



PENN MED SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SPRING CONCERT



IRVINE AUDITORIUM - APRIL 22ND 8:00 PM



Concert Program

Verdi *Overture to Nabucco*

Bizet *L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2*

- I. Pastorale
- II. Intermezzo
- III. Menuet
- IV. Farandole

— INTERMISSION —

Rimsky-Korsakov *Scheherazade: Symphonic Suite, Op 35*

- I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
- II. The Story of the Kalendar Prince
- III. The Young Prince and the Young Princess
- IV. Festival at Baghdad

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many people and organizations who have made this concert possible, and who have continued to support our orchestra: GAPSA, MSG, BGSA, and Penn Dental Executive Student Council.



Special thanks to Dr. Steven Weinberger & Mrs. Janet Weinberger for supporting this event.



The Music

Sinfonia (Overture) to *Nabucco*

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Verdi's long career as an opera composer extended from 1839, with his first work in this genre (*Oberto*), to 1893, when his final opera (*Falstaff*) was first performed. During this 54-year span, Verdi wrote 26 operas, of which several exist in more than one version, occasionally with different titles.

Nabucco, Verdi's third opera, was his first major success, and was first performed (at the *La Scala* opera house in Milan), in March 1842. Before this, Verdi had already experienced professional failure and personal tragedy. His first opera was fairly successful, although his second, *Un Giorno di Regno* (*King for a Day*, or more literally, *A Day of Reign*) was a failure at its first performance, in 1840, and – between 1838 and 1840 - Verdi's two small children and young wife died.

The subject-matter of *Nabucco* deals with an attack on Jerusalem by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, the abduction of Jewish captives to Babylon, and subsequent events in that Mesopotamian city. The libretto of the opera superimposes the activities of fictional individuals (Babylonian and Jewish) on the historical record from around 587-586 before the Christian Era (as presented in the Old Testament of the Bible). The unabridged title of the opera, *Nabucodonosor*, is an Italianized form of "Nebuchadnezzar" (or, more accurately, "Nebuchadrezzar", according to the preface to *Nabucco* in a complete edition of Verdi's works). The overture, which is a compilation of themes from the opera, appears to have been the last part of the work to have been written. Instruments specified in the score include a *cimbasso*, a large wind instrument (providing the bass of the orchestra's brass section) constructed of wood and brass (the "early *cimbasso*") or – in a later iteration – of brass without wood.

After his reputation as the leading contemporary Italian opera composer had been established in the 1850s, Verdi pursued interests outside music, while continuing to compose new works and revise earlier ones. His non-musical

activities included farming a piece of land (Sant'Agata, where he also had a villa built, approximately 16 km south of Cremona in northern Italy) and serving (with some reluctance) as a member of parliament for the newly unified Republic of Italy. Between 1842 and the early 1850s, years that he called *gli anni di galera* (the years in the galleys, when he wrote music at a frenetic and exhausting pace), Verdi wrote 16 operas. Thereafter, there was a decline in the rate at which he wrote new operas, although he continued to revise earlier ones. His last three new operas, *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*, appeared in 1871, 1887, and 1893, respectively. Verdi's non-operatic works include a string quartet, besides a well-known Requiem and some additional sacred vocal pieces.

***L'Arlésienne* Suite No. 2 (arranged by Ernest Guiraud)**

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

- I. Pastorale**
- II. Intermezzo**
- III. Menuet**
- IV. Farandole**

Bizet's talent and ability in composing were already evident at the age of 17, when he wrote a highly accomplished Symphony in C. This outstanding work was lost until the 1930s, when Bizet's autograph score of the symphony resurfaced in Paris. The world première followed in 1935 (in Basel), and the work was published during that year. Since then, the symphony has been performed and recorded frequently. A student at the Paris Conservatoire, Bizet won the Prix de Rome for emerging composers in 1857 (a sort of postgraduate fellowship). This award funded residence and further study/composition in Rome for at least 2 years, with an expectation to write new works (*envois*) and submit them for review.

The opera *Carmen* is the culminating masterwork of Bizet's abbreviated career. It was completed in the last year of the composer's short life; Bizet's premature death (conceivably from cardiac sequelae of a presumed streptococcal peritonsillar abscess) occurred during the initial run of *Carmen* in Paris. As a mature composer in the early 1870s, leading up to the start of his work on *Carmen*, Bizet wrote 3 substantial works: a one-act opera

(*Djamileh*), which had a run of 11 performances at its initial production (in 1872), a set of 12 pieces for piano duet (*Jeux d'Enfants*; Children's Games), 6 of which were also orchestrated by the composer, and incidental music for *L'Arlésienne*. This is a play by the French playwright Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897), in which the course of love does not run smoothly, and the "Girl from Arles" of the title does not appear. The budget for the production included payment for 26 musicians. The scoring includes a solo viola, an alto saxophone, two horns – one without valves (a 'natural' horn), and one with valves – and, reportedly, a *tambourin* (a Provençal drum). Bizet wrote the music during the summer of 1872, and the play opened at the Vaudeville Theatre in Paris later that year. It ran for 19 performances and seems not to have been a success in the theatre; Bizet's music was more appreciated than the play.

The original production of the play included 27 sections with music, some of them very short, and some including an off-stage chorus (directed by a harmonium player in the wings – a role occupied by Bizet at some of the performances). Bizet extracted and partly re-orchestrated several of the extended movements, to form a suite in four movements (*L'Arlésienne* Suite No. 1). This was first performed in November 1872, and was well received. After Bizet's death, his friend the composer Ernest Guiraud (1837-1892) assembled what is known as "*L'Arlésienne* Suite No. 2", from 3 movements of the incidental music for the play, and a minuet ("Menuet") from Bizet's opera *La Jolie Fille de Perth* (The Fair Maid of Perth). The assembly process involved some re-orchestration by Guiraud, as well as additional changes made by him. Parenthetically, and somewhat controversially, Guiraud also wrote recitatives for *Carmen*, which are sometimes included in performances of that opera instead of the spoken dialogue of Bizet's authentic version. In the last movement of the suite on this evening's program, "Farandole" refers to a Provençal "chain dance" involving a line of dancers; this dance is reportedly of Greek and Phoenician origin.

Scheherazade: Symphonic Suite, Opus 35

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

- I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship**
- II. The Kalendar Prince**
- III. The Young Prince and the Young Princess**
- IV. Festival at Baghdad**

Rimsky-Korsakov enrolled at a naval college in St. Petersburg (Russia) in 1862 and then embarked as a naval recruit on a 3-year tour of duty to various ports, including London and cities in North and South America. By the age of 17, Rimsky-Korsakov's musical talent was already evident, when he met the composer Mily Balakirev, who became the focal point of an assemblage of five "nationalist" Russian composers known as the "Mighty Handful". Besides Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov, the other members were Modest Musorgsky, Aleksandr Borodin, and César Cui. Lacking experience in composing, the young Rimsky-Korsakov began writing a symphony, an ambitious project that he completed with substantial oversight from Balakirev. The resulting work was first performed in December 1865. At least by the time of his second symphony, *Antar* (1868), Rimsky-Korsakov had arrived at a personal style, in which thematic ideas project a feeling of distance and exoticism – a non-European, "Asiatic" otherness, which is a feature of *Scheherazade* and is well suited to the "fantastic" subject-matter of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas.

Feeling the need for additional grounding in music theory, Rimsky-Korsakov joined the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music in 1871, as a member of the staff. This move provided financial security and an environment in which he was able to acquire the technical knowledge previously lacking. His works written before 1874 were revised, to reflect his new-found technical expertise, and he wrote textbooks of harmony and orchestration (the second of these completed by his son-in-law). In addition, Rimsky-Korsakov emerged as an editor and "realizer" of operas left incomplete at the deaths of other members of the "Mighty Handful", such as Borodin's opera *Prince Igor*. Interestingly, he also revised the already completed and performed opera *Boris Godunov* by the deceased Musorgsky.

Scheherazade is a large-scale work in four movements, which was drafted and orchestrated between the 1st of June and the 29th of July 1888. For such a big

work, this seems a remarkably short time-frame. It was first performed on the 28th of October 1888, in St. Petersburg, conducted by the composer. To the extent that purely instrumental music can “depict” anything concrete, the work supposedly illustrates stories told by Scheherazade to her husband, an Arabian sultan, to play for time in a successful attempt to prevent him from executing her (the fate of her predecessors). Episodes from the “Arabian Nights” tales were initially specified by Rimsky-Korsakov as the alleged basis of the various sections of *Scheherazade*, although he later disavowed the resulting subtitles and regarded the piece as an essentially abstract composition projecting an exotic atmosphere. The work includes a prominent part for a solo violin, and soloistic writing for other members of the orchestra is also evident. Although *Scheherazade* is as long as a major symphony, it is more discursive than a symphony; its memorable tunes are presented already fully-formed and are repeated with kaleidoscopically changing orchestration, rather than dissected and transformed as would be typical for a symphony.

Between 1894 and 1908, most of Rimsky-Korsakov’s creative energy was directed to writing opera; 11 of his 15 operas date from this productive span of years (one of the 11 is a rewritten version of part of an earlier work). In the 1900s, Rimsky-Korsakov was a mentor for the young Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), who was making the transition from student of law to professional composer. The colorful orchestration of the ballet scores from Stravinsky’s early maturity (including the *Firebird* and the revolutionary *Rite of Spring*) reflects the example of Rimsky-Korsakov.

(Written by: Martin F. Heyworth, MD)



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MD-PhD Student, UPenn

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Resident Physician, General Surgery, UPenn

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Tracy Du

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Julie Hong

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MSE Student, Penn SEAS; Software Developer, UPenn

Ben Grossman

DMD Student, UPenn

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Guest Artist

Sophia Kelsall

Guest Artist

Flute**Grace Kuang**

Visiting MD Student, Scheie Eye Institute

Andrea Apter, MD

Professor Emerita of Medicine, Allergy & Immunology, U Penn

Jodie Barasatian, DMD

Dentist, Temple Alumni

Nicholas Cerda

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Eden Kahle, MD

Attending Physician, Dept. of Pediatrics, CHOP



Oboe

Laura Schultz, PhD

Data Scientist, Dept. of Biomedical & Health Informatics, CHOP

Mekhi Gladden

Guest Artist

Andrew Dotterer

Guest Artist

Clarinet

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Eric Sah

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Trumpet

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James Waller, PhD

Research Meteorologist, Guy Carpenter

Matthew Owens

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Dan Ju

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Alto Sax

David Kersen

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Horn

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Harp

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Guest Artist

Percussion

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David Lu

Guest Artist

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Guest Artis

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