**Madison Symphony Orchestra Program Notes**
**November 11-12-13, 2022**
**97th Season / Subscription Program 3**
**J. Michael Allsen**

This program opens with the lively *Danzón No. 2* by Mexican composer Arturo Márquez, based upon folk dance from Veracruz. We then welcome back Madison's own Christina and Michelle Naughton. The Naughtons—twin sisters—were both soloists multiple times in our youth concerts when they were growing up in Madison, and they have been working as a piano duo since 2010. They first performed as a duo with the Madison Symphony Orchestra in 2012, playing Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos* and they returned in 2016 for Mozart's two-piano concerto. Here they play a late romantic work by Max Bruch. We close with the emotional sixth symphony of Tchaikovsky, the Russian master's final work.

The *Danzón No. 2* of Arturo Márquez is his most popular work, and one of the most frequently-performed pieces of contemporary Mexican music for orchestra. This is his colorful adaptation of a Mexican folk dance that has Afro-Cuban roots.

**Arturo Márquez**
**Born**: December 20, 1950, Álamos, Mexico.

***Danzón No. 2***

- **Composed**: 1994.
- **Premiere**: *Danzón No. 2* was commissioned by the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The university's symphony orchestra played its premiere in Mexico City in 1994.
- **Previous MSO Performances**: This is our first performance of the work.
- **Duration**: 10:00.

**Background**

Márquez was introduced to music by his father, who was a carpenter by day and a mariachi violinist by night.

Arturo Márquez, one of Mexico's most successful contemporary composers, was born in the state of Sonora. When he was 12 years old, his family moved to a suburb of Los Angeles, where he studied piano, violin, and trombone. Márquez later recalled that "My adolescence was spent listening to Javier Solis [the famous Mexican singer/actor], sounds of mariachi, the Beatles, Doors, Carlos Santana and

Chopin." He later studied at the Conservatory of Music of Mexico, with the great French composer Jacques Castérède in Paris, and at the California Institute of the Arts. He is on the faculty of the National Autonomous University in Mexico City. Márquez frequently uses Mexican and other Latin folk influences in his works, and his best-known series of works are the *Danzónes* he began composing in the 1990s for orchestra and other ensembles. The *danzón* is a dance of Cuban origins, and early Cuban *danzónes* in the 19th century combined intricate European-style figure dancing with African-derived rhythms, and the form is in the background of many later Caribbean styles. The *danzón* was particularly popular in the Mexican state of Veracruz, where it remains one of the primary forms of folkloric music. Like nearly all Caribbean dance forms it is first and foremost a rhythm: in this case, the insistent five-beat pattern known as *clave*: the same rhythm that provides the "heartbeat' of rumba, son, and salsa music.

**What You'll Hear**

The *clave* rhythm that underlies this work is a legacy of the African Diaspora: derived from West African drum music, it was brought to the Caribbean by enslaved Africans.

The *clave* appears in the opening bars of *Danzón No.2*, supporting a sinuous solo for the clarinet, eventually joined by the oboe. The intensity ratchets up as more instruments enter, but the *clave* is always calmly in the background. There is a brief hushed interlude for piano and solo violin that recalls the old-fashioned sound of 19th-century *danzónes*, and this is given a more lush treatment by the strings. There is a sudden break and a new character, more intense and brassy, though the tempo and *clave* rhythm stay immovable until the brash ending.

This late work by Bruch was not heard in its original form until over 60 years after was written. And there's an interesting story behind that...

**Max Bruch**
**Born**: January 6, 1838, Cologne, Germany.
**Died**: October 2, 1920, Friedenau (near Berlin), Germany.

***Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in A-flat minor, Op. 88a***

- **Composed**: 1912.
- **Premiere**: The work was performed, in a simplified version, by sisters Rose and Otilie Sutro, with the Philadephia Orchestra, directed by Leopold Stokowski, on December 29, 1916. Bruch's original version was finally

recorded in 1973, by pianists Nathan Twining, and Martin Berkovsky, who performed with the London Symphony Orchestra under Antal Dorati.

- **Previous MSO Performances**: This is our first performance of the work.
- **Duration**: 22:00.

**Background**

Bruch was one of Germany's leading composition teachers, and his students included Dr. Sigfrid Prager, who would become first conductor of the Madison Civic Symphony (predecessor of today's MSO) in 1926. Prager studied with Bruch in Berlin in the years prior to World War I.

Max Bruch is known today primarily for two solo violin works, the *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor* and the *Scottish Fantasy*, and for his *Kol Nidrei* for cello and orchestra. However, Bruch was a tremendously successful composer in his day, with a catalog of nearly a hundred works that included three operas, three symphonies, five concertos, dozens of other orchestral pieces, sacred and secular choral works, art songs, and chamber music. He was also a well-regarded conductor and one of the most sought-after composition teachers in Europe: Ottorino Respighi and Ralph Vaughan Williams were among his more famous pupils. In 1912, when he composed his *Concerto for Two Pianos*, Bruch was in his 70s, and had retired after over 20 years teaching composition at Berlin's famed Hochschule (Conservatory) für Musik. He had actually declared to a friend when he reached his 70th birthday in 1908 that he was through with composing. In fact, he continued to write music almost until his death at age 82.

The *Concerto for Two Pianos* has a fascinating—and rather twisted—story. In 1911, Bruch heard a performance of his 1861 *Fantasy for Two Pianos* by the American duo-pianists Rose and Otilie Sutro. The Sutro sisters were then touring Europe, and had known him in the 1890s when they were students at the Berlin Hochschule. Bruch, flattered by their request that he write a two-piano concerto for them, promptly agreed, and in 1912, he sent the autograph score to the sisters in the United States. Bruch's concerto was adapted from a suite for organ and orchestra he had been working on since 1904. In 1916, the Sutros performed the "premiere" of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in Philadephia, but unbeknownst to Bruch, what they played was a dramatically simplified version. The sisters had the gall to copyright their arrangement, and they continued to tinker with it for the next few decades. Bruch himself never heard the work performed, but on the strength of the supposed premiere, he later agreed to send the autograph of his by-then famous *Violin Concerto No. 1* to the Sutros, who promised to arrange for publication in the United States. Not only did they arrange for Bruch to be paid in nearly worthless

German Marks (their value destroyed by postwar inflation), they never returned the manuscript and later sold it for a hefty sum in 1949. The original version of Bruch's *Concerto for Two Pianos* remained completely unknown until after Otilie's death in 1970 (Rose had died in 1957), when her papers were auctioned. Pianist Nathan Twining acquired both the Sutros' version and Bruch's original autograph manuscript. Bruch's original was finally performed—over 60 years after he had composed it—in a 1973 recording by Twining and pianist Martin Berkovsky. The concerto was published in 1977 as Bruch's *Op. 88a*.

**What You'll Hear**

This romantic concerto is laid out in four movements:

- It opens with a grand fanfare, and an extended fugue, both based upon themes Bruch heard on the Italian island of Capri.
- A lively scherzo-style movement with a slow introduction.
- A lyrical slow movement.
- A grand finale, based on the main ideas from the opening movement.

The concerto's origins as a suite for organ and orchestra may have been responsible for its unusual four-movement form. The opening movement (*Andante sostenuto*) begins with a stern fanfare, that, according to Bruch, was derived from a Good Friday procession he heard while recovering from an illness on the resort island of Capri in 1904. Bruch remembered that, leading the procession

> "was a messenger of sadness with a large tuba, on which he played a kind of signal. It was not bad: one could make a good funeral march out of it! Next came several large flowered crosses, one carried by a hermit from Mount Tiberio. Then 200 children dressed in white and carrying large burning candles, each of them also holding a small black cross. They saying in unison a kind of lamentation..."

The children's lament, which he transcribed, here became the subject of a solemn fugue. The fanfare eventually returns with great ferocity, before a calm closing episode from the pianos.

The second movement (*Andante con moto*) begins in a quiet, pastoral mood, an episode decorated by the pianos, before launching into lively scherzo-style music (*Allegro molto vivace*). pianos and orchestra develop a series of new ideas before returning to the scherzo theme and a rousing ending. The slow movement (*Adagio non troppo*) begins with a quiet introduction, led by solo horn, before the pianos introduce a flowing main theme. This eventually grows into a passionate statement

for orchestra. In the remainder of the movement, this idea is developed in an unhurried way, rising to one last grand peak before a quiet conclusion.

The closing movement (*Andante*) begins with a return of the opening fanfare, which is developed expansively, before the tempo suddenly quickens (*Allegro*). The movement's main theme is a fierce idea derived from the fanfare, though Bruch also introduces a calmer second idea: a version of the children's lament of the opening movement. The short development focuses on the fanfare, and after a recapitulation of these ideas, concerto ends with a fiery coda dominated by the fanfare.

Tchaikovsky's very last work, premiered just over a week before his death, is profoundly sad and moving, but also a work with several brilliantly innovative moments.

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**
**Born**: May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia.
**Died**: November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia.

***Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique")***

- **Composed**: Between February and August 1893.
- **Premiere**: The *Symphony No. 6* was first played in St. Petersburg on October 28, 1893, with Tchaikovsky conducting.
- **Previous MSO Performances**: 1945, 1956, 1963, 1971, 1982, 1999, and 2017.
- **Duration**: 45:00.

> "You can't imagine what bliss I feel, being convinced that my time is not yet passed and I can still work. Perhaps, of course, I'm mistaken, but I don't think so."
>
> - Tchaikovsky (to his nephew)

**Background**

Tchaikovsky was a composer who wore his heart on his sleeve...and who revealed his heart in his music. The tragic *Symphony No. 6* was a reflection of his state of mind in the last year of his life.

Tchaikovsky's late symphonies are autobiography of the most revealing kind. This was a man who felt and suffered deeply, and those feelings—fear, guilt, insecurity, and occasionally joy—came though most clearly in these works. The idea of Fate

figures prominently in the programs of the fourth and fifth symphonies. The fourth (1877) seems to be a titanic battle with Fate, most likely occasioned by his feelings of guilt and inadequacy after his short-lived marriage and the increasing realization of his own homosexuality. The fifth (1888) is also a symphony about Fate, but here the relationship is more comfortable, or at least resigned. A decade after the fourth, Tchaikovsky had probably come to terms with his homosexuality, and although he still felt guilt pangs, his acceptance was accompanied by a deepening religious conviction and renewed confidence. A clear sense of this self-assurance comes through in the symphony's triumphant finale.

None of the late symphonies is surrounded by more mystique than the sixth, however. This is his last major work, and it was written after a protracted depression. The optimism of the late 1880s collapsed when his longtime patroness and confidante Nadejda von Meck severed their relationship in 1890. Though he was no longer financially dependent on her, his correspondence with von Meck had obviously been an emotional support—she had been the one person to whom he could open his heart, even though they never spoke in person. Even artistic success and international fame was not enough. On a fabulously successful American tour in 1891, he wrote in his diary about feeling old and washed out: "I feel that something within me has gone to pieces." By the beginning of 1893, he had hit rock bottom, writing to his nephew Vladimir Davidov on February 9 that: "What I need is to believe in myself again, for my faith has been greatly undermined. It seems to me that my role is over." But within two weeks, he reported back excitedly to the same nephew that he was composing "furiously." By August, when the *Symphony No.6* was nearly complete, he wrote again, calling it "the best, and certainly the most open-hearted of my works." The supreme irony of this work is that, only nine days after he conducted its successful premiere in St. Petersburg, Tchaikovsky was dead. The old story about his death from cholera seems to be a fabrication, covering up what was almost certainly suicide. The precise details of his death remain a mystery, but one story that came to light in 1966 connects the death to a romantic relationship between the composer and the nephew of a Russian noble. Such things were kept out of the public eye, but Tchaikovsky was supposedly convicted by a "court of honor" comprised of his noble peers, and told to kill himself to avoid embarrassment for all concerned.

Given the biographical circumstances of this symphony, Tchaikovsky's intended meaning is significant in how we hear it. Its pessimistic tone, and elements like the quotation of a chant from the Orthodox service for the dead, suggest that death was probably on his mind. This is clearly a symphony with a message—it was billed as *A Program Symphony* at its first performance, and in a letter to his nephew, he

described it as: “a work with a program, but a program of a kind which remains an enigma to all—let them guess it who can.” Modeste Tchaikovsky, who composed a sort of biographical program for the *Symphony No.6* after his brother’s death, maintained that the secret died with the composer. However, some clue of his intentions may lie in a brief note found among the sketches for his *Nutcracker* ballet, written a year earlier:

> “Following is the plan for a symphony LIFE! First movement—all impulse, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short (Finale death—result of collapse). Second movement love; third movement disappointment; fourth ends with a dying away (also short).”

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the *Symphony No.6* is autobiographical, the work of a deeply sad man. The title was not Tchaikovsky’s own: *Pathétique,* not simply “pathetic” as usually understood, but *Patetichesky* in the original Russian implying poignancy and deep sorrow. His brother Modeste suggested the title the day after the premiere as a replacement for the composer’s own enigmatic *Program Symphony*, and Tchaikovsky appended it when he mailed the score to his publisher Jurgenson. The day after he mailed the score, he wrote a second letter to Jurgenson rejecting the title, but he was dead a week later and the publisher kept Modeste’s title, which has remained with the work ever since.

**What You’ll Hear**

The symphony is in four movements:

- A large opening movement that experiments with the conventional elements of the form.
- A lilting waltz...in 5/4!
- A grand march.
- A deeply sad and tragic concluding movement.

In his letters, Tchaikovsky promised “much innovation of form” in the *Symphony No.6,* and the opening movement certainly lives up to this. Dispensing with the usual conventions, he presents three related ideas in three different tempos: first a doleful bassoon melody, which gives way to a faster version of the same idea in the violas. A descending line at the end of this section is transformed into the lush third theme in the strings. After an ascending answer in the woodwinds, the theme enters again in fuller form. The music dies away—literally: never one for understatement, Tchaikovsky writes the seemingly impossible dynamic marking *pppppp* (*pianisisisisississimo*!) at the close of the exposition. The development begins with a crashing chord from the full orchestra (merely *ff* — *ffff*

comes later...). After a fierce *fugato*, the bassoons and low brass solemnly intone a chant from the Russian Orthodox mass for the dead ("With your saints, O Christ, may the soul of the departed rest in peace"). There is no regular recapitulation, but instead a continuation of the furious motion of the development, following on the heels of this chant. When it reappears, the second theme is underlaid with a nervous accompaniment figure. The movement fades away with quiet woodwind statements above descending pizzicato notes from the strings.

Innovation continues in the second movement (*Allegro con grazia*), a waltz set in 5/4. This meter was almost unheard of in orchestral music at the time, and can often sound awkward and off-balanced. Tchaikovsky's melodies, however, flow so naturally that this odd metrical arrangement is scarcely noticeable. The movement is cast as an alternation between the gentle, lilting "waltz" and a more pensive trio.

The third movement (*Allegro molto vivace*) is a march, but this is not clear for quite a while. Quick triplet figures are tossed off between strings and woodwinds as tiny fragments of a march theme gradually emerge. When the march itself finally appears, some 70 bars into the movement, it is quietly stated by the clarinets, and then again by the strings. There is a brief crescendo, but the dynamic backs off again and the strings and woodwinds introduce a countertheme. The march theme begins again, still under tight control, and there is a lengthy section where tension builds to the breaking point before the seemingly inevitable statement by full orchestra. The movement closes triumphantly with a descending line in the brass and a triplet flourish.

After the noisy bombast of the march, the tragic character of the finale (*Adagio lamentoso*) comes as a complete surprise. The main theme is given immediately by the strings, and then again with slightly augmented orchestration, rounded off by a melancholy bassoon solo. The second theme moves to a somewhat brighter major key, and the mood intensifies until an ominous strike of the gong. The music builds to one more peak before silenced again by the gong and a dark trombone and tuba chorale. As if exhausted, the movement quickly dies away to nothingness.

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