

# Northwest Symphony Orchestra

## *Reveries*

Sunday January 25, 2015, 3:30 pm

Božičević, Ivan: *Memories of a Birch Tree* (world premiere)

Do trees have memories? If they do, I'm sure they remember better than us humans. All too often we forget about the beauty that nature has given us and thoughtlessly destroy it. Let this music be a small reminder against it.

Memories of a Birch Tree can be divided into three distinct sections. The first is a slow introduction, where the main thematic material gets presented. During the second, moderately fast section, those themes are reshaped and recoloured. After a short reminiscence of the introductory material, the third, dance-like section brings the piece to a fiery close. - IB

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Ysaÿe, Eugene: *Chant d'hiver*, Op. 15

Soloist: violinist Maria Storm

Ysaÿe was regarded as a leading violinist in his day. As "The King of the Violin" he developed the Franco-Belgian school of violin and served as a leader in violin technique and education, greatly influencing the Romantic style of violin playing. His approach to performance was, "Nothing which wouldn't have for goal emotion, poesy, heart." His solo and orchestral career was cut short by diabetes, which affected his hands. It is worth noting that Ysaÿe was also Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1918 to 1922.

This work offers a tremendous scope of expression for the soloist. As the orchestra sets an opening landscape of unlimited impressions, the solo violinist weaves musical "reveries" into the auditory picture frame.

Ysaÿe makes use of Romantic and modern techniques of violin expression; harmonics with their glassy sounds, the vibrant earthy low strings, and portamento - 'sliding' - between notes. He allows time to flow and unwind naturally. Colorful writing for the orchestra creates musical thoughts evocative of nature; wind in the trees floating out of time, swaying with the shifting colors and textures of our reveries. - KD

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Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich: *Symphony No. 1 in g, Op. 13 (Winter Reveries)*

This first symphony of Tchaikovsky was written shortly after he moved from St. Petersburg to Moscow to teach music theory. A significant feature in this work is his use of emptiness. Unexpected silence appears as to question the direction and purpose of what was just said. Each movement seems to pass through moments of doubts, where these stops and starts

suggest a disintegration, questioning, and then rebuilding of ideas. However, once the thought is carried through to its completion, the mood is triumphant.

The first movement presents melodies offered with pulsing background energy which fall into fragmentation as the movement ends as a distant vision.

The second movement's subtitle "Land of Gloom, Land of Mist" is Tchaikovsky's own label. A gentle flow of colors and warmth linger with no hurry to go anywhere. Bird-calls and sounds of nature from the woodwinds paint the images of woods, fog and mist. A sudden interruption by the horns create a menacing effect which quickly softens into a rich singing of the tune. It is interesting to note that horns have traditionally been used to evoke distance both geographically and within time. The movement ends with fragments of thoughts, leading to a closing return to the misty thoughts from which we began.

The third and Scherzo movement captures the bouncing specks of sounds, as of a spinning top. One can imagine laughter and child-like delight. This too, however, is interrupted by silence and defragmenting of this playful musical thought. Everything stops, rumbles slowly, then, in a complete switch of mood, takes off into a sophisticated waltz as only Tchaikovsky can so gracefully capture. We revisit the earlier bouncy top-spinning energy once more before it disappears into the night.

The opening of the fourth movement creates a dark solitude from the bassoon and low clarinets. The horns then set a wider horizon for the tone painting as the woodwinds offer a tune which remains hopeful yet incomplete. The strings gather courage and lead with an expressive tune shaped with a pulse to suggest walking. We pass through a desolate landscape, then stop; haltingly try to restart. Here we almost fade to dark, but instead gather speed, and build quickly into fanfares of triumph.

In classic joy, the orchestral voices break into fugue, tripping over each other in delight. We move quickly on to a folk-like tune suggesting vibrant dance energy. This idea makes its way through the orchestra, provokes jabs at rhythms, and then, as this symphony seems compelled to do, the musical thought breaks apart into small fragments.

This movement, however, finally provides a new resolution to the fragmenting and frequent silences. With help from the low brass players, who make their first appearance of the whole symphony, we gradually rise from the mist. As energy rises, we sense a turn to brighter times. Hopefulness grows and momentum builds as we rush to the end, triumphant. - KD

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