

# CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

THE JACK WOLGIN  
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

Orchestral concerts are supported by the  
Jack Wolgin Curtis Orchestral Concerts Endowment Fund.

**Tuesday, October 27, 2009**  
Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center

JoAnn Falletta, *conductor*

Elissa Lee Koljonen, *violin*

**R. STRAUSS**

*Don Juan, Op. 20*

**RANJBARAN**

**Violin Concerto**

Andante

Adagio

Allegro moderato

INTERMISSION

**RIMSKY-KORSAKOV**

*Sheherazade, Op. 35*

The Sea and Sindbad's Ship (Largo e maestoso—Allegro non troppo)

The Tale of Prince Kalendar (Lento—Allegro molto)

The Young Prince and the Princess (Andantino quasi allegretto)

The Festival at Bagdad; The Sea; The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock  
(Allegro molto)

This concert is sponsored by Razak Company; INTECH Construction;  
and Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates.

Photographic and recording equipment may not be used in Verizon Hall.

# PROGRAM NOTES

---

## **Richard Strauss: *Don Juan*, Op. 20**

Born in Munich, June 11, 1864

Died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, September 8, 1949

Strauss's early tone poems contain more than a little autobiography, and *Don Juan* is a particularly interesting case. By all reports the composer was a bit of a Don Juan himself before he married soprano Pauline de Ahna. Pauline was to have a reforming effect on the brash young composer: Coincidentally or not, it was about the time of their acquaintance in 1887 that Strauss began sketching out a work based on Nikolaus Lenau's version of the Don Juan legend. It might be overstating the case to construe biographical ties between Juan and Strauss, but this brilliant score does contain a palpable quality of youthful impetuosity and self-irony—qualities that are consistently associated with the young Strauss.

Lenau's hero is a far remove from the proud, lascivious figure of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Lenau's Don has left far behind any arrogance he might have had: In fact he is so bored, even depressed by his constant carnal pursuits that he yearns for their end. He conquers women more out of sheer compulsion than from any real need to appease his ego. In fact he feels remorse for his victims, "profoundly disturbed," in the apt words of the critic Norman del Mar, "that his life's philosophy—the glorification of the experience of the single moment above all else—is so utterly unendurable to those on whom he seeks to impose it that they destroy themselves, leaving him completely baffled and demoralized."

A remorseful Don Juan? It's not an image we're used to seeing. But such is Lenau's—and Strauss's—anti-hero. Yearning for death, in the end the Don dies in a duel by letting himself be overpowered—for even victory is "as boring as life itself." This aspect of nihilistic ennui, which Lenau uses to stir a sort of perverse sympathy for his character, fascinated Strauss in his tone poem. With *Don Juan*, whose premiere performance in Weimar in 1889 was the first major triumph of his career, Strauss paved a path for subsequent masterpieces, including *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, *Ein Heldenleben*, and *Don Quixote*.

The program for *Don Juan* should not be read too literally. Strauss was careful not to associate particular events from the tale with specific musical details in the score, though some can be extrapolated. He did cite three of the work's more obscurely philosophical passages in the score. Some have construed the musical structure as a sort of variation on sonata form. The dashing first two themes seem to represent the Don's posturing boldness, after which we hear several brief amorous flirtations that form a sort of development. This is interrupted by a restless new quest for satisfaction, which leads to the horn theme representing the heroic Juan and culminating in the famous dinner-party that leads to his death. The musical recapitulation of the Don's themes concludes with the trumpets' sharp stab, as Juan offers himself up to his opponent's sword.

---

## **Behzad Ranjbaran: Violin Concerto**

Born in Tehran, Iran, July 1, 1955

Living in Garden City, N.Y.

Few musicians from Iran have gained as strong a profile in Western music as Behzad Ranjbaran. As a boy in Tehran, he showed strong early promise, entering the Tehran Music Conservatory at

age nine. A decade later he came to the United States to study at Indiana University and eventually earn his Master's and D.M.A. degrees at the Juilliard School. Among his teachers were Joseph Schwantner, Vincent Persichetti, and David Diamond. Ranjbaran joined the faculty of Juilliard's pre-college program in 1991 and the regular faculty in 1993. In 2005 he served as composer-in-residence for the fortieth anniversary of the Saratoga Music Festival, where his works were performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, among others.

Ranjbaran's music embraces a lush tonal idiom while drawing on Persian sonorities and culture. Among his significant works is his *Persian Trilogy* (*Seven Passages*, *Seemorgh*, and *The Blood of Seyavash*), a cycle that takes its inspiration from the eleventh-century Persian epic *Shahnameh*. JoAnn Falletta's recording of the *Trilogy* with the London Symphony Orchestra on Naxos was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006. Ranjbaran's music has also been performed by Renée Fleming (*Songs of Eternity*), Yo-Yo Ma (*Elegy*), Paul Tobias (Cello Concerto), and Jean-Yves Thibaudet (Piano Concerto).

Ranjbaran was named a distinguished artist (New Jersey Council on the Arts), won the Charles Ives Award (American Academy of Arts and Letters) and the Rudolf Nissim Award (ASCAP), and has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Meet the Composer. Joshua Bell gave the premiere of the Violin Concerto in 2003, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Gerard Schwarz.

According to the composer, the violin concerto "provided me with an opportunity to revisit some of my musical impressions of the *kamancheh*, an ancient Persian bowed instrument, considered to be one of the ancestors to the modern violin. From my early years in the Tehran Music Conservatory, I was mesmerized by the sound of *kamancheh*. Therefore, the notion of writing a violin concerto that could incorporate the power and brilliance of a modern instrument and the intimacy of an ancient solo instrument was simply irresistible. This inspiration from the *kamancheh* also informed my use of Persian modes and rhythms."

The concerto is in three movements. The main theme is built from the intervals of perfect fifth and perfect fourth. The three movements share thematic material, with the principal idea of the third movement being a transformation of the opening theme. The opening movement alternates between lyricism and ferocity; the second is dark and expressive. The finale contains brilliant passagework for the soloist, and re-introduces the themes of the first and second movements.

////////////////////////////////////  
**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov: *Sheherazade*, Op. 35**

Born in Tikhvin, Russia, March 18, 1844

Died in Lyubensk (near St. Petersburg), June 21, 1908

*Sheherazade* is the quintessential musical statement on *The Arabian Nights*, the celebrated collection of Middle Eastern folk tales from which sprang such characters as Aladdin, Sinbad, and Ali Baba. As one of the prime expressions of Rimsky-Korsakov's mastery of orchestral texture, this series of musical episodes also helped establish the composer as a sort of father of twentieth-century orchestral sound. To some degree it and other works by Rimsky-Korsakov helped spur orchestra innovations by Ravel, Stravinsky, Debussy, and other composers.

The preface to the composer's first edition of *Sheherazade* sets the tone: "The Sultan Shahriar, convinced of the duplicity and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Sheherazade saved her life by interesting the Sultan in tales she told him,

through 1,001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan continually put off her execution, and at last entirely abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Sheherazade relate to him, citing the verses of poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale and story into story.”

*Sheherazade*'s program draws on several images and stories from *The Arabian Nights*, arranged in four movements. “The program that guided me in the composition of *Sheherazade* consisted of separate, unconnected episodes and pictures from *The Arabian Nights*, scattered through all four movements: the Sea and Sinbad's Ship; the Story of Prince Kalander; the Young Prince and Princess; and the Festival in Baghdad, with the Ship Breaking Up Against a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman.” *Sheherazade* received its premiere in St. Petersburg in 1888.

The opening theme seems to represent the Sultan's booming voice, demanding that Sheherazade begin her stories; the willowy violin solo that follows seeks to characterize her discursive storytelling. Both recur throughout all four movements. The second movement represents the story of a lowly Kalander who turns out to be a nobleman; the Kalanders were itinerant magicians and showmen at Middle-Eastern courts. A romantic slow movement relates a love story between the Prince Kamar al-Zanna and Princess Budur. The Finale relates a series of stories: “The Festival at Baghdad,” “The Sea,” “Shipwreck,” and a conclusion. Through the course of the piece one hears the stern theme representing the Sultan gradually yield into something more sensuous and cheerful, and perhaps even loving.

Like many composers before and after him, Rimsky-Korsakov created a program for *Sheherazade* and then almost wished he hadn't. His aim was to create “a kaleidoscope of fairy-tale images and designs of oriental character,” which led him later to do away with most of the headings. “I meant these hints to direct *only slightly* the listener's fancy on the path that my own fancy had traveled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each.”

In the final analysis—and this is perhaps what the composer was getting at—one can listen to *Sheherazade* either as music that tells tales or as absolute music free of programmatic connections. Its discursive music suggests moods and emotional states, but as a purely musical structure it holds together organically as well as any work in the orchestral repertoire.

Copyright © 2009 Paul Horsley

## BIOGRAPHIES

---

### **JoAnn Falletta**, *conductor*

An effervescent and exuberant figure on the podium, JoAnn Falletta has been praised by the *Washington Post* as having “Toscanini's tight control over ensemble, Walter's affectionate balancing of inner voices, Stokowski's gutsy showmanship, and a controlled frenzy worthy of Bernstein.” A vibrant ambassador for music and an inspiring artistic leader, she serves as the music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Falletta's recent and upcoming international guest-conducting appearances

include: the Netherlands Radio, Tokyo Metropolitan, and Royal Scottish National orchestras; National Philharmonic of Lithuania; Spain's Orquesta de Extremadura and Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias; the Warsaw National, Kraków, Seoul, Northwest German, Rotterdam, and BBC philharmonics; Orchestre National de Belgique; Ensemble Kanazawa (Japan); Orchestre National de Lyon; and Lisbon Metropolitan Symphony.

This past May she led the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center's spring gala. She has guest-conducted

over one hundred orchestras in North America, including those of Philadelphia, Montreal, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, Toronto, New Jersey, Seattle, Honolulu, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Houston, Rochester, Utah, Edmonton, and Quebec.

Ms. Falletta has received many prestigious conducting awards, including the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award; the Stokowski Competition; the Toscanini, Ditson, and Bruno Walter Awards for conducting; and the American Symphony Orchestra League's John S. Edwards Award.

She has introduced over four hundred works by American composers, among them more than eighty world premieres. Hailing her as a "leading force for the music of our time," the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers honored Ms. Falletta with her tenth ASCAP award in 2008. She serves as a member of the National Council on the Arts, the advisory body of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Since becoming music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in 1999, Ms. Falletta has been credited with bringing the philharmonic to a new level of national and international prominence. In 2009 the orchestra won two Grammy awards—best classical performance and best classical composition—for its CD *John Corigliano—Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan; Three Hallucinations*. The orchestra was also nominated for best-engineered album, classical category, for its *Respighi—Church Windows* recording.

### **Elissa Lee Koljonen, violin**

Celebrated violinist Elissa Lee Koljonen has thrilled audiences and critics in over one hundred cities throughout the world. She initially received international acclaim when she became the first recipient of the prestigious Henryk Szeryng Foundation

Award and silver medalist of the Carl Flesch International Violin Competition. Her playing has been lauded by the *Helsingin Sanomat* (Helsinki) as "sparkling, sensual, and personal." The *Chicago Tribune* has praised her "boundless technique and musicianship," and the *Detroit News* wrote, "Koljonen brings to her playing not just assured technique but unflinching purpose and confidence."

Ms. Koljonen performed Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 with the Philadelphia Orchestra in July 2007. Recent and upcoming engagements include her debut in Spain with James Judd and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Bilbao; performances with José-Luis Novo and the orchestras in Annapolis and Binghamton; and concerts with the Delaware and Reading symphony orchestras; and a performance for the Kimmel Center's Summer Solstice. Other engagements include the Boston Pops, Minnesota Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Oregon, Pittsburgh, Helsinki, and Seoul.

Ms. Koljonen has collaborated with noted conductors such as Matthias Bamert, James DePreist, Lawrence Foster, Richard Hickox, Neeme Järvi, Louis Lane, Andrew Litton, Eiji Oue, and the late Bryden Thomson. She has performed in some of the world's most important venues, among them the Vienna Musikverein, Salzburg Mozarteum, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, London's Barbican Centre, Seoul Arts Center, Boston's Symphony Hall, and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia.

As a recitalist Ms. Koljonen has performed in many musical capitals, including London; Amsterdam; Salzburg; Seoul; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; and New York. A 2004 performance in Carnegie Hall was hailed with excellent critical review. Also an avid chamber musician, Ms. Koljonen appears regularly at festivals throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. She garnered

critical acclaim for her debut at the Queen Elisabeth Hall in London and her appearances with the London Mozart Players and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo in a special concert celebrating the seven-hundredth anniversary of the Grimaldi Dynasty.

Ms. Koljonen is a protégé of Aaron Rosand of the Curtis Institute of Music. Through his influence, she continues the legacy and tradition of Leopold Auer's legendary school of violin playing.

## This Fall at Curtis

### STUDENT RECITAL SERIES

Through December 16, most Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays  
8 p.m., Field Concert Hall, Curtis Institute of Music, 1726 Locust Street  
Free; no tickets required. For a complete list of the week's performances,  
call (215) 893-5261 or visit [www.curtis.edu](http://www.curtis.edu).

#### November

### 8 PECO FAMILY CONCERTS: INTRODUCTION TO COMPOSITION AND CONDUCTING

2 and 4 p.m., Field Concert Hall

Tickets: \$5 for adults, free for children twelve and under  
Curtis Ticket Office, (215) 893-7902 or [www.curtis.edu](http://www.curtis.edu)

### 22 ALUMNI RECITAL SERIES: JULIETTE KANG AND FRIENDS

3 p.m., Field Concert Hall

Juliette Kang, violin ('91)

Christoph Eschenbach, piano (guest artist)

Thomas Kraines, cello ('92)

Four-recital subscription: \$95

Single tickets: \$28

Curtis Ticket Office, (215) 893-7902 or [www.curtis.edu](http://www.curtis.edu)

#### December

### 4 CURTIS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

8 p.m., Perelman Theater at the Kimmel Center

Presented by Philadelphia Chamber Music Society

Mischa Santora, conductor ('97)

Sarah Kwak, violin ('83, '84)

Fora Baltacigil, double bass ('06)

BRAHMS Serenade No. 2

BOTTESINI Gran duo concertante

STRAVINSKY *Apollon musagète*

Tickets: \$23

Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, (215) 569-8080 or [www.pcmsconcerts.org](http://www.pcmsconcerts.org)