

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT  
Steven Schick, conductor**

January 26 and 28, 2018

**MAURICE RAVEL**

***Suite (5 pièces enfantines) from Ma Mère l'Oye*  
(Mother Goose)**

Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty

Tom Thumb

Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas

Conversations of Beauty and the Beast

The Enchanted Garden

**TORU TAKEMITSU**

***From me flows what you call Time***

Introduction

Entrance of the Soloists

A Breath of Air

Premonition

Plateau

Curved Horizon

The Wind Blows

Premonition

Mirage

Waving Wind Horse

The Promised Land

Life's Joys and Sorrows

A Prayer

**Aiyun Huang, percussion**

**Gregory Cohen, percussion**

**Andrew Watkins, percussion**

**Erin Douglas Dowrey, percussion**

**Ryan J. DiLisi, percussion**

INTERMISSION

**MISSY MAZZOLI**

***River Rouge Transfiguration***

**BÉLA BARTÓK**

***Suite from The Miraculous Mandarin, Op. 19***

**Suite (5 pièces enfantines) from *Ma Mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose)**

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrennes

Died December 28, 1937, Paris

Ravel was a very strange mixture as a person. A man of enormous sophistication and intelligence, he nevertheless felt throughout his life a stinging longing for the world of the child: he collected toys and was fascinated by the illustrations in children's books. Not surprisingly, he made friends easily with children and sometimes abandoned the adults at parties to go off and play games with their children.

Ravel's fascination with the world of the child found expression in his art: he wrote music for children to hear (such as his opera *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*) and music for them to play. His *Ma Mère l'Oye* ("Mother Goose") for piano-four hands dates from 1908. Ravel wrote it for Jean and Mimi Godebski, aged eight and ten, the son and daughter of some of his friends, though it was two other children – aged seven and ten – who played the premiere in Paris in 1910. Each of the five movements was inspired by a scene from an old French fairy tale; the suite, however, should be understood as a collection of five separate scenes rather than as a connected whole. In an oft-quoted remark, Ravel described his aim and his technique in this music: "My intention of awaking the poetry of childhood in these pieces naturally led me to simplify my style and thin out my writing." This may be music for children to hear – and for very talented children to play – but it is also music for adults: it evokes the freshness and magic of something long in the past. In 1911 Ravel orchestrated *Ma Mère l'Oye*, slightly expanding the music in the process.

The very gentle *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* depicts the graceful dance of the attendants around the sleeping Princess Florine. *Tom Thumb* tells of one of the most famous figures in children's tales – the little boy who leaves a trail of breadcrumbs behind in the woods, only to become lost when birds eat the crumbs. The music itself seems to wander forlornly as the lost boy searches for the path; high above him, the birds who ate his crumbs cry out tauntingly. *Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas* tells the story of the empress who is made ugly by a spell, only to be transformed to beauty at the end. When she steps into her bath in the garden, bells burst out in happy peals. Ravel's use of the pentatonic scale – the music is played mostly on the black keys – evokes an exotic atmosphere. *Conversations of Beauty and the Beast* brings

another classic tale. Ravel depicts Beauty with a gentle waltz, Beast with a lumpish, growling theme in the contrabassoon's low register. A delicate glissando depicts his transformation, and Ravel skillfully combines the music of both characters. *The Enchanted Garden* brings the suite to a happily-ever-after ending. The opening – for strings alone – is simple, almost chaste, but gradually the music assumes a broad, heroic character and – decorated with brilliant runs – drives to a noble close in shining C Major.

***From me flows what you call Time***

TORU TAKEMITSU

Born October 8, 1930, Tokyo

Died February 20, 1996, Tokyo

*From me flows what you call Time*, a concerto for five percussionists and orchestra, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the percussion ensemble NEXUS to mark the hundredth anniversary of the opening of that hall. The Boston Symphony and NEXUS gave the premiere in Carnegie Hall on October 19, 1990. In his program note at the time of the premiere, Takemitsu said that he “suddenly imagined 100 years of time flowing through this man-made space, so full of special meaning, called Carnegie Hall. It was as if I could hear the Hall murmuring from the numberless cracks between the layers of those years, ‘From me flows what you call Time.’ Thus, the ‘me’ in the title is meant to be ‘Carnegie Hall,’ not the composer.”

But if the notion of 100 years was important to the creation of this music, a different number gave it shape. The number five dominates this music: it was written for five soloists, the principal theme has five notes, that theme spans a perfect fifth and so on. Takemitsu noted an even more important influence of the number five, and it is worth quoting him at length:

As soon as I had chosen the number five as the principal motif of the work, I immediately recalled the Tibetan “Wind Horse” (*rlungria*). The “Wind Horse” is a custom observed by the highland nomads of Tibet when they migrate in search of new land. Used like divination during a ceremony, it consists of five cloth streamers, each a different color, strung up on a rope, and allowed to wave in the wind. Blown by the seasonal winds, the myriad wind-horses then point out the way the nomads must take to find the location of their new life.

The five colors of the cloth streamers – white, blue, red, yellow, green – have separate meanings and are the same as the colors emitted by the five Buddhas who sit at the center of a mandala. Blue is the color of water, red of fire, yellow of the earth, green of the wind, and white, as the color created by the other four, signifies the sky, the air, the heavens, and finally “nothingness.”

Though this is a concerto, audiences should not look for the brilliance and extroversion that are normally part of concerto form. The orchestra is divided in unusual ways, with the woodwinds set at a distance behind the violins, the brass set at a distance behind the lower strings; the five soloists are themselves separated and stationed at various points within the orchestra. Takemitsu has called this “an orchestral work in which the orchestra, like nature, surrounds us limitlessly, and out of that limitlessness the soloists materialize in limited forms such as earth, wind, water and fire, then once again dissolve into limitless nature.”

That last note is important because it points to the fact that while this music plays out over a 30-minute span, it really exists outside time. Western audiences have almost taken for granted that music should be teleological, or end-oriented – we conceive of music as based on conflict and resolution. Takemitsu, however, did not, and in an oft-quoted remark he has compared his music to the experience of walking through a Japanese garden: there is no direct path and no end, and instead one is free to wander, to pause, and to experience without the need to be getting someplace.

Takemitsu has said that “the ruling emotion” of *From me flows what you call Time* is “prayer,” and he has divided the work into 13 brief sections, which are listed on the program page. Listeners should use these titles only as a general guide. This is not descriptive music, nor is there a dramatic progression across the span of these movements. This is music to be enjoyed at the moment it is happening – and for its connection to something outside time.

### ***River Rouge Transfiguration***

MISSY MAZZOLI

Born October 27, 1980, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Described by *The New York Times* as “one of the most consistently inventive, surprising composers now working in New York,” Missy Mazzoli is certainly one of today’s most successful young composers from *any* part of this country. Trained at the Yale School of Music,

the Royal Conservatory of the Hague and Boston University, Mazzoli has had works performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Kronos Quartet, Emanuel Ax, Jennifer Koh and many other performers. She has had particular success with her three operas, which have been produced by such companies as the New York City Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Opera Philadelphia. Those operas are *Song from the Uproar* (2012), *Breaking the Waves* (2016) and *Proving Up*, the latter of which will be premiered this month by the Washington National Opera. A pianist, Mazzoli leads and tours with the new music ensemble Victoire and currently teaches at the Mannes College of Music in New York City.

Mazzoli's *River Rouge Transfiguration* was premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on May 13, 2013, under the direction of Leonard Slatkin. The composer has prepared a program note, which is reprinted with the kind permission of G. Schirmer, Inc.:

"...all around me and above me as far as the sky, the heavy, composite, muffled roar of torrents of machines, hard wheels obstinately turning, grinding, groaning, always on the point of breaking down but never breaking down."

— Louis-Ferdinand Céline, from *Journey to the End of the Night*

I first fell in love with Detroit while on tour with my band, Victoire, in 2010. When I returned home to New York I dove into early Detroit techno from the late eighties, Céline's novel *Journey to the End of the Night* and early 20th century photographs by Charles Sheeler, who documented Detroit's River Rouge Plant in 1927 through a beautiful, angular photo series. In my research I was struck by how often the landscape of Detroit inspired a kind of religious awe, with writers from every decade of the last century comparing the city's factories to cathedrals and altars, and *Vanity Fair* even dubbing Detroit "America's Mecca" in 1928. In Mark Binelli's recent book *Detroit City Is the Place to Be*, he even describes a particular Sheeler photograph, *Criss-Crossed Conveyors*, as evoking "neither grit nor noise but instead an almost tabernacular grace. The smokestacks in the background look like the pipes of a massive church organ, the titular conveyor belts forming the shape of what is unmistakably a giant cross." This image, of the River Rouge Plant as a massive pipe organ, was the initial inspiration for *River Rouge Transfiguration*. This is music about the transformation of grit and noise (here represented by the percussion, piano, harp and pizzicato strings) into something massive, resonant and unexpected. The "grit" is again and again folded into string and brass chorales that collide with

each other, collapse and rise over and over again.

*River Rouge Transfiguration* was commissioned by the Detroit Symphony in honor of Elaine Lebenbom. Thank you to the Detroit Symphony, Leonard Slatkin, Erik Ronmark, Rebecca Zook, Farnoosh Fathi, Katy Tucker and Mark Binelli. (— Missy Mazzoli)

**Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, Op. 19**

BÉLA BARTÓK

Born March 25, 1881, Nagyszentmiklos, Hungary

Died September 26, 1945, New York City

No other work looms quite as large in Bartók's career as *The Miraculous Mandarin*, and none of his other works caused him so much trouble. From the time he encountered Melchior Lengyel's story in January 1917, Bartók worked on this music for almost ten years – the most time he spent on a single work – before it was produced on the stage. Yet that premiere in Cologne in November 1926 was a catastrophe. The audience jeered, the press was savage, the Catholic Church protested and the mayor of Cologne – Konrad Adenauer (decades later the first Chancellor of West Germany) – called the conductor into his office, ripped into him for programming “such a dirty piece,” and blocked any further performances. Efforts to produce *The Miraculous Mandarin* in Budapest in 1931 – to commemorate Bartók's fiftieth birthday – ran into such opposition that the whole idea had to be canceled.

The reasons for such furious opposition are obvious. *The Miraculous Mandarin* tells a story that would annihilate audiences even today, when almost anything is acceptable on stage. The composer himself left a concise summary: “Three apaches force a beautiful girl to lure men into their den so that they can rob them. The first is a poor youth, the second is not better off, but the third, however, is a wealthy Chinese. He is a good catch, and the girl entertains him by dancing. The Mandarin's desire is aroused, he is inflamed with passion, but the girl shrinks from him in horror. The apaches attack him, rob him, smother him in a quilt, stab him with a sword – but their violence is of no avail. They cannot cope with the Mandarin who continues to look at the girl with love and longing in his eyes. Finally feminine instinct helps, and the girl satisfies the Mandarin's desire; only then does he collapse and die.”

This tale could not be more squalid or explicit, and so Bartók's reactions to it catch us by surprise. He called it “marvelously beautiful,” and on another occasion exclaimed “how beautiful

the story is.” Bartók saw it as a *moral* tale: beneath the lurid surface, it is an allegory of the collision of good and evil and of the ultimate triumph of good. The evil is clear: the three thugs – always portrayed by noisy, abrasive music – represent modern urban society. They are money-mad, violent and destructive; they have corrupted the girl (innocence) to do their bidding. Into this setting comes something otherworldly, powerful and incomprehensible: the mandarin (it was not so crucial that he be Chinese as that he be *different* – in one of Lengyel’s early versions this figure was a deformed dwarf). The mandarin represents an unstoppable life force beyond the comprehension of the thugs. Only the girl comes to understand his true essence, and she redeems the mandarin and herself through passion.

*The Miraculous Mandarin* is usually classified as a ballet, but Bartók insisted that it was not. In a letter to his publisher, Bartók complained: “I see that [Universal Edition] is advertising Mandarin as a ballet. I have to observe that this work is less a ballet than a pantomime, since only two dances actually occur in it.” And later he wrote: “the piece must not be turned into a ballet-show; it is intended as a pantomime, after all.” For Bartók, the emphasis was on action rather than on dance, and his music depicts that action with raw power. Some have heard the influence of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* here, others the music of Schoenberg (which Bartók had discovered after World War I), but *The Miraculous Mandarin* actually sounds like Bartók in every measure: brilliant, hard-edged, rhythmic, powerful. It has been observed that a stage performance needs no choreographer, since every action – every gesture – is clear from the music.

Onstage, *The Miraculous Mandarin* lasts half an hour, but the Suite consists of about the first two-thirds of the complete score. (Bartók made two brief cuts and provided an ending for concert performances.) From its first instant, this music is unsettling. Second violins swirl up and down over a “wrong” interval (octave plus a half-step), and the din of the industrialized urban setting arrives in a blast of auto-horns. Bartók was very proud of this beginning and described it in a letter to his wife: “an awful clamor, clatter, stampeding and blowing of horns: I lead the highly respectable listener from the crowded streets of a metropolis into an apaches’ den.” Each of the girl’s seductive lures in the window, depicted by clarinets, nets a prospective client. First, a shabby rake (Bartók’s original scenario quoted above reverses the sequence of the first two Johns) enters to the sound of trombone glissandos and then is graphically thrown down the stairs by the thugs. The second lure brings a reticent young man (solo oboe), and the girl dances shyly

for him before he too is found to be penniless and cast down the stairs.

But the third lure brings the mandarin, who makes a magnificent entrance: the orchestra “shivers” in terror as the lower brass stamp out an “oriental-sounding” theme and the acid chords that mark his arrival in the room. A moment of stunned silence follows. Terrified, the girl begins to dance for him, and her waltz gradually becomes more animated. When the mandarin tries to embrace her, she flees in terror, and he chases her around the room. This music, the most violent in *The Miraculous Mandarin*, is a furious fugue, and at the climax of the chase – just before the thugs leap out to seize the mandarin – Bartók rips the Suite to a sudden close on three brutal chords.

*The Miraculous Mandarin* has never found much success on the stage – its lurid events simply overwhelm its redemptive subtext. But the Suite Bartók drew from it – full of exhilarating energy, color and sheer sonic punch – has become one of his most popular works in the concert hall.

**-Program notes by Eric Bromberger**

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

Robert Shaw led the San Diego Symphony's initial performance of Ravel's exquisite *Mother Goose* Suite in the summer season of 1953. Since then, it has been programmed by the orchestra eight times, most recently when Yoav Talmi directed it in the 1990-91 season. Peter Erős introduced Bartók's Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin* to San Diego Symphony audiences in the 1976-77 season. It has also been conducted here by Yoav Talmi during the 1990-91 season. The only other performance of this work by the orchestra was the most recent one, in the 2004-05 season, under the direction of Jahja Ling. The two other pieces on this program, by Toru Takemitsu (*From me flows what you call Time*) and Missy Mazzolli (*Rouge River Transfiguration*), are being heard at these concerts for the first time.