

## LISZT: THE BLACK GONDOAL

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2012, 7:30 PM

MONDAY, MAY 21, 2012, 8:00 PM

**Carlos Kalmar**, conductor

**Frank Liszt**  
(John Adams, arr.)     The Black Gondola

## TCHAIKOVSKY'S PATHÉTIQUE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2018, 7:30 PM

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2018, 7:30 PM

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018, 7:30 PM

**Carlos Kalmar**, conductor

**Natasha Paremski**, piano

**Sergei Prokofiev**     Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor  
*Andantino—Allegretto—Andantino*  
*Scherzo: Vivace*  
*Intermezzo: Allegro moderato*  
*Finale: Allegro tempestoso*  
**Natasha Paremski**

### INTERMISSION

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**     Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, "Pathétique"  
*Adagio—Allegro non troppo—Andante—Allegro vivo—Andante come prima—Andante mosso*  
*Allegro con grazia*  
*Allegro molto vivace*  
*Finale: Adagio lamentoso—Andante*

ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL

## Program Notes

### Franz Liszt

(1811-1886), orch. 1989 by John Adams (b. 1947)

***The Black Gondola* (1882)**

**First Oregon Symphony performance.**

---

#### THE VITAL STATS

**Composer:** born Oct. 22, 1811, Raiding, (Doborján), Hungary; died July 31, 1886, Bayreuth, Germany

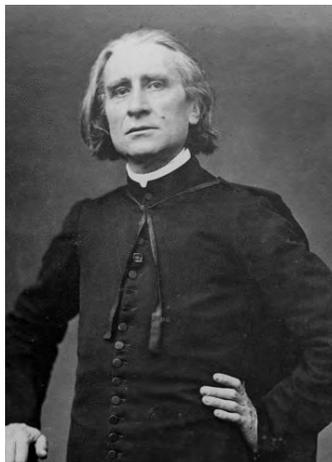
**Work composed:** Liszt composed *La Lugubre gondola II* in 1882, revised it in 1883 and revised it again in 1885. Adams arranged his version for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in 1989.

**World premiere:** Adams led the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in the premiere at the Ordway Music Theatre in St. Paul, MN, on Oct. 27, 1989.

**First Oregon Symphony performance.**

**Instrumentation:** string orchestra

**Estimated duration:** 9 minutes



FRANZ LISZT

Orchestrated with clarinet, bass clarinet, cellos and double basses, this work's opening just oozes darkness – the color black, which absorbs all light, and in its spiritual dimension signifies the loss of hope that accompanies grief and mourning. There is a stateliness to this evocative and wonderful original Liszt work for solo piano that John Adams so ably orchestrated in the manner of Liszt's son-in-law Richard Wagner. Nothing is hurried – we are meant to see a stately and funereal procession of gondolas on the Grand Canal in Venice, led by the eponymous coffin-bearing black gondola. There are brief moments where I imagine that the clouds lighten a bit (just after the rapturous cello solo, for example), but never admit full sunlight. Liszt's constantly descending lines weigh us down, and beckon us to the world of the dead. A sense of loss pervades the piece – heightened by the use of quotations from Wagner's tragic opera *Tristan and Isolde*. And is there a better, more chilling use of the double bass section than the funeral march tattoo that they beat to introduce the coda? Like huge bells ringing from the depths of hell, they are. By the end, wrung of any remaining strength, only the raw and tenuous thread of grief remains.

## Biographies



### Natasha Paremski

Natasha Paremski last appeared with the Oregon Symphony on February 8, 2016, when she performed Paul Schoenfield's *Four Parables* with conductor Carlos Kalmar.

With her consistently striking and dynamic performances, pianist Natasha Paremski reveals astounding virtuosity and voracious interpretive abilities. She continues to generate excitement from all corners as she wins over audiences with her musical sensibility and powerful, flawless technique.

The 2017–18 season sees Natasha's return recitals at the Wigmore Hall and Istanbul Resitaleri, as well as a return to the North Carolina, Oregon, Winnipeg, Colorado, and Columbus symphonies and her debut with Kansas City Symphony. In addition, her recording of Fred Hersch's *Variations on a Theme by Tchaikovsky* – commissioned for her by the Gilmore Festival – will be released on the Steinway & Sons label alongside Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Natasha is a regular return guest of many major orchestras, including Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Grant Park Festival, Winnipeg Symphony, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Elgin Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with whom she has performed every year since 2008 in venues such as Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, and Cadogan Hall.

She has performed with many major orchestras in North America including the Dallas, Oregon, San Diego, Toronto, Baltimore, Houston, and Nashville symphonies; NAC Orchestra in Ottawa; and

the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She has toured extensively in Europe with such orchestras as Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchester, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre de Bretagne, the Orchestre de Nancy, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchester in Zurich, and Moscow Philharmonic; and under the direction of conductors including Peter Oundjian, Andres Orozco-Estrada, Jeffrey Kahane, James Gaffigan, Dmitri Yablonski, Tomas Netopil, JoAnn Falletta, Fabien Gabel, Rossen Milanov, and Andrew Litton.

A passionate chamber musician, Natasha is a regular recital partner of Grammy-winning cellist Zuill Bailey, with whom she has recorded a number of CDs. Their Britten album on Telarc debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Classical Chart, remaining there for a number of weeks, in addition to being featured on *The New York Times* Playlist. Their French recital record is due for release in fall 2018 on the Steinway & Sons label.

Natasha was awarded several prestigious prizes at a very young age, including the Gilmore Young Artists prize in 2006 at the age of 18 and the Prix Montblanc in 2007. In September 2010, she was awarded the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year. Her first recital album was released in 2011 to great acclaim, topping the Billboard Classical Charts, and was re-released on the Steinway & Sons label in September 2016 featuring Balakirev's *Islamey* recorded on Steinway's revolutionary new Spirio technology. In 2012, she recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Rachmaninoff's *Paganini Rhapsody* with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Fabien Gabel on the orchestra's label distributed by Naxos.

With a strong focus on new music, Natasha's growing repertoire reflects an artistic maturity beyond her years. In the 2010–11 season, she played the world premiere of a sonata written for her by Gabriel Kahane, which was also included in her solo album. At the suggestion of John Corigliano, Natasha brought her insight and depth to his Piano Concerto with the Colorado Symphony.

Natasha continues to extend her performance activity and range beyond the traditional concert hall. In December

2008, she was the featured pianist in choreographer Benjamin Millepied's *Danses Concertantes* at New York's Joyce Theater. She was featured in a major two-part film for BBC Television on the life and work of Tchaikovsky, shot on location in St. Petersburg, performing excerpts from Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and other works.

Natasha began her piano studies at the age of four with Nina Malikova at Moscow's Andreyev School of Music. She then studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music before moving to New York to study with Pavlina Dokovska at Mannes College of Music, from which she graduated in 2007. Natasha made her professional debut at age nine with El Camino Youth Symphony in California. At the age of 15, she debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and recorded two discs with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Born in Moscow, Natasha moved to the United States at the age of eight, became a U.S. citizen shortly thereafter, and is now based in New York.

## Program Notes

### SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 16

#### THE VITAL STATS

**COMPOSER:** April 27, 1891, Sontsovka, Bakhmutsk region, Yekaterinoslav district, Ukraine; died March 5, 1953, Moscow

**WORK COMPOSED:** Original version 1913, revised 1923

**WORLD PREMIERE:** At the Vauxhall in Pavlosk, outside Moscow, on September 5, 1913, with Prokofiev at the piano

#### MOST RECENT OREGON

**SYMPHONY PERFORMANCE:** November 7, 2005; Carlos Kalmar, conductor; Freddy Kempf, piano

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Solo piano, 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 31 minutes

In December 1912, a group of Russian Futurist poets, led by 19-year-old Vladimir Mayakovsky, issued a manifesto entitled “Slap to the Public’s Taste.” This pamphlet repudiated all traditional forms of art and artists, and expressed an “invincible hate for the language that existed before.” Mayakovsky and his associates advocated radical change in all forms of art and literature while encouraging individualism and nonconformity.

Sergei Prokofiev admired Mayakovsky’s poetry and respected his provocative artistic aesthetic. The two met at the Poets’ Café in Moscow, and Mayakovsky inscribed a copy of his poem “War and the World” for Prokofiev: “To the World President of Music from the World President of Poetry.” Like Mayakovsky’s poetry, 21-year-old Prokofiev’s music was intended to shock.

Prokofiev began composing his Second Piano Concerto while enrolled at the St. Petersburg Conservatory; the original score was destroyed in a fire during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Six years later, Prokofiev used his preliminary sketches to recreate it. He reintroduced it on May 8, 1924, in Paris with Serge Koussevitzky conducting.

The 1913 premiere did generate an intensely negative audience reaction, of which the following account is typical: “Seats emptied one by one. At last the Concerto came to an end . . . most of the audience were hissing and shouting angrily. ‘To hell with this futurist music!’ people were heard to exclaim. ‘The cats on the roof make better music!’ Another group – the progressive critics – were in raptures: ‘A work of genius! How original! What spirit and invention!’”

The solo piano begins the *Andantino* with the primary theme, a romantic, mysterious melody with hints of dark complexity. The winds dialogue with the piano as the theme repeats. A bouncier, more agitated counter-melody is unveiled by the piano; however, it is the primary theme that dominates the majority of the first movement, which is developed and rearticulated in an extended solo section for the piano. The *Scherzo* is two and a half minutes of dazzling scale passages and eye- and ear-popping virtuosic tricks for the soloist, while the contrasting *Intermezzo* features an elephantine *ostinato* (repeating melodic and/or rhythmic pattern) in the low strings, punctuated by long dissonant blasts from the brasses. The piano music’s weight and power has a primitive quality; this section may have sparked the 1913 audience’s reaction. In the closing *Allegro tempestoso*, Prokofiev unleashes fire and energy, and gives the pianist an extended solo. The concerto ends with a return to the fourth movement’s opening brilliance and irrepressible energy.

## PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

**Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74,  
“Pathétique”**

### THE VITAL STATS

**COMPOSER:** Born May 7, 1840, Kamsko-Votinsk, Viatka province, Russia; died November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1893; dedicated to Tchaikovsky’s nephew Vladimir Davidov.

**WORLD PREMIERE:** Tchaikovsky conducted the first performance on October 28, 1893.

### MOST RECENT OREGON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCE:

October 16, 2012; Aziz Shokhakimov, conductor

**INSTRUMENTATION:** 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam tam, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 45 minutes

“I love it as I have never loved any one of my musical offspring before.” —Tchaikovsky, regarding his Sixth Symphony

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s most controversial work continues to spark debate more than 100 years after its composition. Although Tchaikovsky declined to articulate the specifics of the program he attached to this symphony – “Let them guess at it!” he wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidov – many scholars and critics agree that this passionate, highly emotional music is a declaration of forbidden love; namely, that of Tchaikovsky for Davidov. The title “Pathétique” supports this interpretation, as it suggests the *grande passion pathétique* of French opera. Biographer John Warrack writes, “The Russian word . . . carries more feeling of ‘passionate’ or ‘emotional’ in it than the English ‘pathetic,’ and perhaps an overtone, which has largely vanished from our world . . . of ‘suffering.’”

Tchaikovsky died of unknown causes ten days after conducting the first performance of the “Pathétique.” Like his hero Mozart, the circumstances of Tchaikovsky’s death have sparked numerous rumors, and the cause of his death has never been definitively established. Tchaikovsky’s brother and first biographer Modest said Tchaikovsky died from cholera contracted after drinking tainted water; others claim he committed suicide to avoid the publicity of his advances to a male student. There is no clear evidence one way or the other, and debate will no doubt continue.

The *Adagio—Allegro ma non troppo* begins with a dark and forbidding bassoon solo, the primary theme of the first movement. After the slow *Adagio*, the strings burst in with an agitated restatement of the bassoon solo, followed by a contrasting theme full of melancholy nostalgia. The movement descends into chaos as the themes are developed, ripped apart, and tossed about in a tempest of sound. A solemn brass chorale

with pizzicato string accompaniment draws the movement to a close. In the *Allegro con grazia*, Tchaikovsky presents a graceful waltz in the unusual meter 5/4, which sweeps through the strings like a gentle wind. Although the overall mood of this movement is lighter than that of the first, Tchaikovsky infuses the music with strong sense of sadness and hints of romantic despair. The vigorous march of the *Allegro molto vivace* offsets the melancholy of the first two movements. This powerful, masculine music boldly proclaims itself with insouciant swagger. The closing *Adagio lamentoso* begins with an anguished cry in the strings. This music succumbs to its own beautifully crafted fatalism, laden with pain and lamentation. The strings are interrupted by a blast from the brasses, after which the strings continue on their mournful way to a subdued conclusion, in which there is no hint of a happy ending.

Interestingly, the first performance of the Sixth Symphony was not a success, but after the second performance, just days after Tchaikovsky’s death, it was hailed as a symphonic masterpiece.

© 2018 Elizabeth Schwartz