Concert Program for April 20, 21, and 22, 2012

Peter Oundjian, conductor
Daniel Lee, cello

SMETANA (1824-1884)
Šárka* from *Má vlast (1875)

DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)
Cello Concerto in B minor, op. 104 (1894-1895)
Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro moderato

Daniel Lee, cello

Intermission

TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)
Symphony No. 2 in C minor, op. 17, "Little Russian" (1872)
Andante sostenuto; Allegro vivo
Andantino marziale, quasi moderato
Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Moderato assai; Allegro vivo

Peter Oundjian is brought to you through the generosity of the Whitaker Foundation as part of the Whitaker Guest Artist Series.
Daniel Lee is the Lucy and Stanley Lopata Guest Artist.
The concert of Friday, April 20, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Walter G. Shifrin.
The concert of Sunday, April 22, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Dr. and Mrs. Richard G. Sisson.
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Cylla von Tiedemann

Peter Oundjian Whitaker Guest Artist

Toronto-born conductor Peter Oundjian, noted for his probing musicality, collaborative spirit, and engaging personality, has been an instrumental figure in the rebirth of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) since his appointment as Music Director in 2004. In addition to conducting the orchestra in dynamic performances that have achieved outstanding artistic acclaim, he has been greatly involved in a variety of new initiatives that have strengthened the ensemble's presence in the community and attracted a young and diverse audience. In 2004, he established an annual celebration of new music, showcasing new compositions and premiering commissioned works. Now an audience favorite, the New Creations Festival celebrates the best in contemporary orchestral music and attracts celebrated contemporary composers.

In his tenure with the TSO, Oundjian has also released five recordings on the orchestra's self-produced record label, tsoLIVE. The award-winning documentary *Five Days in September: The Rebirth of an Orchestra*, is available on DVD and chronicles Oundjian's first week as Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to his post in Toronto, Peter Oundjian has been named the Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, starting in the 2012-13 season. Oundjian was Principal Guest Conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra from 2006 to 2010 and played a major role at the Caramoor International Music Festival in New York between 1997 and 2007. He has served as a visiting professor at the Yale School of Music since 1981. In May 2009, Oundjian received an honorary doctorate from the San Francisco Conservatory.

During the 2011-12 season, Oundjian will be conducting the Colorado Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Oundjian was educated in England, where he studied the violin with Manoug Parikian. He then attended the Royal College of Music in London, where he was awarded the Gold Medal for Most Distinguished Student and Stoutzker Prize for excellence in violin playing. He completed his violin training at the Juilliard School in New York, where he studied with Ivan Galamian, Itzhak Perlman, and Dorothy DeLay. Oundjian was the first violinist of the renowned Tokyo String Quartet, a position he held for 14 years. He and his wife Nadine have two children, Lara and Peter.

Peter Oundjian most recently conducted the St. Louis Symphony in December 2009.

Daniel Lee Lucy and Stanley Lopata Guest Artist

Korean-American cellist Daniel Lee continues to gain recognition as one of his generation's most significant artists. A native of Seattle, Lee started playing the cello at the age of six, studying with Richard Aaron. At age 11, he began his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and became the youngest protégé of the legendary Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. While at Curtis, Lee also studied with Orlando Cole, William Pleeth, and Peter Wiley. He graduated from the New England Conservatory with an Artist Diploma after studying with Paul Katz of the Cleveland Quartet. In 1994, at the age of 14, he signed an exclusive recording contract with Decca Records. He released two recordings: Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata and short pieces; and the Brahms sonatas. And in 2001, at the age of 21, he received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, just one of many awards and competitions that he's won during his career.

He has won critical acclaim as a soloist with such prestigious American orchestras as the Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and the St. Louis Symphony, where he has served as Principal Cello since 2005.

An active recitalist, Lee has performed at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Jordan Hall in Boston, the Herbst Theater in San Francisco, and recital tours in Japan and Korea. Concerto appearances with the St. Louis Symphony have included Strauss's *Don Quixote* and Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Mania*. Lee opened the 2009-10 St. Louis Symphony season performing the St. Louis premiere of Osvaldo Golijov's *Azul* for Cello and Orchestra with David Robertson conducting.

In 2010, Lee played his New York City recital debut at Merkin Hall in a program highlighted by Kodály's Sonata for Violoncello Solo. During the 2010-11 season, Lee debuted as a soloist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra performing the U.S. premiere of James MacMillan's *Kiss on Wood* for Cello and Strings. At the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts in St. Louis, he performed Xenakis's *Nomos Alpha*. With the St. Louis Symphony, Lee has also performed Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, conducted by Bernard Labadie. That piece is included in a CD that was recorded with the Czech Philharmonic and released in spring 2011 on Sony Classical in Korea. He also returned to Korea for a concert at the Seoul Arts Center in May 2011, for the official release of this CD.

Daniel Lee most recently performed as a soloist with the St. Louis Symphony in February 2011.

Another Europe
BY LAURIE SHULMAN

Ideas at Play
This weekend guest conductor Peter Oundjian leads an all-Slavic program of Czech and Russian works. All three pieces were composed within a span of twenty-five years, and two are virtually contemporary. More to the point is the strong nationalist flavor that permeates the entire program, with an emphasis on native rhythms, harmonies, and melodies composed at a great distance from the music capitals of London, Paris, and Vienna.

Our all-Czech first half begins with *Šárka*, one of *The Moldau*'s siblings from Bedřich Smetana's great cycle *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*). In its entirety, *Má vlast* is a tribute to Czech legend, landscape, and tradition; however, each of its six segments functions as an independent tone poem. The dramatic and exciting *Šárka* (pronounced SHAR-kah) chronicles in music the crafty vengeance of a brilliant female warrior intent on punishing the entire male sex because her lover betrayed her.

Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto is the antithesis of such youthful impetuosity. One of the great masterpieces of Dvořák's maturity, this lofty, expansive concerto speaks with its own passion, showing a different side of Czech music. As a young violist, Dvořák had played in orchestras that Smetana conducted and he freely acknowledged his deep debt to the older master. In the Cello Concerto, he paid homage to that legacy—and gave cellists their greatest solo work of the romantic era.

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2, "Little Russian," is almost exactly contemporary with Smetana's *Šárka*, and is as intensely Russian as Smetana's music is Czech. The subtitle suggests the Ukrainian character of the music—Tchaikovsky used folk tunes from that region for his Second Symphony at a time when Ukraine was known as "little Russia" in the Czarist Empire. Nevertheless, the symphony has a distinct Russian flavor, seasoned with orchestral techniques that are Tchaikovsky's signatures: separation of orchestral choirs, rapid scale passages as musical glue binding sections, and an emphasis on the low register of his woodwinds. Perhaps because we do not hear this work as often as the last three Tchaikovsky symphonies, it has a freshness that is most appealing.

Bedřich Smetana *Šárka* from *Má vlast*

Born: Litomyšl, Czechoslovakia, March 2, 1824 **Died:** Prague, May 12, 1884 **First performance:** March 17, 1877, in Prague (*Šárka*); the complete cycle, *Má vlast*, was premiered on November 5, 1882, also in Prague **STL Symphony premiere:** January 23, 1975, Walter Susskind conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** April 10, 1999, Libor Pešek conducting **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and other percussion, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately nine minutes

Jan Vilimik
Smetana

In Context: *Peasants in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Balkans rebel against the Ottoman army; Bizet's* Carmen *opens in Paris; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 premieres in Boston*

Most of us first associate Czech music with Antonín Dvořák. The Czechs themselves, however, regard Dvořák's older compatriot, Bedřich Smetana, as the father of Czech music and their first major proponent of nationalism.

A staunch patriot, Smetana expressed his deep love of Bohemia through composing. Most of his works are programmatic, inspired by an event in his life or an extra-musical association. His masterpiece is *Má vlast*, a cycle of six tone poems that encompass Czech legend and landscape, geography and history, evoking both people and places. If we think of *Má vlast* as a large-scale symphony as well as a collection of tone poems, *Šárka*—its third segment—functions as a scherzo.

The Šárka Valley is an area of northwest Prague that includes the oldest nature preserve in the country. It takes its name from an Amazon woman in Czech legend. Deserted by her unfaithful lover, she vowed revenge on all men. Smetana sketched a prose outline summarizing the story embedded in his music:

> *Šárka* begins with the maddened girl, who swears revenge on the entire male generation for the infidelity of her lover. When the hero Ctirad and his men-at-arms approach, they hear the feigned cries of a young woman (Šárka) bound to a tree. Ctirad is captivated by her beauty. He frees her and she offers him and his armor-bearers a drink that is really a sleep-inducing potion. On a prearranged signal (sounded by the horn), her warrior maidens, previously concealed at a distance, rush forward to commit their bloody massacre. The movement ends with the horror of mass slaughter. Šárka's thirst for revenge has been slaked.

The Music *Šárka* is a series of free variations. Smetana is both clever and graphic in communicating the action. His opening theme depicts the enraged warrior-maiden throwing down her gauntlet. Ctirad's troops march into Šárka's trap, unaware that they are both outwitted and doomed. Solo clarinet and section cello solos hint at our heroine's plot: drugging and tricking her victims. They will embark on a drunken revel before collapsing from alcohol and drug-induced slumber. (A bassoon indicates that at least one of them snores.) The solo clarinet returns to herald the massacre, as Šárka wreaks her bloody revenge.

Antonín Dvořák Cello Concerto in B minor, op. 104

Born: Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841 **Died:** Prague, May 1, 1904 **First performance:** March 19, 1896, at Queens Hall, London; Leo Stern was the soloist, Dvořák conducted **STL Symphony premiere:** February 11, 1916, Pablo Casals was soloist, with Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** October 24, 2009, Yo-Yo Ma was soloist, with David Robertson conducting the Symphony Gala **Scoring:** Solo cello and an orchestra of two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 40 minutes

Dvořák

In Context *Japan and China go to war; Russian Czar Alexander III dies in Crimea; Tchaikovsky's* Swan Lake *premieres in St. Petersburg*

When Johannes Brahms first examined the score to Dvořák's late Cello Concerto, he exclaimed, "Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a violoncello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!" Op. 104 crowns Dvořák's concerto production, and remains one of the glories of the literature. His confidence in solo writing clearly developed with great strides beyond the piano and violin concertos that preceded it; this work is the harvest.

Oddly enough, Dvořák considered cello to be an inappropriate solo instrument. He perceived its upper register as strained, even nasal, and its lower register gruff. These characteristics made him reluctant to attempt a concerted work, despite entreaties from the eminent Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan.

During his second American sojourn, in March 1894, Dvořák attended a New York Philharmonic Concert featuring the Irish-American cellist and composer Victor Herbert (1859-1924). Dvořák and Herbert had become friends; Herbert was introducing his own new Cello Concerto No. 2. Dvořák was moved by Herbert's artistry and newly stimulated by the instrument's possibilities. Within a year, he set to work on his own cello concerto. Because it was the sole piece Dvořák completed during his final year in America, op. 104 is generally grouped with Dvořák's "American" works. Actually it is far more closely allied to his Bohemian roots, filled with the spirit and rhythms of his beloved homeland.

The Music The first movement is rich in melodies, distributed generously throughout the orchestra but focused in the woodwinds. Clarinets declaim the main theme in the orchestral exposition. The second theme is one of the horns' most soaringly lyrical moments in 19th-century orchestral literature. After their initial statement, the horns cede to clarinet and oboe. Eventually, of course, the soloist has his way with most of the melodic material.

More than anywhere else, Czech flavor sails forth in the slow movement. While working on the piece, Dvořák learned that his sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzova, was ill. She had been a youthful love of his,

and he retained a strong affection for her. Knowing that she was fond of his song "Let me wander alone with my dreams" (op. 82, no. 1), he incorporated its melody into the Adagio. The movement is exceptionally rich in other melodic material, including a noteworthy duet for oboe and the soloist, plus a lovely flute solo.

Following Dvořák's return to his homeland in May 1895, Josefina died. At that point he undertook the revision of the Finale, incorporating another quotation from the song into the coda. He encountered resistance from his intended soloist, squabbling with Wihan about the movement. Dvořák wrote to his publisher Simrock: "I shall only give you the work if you promise not to allow *anybody* to make changes—Friend Wihan not excepted—without my *knowledge and consent*—and also not the cadenza that Wihan has added to the last movement."

The composer won the battle, resisting interference from the soloist. He was adamant against the idea of a cadenza, and allowed only minor alterations that Wihan had suggested in the first movement. Consequently, the finale's last 60 measures have an ineffable quality of repose that is one of the concerto's most distinguishing characteristics. Wihan was incensed, precipitating a tiff with Dvořák. Thus Leo Stern played the premiere. Dvořák did, however, dedicate the piece to Wihan upon publication.

The concerto is imbued with a symphonic breadth throughout, an approach whose Brahmsian qualities can hardly be lost on those familiar with both composers' works. The prominent solo role, aggressive and fluid from the start, succeeds in integrating itself quite satisfactorily with the larger orchestral entity.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, op. 17 ("Little Russian")

Born: Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka district, Russia, May 7, 1840 **Died:** St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893 **First performance:** February 7, 1873, in Moscow, Nikolai Rubinstein conducting; the revised version was premiered in St. Petersburg on February 12, 1881; Karl Zike conducted **STL Symphony premiere:** December 19, 1941, Igor Stravinsky conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** January 30, 1993, Leonard Slatkin conducting **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and other percussion, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 32 minutes

Tchaikovsky

In Context 1872 *Wireless radio patented; Tolstoy writes* Anna Karenina; *Nietzsche's first book,* The Birth of Tragedy, *published*

Tchaikovsky is generally regarded as a Russian exponent of western musical tradition, adopting conventional forms such as symphony, concerto, and string quartet. During the late 1860s, he actually flirted with both nationalism and the so-called "Mighty Handful,"

also known as the "Mighty Five" (Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov). For a while, he was close to Balakirev, the leader of the new group of composers. The Symphony No. 2 is the closest Tchaikovsky came to embracing the ideas and techniques of his Russian contemporaries. Compared to his later, highly charged symphonic essays, it is almost cloudless.

The subtitle "Little Russian" is not the composer's, but was bestowed by the Moscow critic Nikolai Dmitrievich Kashkin because Tchaikovsky incorporated three Ukrainian folk tunes into its fabric. (Ukraine was called "Little Russia.") That is doubtless why the Second Symphony was greeted warmly not only by Balakirev and his group, but also by the Russian public. The very successful Moscow premiere in February 1873 was one of the sweetest triumphs Tchaikovsky was to know.

In 1879 and 1880, Tchaikovsky overhauled the symphony, rewriting nearly the entire first movement, and shortening the work significantly. Listeners familiar with Tchaikovsky's later works may be surprised that such a large work as the "Little Russian" is free of the tortured self-questioning that so dominates the last three symphonies. In the Symphony No. 2, the composer shows less torment and more charm.

The Music A key aspect of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 is the repetition of a relatively simple tune with a shifting background. Tchaikovsky turns this technique into a sophisticated variation method, challenging the listener to focus attention beyond the foreground theme. He does this with three different folk melodies prominently showcased among its movements. His approach is particularly evident in the first movement and the finale.

The inner two movements reveal the fledgling Tchaikovsky hinting at what he was to achieve in the later symphonies. Hans Keller calls it "quoting from the future":

> It seems significant that whereas the First [Symphony] quotes from the past, the Second quotes, as it were, from the future: the basic thought of the second movement, *Andantino marziale, quasi moderato*, was to grow, more than 20 years later, into the (not so called) march of the Sixth Symphony's third movement.

This third movement, a lively scherzo based on a single rhythmic idea, is indebted both to the scherzo of Alexander Borodin's Symphony No. 1 and to the "Queen Mab" scherzo from Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*. Tchaikovsky imbues it with his own personality by means of ingenious metrical shifts that help to maintain the interest level, and with irregular phrase lengths of three and six bars.

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