

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
2019-2020 Mellon Grand Classics Season

November 29 and December 1, 2019

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR  
NAREK HAKHNAZARYAN, CELLO

FRANZ VON SUPPÉ                      *Overture to Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*

ARAM KHACAHTURIAN                “Saber Dance” from *Gayane*

EDVARD BAGHDASARYAN          *Nocturne*  
**Mr. Hakhnazaryan**

ARAM KHACAHTURIAN                Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra  
**Mr. Hakhnazaryan**

Intermission

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.                *Overture to Waldmeister*

JOHANNES BRAHMS                    Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G minor

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.                *Be Embraced, Ye Millions!*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.                *Egyptian March*

JOSEF STRAUSS                        *Jockey Polka*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.  
and JOSEF STRAUSS                *Pizzicato Polka*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.                *Tick-Tock Polka*

## PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

### FRANZ VON SUPPÉ

#### Overture to *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* (1844)

Just as Jacques Offenbach, the great innovator of French comic opera, was an immigrant from Germany, so one of the seminal figures in the development of Viennese operetta came from what is now Croatia. Francesco Suppé Demelli was born in 1819 on a ship off the Adriatic coast city of Spalato, Dalmatia (now Split, Croatia) to Austrian parents, sent to Italy to study law, and moved with his mother after his father's death in 1835 to Vienna, where he became Franz von Suppé and took up music in earnest as a student of Ignaz Seyfried and Simon Sechter (also remembered as the counterpoint teacher of both Schubert and Bruckner). Seyfried helped him get a job — initially unpaid — as Third Kapellmeister at the Josefstadt Theater, where his first stage work appeared in 1841. More than twenty theater scores followed in the next five years. He moved on to other, more lucrative, positions in Vienna's light-opera theaters, and continued to conduct until 1883, all the while turning out a steady stream of well-received musical farces. *Das Pensionat* of 1860, the first successful Viennese response to the growing local popularity of Offenbach's operettas, established the form with which Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár and others were to charm the world in later decades. In addition to nearly 200 operettas and other stage pieces, Suppé also wrote two grand operas, a symphony, several still-popular concert overtures, songs, three Masses, a Requiem and some sacred music. He died in Vienna in 1895.

*A Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*, Suppé's tribute to his adopted home, grew from a "play with songs" he composed for the Josefstadt Theater in 1844.

### ARAM KHACHATURIAN

#### "Sabre Dance" from *Gayane* (1942)

When the German invasion of June 1941 drew the Soviet Union into the Second World War, the country's artists and writers were called upon to sustain the people's spirit and provide hope with their works. Aram Khachaturian, as one of the leading musical voices of the Soviet Union, was an active member of the Defense Music Commission, selecting new compositions and giving performances of his own patriotic songs at military installations and hospitals. When Hitler's forces began bombing Moscow in the summer of 1941, he did fire duty on the roof of the building housing the Union of Soviet Composers. Later that year, he was evacuated to Perm, where the Leningrad Kirov Opera and Ballet Theater were also based while giving hundreds of performances for troops along the northwestern front. Inspired by the propinquity of such distinguished performers, Khachaturian wrote a ballet based on a subject glorifying Russian workers and their devotion to justice and country. For musical material, named *Gayane* after its heroine, he reworked extended portions of the 1939 ballet *Happiness*, which was pervasively influenced by the folk songs and dances of his native Armenia, and added to them much new music. In the story, Gayane, a model worker, lives on a collective farm in southern Armenia picking cotton. Her lazy husband, Giko, however, drinks and consorts with criminals, threatening the stability and productivity of the community. When Gayane, unable to bear Giko's conduct any longer, denounces him to the workers, he ignites the bales of cotton stored in the village and seizes their child as a hostage. The arrival of the Red Army Border Patrol saves the situation. Giko is exiled, and Gayane falls in love with the commander of the Patrol. The ferocious *Saber Dance* occurs in the series of festive folk dances that close the ballet.

### EDVARD BAGHDASARYAN

#### *Nocturne* (1957)

Edvard Baghdasaryan, one of Armenia's most prominent mid-20th-century musical figures, was born in the capital city of Yerevan in 1922 and graduated from the Yerevan State Conservatory with a double degree in composition and piano. After taking advanced training in Moscow between 1951 and 1953, Baghdasaryan returned to Armenia to collect folk songs and made the rest of his career there, teaching at the music school established by the Armenian composer Romanos Melikian before joining the faculty of the Yerevan Conservatory. Baghdasaryan established a reputation for his concert compositions in the late 1950s while also becoming involved film and incidental music and, later, in television and popular styles. (In 1962, he wrote the score for director Arman Manaryan's *Tjvjik*, the first film in the Western Armenian language and considered a classic of that country's cinema.) In addition to Baghdasaryan's music for film, television and the popular market, his works also include a ballet, an opera, orchestral compositions, concertos, choral music, chamber pieces, and piano selections. His *Nocturne*, composed in 1957, echoes the poignant, lyrical slow movements of the late Romantic Russian tradition rather than native Armenian vernacular sources.

## ARAM KHACHATURIAN

### Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra (1963)

Mstislav Rostropovich was one of the most dynamic forces of 20th-century music. Born in Azerbaijan in 1927, he had established himself among his generation's foremost cellists by the time he won the Stalin Prize when he was 23. More than hundred pieces were written for him by a Who's Who of composers — Prokofiev, Bernstein, Shostakovich, Messiaen, Berio, Britten, Schnittke — and after defecting to the West in 1974, he established a parallel career as a conductor, serving as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. from 1977 to 1994. Rostropovich succeeded as much from his force of personality as his musical talent. His wife, the brilliant soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, said that her husband was “a man with a kind of frantic motor inside him; once Rostropovich has made up his mind to do something, no force on earth could stop him.” Benjamin Britten, who wrote a sonata, a “symphony” with orchestra, and three unaccompanied suites for him, admitted that “Rostropovich got his works by bullying me.” Dmitri Shostakovich (two concertos) recalled, “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.” It was for Rostropovich that Aram Khachaturian wrote his Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello in 1963, the second of three similarly titled pieces (violin, 1961; piano, 1968) that collectively won the USSR State Prize in 1971.

As the work's title implies, the Concerto-Rhapsody follows the three-part structure of the former genre but plays them continuously and with the thematic sharing across the entire piece of the latter form. The opening horn summons is both a distinct motto as well as the source of a neighboring-note gesture that is reflected in other themes. The orchestra works these ideas into a passionate, extended melody with traces of Armenian folk influence. The intensity lessens for a lyrical theme based on a descending scale that serves as the opening section's second subject; the cello weaves an extended and deeply felt solo cadenza around these elements. The orchestra returns for the transition to the central episode, an expressive soliloquy for the soloist that refers back to the work's opening thematic material. The closing section is largely fast and virtuosic, but one broader episode recalls the first theme before the headlong pace resumes for the dash to the finish.

## JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

### Overture to *Waldmeister* (“Sweet Woodruff”), Opus 463 (1894-1895)

In September 1894, as Vienna was eagerly preparing to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his debut as composer and conductor the following month, Johann Strauss began sketching a new operetta to a libretto by the successful comedic playwright Gustav Davis. *Waldmeister* invoked the tested devices of mistaken identities, untoward amorous advances and mismatched couples in a plot lubricated by the timely imbibing of a potent alcoholic potion made with the flowering forest plant known in English as sweet woodruff (*Waldmeister* in German). The premiere, at the Theater-an-der-Wien on December 4,

1895, proved to be one of Strauss' greatest theatrical successes since *Die Fledermaus*. The delightful *Waldmeister Overture* is built around several themes from the operetta, including an infectious waltz that ingeniously inverts the opening phrase of his ever-popular *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* and a song he wrote when he was a teenager.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

### Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G minor (1869 for piano, four hands; orchestrated 1873)

The special affection Brahms retained throughout his life for Gypsy fiddlers and their music blossomed in such Gypsy-inspired compositions as the finale of the Violin Concerto, the closing movement of the G minor Piano Quartet (Op. 25), the *Zigeunerlieder* ("Gypsy Songs"), and, especially, the *Hungarian Dances*. The themes of most of these *Dances* were not original with Brahms. He collected them, thinking — as did almost everyone else at that time — that the melodies were folk tunes, and he clearly stated that they were arrangements. Such a precaution, however, did not exempt Brahms, one of the most honest and forthright of all the great composers, from being accused of plagiarism by the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, with whom he had toured early in his career. Reményi disingenuously claimed that Brahms had stolen the tunes from him, and when that tale was easily exploded, Reményi issued a list of the composers of the melodies in an interview printed in 1879 by the New York *Herald*, forcing Brahms' publisher, Simrock, to distribute a pamphlet defending Brahms on the basis of the *Dances* being arrangements for piano, four hands, that were never intended to be passed off as original work — Brahms did not even give them an opus number. (When Brahms sent the score to Simrock, he wrote, "I offer them as genuine Gypsy children which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk.") Despite this *petite scandale*, the *Hungarian Dances* proved to be among the most enduringly popular of Brahms' works. The Dance No. 1 in C minor was based on the *Isteni Czárdas* by Sárközy.

## JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

### *Seid Umschlungen, Millionen* ("Be Embraced, Ye Millions"), Waltz, Opus 443 (1892)

When *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* was published in 1867, Johannes Brahms bought a copy, played it through, and wrote across the cover: "*Leider nicht von Brahms*" — "*Unfortunately, not by Brahms.*" Two years later, Brahms composed his enchanting *Liebeslieder Waltzes* in Strauss' Viennese spirit and remained a fan of his music thereafter. In 1889, Brahms challenged his publisher, the prestigious Berlin firm of Simrock, "to arrange a tie-up with him," and Simrock duly became Strauss' principal publisher for several years. In appreciation, Strauss wrote to Simrock that he wanted to honor Brahms with the dedication of a work, and he did so with a commission for a new piece for the International Exhibition of Music and Theater that was to open the 1892 season of the Prater, Vienna's pleasure park. Strauss, perhaps encouraged by the music's lofty dedication and the celebratory occasion for which it was written, borrowed its title — *Seid Umschlungen, Millionen* ("Be Embraced, Ye Millions") — from the text by Friedrich Schiller that Beethoven set in the finale of his Ninth Symphony. He planned to present the premiere at the opening ceremony, on May 7th, but when he learned that the concert was to be performed by the Prater's house orchestra rather than by his own ensemble, he programmed the piece for the Strauss Orchestra's final concert of the season six weeks earlier. Brahms learned of the switch and sent Strauss a message the day before: "Tomorrow, your most happy and proud listener will be there." As an additional sign of respect for Vienna's Waltz King, Brahms himself made the piano transcription of *Seid Umschlungen* rather than leave the task, as was usual, to a Simrock staffer.

## JOHANN STRAUSS, JR.

### *Egyptian March*, Opus 335 (1869)

The tintinnabulous *Egyptian March* was written in celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal on November 16, 1869 and introduced in anticipation of that event at the Strauss Orchestra's June 24th

concert during their annual summer season at Pavlovsk, Russia. The *March* was heard again to accompany the entry of Egyptian soldiers in the final scene of Anton Bittner's play *Nach Ägypten* ("Into Egypt"), introduced at Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien on December 26, 1869.

## JOSEF STRAUSS

Born August 22, 1827 in Vienna; died there July 21, 1870.

### *Jockey Polka*, Opus 278 (1870)

The explosive growth of the middle class and the concomitant availability of leisure time in the late 19th century allowed for an unprecedentedly wide enjoyment of sports and entertainment. The Strausses, as adept at marketing as they were at music, seldom let an opportunity pass to capitalize on the social life of Vienna in their performances or their compositions. Johann, Jr. composed polkas titled *Jäger* ("Huntsman," 1859), *Auf der Jagd* ("On the Hunt," 1875), and *Freikugeln* ("Free Bullets," 1886, whose title evokes Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* ["*The Free Shooter*"], in which magic bullets help a huntsman win a maiden's hand in a shooting contest). Josef wrote *Sport Polka* in 1868 and *Eislauf* ("Ice Skating") in 1869, and evoked his own favorite pastime, horse racing, with *Steeplechase* in 1857 and again, in 1870, with *Jockey Polka*. This last was composed for a benefit ball in the flower halls of Vienna's *Gartenbaugesellschaft* ("Garden Society") on February 17, 1870 at which the Strauss Orchestra, under Josef's direction, provided the entertainment. The *Jockey Polka* proved to be one of Josef's last compositions. On June 1st, he collapsed during a concert in Warsaw and died six weeks later in Vienna of a brain tumor. After Josef's death, his brother Johann said, "He was the most gifted among the three of us Strauss brothers [Eduard was the youngest]. I am only the most popular one."

## JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. and JOSEF STRAUSS

### *Pizzicato Polka*, Opus 234 (1869)

The *Pizzicato Polka* was written collaboratively by Johann and Josef for their 1869 summer concert season in Pavlovsk, Russia, Johann having earlier failed to persuade his brother to write such a piece alone. This delicious bon-bon was encored three times at its premiere on June 24th in Pavlovsk, and has remained one of the most popular items in the Strauss repertoire.

## JOHANN STRAUSS

### *Tick-Tock Polka*, Opus 214 (1874)

The *Tick-Tock Polka* is a composite of several themes from the operetta *Die Fledermaus*, including the *Watch Duet* (Act III), the trio *Kein Verzeih'n! Der Eisenstein* (Act III), the chorus *Wie fliehen schnell die Stunden fort!* (Act II) and Adele's aria *Spiel' ich die Unschuld vom Lande* (Act III).

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