

HART HOUSE ORCHESTRA

HENRY JANZEN, PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR &
MUSIC DIRECTOR

SPRING CONCERT

THURSDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2024
GREAT HALL, HART HOUSE
TORONTO

PROGRAMME

Prélude a l'après-midi d'un faune

Claude Debussy

Tzigane

concert rhapsody for violin and orchestra

Maurice Ravel

with Violin soloist Emrik Revermann

— INTERMISSION —

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45

Sergey Rachmaninov

1. (Non) Allegro
2. Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
3. Lento assai – Allegro vivace

Claude Debussy: *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*



Orchestration: 3 flutes, 2 oboes and English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 harps, antique cymbals, and strings.

Approximate duration: 10 minutes

Composed between 1892 and 1894 the 10 minutes long *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*) not only propelled Debussy to fame, it also influenced music out of proportion to its small size. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that this work is the “10 minutes that changed music”.

What makes *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* a revolutionary work is that it embodied a revolutionary sound and a new sensibility in Western art and culture. Order was displaced by ambiguity; discipline and the rational by languor and the sensual. Diatonic scales gave way to chromatic and whole note scales, rhythms became fluid. There is also no apparent architecture to the piece, which appears improvisational. This is not to say that there is no structure, but it is a different from what was accepted until then. The *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* consists of a complex organization of motifs that invite little development, but inspire momentary excitement rather than underscoring long trajectory.

The *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* is a musical recreation of the poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* by the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé about a faun on a warm summer afternoon. The faun gradually emerges from sleep. Sensuously stretching his limbs, he views the world through eyes now half-opened, now half-closed.

Debussy wrote about his poetic, dream-like piece: “The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé’s beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature.”

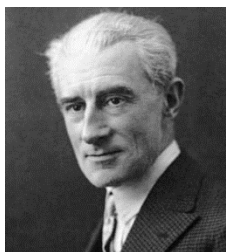
Initially Mallarmé was unhappy about the idea of using his poetry as a basis for music. He considered that there was enough music in his verses and that even with the best intentions in the world, it was wrong to juxtapose poetry

and music, even if it were the finest music. Mallarmé's attitude may be better understood if one keeps in mind that Symbolist poets attached as much (and at times even more) importance to the sound of words as to their meaning. However, his initial disapproval changed to enthusiasm after listening to the first performance of the work. In a letter he wrote to Debussy after the concert he said: "I didn't expect anything like this! This music prolongs the emotion of my poem, and sets its scene more vividly than color."

As the piece opens, the faun's flute softly intones the languorously syncopated principal motif, consisting of chromatic scales within the range of three whole tones. (Pierre Boulez noted that "The flute of Debussy's *Faune* breathed new air into the art of music.") The flute is answered by muted horns and soft harp glissandos. All these elements play a part in re-creating the dream-like atmosphere of Mallarmé's poem. After a second and third subject are introduced by the woodwinds, the piece slowly builds up to a climax. The first theme then returns, more languorous than ever. Eventually, a solo cello, then an oboe, join the flute, as horns, violins, and woodwinds, accompanied by harp and the bell-like tone of antique cymbals bring the piece to an end.

The first performance of Debussy's composition on December 22nd, 1894 was an unmitigated triumph; such was the enthusiasm of the audience that the piece had to be encores. In 1912 the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* became associated with another revolution, when Vaslav Nijinsky used it for the eponymous ballet which he choreographed for Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*, and which shocked the audiences with its unconventional moves and explicit eroticism.

Maurice Ravel: *Tzigane*, concert rhapsody for violin and orchestra



Orchestration: 2 flutes (2nd also piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (B♭), 2 bassoons, 2 horns (F), 1 trumpet (C), percussion (triangle, timbre, cymbal), celesta, harp, strings.

Approximate duration: 10 minutes

While on tour in England in 1922, Ravel met the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Árányi. She was a well-respected artist who also happened to be the great-niece of Joseph Joachim, the famous 19th century violinist and friend of Brahms. Jelly d'Árányi played the violin part in a private performance of his

Sonata for Violin and Cello. Impressed by her virtuosity, Ravel asked d'Arányi to play Gypsy pieces for him, which she did well into the wee hours. This meeting inspired Ravel to write a short piece in a Hungarian Gypsy style; he dedicated it to d'Arányi who premiered it in 1924

The original version was for violin and piano with optional luthéal, an attachment that could produce sounds remarkably like the Hungarian cimbalon. However the luthéal soon fell out of fashion, and the ordinary piano is used today. Shortly after having written the original composition, Ravel orchestrated it, in a way that evokes the sound of the cimbalon.

The name of the piece is derived from the generic European term for "gypsy": (in French: gitane or tzigane, Hungarian: cigány). However, the piece does not contain any authentic Roma or Hungarian melodies, though it uses traditional modes and rhythms. It is basically a "Hungarian rhapsody" in the Lisztian manner, though spikier in harmony and rhythm.

For the first half of the composition, the violinist plays alone, exploring just about every technique and figuration possible in the Hungarian Gypsy style in a freely rhapsodic fashion. Finally, the orchestra joins in, and a series of wild dancing passages ensues, with Ravel's inimitable sparkling orchestration playing a perfect foil to the maniacal violin.

Sergey Rachmaninov: Symphonic Dances, Op. 45



Orchestration: 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes and English horn, 2 clarinets and bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, glockenspiel, xylophone, snare drum, chimes, 2 harps, piano, and strings.
Approximate duration: 35 minutes

The orchestral suite Symphonic Dances, composed in 1940, is Rachmaninov's last major work, and the only one composed in its entirety in the United States.

After leaving Russia in 1917, Rachmaninov's compositional output slowed considerably. For one, he had to turn to performing in order to support his family, and the demanding touring schedules left him little time or energy for composing. More importantly though, is the fact that he missed Russia. He admitted that by leaving Russia, "I left behind my desire to compose: losing my country, I lost myself also". Between 1918 and 1936 he wrote only five

original works, out of which only the *Rhapsody on Theme by Paganini* was received with delight, then other ones were met with indifference. By 1937 Rachmaninov has stopped composing. The compositional drought ended in the summer of 1940, when the relaxing atmosphere of the beachfront estate near Huntington on Long Island made it possible for Rachmaninov to turn again to composition. Work progressed swiftly, and by mid-August he wrote to his friend Eugene Ormandy, the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra: "Last week I finished a new symphonic piece, which I naturally want to give first to you and your orchestra. It is called *Fantastic Dances*. I shall now begin the orchestration". By the end of the summer, the *Fantastic Dances* became *Symphonic Dances*. In spite of the pressures of practicing and touring, work on the *Symphonic Dances* went forward. Much of the third movement was scored on the road, and wherever Rachmaninoff checked into a hotel he was handed a package of proof sheets to correct. The first performance took place in Philadelphia on January 3, 1941, to a very warm reception by the audience, while the critics were mostly uninterested. Soon however, the critics warmed up too, and the *Symphonic Dances* became one of Rachmaninov's most popular work.

Rachmaninov was always interested in writing a ballet – he was, after all Russian, and he shared his compatriots' passion for ballet. He made a first attempt as far back as 1914, when he submitted sketches for a ballet score called *The Scythians* to his friend Mikhail Fokine, who choreographed many ballets for Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. This project, however, came to naught. Rachmaninov's second encounter with ballet was in 1939, when Fokine asked for his permission to use the *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* for the ballet *Paganini*, which he was choreographing for the Royal Ballet in London. Rachmaninov was so enthusiastic about the project that he even allowed Fokine some changes to the score. When he started to compose what was to become the *Symphonic Dances*, Rachmaninov had in mind another collaboration with Fokine. After finishing the piano score, Rachmaninov played fragments to Fokine, who fell in love with the music. Alas, Fokine's death in 1942 brought an end to their friendship and the possibility of a ballet.

The *Symphonic Dances* are Rachmaninov's most modern composition. It reveals tighter, clearer musical structure while still exhibiting his gifts for lush orchestration and heart-melting melodies. While much of the traditional Rachmaninov sound is prevalent, we hear new textures and harmonies not characteristic of the arch-romantic, as well as spiky rhythms reminiscent of Stravinsky and Prokofiev.

Rachmaninov was also aware that this would be his last work ("That was probably my last flicker" he wrote) and he intended it to be also a synthesis

of his work: quotations from works that he had composed many decades before are interspersed with melodic elements from Russian ecclesiastical chant, of which he was so fond. In form, the Symphonic Dances suggest a symphony in three movements. The three movements were initially titled Morning, Noon, Twilight, but in the end Rachmaninov dispensed with titles altogether.

The first movement (marked Non Allegro) begins coyly with a few quiet woodwind motifs over light tripping strings—and then hammerstrokes from the full orchestra sets the real mood. After establishing a steady rhythmic dance tempo, the middle section is introduced by the woodwinds, which preface the impressive, long lyrical solo for the alto saxophone, the first characteristic Rachmaninov tune of the movement. The return of the march music after the slower middle section is followed by an expansive coda, which introduces a new melody of great poignancy, beautifully scored, and accompanied by piano, harp, glockenspiel, flute, and piccolo. This melody quotes a theme from his ill-fated First Symphony whose failure in 1897 caused a three year long nervous breakdown and creative hiatus. The movement goes on from this to end quietly.

The middle movement is a dark, introspective waltz in the tradition of Sibelius' famed *Valse triste*. Rarely loud, always gently swaying, it's a dark affair with frequent ruminative suspensions of the tempo. The spectral mood is established by muted brass, soft cascades of woodwind scales against the *sotto voce* strings. The movement concludes with soft, scampering woodwind-and-string figures that suggest the participants not so much ending their dance as being blown away, still whirling, out of their dark, ghostly ballroom into an even darker night.

Rachmaninoff's obsession with the *Dies irae* motif dominates the final movement (Lento assai—Allegro vivace). Another pointed religious reference is made to the music Rachmaninoff himself wrote for the ninth section ("*Blagosloven yesi gospodi*"—"Blessed be the Lord") of his *All-Night Vigil*, completed in 1915 during World War I. This theme comes from an ancient Orthodox liturgical chant and acts as an affirmative counterpoint to the pessimism of the message of the *Dies irae*. These two ideas intertwine in colorful and dramatic variations, by turns dark and triumphant, colored by the tolling of the tubular bells and contrasted with a serene middle section featuring a lamenting falling figure in the strings that seems to recall times gone by. The piece ends with powerful thrusting chords and a final stroke from the tam-tam. At the end of the score, the composer wrote: "I thank Thee, Lord!"



Henry Janzen, Music Director and Principal Conductor

Henry Janzen's formative influences include Masterclasses with Menahem Pressler and William Primrose at the Banff School of Fine Art coupled with advanced studies in New York City with renowned pedagogues Lillian Fuchs, Arianna Bronne, Raphael Bronstein and Nathan Gordon.

Subsequent teaching positions include the University of Western Michigan, Wayne State University and University of Western Ontario. For the past 20 years Mr. Janzen has taught in the Orchestral, Applied and Chamber Music areas at the University of Guelph. In addition to regular orchestral and opera performances he has been heard in performances across North America and Europe including Prague, Salzburg and Vienna. Mr. Janzen has appeared with such diverse groups as the New York String Ensemble, Greenwich (Connecticut) Choral Society and Rackham Symphony Choir. As conductor he has served with distinction the Michigan Youth Symphony, the Clarion Choir and Orchestra; the Dearborn Symphony and the University of Guelph Orchestra. Some of his memorable performance opportunities were the private funeral ceremony for Henry Ford II; with Lloyd Bridges in the TV movie "In the Nick of Time"; performances at the Premier Centre in Detroit with Gladys Knight and the Pips; the installations of firstly Archbishop and then Edmund Cardinal Szoka and a mass for 100,000 people with Pope John Paul II.

Emrik Revermann, Violin soloist



Emrik Revermann is a 15-year-old Canadian-German violinist, based in Toronto. Emrik made his solo orchestral debut at the age of 9 and has since been a soloist with several orchestras including the Orchestre de l'Agora in Montreal, the I Musici de Montreal orchestra, the National Academy Orchestra with Maestro Boris Brott, and the Canadian Sinfonietta.

In 2023, Emrik was a prizewinner (2nd prize) in the Johannes Brahms International Competition in Austria and a semi-finalist in the Mirecourt International Violin Competition in France. For both competitions, he was by far the youngest participant. Also in 2023, Emrik received the Arkady Fomin Scholarship, which allowed him to take masterclasses with soloist Vadim Gluzman in Vienna. Right after the masterclasses, he performed the Brahms Violin Concerto with the Kammersinfonie Oldenburg in Germany.

In 2022, Emrik won 1st prize in the Allegra International Competition in Bulgaria. As a result, he performed as a soloist with the Allegra Festival Orchestra in Sofia. In 2022, he also won 1st prize in the Vienna Classical Music Academy's international competition.

In 2021, Emrik participated in the prestigious Menuhin International Violin Competition, and he won a Gold Medal in the European Competition for String Instruments in Luxembourg.

In 2019, he won the Vienna International Music Competition, the prize for which was a performance in the Musikverein concert hall in Vienna. Klassik magazine in Austria said his performance “showed considerable, already highly-developed potential.”

In 2018, just after his 10th birthday, he was named “Absolute Laureate” of the Kocian International Violin Competition in the Czech Republic, after coming in 1st place in his age category. Emrik was subsequently invited back to the Czech Republic to perform the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with the Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice as well as do a recording for Czech Radio in Prague. Emrik was named in 2018 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as one of “30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30,” the youngest person on the list. He received the top violin score at the national Canadian Music Competition in 2016 and 2017 – in 2017, he was named a grand prize winner.

In 2022, Emrik took masterclasses in Bulgaria with Gregory Ahss, the concertmaster of Camerata Salzburg and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. 2020 and 2021, Emrik took masterclasses with Karen Gomyo, Mark Kaplan, Ian Swensen, and Giora Schmidt through Orford Musique in Quebec. In 2019, Emrik took masterclasses with Donald Weilerstein at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany. From 2016-18, Emrik took masterclasses with several distinguished violinists at the Summer Academy at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg (Christian Altenburger, Ernst Kovacic, Zakhar Bron, Paul Roczek).

Thanks to the Taylor Prize, Emrik is currently on a full-scholarship at the Phil and Eli Taylor Academy at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, where he studies with Timothy Ying.

Fluent in German, Emrik’s passions outside the violin are history, politics, composing, and playing tennis, soccer and basketball. He plays on a ca.1824 Nicolas Lupot violin on generous loan from Canimex Inc., from Drummondville, Quebec.

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Roland Wilk

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HARP

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ACM – Assistant Concert Master

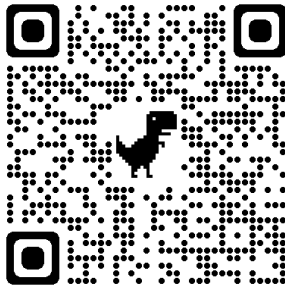
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AP – Assistant Principal

CP – Co-principal

* Guest musician

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