

notes

October 12/13

SYMPHONY IN SCULPTURE

By Dr. Richard E. Rodda

30 SECOND NOTES: *Symphony In Sculpture*, commissioned by the Des Moines Symphony in celebration of its 75th Season in 2012-2013, is Minnesota composer Steve Heitzeg's musical impression of works in the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park, the green gateway to the city's downtown. He composed *Symphony In Sculpture II* in 2015 and this concert features the premiere of *Symphony in Sculpture III*, dedicated to John and Mary Pappajohn in celebration of their three newest additions to the Sculpture Park, including Robert Indiana's iconic *LOVE*. Complementing Heitzeg's work on this program are the cinematic *Night on Bald Mountain* by Modest Mussorgsky and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's exotic *Scheherazade*, inspired by *The Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of millennium-old fantasy tales from Egypt, Persia and India. 🎵



MODEST MUSSORGSKY

**Born March 21 1839 in
Karevo, Russia;
died March 16, 1881 in
St. Petersburg.**

A NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN (1867)

**Arranged by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1908)**

- First performed on October 15, 1886 in St. Petersburg, conducted by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.
- First performed by the Des Moines Symphony on May 3, 1953 with Frank Noyes conducting. Three subsequent performances have occurred, most recently on November 22 & 23, 2003 with Joseph Giunta conducting.

(Duration: ca. 12 minutes)

The mountain referred to in the title of Mussorgsky's tone poem, well known in Russian legend, is Mount Triglav, near Kiev, reputed to be the site of the annual witches' sabbath that occurs on St. John's Night, June 23-24, the eve of the Feast of St. John the Baptist. The sinister god Chernobog, the devil himself in disguise, presides over the demonic revelries. The score contains the following synopsis of the action: "Subterranean sounds of supernatural voices ... Appearance of the spirits of darkness, followed by that of Satan himself ... Glorification of Satan and celebration of the Black Mass ... The Sabbath Revels ... At the height of the orgies the bell of the village church, sounding in the distance, disperses the spirits of darkness ... Daybreak."

The mood of the music is dark, unearthly and more than a little weird. At the beginning, swirling strings and shrieks from the woodwinds, like great gusts of wind, seem to rise out of the

ground itself. The trombones blare forth a savage summons for the demons to assemble; their arrival is portrayed by the clucking and chattering of the woodwinds. A loud brass fanfare marks the appearance of Satan, and the witches join old Beelzebub in a wild and ghoulish dance. The revels go on all night, and only when dawn breaks do the unearthly participants depart and the music return to the plodding world of mere mortals. A distant church bell sounds, and the bizarre ceremony is over.

The score calls for piccolo, pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, chimes, tam-tam, gong, harp and the usual strings consisting of first violins, second violins, violas, violoncellos and double basses.



STEVE HEITZEG

Born October 15, 1959 in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

SUITE FROM SYMPHONY IN SCULPTURE I & II (2012 & 2015)

PANORAMIC AWARENESS PAVILION (OLAFUR ELIASSON) from SYMPHONY IN SCULPTURE II (2015)

- Premiered on May 23 & 24, 2015 by the Des Moines Symphony, conducted by Joseph Giunta.

POST-BALZAC (JUDITH SHEA)” and “NOMADE (JAUME PLENSA) from SYMPHONY IN SCULPTURE I (2012)

- Premiered on September 29, 2012 by the

Des Moines Symphony, conducted by Joseph Giunta.

(Duration: ca. 15 minutes)

Steve Heitzeg, born in Albert Lea, Minnesota on October 15, 1959, grew up on a dairy farm in his hometown. By age eight, he was playing guitar and piano; he began composing in high school with a rock opera titled P.S., based on the parable of the Prodigal Son. From 1978 to 1982, Heitzeg attended Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Music Education. He continued his professional training at the University of Minnesota's School of Music in Minneapolis, completing his Ph.D. in Music Theory and Composition in 1986 as a student and teaching assistant of Dominick Argento. Heitzeg has taught and held residencies at Mankato State University, Gustavus Adolphus College and University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, served as library assistant with the Minnesota Orchestra, and created, organized and performed in the "Music of the Earth" Program for the Young Arts Program at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Among Heitzeg's honors are an Emmy Award for his score for the public television documentary *Death of the Dream: Farmhouses in the Heartland*, Bush Foundation Fellowship, McKnight Fellowship, Meet The Composer/Reader's Digest-Lila Wallace Commissioning Grant, and multiple grants and commissions from the American Composer's Forum, Meet The Composer, ASCAP and other organizations. He was named Minnesota's "Composer of the Year" in 2000 by the Minnesota Music Academy.

Mr. Heitzeg has written "orchestral, choral and chamber music in celebration of the natural world, with evocative and lyrical scores frequently including naturally found instruments such as stones, manatee and beluga whale

bones, and sea shells” — rocks and leaves appear in his *Enduring Earth*, soil and horse bones in *Songs of the Soil*, rain sticks in *Litanies for the Living*, birch bark and pine cone wind chimes in *Raven and Crow: Medicine Birds*, stones, an obsidian wind gong and jade and agate slice wind chimes in *Sacred Stones (Symphony in Stone)*, and acorns, maple seedlings and Catalpa tree pods in *Leaf Songs*. Since 1991, Heitzeg has also been creating what he calls “eco-scores” or “earth-scores,” which he defines as “music scores/drawings with an earth-centric or an environmentally based statement dedicated to the preservation of the many voices in nature.” *World Piece*, for example, features 192 chords in honor of each of the world’s 192 countries. His other main concern in his music is addressing social issues — the ballet *Social Movements* explores war, global warming, refugees and human rights; *Song Without Borders* is dedicated to United Nations personnel who lost their lives in pursuit of peace; *Peace March for Paul and Sheila Wellstone* is composed in the shape of a peace sign.

Heitzeg wrote, “*Panoramic Awareness Pavilion* (Olafur Eliasson). I had the privilege of meeting and talking with Olafur Eliasson when he visited Des Moines for the dedication of his *Panoramic Awareness Pavilion*. He spoke eloquently about the sculpture as a study in light, space and plurality. Scored in a bright key, this movement is a set of variations for the seven colors of the rainbow. Influenced by Eliasson’s use of the phrase ‘Your rainbow panorama and Your black horizon’ in his previous works, the sections/ variations are:

“*Your dawn fanfare* — marked bright, sparkling, this full orchestra fanfare celebrates the evanescence and beauty of dawn.

“*Your aurora dance* — this is a brief and Druidic-inspired dance for the aurora borealis in the northern hemisphere and aurora australis in

the southern hemisphere.

“*Your moonbow hymn* — rainbows at night are called moonbows or lunar rainbows. This variation is a contemplative hymn for strings, glockenspiel and tingshaws (small Tibetan cymbals) honoring nighttime hues.

“*Your noon flourish* — a brass fanfare with timpani, percussion and low strings heralds solar power and energy. The lowest notes of the cellos and basses is tuned down yet another half-step, similar to the effect Respighi used in the last movement of *The Pines of Rome*. This section/ variation is marked radiant, evoking ancient sun power.

“*Your kaleidoscopic interlude* — a mixed-meter, energetic dance depicting daily activities in which one of the percussionists plays a sea glass rattle as a symbolic reference to the sculpture’s colored glass panels and prisms of color. (The Pacific Ocean sea glass was found by our daughter, who has a keen eye for it, and the lake glass is from Lake Superior). Another percussionist plays a sistrum, a common percussion instrument in Ethiopia, in tribute to Olafur Eliasson’s work with 121 Ethiopia and his global project based on Little Sun, a solar-powered LED lamp designed to deliver clean, affordable, reliable light to the 1.6 billion people worldwide without access to the electrical grid. (littlesun.com)

“*Your panoramic chorus* — the original theme returns, slightly altered, with the full orchestra.

“*Your luminous paeon at dusk* — an extremely high pitched and shimmering episode brings the piece to a celebratory close with huge B major chords.”

“*Post-Balzac* (Judith Shea). ‘Is it nothingness or does a spirit reside? Music will certainly live inside ...’ There is a sense of loss in the hollow space where a person should be inside Judith Shea’s sculpture. Yet there is also

an evocation of comfort, even though the robe is cast in bronze and not soft fabric. To portray this, I have scored this movement in the exact instrumentation of Elgar's *Nimrod* from the *Enigma Variations*, one of the most famous and beautiful adagios ever composed.

“*Nomade* (Jaume Plensa). Jaume Plensa's sculptures share a deep respect for all cultures and reference the beautiful universality of the world in their inclusiveness, approachability and playfulness. To reflect this as well as the notion implied in the title of the sculpture that we are all nomadic, this movement begins with the sound of a *shruti* box drone, one of many transportable instruments employed here. (Similar to a harmonium, this small wooden instrument with a system of bellows frequently accompanies other instruments in Indian classical music. I have included an electronic *shruti* box in this work for its cross-cultural purposes. ‘Shruti’ means ‘hearing, revelation’ in Sanskrit.) Percussion instruments such as hand drums, finger cymbals, seed rattle and tambourine propel the movement and underscore the mixed-meter melody based on a synthetic scale. Celebration and dance abound, but they are interrupted by a searching, bittersweet melody that remains unresolved. The earlier dance theme returns briefly, then the work closes with the full orchestra expanding on the searching theme.”

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, tambourine, triangle, finger cymbals, tam-tam, sistrum, tingshaws, sea glass rattle, hand drums, seed rattle, stones, shruti box, harp, celesta, piano and the usual strings.

SYMPHONY IN SCULPTURE III (2019)

• World Premiere: first performances of *Symphony in Sculpture III* at these concerts on October 12 & 13, 2019.
(Duration: ca. 17 minutes)

The composer has kindly provided the following information for this performance.

I. *Iron Tree Trunk* (Ai Weiwei). Marked “In Protest, procession-like,” the *Symphony* begins with the harp, piano and basses in their lowest registers, slowly moving, as if from the deepest roots of earth and sound, and gather in scope until the full orchestra is involved.

About Ai Weiwei, Jeff Fleming, Director of The Des Moines Art Center, states: “Ai draws on current global politics, Chinese culture, human rights and more to push the definition of the arts into new realms. He is committed as an artist to effecting social change. This work, *Iron Tree Trunk*, refers to the tradition of contemplating rock and landscapes in Chinese culture. This tree exemplifies the tension between industrialization and cultural China.”

The opening theme is shaped and permuted like a series of different branches forming (the sculpture is a vertically standing tree trunk, with imaginary branches). Strings are marked “*col legno battuto*,” meaning with the wood side of the bow, and horns are marked “*cuique*” to emphasize the iron ‘metal’ of this sculpture. In the middle of the movement is a lyrical and tranquil reflection in the high strings for the souls of trees and birds. Percussionists play a wide range of natural percussion instruments: small stones, fallen tree branches, and a sunflower seed rattle (sunflower seeds are sacred in Chinese culture). The movement closes with grand gestures with the opening theme returning — this time heroic and rising, like a protest itself.

II. *Pumpkin Large* (Yayoi Kusama). Kusama's playful polka-dot pumpkin sculpture cried out for me to compose a cheerful and slightly tongue-in-cheek polka. Inspired by Strauss' *Champagne Polka*, I have composed a "craft beer polka." Percussionists play the usual traditional percussion instruments in a polka such as glockenspiel, triangle and bass drum, but they also play a growler bottle, a crowler aluminum can and two beer bottles from a variety of craft breweries in Des Moines — for an authentic Des Moines sound.

In the middle of the polka I have scored a vamp so that the conductor and the string principals can toast each other, the orchestra, and the audience with either a craft beer or a pumpkin spice latte before starting the polka up again.

III. *LOVE* (Robert Indiana). Robert Indiana's iconic *LOVE* sculpture required that I compose a pop-infused movement; his *LOVE* print was created in 1965, the *LOVE* sculpture in 1970.

This movement reflects on the various meanings of the word love, opening with a carefree melody and closing with the cyclical groove "Love More," inspired by American soccer star Megan Rapinoe's eloquent speech on July 12, 2019: "This is my charge to everyone. We have to be better. We have to love more. Hate less." The youth choir sings this text with lush string chords and cascading piano riffs. Extra instruments include glass pop bottles, a 1970s electric Magnus chord organ, electric guitar and drum set.

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, bongos, claves, glockenspiel,

xylophone, chimes, triangle, woodblock, whip, tam-tam, bamboo wind chimes, temple blocks, beer bottles, crowler aluminum can, glass pop bottles, growler bottle, pumpkin seed rattle, sunflower seed rattle, stones, ginkgo tree branches, a soup can, stainless steel coffee tumbler, cast iron scrap metal, harp, celesta, piano and strings.



NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Born March 18, 1844 in Tikhvin, Russia; died June 21, 1908 in Luga.

SCHEHERAZADE, OP. 35 (1888)

- First performed in St. Petersburg on October 22, 1888 with the composer conducting the Russian Symphony Concerts at the Club of Nobility.
- First performed by the Des Moines Symphony on December 6, 1973 with Henry Charles Smith conducting. Six subsequent performances occurred, most recently on September 29 & 30, 2012 with Joseph Giunta conducting.
(Duration: ca. 42 minutes)

"In the middle of the winter [of 1888], engrossed as I was in my work on *Prince Igor* and other things, I conceived the idea of writing an orchestral composition on the subject of certain episodes from *Scheherazade*." Thus did Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov give the curt explanation of the genesis of his most famous work in his autobiography, *My Musical Life*. His friend Alexander Borodin had died the year before, leaving his *magnum opus*, the opera *Prince Igor*, in a state of unfinished disarray. Rimsky-Korsakov had taken it upon himself to complete the piece, and may well have been inspired by its

exotic setting among the Tartar tribes in 12th-century central Asia to undertake his own embodiment of musical Orientalism. The stories on which he based his orchestral work were taken from *The Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of millennium-old fantasy tales from Egypt, Persia and India which had been gathered together, translated into French, and published in many installments by Antoine Galland beginning in 1704.

To refresh the listener's memory of the ancient legends, Rimsky-Korsakov prefaced the score with these words: "The sultan Shakriar, convinced of the falsehood and inconstancy of all women, had sworn an oath to put to death each of his wives after the first night. However, the sultana Scheherazade saved her life by arousing his interest in the tales she told him during 1,001 nights. Driven by curiosity, the sultan postponed her execution from day to day, and at last abandoned his sanguinary design." To each of the four movements Rimsky gave a title: *The Sea and Sinbad's Ship*, *The Story of the Kalandar Prince*, *The Young Prince and the Young Princess* and *Festival at Baghdad—The Sea—Shipwreck*. At first glance, these titles

seem definite enough to lead the listener to specific nightly chapters of Scheherazade's soap opera. On closer examination, however, they prove too vague to be of much help. The *Kalandar Prince*, for instance, could be any one of three noblemen who dress as members of the Kalandars, a sect of wandering dervishes, and tell three different tales. "I meant these hints," advised the composer, "to direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had traveled, and leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each listener. All I had desired was that the hearer, if he liked my piece as *symphonic music*, should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders."

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, triangle, tam-tam, piano, celesta, harp and the usual strings.