



The Department of Music presents
Cornell Symphony Orchestra
Chris Younghoon Kim, conductor
James Spinazzola, associate conductor
Niccolo D. Athens, composer-conductor

from *Symphony in Two Parts* (2013)
I. Fantasia sinfonica
Premiere

Niccolo D. Athens
(b. 1988)

with Mr. Athens

Intermission

Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, op. 36 (1878)
I. Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima
II. Andantino in modo di canzona

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

with Mr. Spinazzola

III. Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato
IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

with Mr. Kim

BAILEY HALL
CORNELL UNIVERSITY
Sunday, November 17, 2013 – 3:00 PM

Program Notes

Athens: *Fantasia Sinfonica*

Fantasia Sinfonica is the first half of a projected symphony in two parts. It opens with a decisive timpani figure that goes on to generate much of the thematic material throughout the movement. The music that opens the symphony embodies the “symphonic spirit” as I see it, and is characterized by thematic development, visceral contrapuntal energy, and forward drive. Midway through the movement there is a moment of repose, but the developmental energy soon returns, and this time begins to go awry. Successive restatements of the motive, originally played by the timpani, become more dissonant and mechanical, culminating in a heavily distorted restatement of music heard earlier: what had been an agile violin theme is now a snarling trumpet fanfare, and what was a sweet oboe melody has become a barbaric assault by the low brass. Scattered thematic recollections throughout the orchestra are repeatedly crushed by a relentless two-note ostinato. The ending of the movement is powerful but sudden and dramatically unresolved, setting up expectations for the narrative trajectory of the second part.

Born in 1988, Niccolo D. Athens grew up in San Antonio, Texas. In 2010, he received his Bachelor of Music in composition from the Juilliard School, and is currently enrolled in the D.M.A. program at Cornell University. He is the recipient of two BMI Student Composer Awards, the emerging composer prize in the American Art Song Competition for Composers, first prize in the Longfellow Chorus Composition Competition, and a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Athens has participated in the Aspen Music Festival, Staunton Music Festival, and in the Beijing International Composition Workshop. Ensembles that have performed his works include the Juilliard Orchestra, the New Juilliard Ensemble, the Momenta Quartet, Talea Ensemble, the East Coast Contemporary Ensemble, E-MEX Ensemble, Cornell’s Festival Chamber Orchestra, the Olmos Ensemble, the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio, and the San Antonio Symphony. Also active as a conductor, he has directed performances of his own music as well as led the Cornell Symphony Orchestra in performances of music by Hovhaness and Lutoslawski.

Tchaikovsky: *Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, op. 36*

Now one of his most celebrated pieces, Tchaikovsky’s tortured, ambitious Fourth Symphony took time to find its place in the symphonic repertoire. At its premiere in 1878, audience members were baffled by the immensity of the first movement, with friends likening it to a symphonic poem that happened to have three movements tacked on it. International audiences, perhaps accustomed to Tchaikovsky’s more formally conservative earlier symphonies, were equally stunned, with a New York reviewer lamenting in 1890 that it was “. . . one of the most thoroughly Russian, i.e. semi-barbaric, compositions ever heard in the city. . .” Even to contemporary audiences, the symphony’s massive, passionate, borderline-histrionic first movement is striking for its scope and complexity. Since Tchaikovsky’s time, musicologists have ascribed the symphony’s unorthodox extremes to the upheaval occurring in Tchaikovsky’s personal life. In 1877, Tchaikovsky married Antonina Miliukova, a former student, in hopes of deflecting public scrutiny of his homosexual relationships. However, he quickly realized that his wife was genuinely in love with him and, finding the situation untenable, fled abroad where he underwent a spiritual crisis. Despite being mostly composed in the months prior to his disastrous marriage, biographers and analysts have been quick to impose a direct correlation between Tchaikovsky’s personal turmoil and the trajectory of the Fourth Symphony.

Surely, some of this speculation was influenced by the program that Tchaikovsky shared with Nadezhda von Meck, his patroness and the symphony’s dedicatee, characterizing each movement of the symphony in terms of an emotional journey. Tchaikovsky described the iconic fanfare opening as “the kernel, the chief thought of the whole Symphony. This is Fate, the fatal power that hinders one in the pursuit of happiness from gaining the goal, which jealously provides that peace and comfort do not prevail, that the sky is not free from clouds—a might that swings, like the sword of Damocles, constantly over the head, that poisons continuously the soul.” However, Tchaikovsky followed this program with the caveat: “Just as I was about to put this letter in its envelope, I reread it and was taken aback by the vagueness and inadequacy of the program I am sending you. For the first time in my life I had to convert musical ideas and musical images into words and sentences. I failed to do that as it should have been done. Last winter, when I wrote this symphony, I was terribly depressed, and it serves as a true echo of what I went through then. But it is no more than an echo.” Instead, the Fourth Symphony is a paragon of Romantic symphonic sensibility, where architectural form and convention are subservient to, perhaps even overwhelmed by, an outpouring of personal expression. The result is a piece that ranges from haunting intimacy to anguished suffocation to light-hearted frivolity and joyousness.

—Loren Loiacono

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Cornell Symphony Orchestra

Violin I

Sarah McDonald, *Arts & Sciences*, '17 *
Jonathan Park, *Psychology*, '14 *
Elaine Higashi, *Biomedical Engineering, Grad* *
Paul Hwang, *Music*, '15
Sam Johnson, *Chemical Engineering*, '16
Samantha Lee, *HBHS*, '17
Gilad Fefer, *Animal Science*, '15
Jean Kwon, *HBHS*, '17
Jason Wang, *Operations Research & Information Engineering*, '14
Wey-Wey Su, *Engineering*, '17

Violin II

Jin Ho Eric Chang, *Chemical/Biomedical Engineering*, '14 *
Katie Soule, *SNES/Biometry and Statistics*, '14 *
Alexis Ferguson, *Chemistry/English*, '17
Lauren Blacker, *Biology & Society*, '17
Rabindra Willford, *Anthropology*, '17
Vivek Gaddam, *Electrical/Computer Engineering*, '16
Eric Gold, *Computer Science*, '14
Luke Leisman, *Astronomy, Grad*
Mary Nattakom, *Biology*, '17
Jessica Park, *Human Development*, '16

Viola

Andrea Jin, *Biology*, '17 *
Colleen Weatherwax, *Arts & Sciences*, '16 *
Rex Lei, *Ithaca High School*
Ariana Munger, *Chemistry*, '15
Calvin Lai, *AEM*, '15
Derrick Lin, *Engineering*, '17
Caleb Woo, *Electrical and Computer Engineering, Grad*
Richard Gold, *Computer Science*, '16
Keelin Abbott, *Biology*, '17

Cello

Daniel Cho, *Arts & Sciences*, '17 *
Matt Hudson, *Asian Studies/Religious Studies*, '15 *
Charis Lin, *Engineering*, '17
Haeyong David Shin, *Computer Science*, '17
Charles Phil, *Mathematics*, '17
Joan Lee, *Nutritional Sciences*, '14
Tiffany Ge, *Engineering*, '17
Kevin Coughlin, *Arts & Sciences*, '17
Daniel LaChapelle, *Mechanical Engineering*, '16
Kevin Wang, *Electrical and Computer Engineering*, '15
Colin Barber, *Biology*, '17
Peter Friend, *Computer Science*, '17

Bass

Aaron Gittelman, *Chemical Engineering*, '16 *
Wes Britton, *Engineering*, '17
Nicole Foster, *Economics*, '16
Nupur Bhatt, *Biology*, '16
Tom Leeson

Flute

Jae Baek, *Biological Engineering*, '17 *
Eleanor Bayles, *Arts & Sciences*, '17
Dan Finaldi, *English*, '15

Oboe

Emily Shertzer, *Arts & Sciences*, '16 *
Susan Dittmer, *Physics, Grad*

Clarinet

Sun Min "Ellen" Hong, *Biological Sciences*, '17 *
Eric Lin, *Computer Science*, '17 *
Felix Chen, *Chemistry*, '17

Bass Clarinet

Will R. Gregg, *Chemical Engineering*, '16

Bassoon

Marion Quien, *Chemical Engineering '16 **
Joe Peng, *Chemical Engineering, Grad **

Horn

Derek Maseloff, *China and Asian Pacific
Studies, '17 **
William Voge, *Electrical and Computer
Engineering, '16*
James Knight, *History, '16*
Andrew Distler, *Sociology, '15*
Kyle Donahue, *Computer Science, '15*

Trumpet

Steven Miller, *Electrical and Computer
Engineering, Grad **
Christian Compton, *Information Science, '14*
Kaitlyn DeHority, *Music, Ithaca College*

Trombone

Christopher Mayes, *Research Associate **
Mario Carrillo, *Biological Sciences, '17*
Johannes Plambeck, *Regional Science, Grad*

Tuba

Joe Sastic, *Music, Ithaca College*

Percussion

Nicole Joshi, *Eastman School of Music*
Riley Palmer, *Eastman School of Music*

Harp

Sarah Baldessari, *Music/Economics, '15*

* Principal

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