



SUMMER FESTIVAL IN SEATTLE

MONDAY, JULY 26

**Georges Bizet**

*Jeux d'enfants* for Piano, Four Hands, Op. 22

*L'Escarpolette* ("The Swing")

*La Toupie* ("The Top")

*La Poupée* ("The Doll")

*Les Chevaux de bois* ("The Hobby-horses")

*Le Volant* ("Battledore and Shuttlecock")

*Trompette et tambour* ("Trumpet and drum")

*Les Bulles de savon* ("Soap bubbles")

*Les Quatre coins* ("The Four Corners")

*Colin-maillard* ("Blind Man's Bluff")

*Saute-mouton* ("Leap-frog")

*Petit mari, petite femme* ("Little husband, little wife")

*Le bal* ("The Ball")

Ran Dank, piano      Anton Nel, piano

**Gerard Schwarz**

Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano

*[Untitled]*

*Recitative and Aria*

*Scherzo*

Stefan Jackiw, violin    Jeffrey Fair, horn      Adam Neiman, piano

**\*\*World Premiere\*\*** Commissioned by SCMS Commissioning Club

*Dedicated to Gladys Rubinstein and the late Sam Rubinstein, for their inspiration and support of classical music in Seattle.*

**Piotr I. Tchaikovsky**

"Souvenir de Florence" for String Sextet in D minor, Op. 70

*Allegro con spirito*

*Adagio cantabile e con moto*

*Allegretto moderato*

*Allegro vivace*

Ida Levin, violin      Emily Daggett Smith, violin    Richard O'Neill, viola  
Che-Yen Chen, viola      Robert deMaine, cello      Jeremy Turner, cello

## ***Jeux d'enfants for Piano, Four Hands, Op. 22 (1871)***

Georges Bizet (1837–1875)

As with Mozart and Schubert, it is a blessing for humanity that Bizet's abundant musical talent bloomed early enough to create a legacy otherwise denied us by his untimely death at 36. By age 10 he had already been accepted as a student at the Paris Conservatory. Less than a decade later he received the *Prix de Rome*, having already composed his delectable Symphony in C.

Other than granting him musical genius, nature was not especially kind to Bizet. Ill health, depression and an unhappy marriage beset him. His depression, in particular, rendered him prone to great doubt about his ability to create music of stature. The final blow, of course, was the generally poor reception initially accorded *Carmen*, his *magnum opus* and one of the most popular operas ever to grace the stage. He died shortly after its premiere and before it hit the big time.

In 1871, four years before composing *Carmen*, Bizet wrote *Jeux d'enfants*, a suite of 12 pieces for piano four hands. (Later that year he orchestrated five of the numbers under a new title, *Petite Suite*.) Like Schumann's *Kinderszenen* ("Scenes from Childhood") and Debussy's *Children's Corner*, Bizet's "Children's Games" is *about* the world of children; it was not conceived as a piece for youngsters to play (though of course some can do so). Its 12 movements run some 20-plus minutes, making it in essence a series of imaginative miniatures.

*Jeux d'enfants* opens with a slow and graceful number, *L'Escarpolette* ("The Swing") whose arpeggios suggest the back-and-forth rocking of a swing. *La Toupie* ("The Top") follows, its dizzying accompanying figure evoking the spinning motion of the top behind the perky running theme. This energetic ditty is followed by a gentle *berceuse*-like lullaby, *La Poupée* ("The Doll"). Velocity is resumed in the galloping energy of *Les Chevaux de bois* ("The Hobby Horses"), based on the same theme as in *La Toupie* but at a much faster and frenetic pace. The noble game of badminton comes next in *Le Volant* ("Battledore and Shuttlecock"), a delightful tongue-in-cheek portrait of the flight of the shuttlecock as it's launched back and forth over the net. *Trompette et tambour* ("Trumpet and Drum") coyly animates a march of toy soldiers, oddly anticipating the "Children's March" from *Carmen*.

When is the last time you blew bubbles? *Les Bulles de savon* ("Soap Bubbles") may well remind you of that wonderful childhood experience, especially the manner in which Bizet suggests the "popping" sound of the bubbles' ultimate fate. *Les Quatre coins* ("The Four Corners") limns a portrait of an old childhood game. Initiated somewhat hesitantly, the pace quickens and the energy mounts as the kids scurry around the playing field. The next movement, the quietly evocative *Colin-maillard*, is yet another musical homage to a childhood game, known Stateside as "Blind Man's Bluff." Another game follows, *Saute-mouton* ("Leap Frog"), this one vigorous hopping along with gravity-imitating descending scales. Next comes *Petit Mari, petite femme* ("Little husband, little wife"), the sweetest number of the set and one that shows Bizet's great gift for tender melodic

utterance. How best to end this delectable dozen than with *Le Bal* (“The Ball”), a sprightly and frivolous quick *Galop*.

### **Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano (2010)**

Gerard Schwarz (b. 1947)

Seattle Symphony Music Director since 1985, Gerard Schwarz’s extensive career embraces guest conducting appearances and directorships of orchestras here and abroad. The 2010–11 season will mark the close of his directorship after which time he will serve as the orchestra’s conductor laureate. The one-time co-principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic, Schwarz has also enjoyed success as a composer and skillful arranger of music ranging from Handel, R. Strauss, Debussy and Webern, among others.

Schwarz studied composition with several major composers. His primary mentor was Paul Creston; others include Roger Sessions, Jacob Druckman, Milton Babbitt, Vincent Persichetti and Pierre Boulez. Maestro Schwarz’ music has been heard at Seattle Symphony concerts as well as those under the auspices of Music of Remembrance (MOR), the vital Seattle-based organization dedicated to memorializing victims of the Nazi Holocaust. In 2007, Schwarz composed *Rudolf and Jeanette*, a tone poem in memory of his grandparents, who perished in that horrific episode in human history. Schwarz’s works have been performed by the Zagreb Philharmonic and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, among others ensembles.

He composed the Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano in 2010 in response to a request from the SCMS Commissioning Club. Artistic Director Toby Saks approached the composer during the 2008–2009 season, expressing a desire for him to provide a chamber piece. The two musicians talked about various possible formats, including an octet à la Mendelssohn’s, or perhaps a string trio. At one point she mentioned that she’d love for him to compose a horn trio, referring naturally enough to Brahms’ splendid example. Tonight’s performance marks the new work’s premiere. As a full-time conductor, Schwarz’s composing time is, by necessity, limited primarily to the post-season summer months. He sketched much of the new piece in August of 2009, developing the work as time permitted. The Trio emerged complete in early May of 2010.

The Horn Trio opens with a slow introductory incantation that leads to the main body of the sonata-allegro first movement. Three separate themes appear throughout the movement. The three instruments each bring a different “voice” to the proceedings. The horn serves as a kind of Hebraic/biblical *shofar*, the ram’s-horn instrument that ushers in *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year. In Schwarz’s Trio, the horn asserts the dramatic elements of the music. The violin is entrusted with a primarily melodic and expressive role. With its abundant opportunity for playing chords, the piano serves to evoke chorale-like passages. The primary chorale theme, in fact, is first played and largely dominated by the piano. The composer’s thorough grounding in counterpoint comes to the head toward the end of the recapitulation with canonic treatment of the chorale tune.

The following *Recitative and Aria* redeploys material from the first movement, presenting its chorale melody in new garb, i.e., differing in both tempo and harmonic underpinning. The piano intones the chorale tune, and as the movement unfolds one encounters the severe and dramatic *Recitative* which in turn leads to an extended *arioso* section shared by all three instruments.

The work concludes with a *Scherzo* animated by a rustic theme that recalls the horn's historic role as an instrument of the hunt. The mood is prevailingly upbeat and alternates rhythmically between 6/8 and 3/4. The primary motive introduced by the violin but ultimately "owned" by the horn, moves with rhythmic intensity. A second contrasting theme appears, followed by an episode in which the main melody undergoes augmentation (an apparent slowing and extending of a theme by doubling the note values, e.g., stretching a quarter-note to a half-note, etc.) The movement concludes with an extended coda in which the horn plays the main theme joined one measure later by the piano in canonic imitation. The busy violin provides a perpetual-motion style rhythmic accompaniment, and the ensemble ends the piece with a dazzling flourish.

### **"Souvenir de Florence" for String Sextet in D minor, Op. 70 (1890; rev. 1892)**

Piotr I. Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

The major part of Tchaikovsky's canon lies in opera, ballet and symphonic music. Chamber music occupied only a small portion of his creative outpouring: three string quartets, the A-minor Piano Trio and "Souvenir of Florence," composed for string sextet—pairs of violins, violas and cellos. (This is the same scoring as those by Brahms, Dvořák and Schoenberg whose *Verklärte Nacht* was likened by one commentator/wag as "a calf with six legs.") As would happen with Schoenberg's piece, Tchaikovsky's sextet found wide-spread success in an enlarged transcription for orchestra. Still, the original sextet version naturally bespeaks an intimacy lost in its larger incarnation.

Tchaikovsky—no stranger to obsessive thinking—pondered the challenges of writing for sextet. In a letter to his brother Modest he wrote: "I started working on [it] 3 days ago and am writing with difficulty, handicapped by lack of ideas and the new form. One needs six independent but, at the same time, homogenous voices. This is frightfully difficult."

The composer worried that it might end up sounding like a symphonic work with reduced orchestration. It was as if he had read this admonition from the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*: "If the string quartet is the ideal combination for concerted solo playing, it follows that the addition of parts tends to defeat its object, for the ear cannot take in more than a certain amount of multiplicity of detail, while masses of rich tone color, whether the writing is polyphonic or harmonic in its main outline, take one beyond the medium." Still, for many chamber music fans such difficulties in comprehension have not posed a serious impediment to successful auditioning and enjoyment of any of the above-mentioned works.

The opening movement of “Souvenir of Florence,” *Allegro con spirito*, leaps forward with a powerful and surging main theme that plummets from a flatted sixth, through a perfect fifth and down to the D (tonic, or home note of the key of D minor). A much calmer second theme emerges to balance the almost aggressive demeanor of the primary motive. Though Tchaikovsky has often been faulted for his difficulty with sonata-allegro form (about which he was particularly anxious), this movement works just fine, thank you, as a late Romantic version of the “classic” format established a century earlier by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and countless lesser lights. Despite the work’s title, one will listen in vain for anything remotely “Florentine” in this movement unlike, say, the intentional Italianisms of Tchaikovsky’s *Capriccio italien*.

In the *Adagio cantabile e con moto* a beguiling and un-self-consciously Romantic theme emerges from the first violin against a pizzicato accompaniment. Before long, the tune is seconded by cello. A mid-movement interlude for all six players ends with a return of the opening section.

If Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9, “From the New World” is more about Slavonic than American sources, the same is true of the two concluding movements of “Souvenir of Florence.” Russian, often folk-like tunes, course through both the *Allegretto moderato* and *Allegro vivace*, both of which sound as if coming from an entirely different world from the first two movements.

In the third movement, a *scherzo* in name and structure is based on a theme not in the usual triple meter but in Russian-sounding duple meter. The melancholic nature of the main tune is quintessentially Russian in its “accent.” Announced by the first viola, the first violin soon takes over only to be followed by a joint grab of the tune by both cellos, now accompanied by shuttering and nervous contributions from the violins and violas. The mood is lightened considerably by a brief but upbeat staccato dance before the mood returns to its darker opening minor-key mood. Tchaikovsky ends the movement on a bold pizzicato chord.

The finale begins sparsely “orchestrated,” without cellos and only one violin. This opening gambit posits a tune that seems to pay homage to “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*, composed some 15 years earlier. The first violin soon asserts itself with a gypsy-inspired dance tune before the first cello joins the same fiddler in a rich and surging lyrical theme. Themes are mixed together as Tchaikovsky shows the world (and perhaps himself) that he could weave some very worthy counterpoint, at times beautifully balanced by re-emerging lyricism. The movement ends on an exuberant upwardly sweeping gesture and final emphatic tonic chord.

**Program Notes by  
Steven Lowe**