet scents of Iberia left a lasting impression on him, however, just as they had on the earlier Russian composer Mikhail Glinka, who was inspired to compose the *Jota Aragonesa* and *A Night in Madrid* on Spanish themes. Both of those colorful works by his Russian predecessor were strong influences on Rimsky-Korsakov when he came to compose his own Spanish piece in 1887.

Rimsky-Korsakov's principal project during the summer of 1887 was the orchestration of the opera *Prince Igor* by his compatriot Alexander Borodin, who had died the preceding winter. Rimsky installed himself at Nikolskoe on the shore of Lake Nelai in a rented villa, and made good progress with the opera, one of many completions and revisions he undertook of the music of his fellow Russian composers. Things went well enough that he felt able to interrupt this project for several weeks to work on his composition on Spanish themes, originally intended for solo violin and orchestra but which he re-cast for full orchestra as the brilliant *Capriccio Espagnol*.

The *Capriccio Espagnol* comprises five brief, attached movements. It opens with a rousing *Alborada* or "*morning-song*," marked *vivo e strepitoso* — "*lively and noisy*." The solo violin figures prominently here and throughout the work, a reminder of the virtuosic origin of the *Capriccio* as a concerted piece for that instrument. A tiny set of variations on a languid theme presented by the horns follows. The *Alborada* returns in new instrumental coloring that features a sparkling solo by the clarinet. The fourth movement, *Scena e canto gitano* ("*Scene and Gypsy Song*"), begins with a string of cadenzas: horns and trumpets, violin, flute, clarinet and harp. The swaying *Gypsy Song* gathers up the instruments of the orchestra to build to a dazzling climax leading without pause to the finale, *Fandango asturiano*. The trombones present the theme of this section, based on the rhythm of a traditional dance of Andalusia. The final pages of the *Capriccio* recall the *Alborada* theme to bring this brilliant orchestral showpiece to an exhilarating close.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 107 (1959)

Dmitri Shostakovich was born in St. Petersburg on September 25, 1906, and died in Moscow on August 9, 1975. He composed his First Cello Concerto for the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich during the summer of 1959, and it was premiered in Leningrad with Rostropovich, conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky, and the Leningrad State Philharmonic Orchestra on October 4, 1959. Though Rostropovich made several appearances with the Pittsburgh Symphony as both a cellist and conductor, he only performed Shostakovich's Second Cello Concerto in Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the work with conductor Donald Johanos and cellist Michael Grebanier in April 1972, and most recently performed it with conductor David Robertson

and cellist Han-Na Chang in May 2004. The score calls for piccolo, pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, contrabassoon, horn, timpani, celesta and strings. Performance time: approximately 28 minutes.

By the mid-1950s, Dmitri Shostakovich had developed a musical language of enormous subtlety, sophistication and range, able to encompass such pieces of "Socialist Realism" as the Second Piano Concerto, the *Festive Overture*, and the Symphonies No. 11 ("The Year 1905") and No. 12 ("Lenin"), as well as the profound outpourings of the First Violin Concerto, the Tenth Symphony and the late string quartets. The First Cello Concerto, written for Mstislav Rostropovich during the summer of 1959, straddles both of Shostakovich's expressive worlds, a quality exemplified by two anecdotes related by the great cellist himself:

"Shostakovich gave me the manuscript of the First Cello Concerto on August 2, 1959. On August 6th I played it for him from memory, three times. After the first time he was *so* excited, and of course we drank a little bit of vodka. The second time I played it not so perfect, and afterwards we drank even more vodka. The third time I *think* I played the Saint-Saëns Concerto, but he still accompanied *his* Concerto. We were enormously happy...."

"Shostakovich suffered for his whole country, for his persecuted colleagues, for the thousands of people who were hungry. After I played the Cello Concerto for him at his *dacha* in Leningrad, he accompanied me to the railway station to catch the overnight train to Moscow. In the big waiting room we found many people sleeping on the floor. I saw his face, and the great suffering in it brought tears to my eyes. I cried, not from seeing the poor people but from what I saw in the face of Shostakovich...."

The ability of Shostakovich's music, like the man himself, to display the widest possible range of moods in succession or even simultaneously is one of his most masterful achievements. (The same may be said of Mahler, whose music was an enormous influence on Shostakovich.) The opening movement of the First Cello Concerto may be heard as almost Classical in the clarity of its form and the conservatism of its harmony and themes, yet there is a sinister undercurrent coursing through this music, a bleakness of spirit not entirely masked by its ceaseless activity. The following *Moderato* grows from sad melodies of folkish character, piquantly harmonized, which are gathered into a huge welling up of emotion before subsiding to close the movement. The extended solo cadenza that follows without pause is an entire movement in itself. (Shostakovich had used a similar formal technique in the Violin Concerto No. 1 of 1948.) Thematically, it springs from the preceding slow movement, and reaches an almost Bachian depth of feeling. The cadenza leads directly to the finale, one of Shostakovich's most witty and sardonic musical essays. With disarming ease, the main theme of the first movement is recalled in the closing section of the finale to round out the Concerto's form. "It is difficult to think of any modern concerto," wrote Alan Frank, "which pursues its objectives in so purposeful a manner with little or no exploration of by-ways."

In addition to its purely musical value, Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto deserves a significant footnote in Russia's modern artistic history. The piece was written for Rostropovich, about whom the composer said in his purported memoirs, *Testimony*, "In general, Rostropovich is a real Russian; he knows everything and he can do everything. Anything at all. I'm not even talking about music here, I mean that Rostropovich can do almost any manual or physical work, and he understands technology." Shostakovich and Rostropovich were close friends during the composer's later years, and they lived as neighbors for some time in the Composers' House in Moscow. Rostropovich gave the Concerto both its world premiere (Leningrad; October 4, 1959) and its first American performance (Philadelphia; November 6, 1959), and was the inspiration for Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 2 of 1966. In 1974, Rostropovich and his wife, the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, defected to live and work in the West; four years later they were deprived of their Russian citizenship and became "non-persons" in their native land. In 1979 Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky published their *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*, which was essentially the Soviet rebuttal to the scathing criticism leveled in *Testimony*, issued several months earlier. Though Rostropovich was one of Shostakovich's best friends and most important artistic motivators, his name is not even mentioned in the Sollertinskys' *Pages*, and the First Cello Concerto is dismissed in the book with a mere, passing half-sentence.

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Opus 13, "Winter Dreams" (1866, revised 1874)

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburgh on November 6, 1893. He composed his First Symphony in 1866 at the encouragement of his teacher, Nikolai Rubinstein, and it was premiered by the Leningrad State Philharmonic with Rubinstein conducting on February 15, 1868. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the First Symphony in Carnegie Music Hall with conductor Victor Herbert in January 1902, and most recently performed it with conductor Arild Remmereit in December 2012. The score calls for piccolo, pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings. Performance time: approximately 45 minutes.

In 1859, Anton Rubinstein established the Russian Musical Society in St. Petersburg; a year later his brother Nikolai opened the Society's branch in Moscow. Since one of the important aims of the Society was to encourage music education in Russia, it instituted classes almost immediately in both cities. St. Petersburg was first to receive an imperial charter to open a conservatory and offer a formal curriculum of instruction, and Tchaikovsky, who had quit his job as a clerk in the Ministry of Justice to devote himself to music, was in the first class of students when the school was officially opened in 1862. By January 1866, he had completed his studies in theory and composition, principally with Rubinstein and Nikolai Zaremba, and was in need of a job. On the basis of his academic work, which included a cantata for the graduation examinations courageously based on the same *Ode to Joy* text by Schiller that Beethoven had set in his Ninth Symphony, Rubinstein recommended Tchaikovsky to Nikolai as a teacher for the music classes in Moscow. The official opening of the Moscow Conservatory was still some months off, so Nikolai was running the program from his own home and was able to pay his instructors only a pittance. Though reluctant to leave the rich cultural milieu of St. Petersburg for more provincial Moscow, Tchaikovsky accepted the much-needed position.

As soon as his St. Petersburg studies were completed in mid-January, Tchaikovsky departed for Moscow, where he was greeted at the train station like an old friend by Nikolai Rubinstein. Nikolai immediately took the young musician under his wing, lending him clothes (including a frock coat left behind by Henryk Wieniawski on a recent visit), introducing him to his wide circle of acquaintances, offering him a room in his home, and lavishing upon him every hospitality. (Rubinstein also included Tchaikovsky in his nightly rounds of tavern-hopping, during which each impressed the other with his capacity for alcohol.) Nikolai encouraged Tchaikovsky to supplement his teaching duties by continuing his creative work, and the first project he suggested was a revision for full orchestra of the *Overture in F major* written at the end of the preceding year. Tchaikovsky had conducted the original chamber orchestra version of the work as a student in December, shortly before he left the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The success of the revised version when it was conducted in Moscow by Nikolai on March 4th (the first public performance of one of Tchaikovsky's compositions) was such that he was motivated to begin writing a symphony that same month. Though working on such a large scale was a daunting challenge for the young composer, the new symphony was completed by November and premiered by Nikolai in Moscow on February 15, 1868 "with great success," reported the composer to his brother Anatoli. The work was inscribed "Winter Dreams." The first two movements were called "Reveries of a Winter Journey" and "Land of Desolation, Land of Mists"; the closing movements are without sobriquet. There is no specific program apparent in the music, though Tchaikovsky may have intended that this be his contribution to the many depictions of the harsh Russian winters that have always been popular subjects in that country's literature and art.

The Symphony's first movement opens as the flute and bassoon present the doleful main theme above the murmurings of the violins. The complementary melody, more lyrical in phrasing and brighter in mood, is sung initially by the clarinet. The development section, typically Tchaikovskian in many of its orchestral techniques, combines true motivic elaboration with a certain amount of boisterous, newly invented figuration. The recapitulation returns the themes of the beginning and ends with the hushed whispers of the first measures. A chorale-like passage for strings opens and closes the second movement. Within this frame are set two folkish melodies: the first, a plaintive tune, intoned by the oboe, has hints of the *Volga Boatmen*; the other is a more flowing song given first by the flutes and violas. The nimble *Scherzo*, indebted to Mendelssohn for its effervescent writing, is based on a movement from Tchaikovsky's Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor, composed in 1865; the lovely central trio is the first of the succession of great waltzes Tchaikovsky penned for orchestra. The finale is a gloriously noisy display of orchestral color and rhythmic energy. It begins with a slow introduction ("lugubrious," notes the score) during which the violins present the Russian folk song *The Gardens Bloomed*. A vivacious main theme in fast tempo is hurled forth by the full orchestra before the folk song returns to serve as the second theme. Twice the tempo is increased in the closing pages so that the ending of the Symphony is filled with brilliant whirling vitality and bursting spirits.

— Dr. Richard E. Rodda