

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Thursday, September 22, 2016, at 8:00

Friday, September 23, 2016, at 8:00

Riccardo Muti Conductor

Mussorgsky

A Night on Bald Mountain

Strauss

Don Juan, Op. 20

INTERMISSION

Bruckner

Symphony No. 7 in E Major

Allegro moderato

Adagio: Very solemn and very slow

Scherzo: Very fast

Finale: Moving, but not fast

These concerts are generously sponsored by the Juli Plant Grainger Endowment.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to 93XRT and RedEye for their generous support as media sponsors of the Classic Encounter series.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Modest Mussorgsky

Born March 21, 1839; Karevo, Russia

Died March 28, 1881; Saint Petersburg, Russia

A Night on Bald Mountain

(Edited and reorchestrated by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov)



When Mussorgsky died at the age of forty-two, he left his work in a shambles, with many of his compositions unfinished (of his seven operas, only *Boris Godunov* was complete), and so it was left to others to make his talent known. Only

minutes after Mussorgsky was pronounced dead, Rimsky-Korsakov declared that he would take on the task of overseeing Mussorgsky's musical estate, which to him meant not only collecting and organizing sketches and manuscripts, but also completing his friend's work. Although Rimsky-Korsakov acknowledged Mussorgsky's genius—"full of so much that was new and vital"—he felt (not always with justification) that much of the music needed to be edited and corrected.

Although Rimsky-Korsakov rightly considered the completion of Mussorgsky's final opera, *Khovanshchina*, as the most important of his assignments, little of Mussorgsky's other music escaped his editorial hand. And so, like

Khovanshchina and the piano set *Pictures from an Exhibition*, Mussorgsky's only major orchestral piece, *A Night on Bald Mountain*, was introduced in a version concocted by Rimsky-Korsakov.

For many years, Mussorgsky toyed with the idea of writing an opera based on Gogol's story "Saint John's Eve." In the summer of 1867, when he visited his brother's country estate, he decided instead to write an orchestral piece about the satanic revelry that takes place on Saint John's Eve. The composer summarized the action as:

Subterranean sounds of supernatural voices.—Appearance of the spirits of darkness, followed by that of Satan himself.—Glorification of Satan and celebration of the Black Mass.—The Sabbath revels.—At the height of the orgies the bell of the village church, sounding in the distance, disperses the spirits of darkness.—Daybreak.

The score led several lives. Rimsky-Korsakov claimed that Mussorgsky originally composed it for piano and orchestra and then decided to

COMPOSED

1867

FIRST PERFORMANCE

October 27, 1886
(Rimsky-Korsakov edition)

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, harp, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, bells, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

12 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

June 8, 1893, Music Hall at the World's Columbian Exposition. Vojtěch I. Hlaváč conducting (U.S. premiere)

April 4 & 5, 1919, Orchestra Hall. Frederick Stock conducting

July 4, 1940, Ravinia Festival. Nikolai Malko conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

August 10, 1968, Ravinia Festival. Seiji Ozawa conducting

November 14, 15 & 17, 2012, Orchestra Hall. Charles Dutoit conducting

CSO RECORDINGS

1959. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

1968. Seiji Ozawa conducting. RCA

1977. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

rework it for orchestra alone. In characteristic fashion, Mussorgsky later reused it as an interlude in his comic opera, *Sorochintsky Fair*. Rimsky-Korsakov was particularly cavalier with *A Night on Bald Mountain*, and the piece he conducted in 1886 was largely of his own design, loosely based on Mussorgsky's manuscripts. "I selected out of the material left upon the composer's death everything that was the best and most suited for making of it a well-coordinated whole," he wrote in the preface to his edition. This score is, then, one man's view of *A Night on Bald Mountain*. But, with his unsurpassed ear for demonic color and sinister atmosphere, Rimsky-Korsakov made from Mussorgsky's tale a ghost story of irresistible and enduring power.

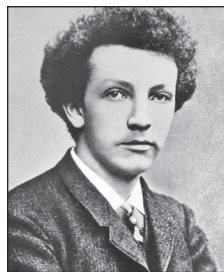
An important historical footnote as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra wraps up its 125th year. As the result of ongoing research by our archivist Frank Vilella, we are now able to confirm that Mussorgsky's *A Night on Bald Mountain* can be added to the list of works given their U.S. premieres by the Orchestra. The performance of Mussorgsky's popular score was first given in this country on a concert of Russian folk music presented at the World's Columbian Exposition on June 8, 1893. The Exposition Orchestra, which was the Chicago Orchestra expanded to 114 players, was led by guest conductor—and professor of music at the Imperial University in Saint Petersburg, Russia—Vojtěch I. Hlaváč. ■

Richard Strauss

Born June 11, 1864; Munich, Germany

Died September 8, 1949; Garmisch, Germany

Don Juan, Op. 20



Although he would later say that he found himself as inspiring a subject as any, Richard Strauss began his career composing music indebted to some of literature's greatest characters. Strauss claimed that his

inspiration to write music about Don Juan came from Nikolaus Lenau's German verse play (left unfinished at his death), but it's worth considering that Strauss conducted Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Munich shortly before he began to compose *Don Juan*, his first important work. (*Don Juan* launched Strauss's career, but it took a few years for his name to replace that of another Strauss in audiences' affections—when the

COMPOSED

1888

FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 11, 1888; Weimar, Germany

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, glockenspiel, harp, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

18 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

November 5 & 6, 1897, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

July 16, 1936, Ravinia Festival. Willem van Hoogstraten conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

December 11, 12, 13 & 16, 2014, Orchestra Hall. Manfred Honeck conducting

July 20, 2016, Ravinia Festival. Vasily Petrenko conducting

CSO RECORDINGS

1954. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

1960. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

1972. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

1990. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Erato

Chicago Orchestra played *Don Juan* for the first time in 1897, it was still necessary to report that the thirty-three-year-old composer was no relation to the “dance Strauss family.”) In fact, the seeds for Strauss’s *Don Juan* were planted as early as 1885, when he attended a performance of Paul Heyse’s play, *Don Juans Ende*.

Strauss’s *Don Juan* is not Heyse’s, nor Mozart’s, nor Lenau’s—despite words on the title page to the contrary—but a character entirely and unforgettably his own, defined in a few sharp musical gestures. Now that Strauss’s tone poem—the term he preferred—has conquered the world’s concert halls, the figure of *Don Juan* is unimaginable without the ardent horn theme which, in Strauss’s hands, becomes his calling card. Strauss once said his two favorite operas were *Tristan and Isolde* and *Così fan tutte*, and this work is informed by both the Wagnerian idea of undying love as well as Mozart’s understanding of passion as a fragile, ever-changing state of mind. It’s no small coincidence that, at the time he was composing this tone poem, Strauss himself fell madly in love with Pauline de Ahna, the soprano who would eventually become his wife.

Strauss worked on two tone poems during the summer of 1888. *Macbeth*, which gave him considerable trouble and wasn’t finished until 1891, doesn’t profit from comparison with Shakespeare’s play. But with *Don Juan*, composed in just four months, Strauss discovered the knack (which would rarely desert him thereafter) for depicting character, place, and action of cinematic complexity so vividly that words of explanation are unnecessary. Still, Strauss prefaced the score of *Don Juan* with three excerpts from Lenau’s poem, and at the earliest performances he asked to have those lines printed in the program. Later, realizing that the public could follow his tone poems, in essence if not blow by blow, he disdained such self-help guides and trusted the music to speak for itself.

Strauss was always a master of the memorable first line—think of the glorious daybreak, now so often misquoted in television commercials, at the beginning of *Also sprach Zarathustra*—but in all music, there are few openings as breathtaking as that of *Don Juan*—a rapid unfurling in which the hero leaps headlong in front of us. Throughout



Illustration of poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802–1850), author of *Don Juan*, surrounded by romanticized images of the Hungarian and German landscapes, where he spent most of his life, as depicted by Herbert König in the magazine *Die Gartenlaube* (The garden arbor) in 1863

the work, Strauss doesn’t skimp on details, for even in his abridged biography of the great lover he depicts at least one flirtation, two torrid affairs, and a duel to the death.

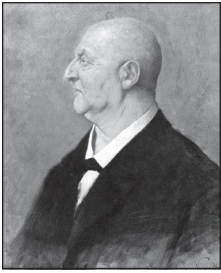
There are many remarkable moments—the deeply felt love scene at the heart of the piece, beautifully launched by the oboe; the brazen new signature theme that follows, played by the four horns in unison; the hero’s precipitous fall from grace, when memories of his most recent loves pass quickly before him. Finally, after reliving the glory of past conquests, *Don Juan* recognizes that his victory is hollow—“the fuel is all consumed and the hearth is cold and dark,” Lenau writes—and he willingly dies at his adversary’s hand. With one piercing stab from the trumpets, he drops, trembling, to the ground. As swiftly as *Don Juan*’s life had ended, Strauss’s dazzling career was launched. ■

Anton Bruckner

Born September 4, 1824; Ansfelden, Upper Austria

Died October 11, 1896; Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 7 in E Major



Bruckner was sixty years old when he tasted public success for the first time. The ovations that greeted him following the premiere of his Seventh Symphony lasted a full fifteen minutes, and the press was not only ecstatic, but also dumb-

founded by the discovery of this mature talent. “How is it possible,” a local Leipzig critic wrote, “that he could remain so long unknown to us?” Although Bruckner never again enjoyed the easy success of his Seventh Symphony, from that point on, he was recognized as one of the few composers whose every work demanded attention, and his name quickly became as famous as those of his contemporaries, Brahms and Wagner.

What is surprising isn't that public acceptance came so late to Bruckner, but that he survived so long without it. Bruckner was the most insecure of composers—he regularly caved in to the advice of his detractors, revised his scores to please his critics, and often faced long stretches of writer's block when his confidence was entirely spent. Of all the major composers, Bruckner also took the longest to find his own

voice. After years of composing for the church, he wrote his first significant instrumental music in 1862, at the age of thirty-eight; the following year he composed his first symphony (a *Studiensymphonie*, as he called it)—one last student exercise, at thirty-nine.

Bruckner's sudden and unlikely decision to begin writing symphonies is one of music's miracles. The mid-nineteenth century was the time of Wagner and Liszt, the heyday of the music drama and the symphonic poem. The classical symphony was no longer of interest to serious, forward-thinking composers. Schumann, the last master of the form, had died nearly a decade before Bruckner began his first symphony, and no one yet knew that Brahms was working on one. Still, sometime around 1863 or 1864, Bruckner realized that the symphony was to be his ideal form, despite his almost total lack of experience in writing for orchestra. But from that point on, it was his main interest. Bruckner's discovery of Wagner's music in 1863, when *Tannhäuser* was staged in Linz for the first time, was the most decisive event in his creative life. The experience unlocked something inside Bruckner, freeing the boldness and individuality of his own ideas. Once he tackled the symphony, form and content came together, and Bruckner became the first

COMPOSED

September 1881–September 1883

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 30, 1884. Leipzig
Gewandhaus Orchestra, Arthur
Nikisch conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets,
two bassoons, four horns, four
Wagner tubas, three trumpets, three
trombones and tuba, timpani, cymbal,
triangle, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

64 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

March 9 & 10, 1906, Orchestra Hall.
Frederick Stock conducting
July 17, 1992, Ravinia Festival. James
Conlon conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

July 25, 2007, Ravinia Festival.
Christoph Eschenbach conducting
March 3, 4, 5 & 6, 2011, Orchestra Hall.
Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting

CSO RECORDINGS

1978. Sir Georg Solti conducting.
London (video)
1979. Daniel Barenboim conducting.
Deutsche Grammophon
1984. Klaus Tennstedt conducting.
CSO (*Chicago Symphony
Orchestra in the Twentieth Century:
Collector's Choice*)
1986–87. Sir Georg Solti conducting.
London
2007. Bernard Haitink conducting.
CSO Resound

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE WAGNER TUBA

Wagner tubas were invented by Richard Wagner for *The Ring of the Nibelung*—but they are not tubas. He designed them to bridge the gap between horns and trombones; they use the same mouthpiece as the horn and are played by members of the horn section. Wagner wrote for a quartet of these instruments—two tenor and two bass tubas—an arrangement that has become standard.

Wagner had already begun *Das Rheingold*, the first work in the *Ring* cycle, before he conceived the new

instrument. The sketches of 1853 give the famous Valhalla motif to trombones, but the full score, completed the following year, specifies the new tubas that have since borne his name.

Wagner's original instruments, made for Bayreuth, evidently no longer exist, although they were housed at the theater until at least 1939.

Bruckner first used the Wagner tubas in the slow movement and the finale of his

Seventh Symphony, completed in 1883. He calls for them again in the Adagio of the Eighth Symphony and in the slow movement of his final, unfinished Ninth Symphony.

The list of other major works that incorporate the Wagner tubas is brief: *Elektra*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and *An Alpine Symphony* by Richard Strauss; Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*; and *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky.



—P. H.

composer to translate the essence of Wagnerian language to instrumental music.

Bruckner found his model for a large-scale structure—a big first movement, a spacious adagio, a scherzo in sonata form, and a wide-ranging finale that gathers many threads together in a new light—in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Six



Arthur Nikisch (1855–1922), who conducted the premiere of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony

of Bruckner's symphonies start with the kind of mysterious, unformed material that he picked up from the opening of Beethoven's Ninth and then focus on an important theme. Bruckner's role as the principal heir to this symphonic tradition wasn't lost on his admirers, and when Arthur Nikisch conducted the premiere of the Seventh Symphony, he commented, "Since Beethoven there has

been nothing that could even approach it."

After its premiere in Leipzig, the Seventh Symphony began to make the rounds of the major music centers. Over the next few months, it was played in Munich (under Hermann Levi, who had recently led the premiere of Wagner's *Parsifal* in Bayreuth), Dresden,

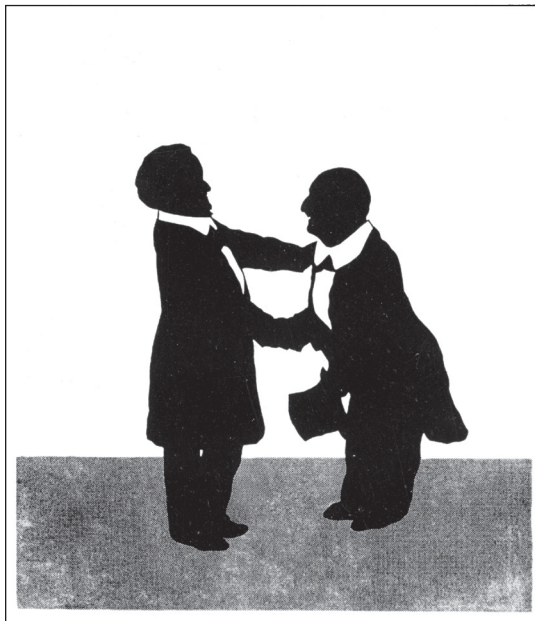
Frankfurt, Utrecht, The Hague, New York City, and Chicago. (Only in Chicago, with Theodore Thomas conducting his own orchestra in the symphony's U.S. premiere in 1886, did Bruckner's score fall flat. It was Frederick Stock who later introduced the work to the Chicago Symphony.) The members of the Vienna Philharmonic (Bruckner's hometown orchestra) wanted to play his Seventh Symphony right away, but Bruckner talked them out of it, fearing "the influential Viennese critics, who would be only too likely to obstruct the course of my dawning fame in Germany." And, in fact, when the score *was* performed there in 1886, Eduard Hanslick did bemoan the "interminable stretches of darkness, leaden boredom, and feverish over-excitement." But Hanslick was swimming against the public tide, and he had to admit, with obvious irritation, that he had never before seen a composer called to the stage four or five times after each movement to accept the applause. In the end, Bruckner's Seventh Symphony was the greatest triumph of his career, and it was the most often performed of his symphonies during his lifetime.

This symphony calls for the largest orchestra Bruckner had yet used, but it is characterized by pages of unusual delicacy and transparency. (Schoenberg made a chamber orchestra version of the first movement.) The very beginning—a characteristic Bruckner opening, with a long and noble melody emerging from the shadows—is a model of classical

serenity and simplicity. The first theme itself, one of Bruckner's most distinctive ideas, begins as a standard E major arpeggio and then develops in unexpected ways. (Schoenberg marveled at how its irregularly shaped phrases, sometimes of three or five measures, sound completely "natural.") The entire *Allegro* is conceived as a single paragraph of great breadth, with three large and important themes, a broad development section, and an extensive coda grounded by the unchanging E in the bass (through much of the coda this foundation is stubbornly at odds with the rest of the orchestra).

When Bruckner began the *Adagio* late in January 1883, he was troubled by premonitions of Wagner's death. "One day I came home and felt very sad," he wrote to conductor Felix Mottl. "The thought had crossed my mind that before long the Master would die, and then the C-sharp minor theme of the *Adagio* came to me." Bruckner had met Wagner for the first time at the premiere of *Tristan and Isolde* in Munich in 1865. (Eight years later, they spent an afternoon together talking about music, but Bruckner, a teetotaler, drank so much beer out of sheer nervousness that he could scarcely recall what they said.) Bruckner went to Bayreuth for the premieres of the complete *Ring* cycle in 1876 and *Parsifal* in 1882, shortly after he had started to work on this symphony. (Wagner sat behind Bruckner at *Parsifal* and chastised him for applauding too loudly.) On that occasion, which turned out to be their last meeting, Wagner said that he wanted to conduct Bruckner's symphonies.

On February 13, 1883, as Bruckner was finishing the *Adagio* of this symphony, Wagner died in Venice. When he heard the news, Bruckner wrote an extraordinary, quiet yet wrenching coda to the movement, which he always referred to as "the funeral music for the Master." This magnificent *Adagio* begins with music for Wagner tubas, the instrument Wagner designed for *The Ring of the Nibelung*, here making their debut in symphonic music. Like the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth, the music is built on two wonderfully contrasted themes, each the subject of further elaboration. Eventually Bruckner reaches the summit of his journey (in C major, an astonishing destination for a movement that began in C-sharp minor), marked by a cymbal crash and the striking of the triangle, over a drum-roll. (Conductors



"Wagner and Bruckner in Bayreuth," silhouette from Dr. Otto Böhlér's *Schattenbilder*, published 1914

still debate the authenticity of using the cymbal and triangle here, despite their undeniable effect, since they were clearly an afterthought, and were added to the score just in time for the Leipzig premiere, apparently at the suggestion of Arthur Nikisch, who conducted the premiere, or possibly even Bruckner's meddlesome students, Ferdinand Löwe and Joseph Schalk.)

The scherzo, in contrast to all that preceded it, is brilliantly athletic outdoor music dominated by a restless string ostinato and a playful trumpet theme. The contrasting trio is spacious and pastoral. The finale begins much like the opening movement, traverses wide and constantly changing territory, and finally returns to the symphony's first theme in the bracing E major fanfares of the closing bars. Just before he completed this movement, Bruckner went to Bayreuth, in August 1883, to visit Wagner's grave and to pay his respects to the man to whom he owed so much. He finished the score a few days after he returned home. The triumphant premiere of the symphony, fifteen months later, was at a benefit concert to raise money for a Wagner monument. ■

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.