

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT  
Cristian Măcelaru, conductor**

October 27 and 29, 2017

**GEORGES BIZET**  
(Arr. Fritz Hoffmann)

**Suite No. 1 from *Carmen***  
Prelude and Aragonaise  
Intermezzo  
Seguedille  
Les Dragons d'Alcala  
Les Toréadors

**WYNTON MARSALIS**

**Violin Concerto in D Major**  
Rhapsody  
Rondo Burlesque  
Blues  
Hootenanny  
**Nicola Benedetti, violin**

INTERMISSION

**NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV**

***Scheherazade, Op. 35***  
The Sea and Sindbad's Ship  
The Tale of Prince Kalendar  
The Young Prince and the Princess  
The Festival at Bagdad; The Sea; The Ship  
Goes to Pieces on a Rock

## **Suite No. 1 from *Carmen***

GEORGES BIZET

Born October 25, 1838, Paris

Died June 3, 1875, Bougival

*Carmen* – Bizet’s opera of passion, jealousy and murder – was a failure at its first performance in Paris in March 1875. The audience seemed outraged at the idea of a loose woman and murder onstage at the Opéra-Comique. Bizet died three months later at age 37, never knowing that he had written what would become one of the most popular operas ever composed. After Bizet’s death, his publisher Choudens felt that the music of the opera was too good to lose, so he commissioned the French composer Ernest Guiraud to arrange excerpts from *Carmen* into two orchestral suites of six movements each. The music from *Carmen* has everything going for it – excitement, color and (best of all) instantly recognizable tunes. From today’s vantage point, it seems impossible that this opera could have been anything but a smash success from the first instant.

The Suite No. 1 from *Carmen* contains some of the most famous music from the opera, and it also offers some wonderful writing for solo woodwinds. The opening *Prelude* presents the ominous “fate motif” that will return throughout the opera, while the *Aragonaise* (which functions as the Prelude to Act IV) is based on an old Andalusian folksong and features the sound of castanets and a haunting oboe solo. The graceful *Intermezzo*, with its limpid flute solo over harp accompaniment, is the Prelude to Act III; *Seguedille*, which offers another solo opportunity for the oboe, has its roots in flamenco music. *Les Dragons d’Alcala* (which is also the Prelude to Act II) depicts a well-disciplined regiment of dragoons; Bizet’s musical portrait offers prominent parts to snare drum, bassoon and clarinet. Most famous of all is *Les Toréadors*, which serves as the Introduction to Act I. The opening introduces the toreadors as they march across the square in Seville; Bizet’s music – with its energy and bristling rhythms – catches some of their swagger. In the center section, violins sing the famous *Toreador Song*, and the movement concludes with the return of its opening music.

## **Violin Concerto in D Major**

WYNTON MARSALIS

Born October 18, 1961, New Orleans

*A note from the composer:* I was blessed with the opportunity to write a piece for one of my favorite artists and people, Scottish virtuoso Nicola Benedetti. I have loved the violin since the age of 14, when I first played with a string orchestra. The instrument is capable of expressing deep pathos, varying states of psychological complexity, delicate tenderness and passionate love, and it is also happy to provide thrilling virtuosic flights of fancy, the biting whine and cry of the blues and that good ole dancing stomp of a fiddler's reel. I set out to combine the profound elements of our American vernacular languages with an orchestral syntax by utilizing the chorus format form that characterizes most jazz improvisation and composition. Because Anglo-Celtic mythology, process, dance and music are all up in the roots of most forms of American folk expression, Nicky and I were able to mine our natural ancestry and mutual heritage. She gave me a first class course on violin.

## ***Scheherazade, Op. 35***

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Born March 18, 1844, Tikhvin

Died June 21, 1908, Lyubensk

In the summer of 1888, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, then 44 years old, went to his summer estate on the shores of Lake Cheryemenyetskoye and set to work on a new orchestral composition. He called it *Scheherazade* and added a subtitle – “Symphonic Suite on 1001 Nights” – that made clear its inspiration. Each movement had a title that suggested a definite program: *The Sea and Sindbad’s Ship*, *The Tale of Prince Kalendar*, *The Young Prince and the Princess*, and the concluding *The Festival at Bagdad*, which ends with a shipwreck (*The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock*). And the composer included an introductory note in the score: “The Sultan Schahriar, persuaded of the falseness and faithfulness of all women, had sworn to put to death each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her life by arousing his interest in tales which she told him during a thousand and one nights. Driven by curiosity, the Sultan put off his wife’s execution from day to day and at last gave up his bloody plan altogether.” *Scheherazade*, composed within the month of July 1888, quickly became one of the most popular works in symphonic literature, played (and over-played) around the world,

where audiences could revel in the stories with which the wily Scheherazade entranced her dangerous husband.

But does this music tell a story? Each of the movements has a descriptive title, and certain themes are obviously musical portraits: the menacing opening is clearly the ferocious Sultan, while the solo violin is just as clearly the sly and sensual Sultana, spinning her tales. And along the way we hear the swaying sea, the sighs of the young lovers, the festival in Baghdad and the crash of the ship against the rock.

Or do we? Despite what seems obvious musical portraiture, Rimsky-Korsakov discouraged any talk of this music's telling a specific story and suggested that his intentions were much more general: "In composing *Scheherazade*, I meant these hints to direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had traveled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each listener. All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as symphonic music, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders..." The composer even went so far as to temporarily withdraw the descriptive titles of the four movements.

And so listeners are free to approach this music in any way they wish. They can experience it as the Sultana's depiction of a thousand exotic tales and even imagine the specific events the music and movement titles seem to evoke. Or they can listen for Rimsky-Korsakov's endless transformation of just a few themes, which return in an exotic array of new shapes and colors. Or they can listen for the opulence of the sound he is able to draw from the orchestra, for *Scheherazade* remains – more than a century after its creation – one of the most sumptuous scores ever composed. Perhaps some of the charm of this music is that it simply cannot be pinned down but remains as elusive, evocative and mysterious as the Sultana's tales.

There was a time, a generation or two ago, when *Scheherazade* was considered the stereotype of the warhorse, music so overplayed and so overfamiliar that the mere mention of its name produced smiles and a certain condescension. But this music appears much less often in concert halls today, and one of the particular charms of a concert like this is the pleasure of hearing this distantly-remembered music burst to vibrant life in front of us one more time.

**-Program notes by Eric Bromberger**

## **PERFORMANCE HISTORY by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, Symphony Archivist**

Although a suite of selections from Bizet's *Carmen* was led by Nino Marcelli during the summer season of 1935 (incidentally, chosen then by popular vote), Charles Ketcham first led a performance of the *Carmen* Suites Numbers 1 and 2 with the contemporary San Diego Symphony in the 1980-81 season. Several performances of varied music from that favorite opera followed, mainly during the summer seasons. Rimsky-Korsakov's very popular symphonic suite, *Scheherazade*, was played by the San Diego Symphony for the first time in the summer of 1962, when Earl Murray conducted. Murray also programmed it in the 1965-66 season but he was injured, and Carlos Chavez led it in his place. Jahja Ling led it most recently during the 2012-13 season. The performance at these concerts is the sixteenth time the piece has been programmed here.

These concerts mark the first performances here of Winton Marsalis's Violin Concerto.