

Philharmonia

Chopiniana

Alexander Glazunov

Les Sylphides is a short, non-narrative ballet blanc. Its original choreography was by Michel Fokine, with music by Frédéric Chopin orchestrated by Alexander Glazunov. Glazunov had already set some of the music in 1892 as a purely orchestral suite, under the title **Chopiniana, Op. 46**. In that form it was introduced to the public in December 1893, conducted by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. *Chopiniana* is comprised of four movements, which are four piano pieces by Chopin, completely orchestrated by Glazunov. The Philharmonia will be performing three of the four movements tonight: *Polonaise, op.40, no.1, Nocturne, Op.15, no.1 & Tarantella, op.43*. The *Polonaise in A major, Op. 40, No. 1*, nicknamed the Military Polonaise, was composed by Frédéric Chopin in 1838. Anton Rubinstein remarked that the Polonaise in A major is the symbol of Polish glory. During the September 1939 German invasion of Poland at the outset of World War II, Polskie Radio broadcast this piece daily as nationalistic protest, and to rally the Polish people. The Nazis later banned public performances of Chopin and destroyed Warsaw's main monument to the composer, a sculpture of a windswept Chopin seated under a tree, which was erected in 1926 at the entrance to Lazienki Park. Chopin's *Nocturne, Op.15, no.1*, was composed in 1832 in simple ternary form (A-B-A). The first section in F major is marked *Andante cantabile* while the second section in F minor is fast and dramatic (*Con fuoco*). It was dedicated to Mr. Ferdinand Hiller, a German composer, conductor, writer and music-director. *Tarantella, op.43* was written in 1843 and is in the traditional Italian dance form. The term "Tarantella" groups a number of different southern Italian couple folk dances characterized by a fast upbeat tempo, usually in 6/8 time, as written here by Chopin. It is among the most recognized of traditional Italian music. "Tarantella" originally referred to an exorcism ritual that existed in Greece around the year 2000 BC and was connected to the gods Dionysus and Apollo (the Greek gods of wine and music). It continued on in southern Italy, an area known as Magna Grecia (greater Greece), where both wine and music are still loved.



Fantasy on Polish Airs, Op.13

Frédéric Chopin

Gustavo Romero – Piano

Fantasy on Polish Airs in A major, Op. 13 was composed by Frédéric Chopin in 1828. The piece is composed in the *Sinfonia Concertante* style. Sinfonia concertante is a musical form that emerged during the Classical period. It is essentially a mixture of the symphony and the concerto genres: a concerto in that one or more soloists are on prominent display and a symphony in that the soloists are nonetheless discernibly a part of the total ensemble and not preeminent. By the Classical period (roughly 1750-1800), both the symphony and the concerto had acquired more definite meanings, and the concerto grosso (baroque period) had disappeared altogether. This led in the last decades of the 18th century to attempts to combine the two genres. Few composers still called their compositions *sinfonia concertante* after the classical music era ended. However, some works of the romantic era such as Fantasy on Polish Airs in A major, Op. 13 by Frédéric Chopin, for piano and orchestra still approached the genre. Fantasy on Polish Airs, Op 13 was dedicated to Johann Peter Pixis (1788 – 1874) a German pianist and composer born in Mannheim, Germany.



Krakowiak, Op. 14

Frédéric Chopin

Gustavo Romero – Piano

Frédéric Chopin, the greatest poet of the piano, left a slim catalog of works involving the orchestra, and all of those include parts for solo keyboard: two concertos (Op. 11 and 21), a set of variations on *La ci darem la mano* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Op. 2), the *Grand Fantasia on Polish Airs* (Op. 13), the **Krakowiak (Op. 14)** and the *Grand Polonaise Brillante* (Op. 22). Despite the opus numbers, which indicate the sequence of publication rather than composition, these are all very early works, completed by 1830. In other words, Chopin did not write a note for orchestra after his twenty-first birthday. Frédéric Chopin produced a bravura concert piece in his grand rondeau de concert **Rondo á la Krakowiak in F major, Op 14** for piano and orchestra. It was written in 1828 while Chopin was living in Warsaw with his family. The piece begins with a soft, pentatonic melody before rushing into a livelier, syncopated dance. *Krakowiak*, sometimes referred to as the Pecker Dance, is a fast, syncopated Polish dance from the region of Krakow, Poland. This dance is known to imitate horses, the steps mimic their movements, for horses were well loved in the Krakow region of Poland for their civilian and military use. It became a popular ballroom dance in Vienna and Paris. Krakowiak Op 14 was dedicated to “*la Comtesse Anna Czartoryska Speichow*”.

Concert pianist **Gustavo Romero** has a stellar reputation for both the technical brilliance and interpretive depth of his playing, as well as his commitment to in-depth exploration of individual composers. Mr. Romero, a native of San Diego with heritage in Guadalajara, Mexico, discovered his love and gift for music at age five, when being introduced to the piano of a neighbor. He started taking lessons, and gave his first public performances at the age of 10, while also winning his first piano competition. While celebrating music and anniversary of Frédéric Chopin this year, Mr. Romero will complete his ambitious project of presenting Beethoven's complete piano sonatas on three continents, in seven recitals, within three years. Among other cities, performances took place in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Taipei, Bangkok, Mexico City, the University of North Texas, La Jolla and Palm Springs.



Symphony Orchestra

An American in Paris

George Gershwin

An American in Paris is a symphonic composition by American composer George Gershwin (1898 – 1937) composed in 1928. Inspired by time Gershwin had spent in Paris, it is in the form of an extended tone poem evoking the sights and energy of the French capital in the 1920s. It is one of Gershwin's best-known compositions. He composed the piece on commission from the New York Philharmonic. Gershwin brought back some Parisian taxi horns for the New York premiere of the composition which took place on December 13, 1928 in Carnegie Hall with Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Philharmonic. This piece could be better known for its inclusion in the 1951 musical, *An American in Paris*, starring Gene Kelly. Written in the original program notes from the concert premier, Gershwin says “My purpose here is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city and listens to various street noises and absorbs the French atmosphere.” When the tone poem moves into the blues harmony Gershwin goes on to say “our American friend ... has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness.....but nostalgia is not a fatal disease.” The American visitor “once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life” and “the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant.” I, for one, am looking forward to being transported to 1920s Paris. The smells, the sounds, the music.....



1812 Overture

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) wrote the *Festival Overture "The Year 1812"* in E flat major, Op. 49 to commemorate Russia's 1812 defense against Napoleon's advancing Grande Armée at the Battle of Borodino, during the devastating French invasion of Russia. The Overture debuted in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow on August 20, 1882. In 1880 the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, commissioned by Tsar Alexander II to commemorate the French defeat, was nearing completion in Moscow; the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Alexander II would be at hand in 1881; and the 1882 Moscow Arts and Industry Exhibition was in the planning stage. Tchaikovsky's friend and mentor Nikolay Rubinstein suggested that a grand commemorative piece for use in related festivities. The work was commissioned by the Russian Red Cross and Tchaikovsky began work on the project on October 12, 1880, finishing it six weeks later. The 1812 Overture is best known for its climactic volley of cannon fire. Unfortunately, we couldn't get our hands on a cannon for tonight's performance but we do have percussionist who can hit a bass drum very, very hard! Beginning with the Orthodox hymn "God Preserve Thy People" played by cellos and violas, the piece moves through a mixture of pastoral and militant themes portraying the increasing distress of the Russian people at the hands of the invading French. At the turning point of the invasion—the Battle of Borodino—the score calls for five Russian cannon shots confronting a boastfully repetitive fragment of La Marseillaise. A descending string passage represents the subsequent attrition of the French forces, followed by victory bells and a triumphant repetition of "God Preserve Thy People" as Moscow burns to deny winter quarters to the French. A musical chase scene appears, out of which emerges the anthem "God Save the Tsar!" thundering with eleven more precisely scored cannon (bass drum) shots. Amazingly, Tchaikovsky is quoted complaining to his friend, Nadezhda von Meck, that he was "not a concocter of festival pieces," and that the Overture would be "very loud and noisy" (no kidding!), "but without artistic merit, because I wrote it without warmth and without love." While this piece has no historical connection with United States history, it is often a staple at Fourth of July celebrations.