

CONCERT PROGRAM

March 14-15, 2015

David Robertson, conductor

Vadim Repin, violin

Women of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Amy Kaiser, director

DEBUSSY *Nocturnes* (1897-99)
(1862-1918)

Nuages (Clouds)

Fêtes (Festivals)

Sirènes (Sirens)

Women of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Amy Kaiser, director

JAMES MACMILLAN Violin Concerto (2009)
(b. 1959)

Dance

Song

Song and Dance

Vadim Repin, violin

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36 (1877-78)
(1840-1893)

Andante sostenuto; Moderato con anima

Andantino in modo di canzona

Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato: Allegro

Finale: Allegro con fuoco

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors series.

These concerts are presented by the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation.

David Robertson is the Beofor Music Director and Conductor.

Vadim Repin is presented by the Whitaker Foundation.

Amy Kaiser is the AT&T Foundation Chair.

The concert of Saturday, March 14, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from
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IMAGES, REMEMBRANCE, CONFESSTION

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

TIMELINKS

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1877-78 | TCHAIKOVSKY
<i>Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36</i>
Thomas Edison demonstrates his first phonograph |
| 1897-99 | DEBUSSY
<i>Nocturnes</i>
Emile Zola publishes "J'accuse," his defense of convicted traitor Alfred Dreyfus |
| 2009 | JAMES MACMILLAN
Violin Concerto
James Cameron's <i>Avatar</i> released |

Each of the three compositions on the program of this week's St. Louis Symphony concerts alludes to something beyond the music itself. The orchestral triptych of Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes* portrays musical pictures of particular scenes. Debussy is often compared to the French Impressionist painters, and with this work he achieves in music something very like their ambiguous yet highly evocative use of line, color, and texture.

The Violin Concerto of Scottish composer James MacMillan is suffused with memory. Particular passages recall the dance music and folk songs MacMillan knew during his youth, and its finale brings a moving elegy for the composer's mother, who had passed away shortly before he began writing this work.

Like MacMillan's concerto, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony is a deeply personal work. Through its music the composer confessed to feeling condemned to misery by implacable destiny. The Fourth Symphony, Tchaikovsky told an intimate correspondent, is a reflection of his struggle against what he feared was his cruel fate.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Nocturnes

INSPIRED BY POETRY AND PAINTING Debussy's three orchestral *Nocturnes* took shape in a long and complex gestation over the course of the 1890s. The composer originally conceived them as an orchestral evocation of three poems in a collection by the symbolist writer Henri de Regnier, then as a work for violin and orchestra before recasting it once again for orchestra. This final version of the work was complete in all essentials by the end of 1899.

Despite the early association with de Regnier's poems, commentators have ascribed a number of other influences and inspirations to the *Nocturnes*. Connections with certain

paintings by Monet, Renoir, and Turner have been drawn, as well as between the final movement and Charles Swinburne's "Nocturne," a poem about a mermaid rising from the sea. On a more mundane note, Debussy's friend Paul Poujard declared that the composer told him the music for *Nuages* (Clouds) had come to him while watching storm clouds pass and hearing a boat's horn near the Seine, and that *Fêtes* (Festivals) represented memories of a village fair.

MUSICAL IMAGES Debussy chose not to reveal the origins of the composition, but he did comment on the music itself, discussing the three pieces in strikingly visual terms:

The title *Nocturnes*...is not meant to designate the usual form of the nocturne, but rather all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests. *Nuages* renders the immutable aspect of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in grey tones lightly tinged with white. *Fêtes* gives us the vibrating atmosphere with sudden flashes of light. There is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling, fantastic vision) which passes through the festive scene and becomes merged in it. But the background remains persistently the same: the festival, with its blending of music and luminous dust, participating in the cosmic rhythm. *Sirènes* depicts the sea and its countless rhythms and presently, among the waves silvered by the moonlight, is heard the mysterious song of the Sirens as they laugh and pass on.

Debussy paints the sky with muted but extraordinarily rich sonic colors in *Nuages*, whose principal elements are a sequence of circling chords and a brief figure assigned to the English horn. (Are its repeated phrases a transformation of the boat horn that Debussy may have heard on the banks of the Seine?) The somber character of this music is dispelled at once with the first notes of *Fêtes*. From its outset this music conveys a sense of tremendous energy through its use of insistently repeating melodic fragments that pass in kaleidoscopic succession. Midway through the movement the celebration pauses



Born

August 22, 1862, Saint Germain-en-Laye, near Paris

Died

March 25, 1918, Paris

First Performance (final version, complete)

October 27, 1901, in Paris, conducted by Camille Cheville

STL Symphony Premiere

March 3, 1911, with Max Zach conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

September 28, 1996, Hans Vonk conducting

Scoring

women's chorus in 3rd movement

3 flutes

piccolo

2 oboes

English horn

2 clarinets

3 bassoons

4 horns

3 trumpets

3 trombones

tuba

timpani

percussion

2 harps

strings

Performance time

approximately 25 minutes

**Born**

July 16, 1959, Kilwinning,
Ayrshire, Scotland

Now Resides

Glasgow

First Performance

May 12, 2010, in London,
Vadim Repin was the
soloist, and Valery Gergiev
conducted the London
Symphony Orchestra

STL Symphony Premiere

This week

Scoring

2 flutes
piccolo
2 oboes
English horn
2 clarinets
bassoon
contrabassoon
2 horns
2 trumpets
2 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
piano
strings

Performance Time

approximately 25 minutes

as a march—distant at first, but drawing ever nearer—brings us an imaginary procession.

The final movement is the most novel in its scoring, if only for its use of a women’s choir singing wordlessly to suggest the sea-maidens of its title. Its fluid rhythms and the constant swell and fall of its phrases create a seascape that is at once poetic and convincing. Debussy would develop these ideas further and even more impressively in his great portrait of the sea, *La Mer*, which he began two years after *Sirènes* was first heard.

JAMES MACMILLAN

Violin Concerto

CELTIC ROOTS “As a Scot,” composer James MacMillan observed in an interview, “I’ve grown up with fiddle music. I used to play in folk bands when I was younger, and fiddles were always the core part of that music.” MacMillan went on to say that he hoped to “plug into that reservoir of experience and memory” in creating his Violin Concerto, “something that can give it a soul that both sings and dances.”

The 55-year-old MacMillan is Scotland’s foremost composer. He is fiercely proud of his nationality and heritage, which often finds reflection in his music. One of his best-known compositions is set in the style of an old Scottish ballad. Other works have been inspired by Scottish folklore or history. The Violin Concerto, although carrying no literary or specific historical associations, nevertheless reflects the Celtic culture with which the composer strongly identifies. MacMillan wrote this work in 2009 for our soloist, Vadim Repin, who has championed it throughout the world. The score is dedicated jointly to Repin and to the composer’s mother, who died shortly before MacMillan began working on the piece. To some extent, the work is a requiem for her.

SONG, DANCE, ELEGY The piece unfolds in the traditional concerto format of three movements, their titles indicating dancing, singing, or both. MacMillan begins with three iterations of a brief but strong and pointed phrase for the orchestra. From the last of these emerges a swiftly running line for the solo violin, its none-too-smooth rhythms conveying a nervous energy. Soon, however, some

ethereal melodic swirls lead to a second theme, a broad melody whose line seems to yearn upward. This, too, proves short-lived. The orchestra now takes up the animated first theme, then the chiseled figure of the opening moments. MacMillan plays with all these ideas as the music unfolds, then offers a surprise: a digression into a lively Scottish reel late in the movement.

Although dance-like rhythms dominated the initial movement, lyrical expression prevails in the second. This portion of the concerto opens with a melody sung by oboe, then passing to the strings while the solo violin weaves counterpoint around it. MacMillan proceeds to vary and develop this material in a series of episodes. But as in the first movement, he takes an unexpected turn into new material, again redolent of Celtic folk music. The composer calls this passage “a hazy, remembered amalgam of old Irish tunes” providing “a memory of childhood.”

The final movement, MacMillan says, has both “the physical energy of the first but some of the singing quality of the second, while introducing a new feeling of burlesque.” Again, there are surprising developments, chiefly in the form of words spoken by members of the orchestra. In German they intone a phrase MacMillan recalls hearing in his dreams: “*Eins, zwei, drei, vier: Meine Mutter, tanz mit mir.*” (“One, two, three, four: my mother, dance with me.”) This invocation to the composer’s recently deceased mother propels the composition into darker territory. The music seems to grow distraught and reckless; it detours to a surreal waltz and finally builds to a tragic climax and a cadenza solo for the violin. Having achieved, it seems, a measure of cathartic release, the piece moves quickly to its conclusion.

PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36

A COMPOSER IN CRISIS “I write,” the great Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky once declared, “so that I may pour my feelings into my music.” This is, of course, a highly Romantic attitude toward the art of composition, and one that suggests an autobiographical element in at least some of Tchaikovsky’s works, veiled though their personal meanings may be. Nowhere is this more true than in the composer’s Fourth Symphony.

Tchaikovsky completed this work late in 1877 following the most harrowing emotional crisis of his life. Earlier that year, in what was surely a desperate attempt to quell his homosexuality and find some measure of the domestic tranquility for which he longed, he had entered into a hasty marriage with a young woman who had once been a student at the Moscow Conservatory, where Tchaikovsky taught. Their union was brief and disastrous. Within weeks Tchaikovsky suffered an almost complete nervous collapse and attempted suicide. The marriage was dissolved and the composer eventually recovered enough composure to resume working. But he emerged from the ordeal convinced that he was destined to a life of personal torment.

WRESTLING WITH FATE This background is keenly relevant to the Fourth Symphony. We know from his correspondence and diary that Tchaikovsky conceived the work as a musical narrative of predestined suffering and a search for solace. In a letter, he went on to describe this narrative as a struggle against “Fate,

**Born**

May 7, 1840, Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia

Died

November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

First Performance

February 22, 1878, in Moscow, Nikolay Rubinstein conducted the orchestra of the Russian Music Society

STL Symphony Premiere

January 23, 1905, Alfred Ernst conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

October 30, 2013, with Steven Jarvi conducting in Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Scoring

2 flutes
piccolo
2 oboes
2 clarinets
2 bassoons
4 horns
2 trumpets
3 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
strings

Performance Time

approximately 44 minutes

which prevents our hopes of happiness from being realized, ... a constant, relentless spiritual torment." That struggle results sometimes in agitation and despair, sometimes in attempts to escape into fantasies. "So life swings," Tchaikovsky wrote, "between cruel reality and ephemeral dreams of happiness." The music of the symphony's first movement mirrors the abrupt alternation of these contrasting emotional states. (Tchaikovsky identified the horn call that opens the symphony as signifying the sternness of fate.)

The second movement represents further effort to evade "cruel reality" through indulgence in pleasant memories. The third movement, Tchaikovsky stated, "expresses nothing so definite. Rather, it is a succession of capricious arabesques that pass through the mind when one has had a little wine and feels the first glow of intoxication." In the finale, temporary release is gained through revelry and pleasure. "But no sooner do you abandon yourself to merriment," the composer observed, "than Fate reappears, reminding you of your suffering. Others pay no attention to your sorrow....Join them, and life will yet be bearable."

All this raises questions that have persistently surrounded narrative, or "program," music: How concretely can any program be embodied in music? Is knowledge or acceptance of the program a prerequisite for appreciating the composition? Tchaikovsky himself was ambivalent on this point. "Most assuredly my symphony has a program," he told the critic and composer Sergey Taneyev, referring to the work that closes our concert, "but a program that cannot be expressed in words; the very attempt would be ludicrous."

Perhaps the essential thing is that this symphony partakes of Tchaikovsky's unique sense of melody, rhythm, and orchestral color, not that it relates any specific details of his biography. But one can ponder such issues indefinitely. Ultimately, the choice of how to hear this symphony, and what to hear in it, is up to each listener.

DAVID ROBERTSON

BEOFOR MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

A passionate and compelling communicator with an extensive orchestral and operatic repertoire, American conductor David Robertson has forged close relationships with major orchestras around the world. In fall 2014, Robertson launched his 10th season as Music Director of the 135-year-old St. Louis Symphony. In January 2014, Robertson assumed the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia.

To celebrate his decade-long tenure with the St. Louis Symphony in 2014-15, Robertson showcases 50 of the orchestra's musicians in solo or solo ensemble performances throughout the season. Other highlights include a concert performance of Verdi's *Aida* featuring video enhancements by S. Katy Tucker (one of a series of such collaborations during the season), and a return to Carnegie Hall with a program featuring the music of Meredith Monk. In 2013-14, Robertson led the St. Louis Symphony in a Carnegie Hall performance of Britten's *Peter Grimes* on the Britten centennial that Anthony Tommasini, in the *New York Times*, selected as one of the most memorable concerts of the year. In the spring of 2014 Nonesuch Records released a disc of the orchestra's performances of two works by John Adams: *City Noir* and the *Saxophone Concerto*. The recording received the Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance, in February 2015.

Robertson is a frequent guest conductor with major orchestras and opera houses around the world. In his inaugural year with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, he led the ensemble in a seven-city tour of China in June 2014. He also led the summer 2014 U.S. tour of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America, a project of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, in cities including Boston and Chicago, culminating in a concert at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. In the fall of 2014, David Robertson conducted the Metropolitan Opera premiere of John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*.



David Robertson and the St. Louis Symphony perform Debussy's *Nocturnes* and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 at New York City's Carnegie Hall on March 20.



Vadim Repin most recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony in September 2007.

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VADIM REPIN

WHITAKER FOUNDATION GUEST ARTIST

Born in Siberia in 1971, Vadim Repin began playing the violin at the age of five. At age 11, Repin won the gold medal in all age categories in the Wienawski Competition and gave his recital debuts in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In 1985, at 14, he made his debuts in Tokyo, Munich, Berlin, and Helsinki; a year later he debuted at Carnegie Hall. In 1987, Repin became the youngest ever winner of the prestigious Reine Elisabeth Concours violin competition.

Recent highlights have included tours with the London Symphony Orchestra and Valery Gergiev; and collaborations with Christian Thielemann in Tokyo, with Riccardo Muti in New York, with Riccardo Chailly in Leipzig, and with Vladimir Jorowski on a tour of Australia with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Repin appeared in recitals with pianist Itamar Golan in Boston, Washington D.C., and New York City. After acclaimed premieres of the violin concerto written for him by James MacMillan in London, Philadelphia, New York's Carnegie Hall, the Salle Pleyel in Paris, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Repin reprised the piece at the 2013 BBC Proms with the BBC Scottish Symphony and Donald Runnicles, culminating in a sold out Royal Albert Hall performance.

Engagements last season included chamber music in Paris and Lyon with Denis Matsuev, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Gautier Capuçon, Alexander Kniazev, and other friends; recitals in Italy, Spain, France, and the United States; and a series at Japan's Pacific Music Festival. Highlights of the current season include a European tour with Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under Neeme Jarvi, and concerts in Vienna with Kent Nagano and Lionel Bringuier in both the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus. In March 2014, as Artistic Director, Repin presented the first Trans-Siberian Festival of the Arts in Novosibirsk's magnificent new concert hall.

Repin lives in Vienna and plays on the 1743 "Bonjour" violin by Guarneri del Gesù.

Vadim Repin's recordings are available on Deutsche Grammophon and Erato/Warner Classics.

AMY KAISER

AT&T FOUNDATION CHAIR

One of the country's leading choral directors, Amy Kaiser celebrates her 20th season as Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus in 2014-15. Kaiser has conducted the St. Louis Symphony in Handel's *Messiah*, Schubert's Mass in E-flat, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart as well as Young People's Concerts. She has made eight appearances as guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Sheffield, Massachusetts, Santa Fe, and at Canterbury Cathedral. As Music Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons, she conducted many performances of major works at Lincoln Center. Other conducting engagements include concerts at Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival and more than fifty performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed *Schubertiade*. She has conducted more than twenty-five operas, including eight contemporary premieres.

A frequent collaborator with Professor Peter Schickele on his annual PDQ Bach concerts at Carnegie Hall, Kaiser made her Carnegie Hall debut conducting PDQ's *Consort of Choral Christmas Carols*. She also led the Professor in PDQ Bach's *Canine Cantata "Wachet Arf"* with the New Jersey Symphony.

Kaiser has led master classes in choral conducting at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, served as faculty for a Chorus America conducting workshop, and as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Amy Kaiser has prepared choruses for the New York Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival and Opera Orchestra of New York. She also served as faculty conductor and vocal coach at Manhattan School of Music and the Mannes College of Music. An alumna of Smith College, she was awarded the Smith College Medal for outstanding professional achievement.



Amy Kaiser prepares the chorus for the Symphony season finale, Verdi's *Aida*, in May.

WOMEN OF THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS 2014-2015

Amy Kaiser

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Leon Burke III

Assistant Director

Gail Hintz

Accompanist

Susan Patterson

Manager

Joy Boland

Cherstin Byers

Alyssa Claire Callaghan

Victoria Carmichael

Jessica Klingler Cissell

Laurel Dantas

Jamie Lynn Eros

Heather Fehl

Lara Gerassi

Ellen Henschen

Allison Hoppe

Heather Humphrey

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Patricia Kofron

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Jei Mitchell

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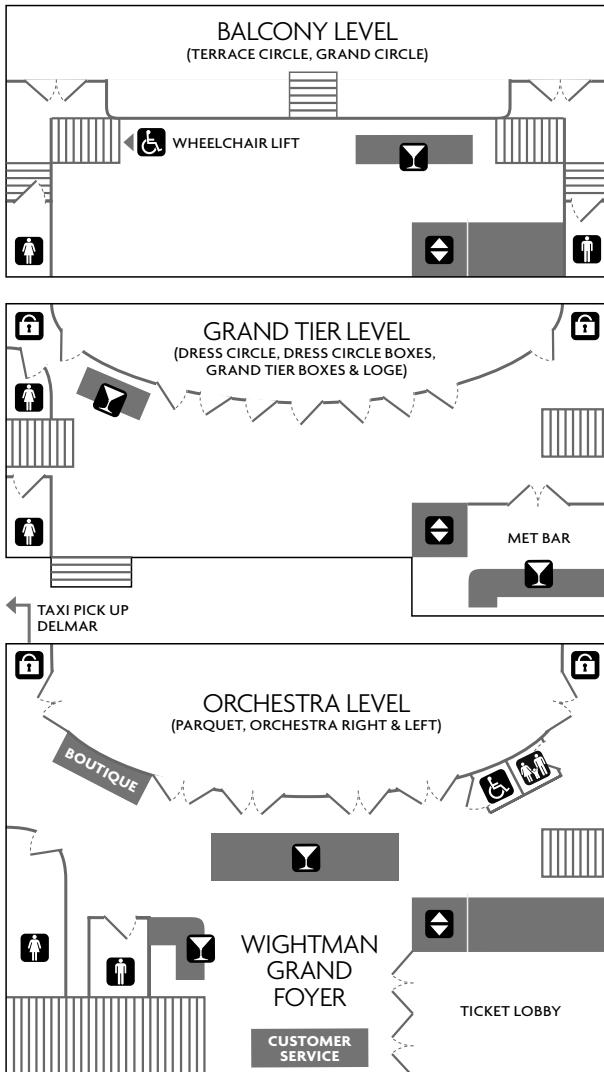
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