

Harp & Cello

Friday, September 29 – 7:30 pm

Saturday, September 30 – 8 pm

José-Luis Gomez, conductor

Stéphane Tétrault, cello

Nora Bumanis, harp

Afterthoughts, Friday post-performance in the Main Lobby with José-Luis Gomez, Stéphane Tétrault & Nora Bumanis

Symphony Prelude, Saturday 7 pm in the Upper Circle (Third Level) Lobby with D.T. Baker

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Capriccio espagnole, Op.34

(15')*

Alborada

Variazioni

Alborada

Scena e canto gitano

Fandango asturiano

SAINT-SAËNS

Cello Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op.33

(19')*

Allegro non troppo – Allegretto con moto – Tempo primo

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

MOZETICH

El Dorado

(16')*

GLAZUNOV

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat Major, Op.48

(32')*

Andante – Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Andante – Allegro

program subject to change

*indicates approximate performance duration

program subject to change

Capriccio espagnole, Op.34

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

(b. Tikhvin, Novgorod, 1844 / d. St. Petersburg, 1908)

First performed: October 1, 1887 in St. Petersburg

Last ESO performance of the complete Capriccio: October 2011

“The opinion formed by both critics and the public that the *Capriccio espagnole* is a brilliant ‘magnificently orchestrated piece’ is wrong. The Capriccio is a brilliant ‘composition for orchestra’.” So said Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who penned the work in 1887, and he further explained what he meant by his statement. “The change of timbres, the felicitous choice of melodic designs and figuration patterns, exactly suiting each kind of instrument, brief virtuoso cadenzas for instruments solo, the rhythm of the percussion instruments, constitute here the very essence of the composition, and not its garb. The Spanish themes, of dance character, furnished me with rich material for putting orchestral effects in use.”

The exciting orchestral showcase is in five uninterrupted sections, beginning with an Alborada (“Morning Song”) in a lively manner. Next is a set of variations, in which a horn fanfare theme is given various treatments. Next, the Alborada returns in different orchestral clothes, followed by a Gypsy song featuring a series of cadenzas for the violins. The final section is a Fandango, introduced by the trombones. The Alborada returns in the spectacular climax.

Cello Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op.33

Camille Saint-Saëns

(b. Paris, 1835 / d. Algiers, 1921)

First performed: January 19, 1873 in Paris

Last ESO performance: June 2013

Unique among French composers of his era, Camille Saint-Saëns regularly, and often, wrote “concertante” works, pieces for a solo instrument plus orchestra. Some were single-movement showcase vehicles, but he also wrote many full-form concertos. His *First Cello Concerto* is, in fact, a little bit of both. Written in 1872 and premiered the following year, the concerto was dedicated to Saint-

Saëns' friend, cellist and composer Adrien-François Servais, though it was another cellist, the Belgian Auguste Tolbecque, who gave the premiere.

While the concerto is in three distinct sections, it differs from many concertos proper in that it is played without pauses between the sections. It is a relatively short work, compared to the titanic concertos being produced by Saint-Saëns' German contemporaries. The work also has a cyclical sense to it; the darting theme stated at the outset of the first movement by the cello is stated almost exactly by an oboe at the start of the third, and it is the major theme of both. The opening section itself moves like a swift-flowing stream, with both cello and orchestra sharing the dramatic drive. The middle of this opening movement slows things only briefly, with double stops and sforzando bowing (playing a note with a strong, and sudden, emphasis) in the cello as the pace picks up once again. The central section begins with a curiously anachronistic feel – a dainty minuet straight out of the *style galant* of Haydn's time more than a hundred years before, and perhaps a small homage to Haydn, whose cello concertos were well known and loved. The cello here shows its lyrical side, intoning a graceful melody to the gentle accompaniment. In the final section, the cellist is put through some virtuosic paces, though the cello's singing nature is never overlooked. The pace becomes more headlong, then slows contemplatively before the dash to the finish.

El Dorado

Marjan Mozetich

(b. Gorizia, Italy, 1948)

First performed: April 4, 1981 in Toronto

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

"I love the harp," Marjan Mozetich has said. "There's something magical about it, about the beauty of pure sound." And indeed, the harp has played an important role in bringing Mozetich and the Edmonton Symphony together. In 1996, the CBC commissioned a concerto for two harps and orchestra, which the ESO premiered - a work written for ESO Principal Harp Nora Bumanis, and Julia Shaw (who was Principal Harp of the Calgary Philharmonic at the time). Tonight's work, for harp and strings, was written 15 years before - for Erica Goodman and New Music Concerts in Toronto.

El Dorado is the mythical South American city of gold, the subject of quests both real and fanciful over the centuries. It has come to represent the idea of something of enormous value, yet unattainable. Mozetich's work begins as a series of arpeggiated chords over shimmering strings, leading to a harp ostinato which grows increasingly ornate. Strings take up a new, rhythmic idea which it cedes to the soloist. While the idea of a steady pace is a feature of the work, so is a romantic, lush landscape. There is a brief slower section in the centre of the work, more mysterious and dreamlike, but it is left behind as the third and final section picks up the pace once again. The interplay between the strings of the ensemble and the harp is blended with occasional pizzicato. This final section has a determination to it,

as if bringing us back from a mythical place to the more grounded "real world," ending the piece on sombre chords in the strings, and hushed tones from the harp.

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat Major, Op.48

Alexander Glazunov

(b. St. Petersburg, 1865 / d. Paris, 1936)

First performed: January 22, 1894 in

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

In his 71 years of life, Alexander Glazunov saw pretty much every aspect of life change. An immensely gifted student of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov's musical curiosity and acumen led him to acquire a working knowledge of many instruments, which would serve his concertante works well throughout his career. He was criticized by the Russian school of nationalists for his ready adoption of western European tradition (he traveled to Weimar to meet Liszt at 19 years old), but managed to win respect from colleagues on either side of the argument. A leading cultural figure in Russia as the Tsarist regime collapsed and was replaced by the Bolsheviks, Glazunov eventually left Russia when the political climate regarded the tradition from which he came with suspicion and censure.

The 1890s were extremely productive years for Glazunov. He made successful appearances in both Paris and London, and he composed some of his most well-received works, including the Fourth Symphony. It is the only one of his, besides the uncompleted Ninth, to eschew the standard four-movement layout. His former teacher Rimsky-Korsakov conducted the first performance. A beautiful solo for English horn in the work's tonic minor begins the symphony, and the mood carries over to the upper strings. As the Andante gives way to an Allegro moderato, we also move from minor to major. The pace and the mood lighten considerably, though the Romantic sensibility seems anachronistic. This part of the movement is really a set of variations on the Allegro moderato's main theme. The work's second movement is the Scherzo and Trio. The Scherzo proper, which opens and closes the movement, is in B-flat, a flighty bit of precociousness in 6/8 time, dominated by the woodwinds. The Trio is still in triple time, but now 3/4, and altogether more serene. The final movement functions, in a way, as the slow movement and the finale, although the Andante opening is really an introduction to the Allegro that follows. Again, it is woodwinds and strings ushering in the atmospheric opening, though as the pace picks up, the brass is finally given a prominent role, with a ceremonial and triumphant beginning to the Allegro. It has the feel of a day of celebration – sunlit, happy, and everywhere contented.

Program notes © 2017 by D.T. Baker, except as indicated