

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT  
Pinchas Zukerman, conductor and violin**

February 2 and 3, 2018

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**  
Arr. by Glazunov

*Mélodie, No. 3 from Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op. 42*  
Pinchas Zukerman, violin

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

*Sérénade mélancolique, Op. 26*  
Pinchas Zukerman, violin

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

**Serenade in C Major, Op. 48**  
Pezzo in forma di Sonatina  
Walzer  
Élégie  
Finale (Tema Russo)

INTERMISSION

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN**

**Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90: *Italian***  
Allegro vivace  
Andante con moto  
Con moto moderato  
Saltarello: Presto

***Mélodie, No. 3 from Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op. 42***

**(Arr. by Glazunov)**

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk

Died November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

In the summer of 1877, Tchaikovsky made an ill-advised marriage. It was a disaster – it lasted only a few weeks – and the composer, near mental collapse, fled Russia. He found refuge in Switzerland, where he gradually recovered in the quiet beauty of Clarens, on the Lake of Geneva. One of his visitors there was Yosif Kotek, a violinist and one of his former students in Moscow. Together, they played music for violin and piano, and Tchaikovsky began to compose for the violin: in the spring of 1878 he wrote the Violin Concerto and a collection of three short pieces for violin and piano. He published these latter works under the name *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* (“Memory of a Dear Place”), a title that expresses his affection for Clarens and its calming influence. The brief *Mélodie* is the final piece of this set. Many listeners will discover that they already know this music, with its soaring, plunging main theme and skittering secondary material. Tchaikovsky plays the opening section up to an impressive climax before the *Mélodie* falls back to its very quiet – and very high – close.

***Sérénade mélancolique, Op. 26***

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

The Hungarian-born violinist Leopold Auer, a student of Joachim, was named professor of violin at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1868, when he was only 23. Auer would remain in that position for the next 49 years, and during that time he produced some of the greatest violinists of all time, including Heifetz, Elman, and Zimbalist. Auer and Tchaikovsky first met in January 1875, when both were still young men, and Auer asked Tchaikovsky for a piece for violin and orchestra. Tchaikovsky – who at this moment was just finishing his First Piano Concerto – agreed and took some time away from the concerto to write a brief work for Auer, which he called *Sérénade mélancolique*. But it was not Auer who first played this work – violinist Adolph Brodsky, who would later give the premiere of Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto, gave the first performance of the *Sérénade* in Moscow on January 28, 1876.

Tchaikovsky’s title catches the character of this music perfectly: it is both lyric and melancholy. A very brief introduction leads to the solo violin’s statement of the main theme, a dark melody of Slavic character. Tchaikovsky extends this through a series of varied repetitions; the music grows more animated in its central section, which requires some agile double-stopping from the violinist, then falls away to close quietly on its opening material.

## Serenade in C Major, Op. 48

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

In the fall of 1880, Tchaikovsky set to work on two pieces simultaneously. One was the Serenade in C Major (for strings, Op. 88); the other was the *1812 Overture*, Op. 49. The composer loved the first of these, but had no use for the second. To his benefactress, Madame von Meck, he wrote: “I have written two long works very rapidly: the festival overture and a Serenade in four movements for string orchestra. The overture will be very noisy. I wrote it without much warmth or enthusiasm; and therefore it has no great artistic value. The Serenade on the contrary, I wrote from an inward impulse: I felt it; and I venture to hope that this work is not without artistic qualities.”

In a way, the two pieces are opposites, for the Serenade – lyric, open, relaxed – is everything the bombastic *1812 Overture* is not, and it comes as no surprise that Tchaikovsky had such fondness for this music. It got its start, he said, as something in between a string quartet and a symphony and eventually turned into a four-movement serenade for string orchestra.

The opening movement is subtitled *Pezzo in forma di Sonatina*, and Tchaikovsky noted that he intended this music as homage to one of his favorite composers: Mozart. Though Tchaikovsky called his work a serenade and specifically set the first movement in sonatina form – both of which suggest an absence of rigorous formal development – this music is nevertheless beautifully unified. The powerful descending introduction quickly gives way to the *Allegro moderato*, based on two subjects: a broadly-swung melody for full orchestra and a sparkling theme for violins. Tchaikovsky brings back the introductory theme to close out the movement.

The second movement is a waltz (*Walzer*). Waltzes were a specialty of Tchaikovsky, and this is one of his finest. It gets off to a graceful start, grows more animated as it proceeds, then falls away to wink out on two pizzicato strokes. The third movement, titled *Élégie*, begins with a quiet melody that soon grows in intensity and beauty. The mood here never becomes tragic – the Serenade remains, for the most part, in major keys – but the depth of feeling with which this *Larghetto elegiaco* unfolds makes it the emotional center of the entire work. The finale has a wonderful beginning. Very quietly the violins play a melody based on a Russian folk tune, reputedly an old hauling song from the Volga River, and suddenly the main theme bursts out and the movement takes wing. The *Allegro con spirito* theme is closely related to the introduction of the first movement, and at the end Tchaikovsky deftly combines these two themes to bring one of his friendliest compositions to an exciting close.

## **Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90: *Italian***

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Born February 3, 1809, Hamburg

Died November 4, 1847, Leipzig

Mendelssohn's parents encouraged him to travel, and as a very young man he made – on his own – a nine-month tour of Italy in 1830-31. It was a trip he had eagerly anticipated, and it brought pleasures beyond his dreams. He wrote: “Italy at last. And what I have all my life considered as the greatest possible felicity is now begun, and I am basking in it.” (A generation later, another native of Hamburg, Johannes Brahms, would be equally rapturous about Italy). The young man – Mendelssohn celebrated his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday in Italy – loved the clear blue skies, the lemon blossoms, the churches, paintings, statues – and even took part in the carnival of Rome.

While staying in Rome in October 1830, Mendelssohn began a symphony inspired by Italy and worked on it the next several years, finishing it early in 1833. Mendelssohn may have loved Italy, but he had no use for Italian music and incorporated no specifically Italian themes in his symphony; this is the music of a very happy young German composer who celebrates Italy in his own musical language. Mendelssohn conducted the premiere in London on May 13, 1833, to great acclaim, but he was unhappy with the score and thoroughly revised it. He remained dissatisfied and planned to revise the final movement, but his sudden death at 38 prevented this, and the symphony was published in its second version four years after his death.

From its blazing beginning to its exciting close, the *Italian* Symphony is a marvel of color and energy, and it has one of the most effective openings in music: over bubbling woodwinds, violins sing the surging main idea, and the high spirits of this opening establish a rocket-like momentum that will drive the entire movement. Two beautifully-contrasted subordinate themes follow in turn: an amiable clarinet duet and then a fugato, full of rhythmic snap, which the second violins introduce at the start of the development. This movement almost overflows with energy: Mendelssohn reminds the orchestra to play *staccato* seven different times, and the music drives to a close as exciting as its opening.

Commentators have been unanimous in hearing a religious procession in the *Andante con moto*, but beyond that they differ sharply: one hears an old Czech pilgrim song, another a religious procession in Naples; in Rome, Mendelssohn saw the installation of Pope Gregory XVI – perhaps this movement was inspired by that ceremony. Outwardly, the third movement has the minuet-and-trio form of the classical symphony, but here the outer sections flow elegantly on long and seamless phrases, while the trio section features fairyland horn calls reminiscent of Mendelssohn's (as yet unwritten) incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The coda is built on both themes.

Mendelssohn's one nod to native Italian music in this symphony comes in the final movement,

which is a saltarello, an ancient Italian dance based on triplet rhythms and full of vigorous leaps. Mendelssohn uses three energetic themes in this movement (the sinuous third, which slithers between major and minor tonalities, is a tarantella), and the music dances happily to its fiery close, remaining in fierce A minor rather than returning to the key of the opening movement, A Major. So perfect a conclusion is this finale that it is difficult to imagine what changes Mendelssohn had planned during its revision: how possibly could this movement be improved?

A note on the orchestration: from the bright primary colors of the outer movements to the subtle woodwind shadings and brass fanfares of the inner movements, the *Italian* Symphony is such a model of inspired orchestral writing that it is sometimes cited as an example of how the Romantic composers expanded the possibilities of the orchestra. But the marvel is that Mendelssohn achieves all this with the classical orchestra: the symphony is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, plus timpani and strings. This is the orchestra that Haydn and Mozart used, yet in Mendelssohn's inspired hands it sounds like a completely new – and vastly more powerful – instrument.

**-Program notes by Eric Bromberger**

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

Pinchas Zukerman has chosen a nearly all-Tchaikovsky program, in which the first two pieces, the *Mélodie* and the *Sérénade mélancolique*, are violin pieces he has previously played here. Tchaikovsky's lovely Serenade in C Major for Strings was introduced to San Diego Symphony audiences by guest conductor Vassily Sinaisky in the 1989-90 season. Surprisingly, for a quite popular work, it has been programmed here only once more, in the 1993-94 season, until these performances. In contrast, Mendelssohn's popular *Italian* Symphony has been programmed five times by the orchestra, beginning with the performance under Zoltan Rozsnyai during the 1966-67 season. The orchestra's then-associate conductor, Philip Mann, conducted it during the 2008-09 season, the work's most recent performance here.