SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
“TRUMPETS & TCHAIKOVSKY”
A Jacobs Masterworks Concert
Rafael Payare, conductor

March 28 & 29, 2020

ANDREW NORMAN

Drip Blip Sparkle Spin Glint Glide Glow Float
Flop Chop Pop Shatter Splash

JOHANN BAPTIST GEORG NERUDA
Trumpet Concerto in E-flat Major
Allegro
Largo
Vivace
Pacho Flores, trumpet

PAQUITO D'RIVERA
Concerto venezolano (U.S. Premiere)
Pacho Flores, trumpet

INTERMISSION

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36
Andante sostenuto
Andantino in modo di canzona
Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato
Finale: Allegro con fuoco
Born in Michigan, Andrew Norman grew up in Modesto, studied composition and piano at USC and Yale, and over the last 15 years has developed into one of the outstanding composers of his generation. He has been composer-in-residence with both the Boston Modern Orchestra Project and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and in 2017 he was named *Musical America’s* Composer of the Year. His 45-minute orchestral work *Play* (its brilliant “Level 1” movement performed last season by the San Diego Symphony) received the Grawemeyer Award as the outstanding orchestral composition of 2017, and his *Sustain* (premiered in 2018 by the Los Angeles Philharmonic to open their centennial season) has been hailed as one of the most important recent works for orchestra. Norman’s music is notable for his careful attention to sonority, its high energy level, and his awareness of the dynamics behind the notes – the way the parts of a composition interact, trigger each other, and develop in their own ways. Norman currently teaches at the USC Thornton School of Music.

Norman’s *Drip Blip Sparkle Spin Glint Glide Glow Float Flop Chop Pop Shatter Splash* shows another side of the composer – a sense of fun. The piece was commissioned in 2005 by the Minnesota Orchestra for their Young People’s Concerts, and it has become a popular curtain-raiser as well as a piece Norman uses when he makes educational visits to schools. Norman has spoken of his method in composing it: “As I say to the kids who listen to this piece during school visits, the process of writing it was a bit like making a tossed salad. I chopped up sounds from the orchestra – one sound for each of the thirteen verbs in the title – and then I tossed them all together and called it a piece.”

Only four minutes long, *Drip* is full of a madcap energy, which has led some to describe this music as “cartoonish” in its methods – it is full of starts and stops, pauses and then great explosions, sounds that leap between sections of the orchestra, bits and pieces that collide and spin off in new directions. All of this zany energy is achieved, of course, with very careful control, but the effect is of fizzing energy and a kaleidoscopic spin of different sounds.

No wonder it works so well as a curtain-raiser.
Trumpet Concerto in E-flat Major
JOHANN BAPTIST GEORG NERUDA
Born about 1707, Bohemia
Died about 1780, Dresden

Almost nothing is known about Johann Neruda, and every biography of him offers the same few facts. Born in what is now the Czech Republic, he learned to play the violin as a boy and for some years made his living as a violinist in Prague. In 1750 he moved to Dresden, where he became the director of the court orchestra. He composed 18 symphonies, 14 concertos, chamber and sacred music and one opera. And that essentially is all that we know about him. Neruda came from the generation that grew up between Bach and Haydn, and his music reflects that – he wrote in what we know as the style galant. This “galant” style set aside the contrapuntal complexities of baroque music but preceded the firm classical style of Haydn and Mozart – it emphasized clear and appealing melodies, uncomplicated accompaniment and an elegant and courtly manner of expression.

Neruda originally wrote the Concerto in E-flat Major for the corno di caccia, a forerunner of the modern French horn, but it is usually played today on the trumpet (recordings exist of both versions). Both the horn and trumpet of Neruda’s era lacked the valves of modern instruments, and it would have taken stellar performers just to manage the notes of this concerto, let alone play them with the elegance and authority this music demands.

The Concerto in E-flat Major does away with the contrasts of instrumental groups of the baroque concerto grosso, but it is not built on the opposition of themes and keys of the classical concerto – in fact, all three movements of this concerto are in the home key of E-flat Major, and they are in the fast-slow-fast sequence that we expect in a concerto. A long orchestral introduction precedes the entrance of the trumpet in the opening Allegro, and the soloist picks up the orchestra’s principal theme as it enters. Much of the writing in this concerto is set very high in the trumpet’s range, and the music demands both great agility and the ability to sustain a long, lyric line. Neruda offers his soloist the opportunity for a cadenza here (and in the other two movements as well). The Largo begins with ornate and interweaving string lines, and once again the trumpet takes over these themes as it enters. This movement develops a hint of harmonic tension as it proceeds, but these clouds pass quickly, and courtly order prevails. The concluding Vivace forms a brisk finale. The soloist has a demanding part, the orchestral accompaniment
remains clear (the two violin sections often play in unison in this movement), and this pleasing concerto drives to a firm conclusion.

**Concerto venezolano (U.S. Premiere)**

PAQUITO D’RIVERA  
Born June 4, 1948, Havana

The genesis of this flavorful, tropical and trumpet-filled work contains a multi-faceted symbiosis that pairs up and brings together two remarkable musicians. Paquito D’Rivera, a saxophone player and clarinetist, and Pacho Flores, a trumpeter, are bound by language, by the continent, by the Caribbean, by the breath of their instruments, and most of all, by a warm and extroverted personality that guarantees a fruitful and – undoubtedly – fun musical collaboration. What do these two great musicians have to say about *Concerto venezolano* (“Venezuelan Concerto”)?

First, let’s hear from the composer, Paquito D’Rivera:

It could be said that Pacho Flores came into the world with a trumpet (or several!) under his arm. With a special gift for playing the trumpet, the man even married the daughter of a trumpet maker; as my mother used to say: “La yerba que está pa’ ti, no hay chivo que se la coma” (“The grass that is there for you, no goat is going to eat it”). When Pacho – who was born in Venezuela – asked me to write a symphonic piece for him, I didn’t hesitate to mix up elements that symbolized the lush majesty of the landscape of his beautiful South American country, the huge contrast between the tragedy that punishes its people today and the proverbial joy of its traditional music. At the soloist’s request, the piece is conceived as a fantasy in one movement. In the middle, an almost childish merengue in quintuple time emerges and culminates in a very Cuban danzón, as a symbol of the legendary musical and human relationship between the fellow countrymen of Antonio Lauro and Ernesto Lecuona. And the grand finale? In response to the dramatic introduction of the concerto, it couldn’t be anything other than a triumphant and optimistic joropo, as if foreshadowing the nearness of a much-deserved happiness for which “the Brave People” have fought so hard.

During a brief video interview where the composer and trumpeter rehearse the piece, talk about
each other and about relevant musical topics, Pacho Flores said:

This is part of all this crazy stuff we are doing to promote the trumpet repertoire, especially with a great, legendary master such as Paquito D’Rivera, a jazz legend. Listening to him my whole life, he has been a great point of reference for me. And now it is a dream come true that he could write a trumpet concerto for me with all these innovations, features, discoveries that we’ve made in order to bring the trumpet into concert halls. Paquito named this particular concerto “Venezuelan” because there’s a really important story behind it for him. Because I am Venezuelan, he always remembers his time in Venezuela and all the great Venezuelan masters such as Antonio Lauro, the master Antonio Estévez, Simón Díaz – and Paquito himself is a much loved person in Venezuela. This concerto is going to be an important part and a flagship work of my repertoire, and of the catalogue of new works that I’m taking around the world.

It is no secret to anyone that today Pacho Flores is a star in the world of trumpet, and what better person to acknowledge and appreciate that status than another great musician, Paquito D’Rivera, who has this to say about his colleague and friend:

Pacho Flores is a special guy. He is not just a virtuoso… The word “virtuoso” scares me a little. When we talk about a virtuoso, we talk about someone who can play a lot of notes and has no heart, and doesn’t need it either. But Pacho is something else. Pacho is a great artist with a tremendous feeling for playing the trumpet. He is a unique artist, with unique theories on how to play the trumpet, which for him is not one instrument but many.

After playing the merengue section that Paquito D’Rivera mentions in his description of the Concerto venezolano, the Venezuelan trumpeter asked the Cuban saxophone player: “And did you like the merengue?” The response couldn’t have been stronger: “You are the one that has to like it. You are the Venezuelan one!”

– Program note provided by Carlos Magán Fernández, ACM Management
The Fourth Symphony dates from the most tumultuous period in Tchaikovsky’s difficult life, and its composition came from a moment of agony. When he began work on the symphony in May 1877, Tchaikovsky had for some years been tormented by the secret of his homosexuality, a secret he kept hidden from all but a few friends. As he worked on this score, one of his students at the Moscow Conservatory – a deranged young woman named Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova – declared her love for him. Knowing that such a prospect was hopeless, Tchaikovsky put her off as gently as he could, but she persisted, even threatening suicide at one point. As fate would have it, Tchaikovsky was also at work on his opera *Eugene Onegin* at this time and was composing the scene in which the bachelor Onegin turns down the infatuated young Tatiana, to his eventual regret. Struck by the parallel with his own situation – and at some level longing for a “normal” life with a wife and children – Tchaikovsky did precisely the wrong thing for some very complex reasons: he agreed to Antonina’s proposal of marriage. His friends were horrified, but the composer pressed ahead and married Antonina on July 18, 1877. The marriage was an instant disaster. Tchaikovsky quickly abandoned his bride, tried to return, but fled again and made what we would today call a suicide gesture. He then retreated to St. Petersburg and collapsed into two days of unconsciousness. His doctors prescribed complete rest, a recommendation Tchaikovsky was only too happy to follow. He abandoned his teaching post in Moscow and fled to Western Europe, finding relief in the quiet of Clarens in Switzerland and San Remo in Italy. It was in San Remo – on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean and far from the chaos of his life in Moscow – that he completed the Fourth Symphony in January 1878.

The Fourth Symphony has all of Tchaikovsky’s considerable virtues – great melodies, primary colors and soaring climaxes – and in this case they are fused with a superheated emotional content. The composer’s friends guessed, perhaps inevitably, that the symphony had a program, that it was “about” something, and Tchaikovsky offered several different explanations of the content of this dramatic music. To his friend Serge Taneyev, Tchaikovsky said that the model for his Fourth Symphony had been Beethoven’s Fifth, specifically in the way both symphonies are structured around a recurring motif, though perhaps also in the sense that the two
symphonies begin in emotional turmoil and eventually win their way to release and triumph in the finale. For his patroness, Madame Nadezhda von Meck, who had supplied the money that enabled him to escape his marriage, Tchaikovsky prepared an elaborate program detailing what his symphony “meant.” One should inevitably be suspicious of such “explanations” (and Tchaikovsky himself later suppressed the program), but this account does offer some sense of what he believed had shaped the content of his music.

The symphony opens with a powerful brass fanfare, which Tchaikovsky describes as “Fate, the inexorable power that hampers our search for happiness. This power hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, leaving us no option but to submit.” The principal subject of this movement, however, is a dark, stumbling waltz in 9/8 introduced by the violins: “The main theme of the Allegro describes feelings of depression and hopelessness. Would it not be better to forsake reality and lose oneself in dreams?” This long opening movement (it is nearly half the length of the entire symphony) has an unusual structure: Tchaikovsky builds it on three separate theme-groups which evolve through some unusual harmonic relationships. Like inescapable fate, the opening motto-theme returns at key points in this dramatic music, and it finally drives the movement to a furious close: “Thus we see that life is only an everlasting alternation of somber reality and fugitive dreams of happiness.”

After so turbulent a beginning opening, the two middle movements bring much-needed relief. The contrast is so sharp, in fact, that Taneyev complained that these were essentially ballet music made to serve as symphonic movements; Taneyev may have a point, but after that scalding first movement, the gentle character of the middle movements is welcome. The Andantino, in ternary-form, opens with a plaintive oboe solo and features a more animated middle section. Tchaikovsky described it: “Here is the melancholy feeling that overcomes us when we sit weary and alone at the end of the day. The book we pick up slips from our fingers, and a procession of memories passes in review…”

The scherzo has deservedly become one of Tchaikovsky’s most popular movements. It is a tour de force for strings (which play pizzicato throughout), with crisp interjections first from the woodwinds and then from brass. Tchaikovsky makes piquant contrast between these quite different sounds, combining all his forces only in the final moments of the movement. The composer notes: “There is no specific feeling or exact expression in the third movement. Here are only the capricious arabesques and indeterminate shapes that come into one’s mind with a
little wine…”

Out of the quiet close of the third movement, the finale explodes to life. The composer described this movement as “the picture of a folk holiday” and said, “If you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity.” Marked Allegro con fuoco, this movement simply alternates its volcanic opening sequence with a gentle little woodwind tune that is actually the Russian folk-tune “In the field there stood a birch tree.” At the climax, however, the fate-motto from the first movement suddenly bursts forth: “But hardly have we had a moment to enjoy this when Fate, relentless and untiring, makes his presence known.”

Given the catastrophic events of his life during this music’s composition, Tchaikovsky may well have come to feel that Fate was inescapable, and the reappearance of the opening motto amid the high spirits of the finale represents the climax – both musically and emotionally – of the entire symphony. This spectre duly acknowledged, Tchaikovsky rips the symphony to a close guaranteed to set every heart in the hall racing at the same incandescent pace as his music.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

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

The music of Paquito D'Rivera has never been performed by the San Diego Symphony. Neither has the opening work by Andrew Norman, though the Orchestra has performed his other works Suspend and the first movement of his award-winning Play in recent years. In contrast, the Neruda Trumpet Concerto was performed in the 1990-91 season, with the Symphony’s then-principal trumpet, Calvin Price, as soloist.

A truly genuine crowd-pleaser despite the composer's habitually lugubrious outlook, the intense and brilliant Fourth Symphony by Tchaikovsky is being heard at these concerts for its seventeenth outing by the Orchestra. First conducted here in 1950 by Fabien Sevitzky, it was heard most recently here when Jahja Ling conducted the third of his three performances of this work during his tenure as music director, in the season of 2016-17.