

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 5
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT
Gemma New, conductor**

May 18 and 19, 2019

ALYSSA WEINBERG

***Reign of Logic* (West Coast Premiere)**

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 82

Moderato

Andante sostenuto

Tempo I

Allegro

Michael Barenboim, violin

INTERMISSION

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Andante – Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza

Valse: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

Reign of Logic

ALYSSA WEINBERG

Born 1988

Alyssa Weinberg originally trained as horn player, but the lure of composition proved too enticing, and she changed the direction of her career. Her training has been quite varied. She has an Artist's Diploma from the Curtis Institute, a masters in composition from the Manhattan School of Music, a bachelor of music from Vanderbilt, and she is currently in the doctoral program at Princeton. Her teachers have included Richard Danielpour and Jennifer Higdon, and her music – which includes works for orchestra, varied chamber ensembles, solo performers and voice – has been performed by eighth blackbird, Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, the Enso and Dover String Quartets, the Louisville Orchestra and many others. Weinberg is co-founder and co-artistic director of duende, an interdisciplinary ensemble for experimental music and dance.

Reign of Logic, which receives its West Coast premiere at these concerts, was written for the Manhattan School of Music Composers Orchestra in 2013. The composer has provided a short introduction to this piece and its title:

Reign of Logic was originally written for the Manhattan School of Music Composer's Orchestra in late 2012 and early 2013. The title comes from André Breton's 1924 *Surrealist Manifesto*, a document (and artistic movement) that I've drawn inspiration from in much of my work. I believe that the acoustic properties of sound itself, and particularly the manner in which they are manipulated into music are inherently Surrealistic. *Reign of Logic* is an early exploration into those ideas.

Reign of Logic calls for a large orchestra – one that includes a varied percussion section, harp and piano – and then uses those forces with great discrimination: sometimes this music can unleash the full power of that orchestra, sometimes it is built on the most delicate textures. *Reign of Logic* opens with great strikes of sound that quickly give way to misty, shimmering textures. Over these, the work's principal theme emerges, quietly at first: this is a brief falling phrase, intoned solemnly and moving from section to section as the music proceeds. These repetitions gradually grow in strength, and suddenly – over racing strings – the fierce attacks from the beginning return. These tensions fade, the solemn principal theme returns quietly in different sections of the orchestra, and over faint reminiscences of earlier eruptions *Reign of Logic* fades into silence.

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 82

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV

Born August 10, 1865, St. Petersburg

Died March 21, 1936, Paris

Alexander Glazunov is one of those composers who have virtually disappeared in the sharp division between nineteenth and twentieth-century music. As a young man, he was friends with Borodin, Balakirev and Tchaikovsky, he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, and he was taken to meet Liszt in Weimar. He became director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1905 and lived well into the twentieth century, struggling to maintain standards at the Conservatory during the strange new era of communist rule. If Glazunov's world was transformed politically during his lifetime, it was turned on its head musically. Glazunov had achieved an international reputation as a young composer, but his nineteenth-century idiom was regarded as hopelessly

conservative by Prokofiev, Shostakovich and other young Russian composers; he found himself almost irrelevant in the strange new century. On a long tour of Western Europe, he took an apartment in Paris in 1928 and never returned to Russia. He was virtually forgotten at the time of his death in 1936, though in 1972 his remains were exhumed and returned to Russia, where they were buried with honor.

Glazunov composed his Violin Concerto in 1904-05, just as he took over the St. Petersburg Conservatory and just as he was approaching his fortieth birthday. Around him, the world of music was in ferment: at this same moment Debussy was composing *La mer*, Mahler was writing his Sixth Symphony, Schoenberg was completing *Pelleas und Melisande* and Strauss was producing his opera *Salome*, which would send shock waves across Europe. Coming from this moment of musical transformation, Glazunov's Violin Concerto is a serenely conservative piece of music, one that looks back to the order of the nineteenth century rather than touching the strange new currents of the twentieth.

This is a virtuoso concerto, full of attractive melodies and demanding some very accomplished playing from the soloist. Glazunov did not play the violin, and he wrote the concerto specifically for Leopold Auer, professor of violin at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and teacher of such violinists as Heifetz, Milstein, Elman and Zimbalist. Auer gave the premiere in St. Petersburg on March 4, 1905, and the concerto was soon played around the world; Heifetz and Milstein were among its most notable performers. The concerto is compact (about 20 minutes long), and the only feature that might be considered unusual is its structure. Rather than being divided into separate movements, it is in four sections that are played without pause – virtually the entire work grows out of themes announced in its opening section, which then reappear in varied forms in subsequent sections.

Over murmuring woodwinds, the violin soloist enters immediately with the main idea, a long theme of dark and Slavic character. This is extended briefly before Glazunov presents the second subject, a falling lyric melody marked both *dolce* and *tranquillo*. At just the point we expect the development to begin, Glazunov moves on to the second section, marked *Andante sostenuto*. Set in glowing D-flat Major, this section begins with a soaring violin melody that at first seems entirely new (it is in fact related to the opening theme). Gradually the music grows more complex and animated, then proceeds directly into the third section, marked simply *Tempo I*. Dark lower strings now begin what seems to be the “development:” themes from the opening

section return and are extended and combined. This section concludes with a long cadenza full of some really wicked writing for the soloist. The orchestra returns, the tempo accelerates, and the concluding section – marked *Allegro* – bursts to life in a great blaze of trumpet fanfares. The writing for solo violin here (and throughout the concerto) is full of technical hurdles like passages played in octaves, long runs, complex chording, artificial harmonics and left-handed pizzicatos.

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

PETER ILYCH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk

Died November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

When Tchaikovsky composed his Fourth Symphony in 1877, he offered his patroness Madame von Meck a rather detailed program in which he described it as a symphony about Fate: the ringing brass call that opens the symphony and returns at the climax of the finale is the sound of “Fate, the inexorable power that...hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, leaving us no option but to submit.” The Fourth Symphony came from a moment of supreme personal tension for Tchaikovsky – his disastrous and short-lived marriage – and in the process of completing it he collapsed. He suffered a nervous breakdown from which he recovered slowly, and this was followed by a creative dry spell that lasted nearly a decade.

Then, in the winter of 1887-88, Tchaikovsky made a tour of Western Europe, conducting his own works in Leipzig, Hamburg (where he met Brahms), Berlin, Prague, Paris and London. Those audiences responded enthusiastically to his music (Brahms was an exception), and – with his confidence somewhat bolstered – Tchaikovsky returned to Russia ready at last to attempt a new symphony. In April 1888, he moved into a villa in Frolovskoye, northwest of Moscow, where he could work on his new symphony and take long walks in the woods. Two years later he would return to Frolovskoye to discover – in a moment straight out of Chekhov – that the forests had all been cut down, but now he worked happily in this beautiful setting, and his Fifth Symphony was done by August. Tchaikovsky led the premiere in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888, and – despite some initial misgivings – was finally convinced that he had regained his creative powers.

While it lacks the white-hot fury of the Fourth Symphony or the dark intensity of the

Sixth, the Fifth Symphony – full of those wonderful Tchaikovsky themes, imaginative orchestral color and excitement – has become one of his most popular works, so popular in fact that it takes a conscious effort to hear this symphony with fresh ears. As he did in the Fourth, Tchaikovsky builds this symphony around a motto-theme, and in his notebooks he suggested that the motto of the Fifth Symphony represents “complete resignation before fate.” But that is as far as the resemblance goes, for Tchaikovsky supplied no program for the Fifth Symphony, nor does this music seem to be “about” anything. The motto theme returns in each of the four movements, often in quite different guises, but it may be best to understand this motto as a unifying device rather than as anything so dramatic as the Fourth Symphony’s “sword of Damocles.” Listeners are of course free to supply their own interpretations as to what this music is about, but despite the tantalizing hints about “resignation before fate,” Tchaikovsky apparently regarded his Fifth Symphony as abstract music.

Clarinets introduce the somber motto-theme at the beginning of the slow introduction, and gradually this leads to the main body of the movement, marked *Allegro con anima*. Over the orchestra’s steady tread, solo clarinet and bassoon sing the surging main theme of this sonata-form movement, and there follows a wealth of thematic material. This is a lengthy movement, and it is built on three separate-theme groups, full of soaring and sumptuous Tchaikovsky melodies. The development fuses these lyric themes with episodes of superheated drama, and listeners will hear the motto-theme hinted at along the way. The movement draws to a quiet close, its furious energy finally exhausted.

Deep string chords at the opening of the *Andante cantabile* introduce one of the great solos for French horn, and a few moments later the oboe has the graceful second subject. For a movement that begins in such relaxed spirits, this music is twice shattered by the return of the motto-theme, which blazes out dramatically in the trumpets. Tchaikovsky springs a surprise in the third movement: instead of the expected scherzo, he writes a lovely waltz. Its trio section skitters along a steady flow of sixteenth-notes from the strings (this section feels very much like a scene from one his ballets), and Tchaikovsky rounds the movement off beautifully – he writes an extended coda based on the waltz tune, and in its closing moments the motto-theme makes a fleeting appearance, like a figure seen through the mists.

However misty that theme may have seemed at the end of the third movement, it comes into crystalline focus at the beginning of the finale. Tchaikovsky moves to E Major here and

sounds out the motto to open this movement – this music seems to have arrived at its moment of triumph even before the last movement has fairly begun. The main body of the finale, marked *Allegro vivace*, leaps to life, and the motto-theme breaks in more and more often as it proceeds. The movement drives to a great climax, then breaks off in silence. This is a trap, designed to trick the unwary and propel them into premature applause, for the symphony is not yet over. And in fact no attentive listener should be fooled, for this false “conclusion” is in the wrong key of B Major. (One wonders just what thoughts were running through Tchaikovsky’s mind when he designed this trap.) Out of the ensuing silence begins the real coda, and the motto-theme now leads the way on constantly-accelerating tempos to the (true) conclusion in E Major.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, San Diego Symphony Archivist

These concerts mark the west coast premiere of the *Reign of Logic* by Alyssa Weinberg. The popular and very melodic violin concerto by Glazunov was introduced to San Diego audiences when Ruggiero Ricci played it under Peter Erős's direction in the season of 1972-73. The most recent performance of this piece, its fifth repetition at these concerts, was in November of 2006, when Yoav Talmi conducted the orchestra and Jeff Thayer was the violinist.

The glorious Fifth Symphony by Tchaikovsky, a great audience favorite, was introduced to San Diego Symphony audiences when Nicolai Sokoloff conducted it in the summer season of 1941. Shortly after that, Balboa Park was closed to all but the Navy for the duration of WWII, and the reorganized San Diego Symphony restarted its concerts in 1947. Since then, it has been played here nineteen times. Jahja Ling led it twice, the first time at his season finale concert as Music Director Designate with the San Diego Symphony in May 2004. Most recently, Pinchas Zukerman led it during Season 2013-14. It is the most played here of all the Tchaikovsky symphonies.