

The AMHERST COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC presents the

AMHERST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK LANE SWANSON, Music Director & Conductor
Liam Birkerts, Assistant Director

DVORAK & TCHAIKOVSKY

TAZ KIM '23, cello, soloist
ASHLEY KIM '23E, flute, soloist

Saturday evening, December 3, 2002 at 8pm
Buckley Recital Hall, Arms Music Center, Amherst College

PROGRAM

Fantasie for Flute & Orchestra (1913; orch. 1923)

Georges Hüe (1858-1948)

Ashley Kim '23E, soloist
Shuyao (Charlotte) Wang '24, conductor

Concerto for Cello & Orchestra in B minor, op. 104 (1895)

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

I. *Allegro*
II. *Adagio non troppo*
III. *Finale: Allegro moderato / Andante / Allegro vivo*

Taz Kim '23, soloist

*** INTERMISSION ***

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture (1869; rev. 1880)

Pytor Illich Tchaikovsky (1840-1891)

PROGRAM NOTES

The 1889 Paris Universal Exposition was a stage where groups from around the world displayed the best of their countries' architecture, industry, culture and arts including music. It was here where the influence of Eastern music was first heard by many French composers such as Claude Debussy and quickly spread to other French flute composers such as **GEORGES HUE (1858-1948)**. Dedicated to Paul Taffanel, a flautist and professor at the Paris Conservatoire, Hue's *FANTASIE* displays Asian tones and the virtuosity of the modern Boehm flute. As a classic French Romantic piece, it includes long lyrical lines and impressive technical passages with playful chromatic melodies exchanged between the flute and piano. The piece also requires a masterful use of extreme dynamics and tone, and as such, Hue's *Fantaisie* was set as a competition piece for the end of the year exams at the Paris Conservatoire.

ANTONIN DVORAK enjoyed fame at home in Czechoslovakia beginning with the performance in 1873 of a patriotic cantata called *Heirs of the White Mountain*. (It was the defeat of the Bohemians by the Austrians at the battle of the White Mountain just outside Prague in 1620 that led to the absorption of Bohemia into the Hapsburg Empire, a condition that lasted until 1918.) His international reputation was made by the first series of Slavonic Dances of 1878 and also by the *Stabat Mater*. The success of the latter work in England was nothing less than sensational, and particularly in the world of choir festivals Dvořák became a beloved figure there like no composer since Mendelssohn. In the 1890s, this humble man, who had picked up the rudiments of music in his father's combination butcher-shop and pub, who had played the fiddle at village weddings and had sat for years among the violas in the pit of the Prague Opera House, would conquer America as well, even serving for three years as Director of the National Conservatory in New York.

Dvořák enjoyed his first American visit. Nonetheless, he was glad to go home in the spring of 1894 and reluctant to return that fall. Ultimately, however, Dvořák signed another contract with the National Conservatory, and on November 1 he was at work again. The previous spring he had heard Victor Herbert, then principal cellist at the Metropolitan Opera, play his Cello Concerto No. 2 in Brooklyn; now he began to realize a scheme that that experience had suggested. In 1865 he had written a Cello Concerto in A major, but he never bothered to orchestrate that unsatisfactory work. Moreover, Dvořák for some time had wanted to write a work for his friend Hanuš Wihan, cellist of the Bohemian Quartet and the composer's partner on a concert tour in 1892. Just as Dvořák had encouraged violinist Joseph Joachim to give him advice, to suggest and even to make revisions in the Violin Concerto of 1879, he now leaned on Wihan for technical assistance with the **CELLO CONCERTO**. He was, however, less docile now, and there was some friction, particularly concerning an elaborate cadenza that Wihan added to the finale. A reconciliation was achieved easily enough, but ironically a series of misunderstandings over dates between Dvořák and the Secretary of the Philharmonic Society of London made it impossible for Wihan to give the premiere of the concerto that had meanwhile been dedicated to him. Wihan played the piece for the first time in 1899 with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra under Willem Mengelberg, and he later performed it on several occasions under the composer's direction.

The first movement introduces two of Dvořák's most memorable themes. The one at the beginning—low clarinet, joined by bassoons, with a somber accompaniment of violas, cellos, and basses—lends itself to a remarkable series of oblique, multi-faceted harmonizations, and the other, more lyrical, is one of the loveliest horn solos in the literature.

The Adagio begins in tranquility, but this mood is quickly broken by an orchestral outburst that introduces a quotation from one of Dvořák's own songs, now sung by the cello in its high register and with tearing intensity. The song, the first of a set composed 1887-88, is "*Kez duch muj san*" ("Leave me alone"), and it was a special favorite of the composer's sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzová. Thirty years earlier Dvořák had been very much in love with the then sixteen-year-old Josefina Čermáková, an aspiring actress to whom he gave piano lessons. The love was not returned, and Dvořák eventually married Josefina's younger sister Anna, but something of the old feeling remained, and the song intruded on the concerto when the news of Josefina's illness reached the Dvořáks on East 17th Street in New York. Josefina died on May 27, 1895, a month after the composer's return from America, and it was in her memory that Dvořák added the elegiac coda to which he did not want Wihan to add a cadenza.

For the song returns in the finale, and that coda stops the dancelike momentum. Here is what Dvořák wrote about that passage: "The Finale closes gradually diminuendo, like a sigh, with reminiscences of the first and second movements—the solo dies down . . . then swells again, and the last bars are taken up by the orchestra and the whole concludes in a stormy mood. That is my idea and I cannot depart from it."

He had been skeptical about writing a concerto for cello. Now he had written the best one we have. And Brahms, his friend and benefactor, growled: "Why in the world didn't I know one could write a cello concerto like this? If I'd only known I'd have done it long ago!" — Michael Steinberg

In the winter of 1868–69, **PYTOR ILLICH TCHAIKOVSKY** was, for the only time in his life, intensely smitten with a woman, Désirée Artôt, a Belgian soprano. Tchaikovsky's intentions were serious, but Artôt suddenly brought their relationship to an end by marrying a baritone colleague of hers. When Tchaikovsky next saw her on the stage he wept all evening. Thus Tchaikovsky was emotionally prepared when the composer Mily Alexeievich Balakirev suggested that he write a work based on Shakespeare's *ROMEO AND JULIET*, which is indeed what Balakirev did, going so far as to tell Tchaikovsky how to do it, proposing a key scheme and even writing out four measures of music to show how *he* would begin such a piece. Balakirev was not always pleased with the way Tchaikovsky worked out "his" ideas. At first, only the broad love theme aroused his enthusiasm. It is "simply *delightful*," he wrote. "There's just one thing I'll say against this theme, and that is that there's little in it of inner, spiritual love, only a passionate physical languor (with even a slightly Italian hue), whereas Romeo and Juliet are decidedly not Persian lovers but European." Balakirev continued to comment, suggest, blame, and praise, and Tchaikovsky continued to compose—buoyed by the praise, stimulated by the blame, and becoming more confident in his themes and more imaginative in his reading of the play.

He listened carefully at the premiere, which was an indifferent success. That summer he subjected his overture to drastic revisions, finding the present evocative beginning, devising a stronger close, articulating more vividly what came between. Ten years later he returned to *Romeo and Juliet*, and it was then that he found the superb coda. Again, he put strong ideas in place of weak, he integrated, he refined. And he produced a masterpiece. — Michael Steinberg

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES