



VIRTUOSO FIREWORKS

THURSDAY, MAY 18, AT 7 PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 19 & 20, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*

BOMSORI KIM, *violin*

RICHARD STRAUSS **24 minutes**
Tod Und Verklärung, Op. 24
(*Death and Transfiguration*)

HENRYK WEINIAWSKI **18 minutes**
Fantaisie Brillante (on themes from Gounod's Faust)

INTERMISSION **20 minutes**

FRANZ WAXMAN **10 minutes**
Carmen Fantasie

RICHARD STRAUSS **16 minutes**
Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Op. 28

*This concert will last approximately one hour, 28 minutes,
including a 20-minute intermission.*

RICHARD STRAUSS

Tod Und Verklärung, Op. 24 (*Death and Transfiguration*)

Born on June 11, 1864,
in Munich, Germany

Died on September 8, 1949, in
Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Composed:
1888-89

**Estimated
length:**
25 minutes



First performance:

June 21, 1890, at the Eisenach
Festival, with the composer
conducting.

First Nashville Symphony

performance: January 27, 1948,
with William Strickland conducting
at War Memorial Auditorium.

Even before he developed into one of the greatest of opera composers, Richard Strauss was perfecting his talent for telling stories and painting characters in music. The genre of the tone poem, which he inherited largely from Franz Liszt, allowed him the freedom to deploy brilliantly evocative orchestration, audacious harmonic language, and elaborate thematic transformation: Strauss used it as the vehicle to establish his early reputation as a cutting-edge composer. He pushed the concept of program music beyond the typical narrative points of reference exemplified by *Macbeth* and *Don Juan*, the first two in his series of tone poems. Already with his third, *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*), Strauss took on the realm of metaphysics by challenging himself to write music that would depict the passage of consciousness at the very moment of death—all this from a composer still in his mid-20s.

Death is a topic Strauss would go on to dramatize in unforgettable ways in his most provocative operas. For *Death and Transfiguration*, he devised a scenario of his own, enhancing the narrative with a novel touch of realism. The tone poem imagines an artist-hero on his deathbed as he reviews memories of the life ebbing away before his soul departs the body. Some years after the work's premiere, Strauss expounded on the various stages portrayed by the music, noting that in his final hour the artist reflects on “the Ideal which he has tried to realize, to represent in his art, but

which he has been unable to perfect because it was not for any human to perfect it.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A lengthy, slow introduction in C minor portrays the deathbed scene in fatalistic, shadowy timbres. Pained syncopations mirror the protagonist's troubled breathing and irregular heartbeat. Pleasant dreams give him a respite (note the charming dialogue in the woodwinds), but a fiercely agitated theme indicates that he is not ready yet to release his soul.

Strauss was particularly proud of his innovation in withholding the statement of the main theme with which the piece culminates for as long as possible. Its wide span features a distinctive octave leap, symbolizing the elusive Ideal. The brass introduce it in passing, followed by a parade of the artist's memories—tender, bucolic, heroic, and passionate.

But the theme of the Ideal eventually gains prominence, achieving a near breakthrough before its energy is spent in enervating sighs. The agitated music briefly returns and then subsides, sinking into the lower depths to mark the point of death. Strauss lavishes his most opulent orchestration and late-Romantic harmonies on his depiction of the soul's final glorification. Against a steady, tolling beat, the textures thicken, growing almost hallucinogenic

in intensity. The musical transfiguration becomes veritably celestial in the final moments, as luminous C major floods the space and the Ideal theme is revealed as the inevitable outcome of all that had preceded it.

Scored for 3 flutes, 2 oboes and English horn, 2 clarinets and bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, tam-tam, 2 harps, and strings

HENRYK WIENIAWSKI

Fantaisie Brillante (on themes from Gounod's *Faust*)

Born on July 10, 1835,
in Lublin, Poland

Died on March 31, 1880, in
Moscow, Russian Empire

Composed:
1865

**Estimated
length:**
18 minutes



First performance:

May 22, 1866 on his visit to the
Musical Union in London.

**First Nashville Symphony
performance:**

These are the Nashville
Symphony's first performances
of this work.

Henryk Wieniawski belonged to a prominent musical family: his brother Józef and nephew Adam Tadeusz were also composers. His astonishing talent as a violinist was recognized early on and, at the age of eight, the Jewish-Polish prodigy set out from his native Lublin in Poland (then part of the Russian Empire) to study at the Paris Conservatoire. For a dozen years, he lived and taught in Saint Petersburg, where he had been invited by Anton Rubinstein, the legendary pianist and founder of the Petersburg Conservatory. A favorite at the court and leader of the opera orchestra, Wieniawski had a significant influence on the Russian School of violinists.

A tirelessly traveling virtuoso, Wieniawski and Rubinstein undertook a well-publicized tour of the United States in the early 1870s, after which the former became a violin professor at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels. He was only 44 years old when he died. The International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition for violinists up to age 30 is held in his honor every five years in Poznań, Poland.

Wieniawski was admired for the emotional power of his violin style, which he combined with extraordinary technique. One colleague who had played with him in Paris recalled much later: "I

was electrified by his playing. I have never heard anyone play the violin as he did, either before or since. His wonderfully warm, rich tone, his glowing temperament, his perfect technique, his captivating élan—all this threw me into a kind of hypnotic trance."

The Fantasia on Themes from Gounod's *Faust*, which was published as *Fantaisie brillante sur des motifs de l'Opéra "Faust,"* is an example of a genre that became very popular in the 19th century, especially in the "paraphrases" of operas by Franz Liszt for solo piano. The idea combines loose reflections on a particular opera score with the virtuosity of a concert soloist. Wieniawski prepared a version for violin and piano as well as the violin and orchestra score we hear in this performance.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Charles Gounod's *Faust*, one of many musical treatments of the masterpiece by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, premiered in 1859 and became a defining stage work of the Romantic era. It had already become widely known when Wieniawski composed his Fantasia on themes from the opera in

1865. The themes in question depict the principal characters: the troubled philosopher Faust; the devil Méphistophélès, to whom Faust sells his soul in exchange for the powers he is granted in this life; and Marguerite, the young woman Faust seduces and destroys.

The Fantasia unfolds in five interlinked sections, beginning with the opera's portrayal of Faust in the

opening scene and using the principle of variation to develop the various themes. Ending the piece is music from the waltz in the second act, one of the opera's most popular and brilliant numbers.

Along with solo violin, scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings

FRANZ WAXMAN

Carmen Fantasie

Born on December 24, 1906,
in Königshütte in the German
Empire (now Chorzów, Poland)

Died on on February 24, 1967,
in Los Angeles, California

Composed:
1946

**Estimated
length:**
10 minutes



First performance:

September 9, 1946, in a broadcast
featuring Jascha Heifetz.

**First Nashville Symphony
performance:**

These are the Nashville
Symphony's first performances
of this work.

The defiant Carmen is murdered at the end of Georges Bizet's 1875 opera, but she lives on outside the opera house in countless arrangements and adaptations. The seductive power depicted in *Carmen* the opera is not confined to its fiercely independent Roma heroine, who its stabbed by the jealous ex-lover who stalks her: it permeates the whole of Bizet's score.

The violin is often compared to a singing human (especially a soprano), and Pablo de Sarasate was the first celebrity violinist who explored the implications of this association with regard to *Carmen* by creating a fantasy featuring solo violin and orchestra in 1883 based on themes from the opera. His own Spanish-themed compositions had in turn played a role in inspiring Bizet's concept of the local color appropriate to the opera, which is set in Seville. In the 1940s, Franz Waxman concocted his violin-focused *Carmen Fantasie* as part of a film score.

Waxman ended up in Hollywood as an exile from Hitler's Germany. During the Weimar era of the 1920s, he had made a living by playing in nightclubs and arranging jazz band music, which led to jobs

working on soundtracks for the industry centered in Berlin. In response to the rise of the Nazis, he left Germany for Paris and then the United States. Waxman went on to write the scores for more than 150 films, including such Academy Award-winning scores as *Sunset Boulevard*.

In 1946, Waxman created the *Carmen Fantasie* for the film *Humoresque*. The screenplay by Clifford Odets tells the story of an emerging violinist (played by John Garfield) and his involvement with an older woman who supports him (Joan Crawford). Along with a scene showing the protagonist playing the fiendishly difficult violin part, the film includes a counterpart fantasy based on Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

The violin part was intended to be played by the celebrity soloist Jascha Heifetz, but a young Isaac Stern ended up recording it for the soundtrack. Heifetz later requested Waxman to make an expanded version for violin and orchestra, which he introduced on one of the popular radio programs of the era. He also toured the *Fantasia* extensively and made a recording that became immensely popular.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Waxman weaves together famous moments from Bizet’s opera, beginning—after a brief quotation from the Prelude—with the sultry Habanera that introduces Carmen (and her philosophy of love) and including such melodies as the Aragonaise from Act 4, Carmen’s music taunting the officer of the guard Zuniga, an her seguidilla seducing Don

José. All of these are elaborated with high-power virtuoso techniques for the violin. Waxman ends with the furiously spinning “Bohemian” dance with which Carmen and her friends bewitch the officers.

In addition to solo violin, scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, 3 percussionists, harp, and strings

RICHARD STRAUSS

Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks, Op. 28

Born on June 11, 1864,
in Munich, Germany

Died on September 8, 1949, in
Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Composed:
1894-95

**Estimated
length:**
16 minutes

**First performance:**

November 5, 1895, in
Cologne, Germany, with
Franz Wüllner conducting.

First Nashville Symphony

performance: January 18, 1960,
with Willis Page conducting at
War Memorial Auditorium.

If *Death and Transfiguration* shows off Strauss’s mastery of characterization to depict death “realistically”—Straussian lore has it that he announced while on his own deathbed that death was “just as I had imagined it”—*Till Eulenspiegel* is a masterpiece of humor in music. Following the failure in 1894 of his debut opera, Strauss originally intended to base his next effort for the stage on the mischievous folk hero Till Eulenspiegel. He realized, though, that the material would be more suitable as a wordless tone poem. The topic allowed Strauss to indulge in a bit of revenge against the critics who had already made a habit of roasting him.

Similar to the character of Faust, this mischievous trickster and swindler known as Till Eulenspiegel drew inspiration from an actual historical medieval figure from the 14th century. Initially intended as a cautionary tale about wickedness, Till eventually became the protagonist of various popular legends and fables that celebrated his ability to

speak truth to power. The humor (and subversive quality) associated with Till resides in his ability to reflect people back to themselves as they truly are—“spiegel” is German for “mirror”—rather than how they pretend to be.

Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks, after the Old Rogue’s Tale, Composed in Rondo Form for a Large Orchestra, Strauss’s complete title, underscores his use of a specific musical form that involves easily recognizable themes that recur after a chain of different musical episodes, but Strauss’s skillful transformations of these themes are anything but predictable.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Strauss likened his charming introduction to the attitude with which a fairy tale often begins, going back “once upon a time.” This mood is rudely

interrupted when Till bursts on the scene, signaled by a virtuoso flourish on the solo horn that spans almost four octaves. A solo clarinet giggles another theme associated with Till, underscoring the tone of merry mockery. Till's adventures are depicted in the ensuing sequence of musical episodes: he rides his horse through the marketplace, haphazardly knocking over the merchants' stalls (note the cartoonish sound of a ratchet); dresses in clergy drag (pompous bassoons and violas); flirtingly tries to play Don Juan (giddy strings); and makes fun of a parade of bombastic university professors.

After another wild horse ride follows, Till is captured, put on trial, and condemned. A roll on

the snare drum and menacing brass shift the scene to the scaffold, to which the blaspheming rogue has been condemned. A shriek high on clarinet announces Till's execution, but the fairytale music that began the piece returns, bringing the prankster back to thumb his nose once more at us—for his tale lives on.

Scored for piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings

– Thomas May is the Nashville Symphony's program annotator.

ABOUT THE SOLOIST



BOMSORI KIM

Violin

Born in South Korea, Bomsori received a bachelor's degree at Seoul National University, where she studied with Young Uck Kim. She also earned her Master of Music degree and Artist Diploma at The Juilliard School, where she studied with Sylvia Rosenberg and Ronald Copes.

She performs on the Guarnerius del Gesù violin "ex-Moller," Cremona, 1725, on extended loan through the generous efforts of The Samsung Foundation of Culture of Korea and The Stradivari Society of Chicago, Illinois.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season include appearances with the New York Philharmonic and Jaap van Zweden; a tour with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Lahav Shani; concerts with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko, and with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Ryan Bancroft; and debuts with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra and the Gulbenkian Orchestra. Bomsori will also return to the Danish National Symphony with Fabio Luisi and to the San Francisco Symphony with a recital. She will perform in Germany with the Basel Chamber Orchestra in Stuttgart and Freiburg, the Bavarian

Radio Chamber Orchestra in Munich, and the Recital in Baden-Baden.

In addition to winning the 62nd ARD International Music Competition, Bomsori is a prize winner of the Tchaikovsky International Competition, Queen Elisabeth Competition, International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition, Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition Hannover, Montreal International Musical Competition, Sendai International Music Competition, and the 15th International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition. Bomsori received the 2018 Young Artist Award from the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, and the Korean Music Association's 2019 Young Artist Award. In 2020, she was presented with the 4th G.rium Artists Award by the Foundation Academia Platonica.

In February 2021, Bomsori signed an exclusive contract with the Deutsche Grammophon label. She released her first Deutsche Grammophon solo album, *Violin on Stage*, with NFM Wrocław Philharmonic and Giancarlo Guerrero. The duo album with pianist Rafał Blechacz, featuring works by Fauré, Debussy, Szymanowski, and Chopin, was released in February 2019 by Deutsche Grammophon. The album won the Fryderyk Music Award for "Best Polish Album Abroad" for their DG recording of French and Polish repertoire.