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Chapman Symphony Orchestra

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**CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

presents the

**Chapman
Symphony Orchestra**
50th Season

Mark Laycock, conductor

with

Mischa Lefkowitz, violin

Saturday, April 17, 2004 • 8:00 PM
Chapman Auditorium • Chapman University

PROGRAM

Russian Easter Overture	Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)
Meditation in D Minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 42, no. 1	Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) orch. Glazunov
Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso	Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
Mischa Lefkowitz, <i>violin</i>	

INTERMISSION

Intermezzo from <i>Il Pagliacci</i>	Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919)
Aaron Valdizán, <i>student conductor</i>	
I Pini di Roma I Pini di Villa Borghese I Pini presso una catacomba I Pini del Gianicolo I Pini della Via Appia	Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

PROGRAM NOTES

Russian Easter Overture • Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

While Rimsky-Korsakov's inspiration for the *Russian Easter Overture* did indeed stem from a visit to an Orthodox Easter rite, it was the perceived pagan elements of the celebration which most piqued his interest. Struck by the ornamental and the choreographic, Rimsky-Korsakov would later note in his autobiography: "This legendary and heathen side of the holiday, this transition from the gloom and mysterious evening of Passion Saturday to the unbridled pagan-religious merry-making of the morn of Easter Sunday, is what I was eager to reproduce in my Overture." He borrowed freely from the *obikhod*, a collection of the most important canticles of the Orthodox service. The melodic materials are treated with near-programmatic realism, often depicting actual liturgical events. The antiphonal treatment of the opening theme, for example, conjures a call-and-response style of psalmody. Instrumental solos and cadenzas recall chant and the spoken word. Bell-like timbres abound. The triumphal blare of trumpets represents a celestial messenger. Remarkably, Rimsky-Korsakov corrals all of these disparate elements into a clear sonata form, building to a rousing coda in which the Easter canticle is intoned against a background of furious passagework and cacophonous bell-like timbres.

Meditation for Violin and Orchestra • Peter Tchaikovsky/orch. Glazunov

In May 1878, Tchaikovsky traveled to Brailov for a peaceful sojourn at the magnificent estate of Nadezhda von Meck, his patroness. (Though she provided him with financial support and friendship throughout much of his career, the composer and Mrs. von Meck never met.) The visit was shrouded in secrecy: The servants were explicitly instructed to respect the privacy of their mysterious guest. The bucolic setting proved inspirational for Tchaikovsky, and *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* (Memory of a Beloved Place) was but one of several works completed during these prolific months in the countryside. Composed for violin and piano—and later orchestrated by Alexander Glazunov—the three-movement suite begins with the Meditation. Tchaikovsky had originally intended this Andante to be the slow movement of his Violin Concerto, and the work's emotional depth, together with the virtuosic quality of the solo part, belie a grand scale not normally associated with a set of character pieces. Two contrasting subjects, both in D minor, comprise the thematic material: a dark, ruminative melody confined mainly to conjunct motion, and a more nimble theme accompanied by a gently undulating triplet rhythm.

Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso • Camille Saint-Saëns

As with many such works, Saint-Saëns' brilliant solo piece *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* was inspired by a composer's lasting friendship with a renowned virtuoso. In 1859, Pablo Sarasate was just fifteen years old when he boldly approached Saint-Saëns and requested that he compose a violin concerto for him, which led to the Concerto in A Major. This fruitful relationship—which also led to the creation of the B Minor Concerto—endured until Sarasate's death in 1908. The violinist was also a favorite attraction at a renowned series of Monday evening musical soirees hosted by the composer. Saint-Saëns would later write, "For several years after no violinists could be persuaded to perform at my home, so terrified were they of the idea of inviting comparison. Nor did [Sarasate] shine by his talent alone, but also by his brilliant intellect and inexhaustible animation of his conversation, which was always interesting and suggestive." The two men shared a love of Spain and Spanish musical idioms, evidence of which abounds in the *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*. Dating from 1863, the exhilarating, colorful work boasts unforgettable melodies, ample technical demands, and a fiery, impetuous spirit.

Intermezzo from Il Pagliacci • Ruggero Leoncavallo

The 1890's gave rise to a new style of Italian opera inspired by the Realist literary movement with the express purpose of depicting events in the everyday lives of commoners rather than fanciful plots with unrealistic characters. These *verismo* (Italian for "realism") operas had characteristically violent plots that gave the audience a "bleeding slice of life." Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci* ("The Clowns"), no exception to that rule, is possibly the origin of the murderous clown myth that still pervades our culture. The opera premiered in Milan at La Scala in 1892 under the direction of Arturo Toscanini.

The Intermezzo occurs between the two acts of the opera. At the end of the first act, the clown Canio discovers the infidelity of his beloved and sings the famous aria "Vesti la giubba" as his psychosis sinks in, leading to sudden outbursts of rage and sadness. The polarity between his violent jealousy and fondest reminiscence of his now dying love is masterfully captured in the opening bars of the Intermezzo in a contrast between the strings and woodwinds. This brief interlude between acts continues with several gorgeously sensual themes, typical of the era, that are derived from other parts of the opera. The piece closes with the low strings reprising the same motif that ended the first act. [Aaron Valdizán]

I Pini di Roma • Ottorino Respighi

Though of only a few months' duration, twenty-two-year-old Ottorino Respighi's lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov in St. Petersburg proved particularly fruitful. Perhaps most importantly, they vested the young Italian composer with a keen sensitivity to orchestral color and sonic effects. His Roman triptych, a set of dramatic symphonic poems which remain his most popular works, is distinguished by brilliant orchestration and mastery of timbre. *The Pines of Rome*, composed in 1924, was the centerpiece of the trio, balancing *The Fountains of Rome* (1917) and *Roman Festivals* (1928). With *Pines*, Respighi used nature as a point of departure, envisioning the age-old trees as silent sentinels to past glories. The first movement, *Pines of the Villa Borghese*, depicts the rambunctious cacophony of children at play. Keyboard and percussion instruments, together with the high brass, are prominent throughout. In stark contrast, *Pines Near a Catacomb* is darkly mysterious. An ancient chant is intoned among hushed string chords, followed by a solemn trumpet solo. A more active psalm-like melody rises from the low strings, builds to a thunderous climax, and gradually recedes. *Pines of the Janiculum* recalls the grandeur of the magnificent hill overlooking Rome. A plaintive clarinet melody, slow and expansive, frames a dense central section in which melodic fragments are passed among the strings and woodwind soloists. The recorded call of a nightingale marks the peaceful end of the movement. Gathering power and unrelenting momentum form the backdrop to *Pines of the Appian Way*. To recall the grandeur of ancient battles, Respighi utilizes offstage brass for distant fanfares. The masses gradually draw closer, and the full force of Respighi's large orchestra—including piano, harp, organ, celesta, and a formidable battery of percussion—combines for an overwhelming culmination.

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UPCOMING SCHOOL OF MUSIC EVENTS

Friday-Saturday, April 23-24, 8:00 PM	Opera Chapman
Sunday, April 25, 3:00 PM	Opera Chapman
Friday, April 30, 8:00 PM	Chapman University Wind Symphony
Sunday, May 2, 8:00 PM	Instrumental Chamber Music
Saturday, May 8, 8:00 PM	Sholund Scholarship Concert
Sunday, May 9, 8:00 PM	Chapman University Guitar Ensemble
Tuesday, May 11, 8:00 PM	Chapman University Jazz Ensemble

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