

Berkeley Symphony Orchestra  
2003-2004 Season  
Kent Nagano, Conductor/Music Director  
George Thomson, Associate Conductor

8:00 pm, Tuesday, March 16, 2004 • Zellerbach Hall

*A Tribute to Cellist Laszlo Varga*

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky  
*Variations on a Rococo Theme*, Op. 33, for cello and orchestra  
Moderato Assai Quasi Andante  
Tema: Moderato Semplice  
Variazione I: Tempo Del Tema  
Variazione II: Tempo Del Tema  
Variazione III: Andante Sostenuto  
Variazione IV: Andante Grazioso  
Variazione V: Allegro Moderato  
Matt Haimovitz, *cello*

Elliott Carter  
Cello Concerto  
Drammatico  
Allegro appassionato  
Giocoso—Più mosso—Molto moderato (stesso tempo)  
Lento—Lento sempre—Più mosso—Più mosso  
Maestoso—Più mosso  
Tranquillo—Tempo primo  
Allegro fantastico (stesso tempo)  
Judiyaba, *cello*  
George Thomson, *conductor*  
— Intermission —  
Karen Tanaka  
*Urban Prayer*, for cello and orchestra  
(World Premiere)  
Joan Jeanrenaud, *cello*

Ludwig van Beethoven  
Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36  
Adagio—Allegro con brio  
Larghetto  
Scherzo: Allegro—Trio  
Allegro molto

*Variations on a Rococo Theme*, for cello and orchestra, Op. 33  
Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

*Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votinsk, in the Vyatka province of Russia, on April 25 (old style)/May 7 (new style),\* 1840. He died in St. Petersburg on October 25/November 6, 1893. Tchaikovsky composed the Variations on a Rococo Theme at the request of cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen during December 1876 and January 1877. Fitzenhagen himself played the solo part at the work's premiere in Moscow on November 18/30, 1877, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. A version of the piece for cello and piano was first published in 1878 in an edition heavily edited by Fitzenhagen. The first orchestral publication, which followed in 1889, was also based on Fitzenhagen's version of the work. The work is scored for a small orchestra, modeled on those of the Classical era, consisting of pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, in addition to strings and solo cello. Duration ca. 18 minutes.*

\* Russia, like other Orthodox countries, was still using the Julian calendar during Tchaikovsky's lifetime, whereas most of Western Europe had by this time adopted the Gregorian calendar. By the 19th century, the discrepancy between the two calendars had grown to twelve days, so when giving dates of events in the old Russian Empire it is customary to provide both the Julian date ("Old Style") and its Gregorian equivalent ("New Style"). Russia finally switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1918, after the Bolshevik Revolution.

In the autumn of 1876, Tchaikovsky wrote (within the space of three weeks) his most vivid and dramatic symphonic poem, *Francesca da Rimini*. For his next project, perhaps to clear his head, he chose something that could hardly be more different: a neo-classical work for cello and chamber orchestra, the *Variations on a Rococo Theme*. Little is known about the circumstances under which the work came to be composed. Probably, it was commissioned by Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who had played cello in the premieres of Tchaikovsky's string quartets. An offhand comment in a letter to his brother, Anatoly, lets us know that the composer was working on the piece at the end of December; that is the only morsel of information we possess about the genesis of the work.

For better or worse, Fitzenhagen's relationship to the piece is much more complicated than that of mere patron. He not only played the solo part in the work's premiere, he also participated in the shaping of the work. Tchaikovsky seems to have consulted him often; indeed, even in Tchaikovsky's autograph score, most of the solo part is written in Fitzenhagen's hand. Eventually, however, the composer came to regret granting the cellist any license with the work, for the latter went to extremes in adjusting the shape of the piece to his own taste. Tchaikovsky wrote an Introduction, the Theme, eight variations (including two cadenzas, well-spaced so as to anchor the two halves of the work), and a Coda. Fitzenhagen reordered the variations, cutting Variation 8 completely, and putting the two cadenzas almost cheek-by-jowl in the middle of the piece. He also rewrote the endings of some variations, so the transitions from one to the next could progress more smoothly in the new sequence. Fitzenhagen's version was the first to be published, and thus entered the standard concert repertoire. (Tonight's performance will use the Fitzenhagen version—Tchaikovsky's is rarely played.) In 1889, as the orchestral score was being readied for print, Tchaikovsky sputtered to a friend, "That idiot Fitzenhagen's been here. Look what he's done to my piece—he's altered everything!" But the aggrieved composer, in the end, chose to do nothing: "The devil take it!" he said, "Let it stand as it is."\*

Nevertheless, the work has always been popular because of the charm and elegance of the individual variations, no matter what order they're played in. Tchaikovsky was always enamored of the music of the eighteenth century; as an adult, he recounted that hearing the music of Mozart while a child filled him with "sacred delight." The *Variations on a Rococo Theme* does homage to the Classical era in its balanced phrasing, transparent scoring, and restrained mode of expression. On the other hand, the piece makes no effort to fool anyone into believing that it was actually written during the Age of Enlightenment. The variations are not all in the same key, for one thing; the work as a whole is in A major, but Variation VI, the poignant Andante, is in D minor, and the longest and most substantial Variation, the Andante Sostenuto, is in C major. Also, the work contains plenty of examples of late 19th-century chromatic harmony (such that would have made Mozart's head spin) and the solo part makes use of technical maneuvers that were unknown a hundred years before. Tchaikovsky uses characteristics of "rococo" style as a partygoer uses a costume: in donning neo-classical garb, he allows himself to express a facet of his personality that usually remains hidden. But underneath the mask, he is still the same artist, and his own unique personality shines through.

\* Translations from David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study*, Vol. II.

Cello Concerto  
Elliott Carter (b. 1908)

*Elliott Carter was born in New York City on December 11, 1908. His Cello Concerto was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and written for Yo-Yo Ma. The work was completed on November 11, 2000. The world premiere took place at Orchestra Hall, Chicago, on September 27, 2001, with Yo-Yo Ma as soloist accompanied by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim conducting. It is scored for 3 flutes (third doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets (second doubling on bass clarinet), bass clarinet (doubling on contrabass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 percussion players: 1) xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba, 4*

temple blocks, 4 wood blocks, 2 large drums, 2 cowbells; 2) vibraphone, 2 snare drums, bass drum, 3 tom-toms, 4 bongos; 3), guiro, 2 snare drums, 3 suspended cymbals, timpani, harp, strings, and solo cello. Duration ca. 18 minutes.

My Cello Concerto is introduced by the soloist alone, playing a frequently interrupted cantilena that presents ideas later to be expanded into movements. These movements are connected by episodes that often refer to the final Allegro fantastico. In this score I have tried to find meaningful, personal ways of revealing the cello's vast array of wonderful possibilities.

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony for the amazing Yo-Yo Ma, who has given outstanding performances of my 1948 Cello Sonata, the score was composed in New York City and Southbury, Connecticut during 2000.

—Elliott Carter, 2001

Elliott Carter has been considered one of the leading American composers since the middle of the 20th century, and continues his remarkable creative activity into the 21st century. Well into his nineties now, he continues to be a vibrant force on the contemporary musical scene. Born in New York City, he had piano lessons as a child but otherwise showed no particular talent for music. In his teens, he became interested in modernism as expressed in the arts in general, but started to show a special attraction to music. He often attended concerts of new music in the company of Charles Ives, who became something of a mentor. Carter attended Harvard University, but felt its music program was inadequate to his newfound goal of becoming a composer, so he took supplemental courses at the Longy School of Music, also in Cambridge. After earning an M.A. in Music from Harvard in 1932, he went to France and spent three years studying with the famed teacher Nadia Boulanger at the Ecole Normale de Musique. Here, at last, he felt that he was getting the training in compositional technique he needed. Since his return to the States, he has held a number of academic posts, with his longest tenure on the faculty of the Juilliard School (1964–1984).

Carter's voluminous work-list includes compositions in a wide range of vocal, chamber, and orchestral genres, and he has received commissions from most of the world's major orchestras. His many honors include two Pulitzer Prizes (1960 and 1973) and the Sibelius Medal (1961). Among his recent works are a Clarinet Concerto (1997), *Symphonia: sum fluxae pretium spei* (1998), an Oboe Quartet for Heinz Holliger (2001), and his first completed opera, *What Next?*, which premiered in Berlin in 1999.

Over the course of his long career, Elliott Carter has revisited the concerto form many times. He has said, "What has always interested me in my concertos are the possibilities for strong contrasts." This fascination with vivid contrasts is evident in the Cello Concerto from the very opening. The first movement displays the boldest contrasts in the work, setting off the solo cello's impassioned melody against violent interjections from the orchestra. It is very much like an operatic accompanied recitative, a point underscored by the movement's title, *Drammatico*. Each of the concerto's seven movements (played without interruption) has a distinct character, defined by tempo, scoring, and the nature of the relationship of solo part to the larger ensemble. In composing a concerto for cello and orchestra, Carter had to be mindful of a major technical issue:

[T]he main problem is that the register of the cello is the same as that of the main body of the orchestra. It can't always float above it like a violin, and so it's not always easy to hear the soloist. . . . I sometimes give the orchestra fewer notes so it's more like chamber music, or when the cello's playing legato I give the orchestra staccato notes, or sometimes I make the soloist and orchestra play in different registers.

Each movement is colored by a different solution to this problem. In the Maestoso, the very athletic cello part is set off by vigorous brass writing, while the Tranquillo is a duet between the cello, playing at the top of its range with much use of harmonics, and contrabass clarinet. Particularly striking is the Giocososo, a gossamer movement in which the cello is in dialogue with delicate percussion instruments. The juxtaposition of the highly articulated cello part with the crisp and clean sounds of the wood blocks creates a sparkling effect.

In the Lento, at the very heart of the work, the cello plays an almost seamless line, beginning at the bottom of its range, and mounting gradually and passionately to the top. At the same time, the orchestral accompaniment does everything the opposite: short, staccato utterances, furtive entrances, subdued dynamics. This colorful aural vista suggests an image of the cello as a great ship slicing through the

waves, while the orchestral part corresponds to the foam tossed up in its wake. The final movement, *Allegro fantastico*, provides closure by returning to the opening tempo and by developing a number of the ideas presented along the way (especially in the brief linking passages that connect movements). Fittingly, the work ends with a spectacular display of pyrotechnics for the soloist.

*Urban Prayer*,  
for cello and orchestra  
Karen Tanaka (b. 1961)

*Karen Tanaka was born in Tokyo, Japan, on April 7, 1961. Completed in early 2004, Urban Prayer was commissioned by Mrs. Jane Dutcher, and was written for Joan Jeanrenaud and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. The work is scored for 2 flutes (second doubling on alto flute in G), oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets in B-flat (second doubling on bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (second doubling on contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets in C, 2 trombones, 3 percussion players: 1) 2 timpani, 3 suspended cymbals, metallic wind chimes; 2) bass drum, vibraphone, crotales; 3) vibraphone, 3 suspended cymbals; piano, strings, and solo cello. Duration ca. 25 minutes.*

*Urban Prayer* is not a cello concerto in the traditional sense of the term, but rather a work for cello with orchestral accompaniment. Instead of the traditional casting of the soloist as representing a lone voice engaged in a dramatic struggle against a crowd, Tanaka has written a long monologue for the cello, which the orchestra supports by contributing color, harmony, and rhythmic energy. Her idiom has been described as “consonant, yet not tonal.” This means that her harmonic structures are largely those of the major-minor tonal system of Western music, rather than the more dissonant constructs common in contemporary music. But at the same time her harmony is free of the drive to a specific harmonic goal, which is one of the hallmarks of Western tonality. The first movement, for example, unfolds as a series of tableaux, each marked by a distinctive combination of texture and melody, of harmonic activity and instrumental color. Each tableau acts as a frame for the cello soloist, who moves through them as would an actor progressing through a series of scenes in a play. Overall, the movement is structured as an arch: the opening sections return (with variations) at the end, in the opposite order to their first appearance. In the central section, however, at the peak of the arch, the cello falls silent while the first violins, divided into four, rain down cascades of melody over sustained chords in the winds and brass. The movement is rounded off by a short coda, in which the cello repeats a new melody (related to its opening melody) over hushed strings.

The second movement seems to recall the work’s title most closely. The composer has lately taken to playing the organ for services for her church in Santa Barbara, and the experience provided the inspiration for the name *Urban Prayer*. With its stripped-down, almost ascetic texture, this movement creates a mystical atmosphere in the midst of which the cello offers up its prayers. Though the movement is scored for three percussionists, alto flute, and strings, Tanaka is sparing with even these meager resources; the entire string section plays only at crucial moments, and the percussion part is sparse indeed. The strings’ primary role is to maintain a pedal point on a low D (reminiscent of another work for cello by Tanaka, *The Song of Songs*). Adding to the mysterious ambience is the haunting sound of the alto flute. At times seeming to echo the cello’s thoughts, at other times offering counterpoint to the cello’s lines, the flute captures beautifully the ineffable quality of the responses to our prayers. After two movements of widely divergent characters, the finale attempts to arrive at a synthesis of opposites. Tanaka combines the lyricism and expressiveness of the second movement with the melodic motives and rhythmic energy of the first movement.

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36  
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

*Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, in the German Rhineland. The exact date of his birth is not known, but he was baptized on December 17, 1770, so it is presumed that he was born either on that day or on the day before. He died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. Beethoven began making sketches for his second symphony in 1800, but did most of the work of composition during 1802. The symphony’s first*

performance was on April 5, 1803, in the Theater an der Wien in Vienna. It shared the limelight with the first symphony, the C minor piano concerto, and the oratorio *Christus am Ölberg*, which also had their premieres the same evening. The work was first published (in parts) in the first quarter of 1804 by Kunst- und Industrie-Komptoir in Vienna; this is the sole surviving authentic source for the work, since all earlier sources are lost and all later ones derive from this one. The first publication of the score was by Cianchettini & Sperati of London in two installments, in November and December of 1808. Tonight's concert (as well as all performances of Beethoven symphonies this season) uses the new Urtext edition of the Beethoven symphonies, edited by Jonathan Del Mar and published by Bärenreiter-Verlag in 1999. Del Mar's edition takes a fresh look at these classic works, and, relying on the fruits of modern scholarship, attempts to arrive at a text as close to the composer's intent as possible. The work is scored for a standard Classical-era orchestra consisting of pairs each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, plus timpani and strings. Duration ca. 32 minutes.

It is a truism of music history that Beethoven's symphonies alternate in character between the odd-numbered ones and the even-numbered ones. The odd-numbered symphonies are the more self-conscious Monuments; they are the ones that make Serious Artistic Statements and introduce radical innovations to the genre of the symphony. In the even-numbered works, however, Beethoven shows himself as a boy who just wants to have fun. In the place of the philosophy or politics offered up by the odd-numbered symphonies, the even-numbered works seem to be motivated by the sheer joy of making music. Beethoven said of his eighth symphony that it showed him in an "unbuttoned mood;" the phrase is equally apt for numbers two, four, and six.

The sunny disposition of the second symphony is all the more remarkable when one realizes that during the time of its composition, Beethoven was struggling to come to terms with the hearing problems that periodically afflicted him. The prospect of becoming totally deaf sent him into occasional fits of despondency. A document written by Beethoven in October 1802 (right around the time he finished the symphony), discovered posthumously among the composer's papers, shows him considering suicide. In the end, however, he resolves to go on: "It was only *my art* that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt within me." Apparently, the act of writing about his fears had a therapeutic effect; there are few indications that he continued to be haunted by such dark thoughts.

At this point in his career, Beethoven was recognized as an equal member of a triumvirate, on a par with Mozart and Haydn. His second symphony is in many ways the culmination of this tradition; it contains aspects of both of the older composers' styles, but synthesizes them into something new and wholly Beethoven's own. It also marks the end of the line for the classical symphony. In fact, one critic who witnessed the concert that included the premiere of the second symphony wrote: "It confirms my long-held opinion that Beethoven in time can effect a revolution in music like Mozart's. He is hastening toward this goal with great strides." Beethoven's next work, the *Eroica*, would chart the course for a completely new kind of symphony, which would serve as a beacon for the rest of the 19th century.

The opening movement starts off with a slow introduction in the grand manner, worthy of Haydn. Haydnish, too, is his reuse of the main theme of the Allegro as part of the second theme group. The development section explores all of the themes from the exposition, in the order heard there, but ends up on the dominant of F sharp minor, the wrong key. Fortunately, the horns ride to the rescue, and in two quick measures whisk us back to D major, where we belong, at the start of the recapitulation. The movement's coda, normally a perfunctory series of closing chords, is here extended substantially and serves as a second development section, providing a more dramatic close to the movement. This was to become one of Beethoven's chief contributions to symphonic form.

The Larghetto, with its "reckless opulence of themes," in Sir Donald Francis Tovey's happy phrase, shows clearly the legacy of Mozart. The older master's influence shines through not only in the richness and variety of melody; Beethoven also learned how to build a piece upon a series of beautifully balanced, arching melodies and use that same material as the basis for an exciting and dramatic development section. The hymn-like harmonization of the opening tune, on the other hand, which we tend to think of as one of the hallmarks of Beethoven's style, is a trick learned from Haydn.

The final two movements show how much fun it can be to break things apart. The Scherzo's main theme is broken into one-bar units, and jumps sometimes more than two octaves from one measure to the next. In the Trio, almost as if to set things right, Beethoven gives us a suave, linear melody, but the return of the Scherzo, of course, makes mincemeat of any sense of reconciliation. Echoes of Haydn and Mozart again inform the final movement. The movement's sonata-rondo form (in which the main theme returns in the tonic at the start of the development section) was Haydn's favorite scheme for a symphonic

finale, and the ridiculous theme (two notes up high, followed by a squiggle down low and broken by a rest in the middle) would have made Papa Haydn proud. Once we reach the second theme area, however, we're in Mozart comic opera territory. The scoring of the melodies for winds is especially reminiscent of *Figaro*. But of course, it's the movement's drive, energy, and sheer audacity that mark it as Beethoven's own. The movement (and the symphony) closes with another example, this one even more extended and dramatic, of the coda-on-steroids we saw at the end of the first movement.

It was just around this time—1802—that Beethoven's reputation as the most important composer in Europe became cemented. His works of the last decade of the 18th century often came in for harsh criticism, with claims that his music was coarse, at the same time being excessively cerebral. After the turn of the century, however, critical opinion generally swung in his favor. The review of the second symphony printed in the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (*General Musical Newspaper*) was more in tune with the new attitude toward Beethoven's music. After a few quibbles about excessive length and other issues, the review went on to say:

However, all of that is so outweighed by the powerful, fiery spirit alive in this colossal product, by the wealth of new ideas and by their almost entirely original treatment, as well as by the profundity of artistic learnedness, that one can prophesy for this work that it will endure and will always be heard with renewed pleasure long after a thousand fashionable ditties now being celebrated have been buried.

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