



TCHAIKOVSKY & COPLAND

AEGIS CLASSICAL SERIES

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 18 & 19, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*
JOHANNES MOSER, *cello*

CHRISTOPHER ROUSE
Ogoun Badagris for Percussion Ensemble

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello
and Orchestra, Opus 33
Johannes Moser, cello

– INTERMISSION –

ENRICO CHAPELA
Magnetar, Concerto for Electric Cello
Johannes Moser, cello

AARON COPLAND
Symphony for Organ and Orchestra
Prelude: Andante
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Finale: Lento

*This concert will run approximately one hour
and 50 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission.*

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TONIGHT'S CONCERT | AT A GLANCE



CHRISTOPHER ROUSE

Ogoun Badagris

- A major figure in contemporary American orchestral music, Rouse is a professor at the Juilliard School in New York, and his work will be the subject of a forthcoming Nashville Symphony release on Naxos.
- Written in 1976 and scored exclusively for percussion, *Ogoun Badagris* conjures a scene from a Haitian Voodoo ritual. The title of the piece refers to a Voodoo deity, and the various percussion instruments, including cabasa and conga drums, imitate those used in the actual ritual.



PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33

- Though viewed as the epitome of Russian Romanticism, Tchaikovsky also had a strong inclination toward Neoclassicism, as exemplified in this work.
- Cello soloist Wilhelm Fitzhagen asked the composer's permission to make adjustments to the demanding solo part — and wound up taking even greater liberties, making numerous edits and cuts to the piece, to Tchaikovsky's chagrin.
- Fitzhagen's revisions became the standard version of the Rococo Variations until the 1950s, when a Soviet musicologist published a reconstruction of the original score. For tonight's performance, soloist Johannes Moser has chosen to perform this original version.



ENRICO CHAPELA

Magnetar, Concerto for Electric Cello and Orchestra

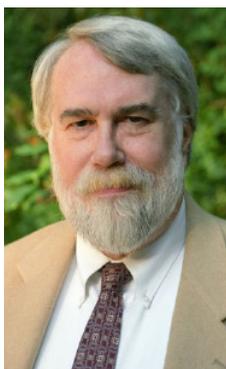
- Mexican composer Chapela got his start as a guitarist and played in a heavy metal band before focusing on classical music. He wrote this piece in 2011 to explore the distinctive sound and energy of the electric cello. He drew conceptual inspiration from the magnetar, a type of neutron star with a powerful magnetic field decay.
- Chapela used data from flares produced by magnetars to compose the piece, incorporating both digital effects (delay, granulation, ring modulation, spectral freeze) and analog effects (distortion, wah-wah, chorus, phaser).
- The arc of the concerto mimics the data from the flares, with the three movements set at tempos described by the composer as “fast, slow and brutal.”



AARON COPLAND

Symphony for Organ and Orchestra

- Copland had just finished his studies in Paris under the legendary teacher and artist Nadia Boulanger, when conductor Serge Koussevitzky commissioned him to compose this work for organ and orchestra. Copland was still early in his career, so he embraced the opportunity, even though the organ was not his instrument of choice.
- A hybrid between a symphony and a concerto, the work premiered in 1925 with Boulanger as the soloist and Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Society.
- The three-movement work displays subtle jazz influence. Copland later reworked the piece to remove organ and called it his Symphony No. 1.



CHRISTOPHER ROUSE

Born on February 15, 1949, in Baltimore, Maryland, where he resides

Ogoun Badagris

Composed: 1976

First performance: Unknown

First Nashville Symphony performance:
April 12 & 13, 1996

Estimated length: 5 minutes

Christopher Rouse has played a major role in revitalizing American orchestral music over the past few decades and maintains a prominent presence in the concert hall. Indeed, every major U.S. orchestra has played Rouse's music, as have many notable ensembles in Europe and Australia. In 2012, he started a high-profile residency with the New York Philharmonic that lasted three years. "Rouse's devotion to the entire history of Western music — an encyclopedic embrace spanning Handel...as well as Led Zeppelin and Moby Grape — has given him a vast canvas on which to apply his sonic brushstrokes," notes the musicologist Frank J. Oteri.

Rouse supplemented an education at Oberlin and Cornell by taking private studies with the maverick composer George Crumb. Along with his prolific work as a composer, Rouse himself has been an influential educator and has taught composition at the Juilliard School in New York since 1997. Associated above all with music for orchestra, he has composed concertos for violin, cello, flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, percussion, piano, harp, organ and guitar, as well as full orchestra. His Trombone Concerto, which commemorated the death of Leonard Bernstein, received the Pulitzer Prize in music in 1993.

Ogoun Badagris is an early work from Rouse's catalog, written in the mid-1970s for the Ithaca College Percussion Ensemble while he was still a graduate student under Karel Husa at Cornell.

Unlike the composer's best-known works, which draw on the full resources of the symphony orchestra, this is a piece for percussion alone. The title comes from a Haitian Vodou (or "Voodoo") ritual. According to the composer, *Ogoun Badagris* is "one of the most terrible and violent of all Voodoo *loas* [deities, who] can be appeased only by human blood sacrifice."

Inspired by Haitian drumming patterns, Rouse singles the "Juba dance" as a source. It was brought to the Americas by enslaved Africans and, explains scholar Joseph E. Holloway, represents a form of "jitterbug dance, which is a general term applied to unconventional, often formless and violent, social dances performed to syncopated music."

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Rouse writes that *Ogoun Badagris* "may...be interpreted as a dance of appeasement. The four conga drums often act as the focal point in the work and can be compared with the role of the four most basic drums in the Voodoo religion — the *be-be*, the *seconde*, the *maman* and the *asator*. The metal plates and sleigh bells are to a certain extent parallels of the Haitian *ogan* (a type of bell).

"The work begins with a brief *action de grace*, a ceremonial call-to-action in which the high priest shakes the giant rattle known as the *asson*, here replaced by *cabasa*. Then the principle dance begins, a *grouillère*: this is a highly erotic and even brutally sexual ceremonial dance which in turn is succeeded by the Danse Vaudou at the point at which demonic possession occurs. The word 'reler,' which the performers must shriek at the conclusion of the work, is the Voodoo equivalent of the Judeo-Christian 'amen.'"

Ogoun Badagris is scored for five percussionists playing the following instruments: *cabasa*, *snare drum*, *Chinese cymbal*, *4 timpani*, *suspended cymbal*, *2 cowbells and tamtam* (Percussionist 1); *bass drum*, *2 bongos and 2 timbales* (Percussionist 2); *string drum*, *4 conga drums and 3 wood blocks* (Percussionist 3); *bass drum*, *3 tom-toms*, *vibraslap*, *one pair of maracas and large ratchet* (Percussionist 4); *quica*, *tenor drum*, *sleigh bells*, *slapstick*, *3 metal plates*, *4 log drums*, *guiro*, *cabasa and suspended cymbal* (Percussionist 5).



PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born on May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia; died on November 6, 1893, in St. Petersburg, Russia

Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33

Composed: 1876-77

First performance: December 30, 1877, in Moscow, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting and Wilhelm Fitzhagen as the soloist

First Nashville Symphony performance: October 12 & 13, 1970, with music director Thor Johnson and soloist Zara Nelsova

Estimated length: 18 minutes

“It is thanks to Mozart that I have devoted myself to music,” Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky observed to his patroness Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck. The composer was attempting to convert Meck, who did not share his enthusiasm for Mozart and compared his devotion to “a cult.” In a diary entry, he even described Mozart as “a musical Christ” whom he saw as “the culminating point of all beauty in the sphere of music.”

Tchaikovsky tends to be seen as the epitome of Russian Romanticism, yet works like the Variations on a Rococo Theme display his inclination toward Neoclassicism, which shows up in several other compositions as well. According to biographer Roland John Wiley, the origins of the Variations on a Rococo Theme are shrouded in obscurity. In 1876, Tchaikovsky was teaching at the recently founded Moscow Conservatory, where his colleagues included the German cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who took part in the premieres of all three of his string quartets. Fitzenhagen also introduced the Variations, which the composer dedicated to him.

Wiley reports that Tchaikovsky experienced considerable embarrassment and chagrin after he gave Fitzenhagen permission to tinker with the demanding solo part. The changes included not only matters of fingering, but also of accent,

dynamics and pitch. Worse still, when he played the premiere, Fitzenhagen reordered the structure Tchaikovsky had carefully worked out, eliminating one variation entirely and changing the order of several others. (The composer was abroad at the time and unable to attend the premiere.)

This unauthorized version ended up becoming the standard one in which the work is still often heard, but in the 1950s a Soviet musicologist published a reconstruction of the original score. For this performance, soloist Johannes Moser has chosen to revert to the original version, which includes all eight variations in the order Tchaikovsky initially intended.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

When composing this piece, Tchaikovsky did not borrow his theme from the 18th-century, when the highly decorative rococo style was in vogue; rather, the theme in A major is apparently of his own invention. Still, Tchaikovsky limits his resources to Classical dimensions and consciously imitates what he perceived as rococo hallmarks: pleasing symmetry (with each of the theme’s two parts repeated), wit and transparent orchestration. Along with this attempt to recapture an imagined sound world from Mozart’s time, Tchaikovsky may have felt a smaller orchestra was necessary to achieve an effective balance with the solo cello. It’s worth noting that the Variations can also be viewed as a cello concerto — nearly two decades before Antonín Dvořák’s great contribution to that literature.

Despite his attempt to re-create a nostalgic image of the past, Tchaikovsky’s own voice is unmistakable. An orchestral introduction and coda frame eight variations. After the brief introduction, the cellist states the theme. Each variation plays up a different character: charmingly decorative (Var. 1); a speeded-up version with a cadenza (Var. 2); a slower excursion into the minor mode (Var. 3); an exceptionally challenging variant in perpetual motion (Var. 4); graceful ruminations (Var. 5); an exquisite dialogue with the flute (Var. 6); a slower meditation that shifts harmonically to other keys (Var. 7); and the seldom-heard inventive final

variation (Var. 8, omitted from the standard Fitzhagen edition), which segues thrillingly into the hyper-virtuosic coda and conclusion.

While Variations may be viewed as a cello concerto, biographer Wiley interprets it as a hidden *opera buffa* — another form in which Mozart was the unmatched master. In this reading, the cellist is a “*bourgeois gentilhomme*” whose theme “conveys the sense of someone

striving for pristine elocution.... Tchaikovsky’s introduction and theme support the imagery of actors looking ridiculous in powdered wigs,” though he never lets the music “descend into slapstick.”

In addition to solo cello, the Rococo Variations are scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns, as well as strings.



ENRICO CHAPELA

Born on January 29, 1974, in Mexico City, where he currently resides

Composed: 2011

First performance: October 20, 2011, with Johannes Moser as the soloist and Gustavo Dudamel conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic

First Nashville Symphony performance: These are the orchestra’s first performances.

Estimated length: 25 minutes

Magnetar: Concerto for Electric Cello and Orchestra

A significant voice from the contemporary music scene in Latin America, Enrico Chapela actually began composing relatively late, after beginning his career as a guitarist and playing in a heavy metal band. He was 29 when he premiered his first major orchestral work — the brief symphonic poem *ínguesu*, a tribute to his native country’s victory in the 1999 FIFA Confederations Cup against Brazil in Mexico City. Since then, Chapela has received commissions from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Orchestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, as well as major festivals and institutions such as Beethovenfest Bonn, the Vail Music Festival, the National Centre for the Performing Arts of China, Carnegie Hall and Wigmore Hall, among many others. Along with Giancarlo Guerrero, conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, Marin Alsop, Joana Carneiro, Krzysztof Urbanski and José Luis Castillo have championed his music around the world.

Chapela studied composition in Mexico City and Paris and is at ease crossing boundaries, whether between heavy metal and the state-of-the-art electronic music he studied in Paris, or between the concert stage and movies. He has

written award-winning film scores (such as *Amar no es querer*, directed by Guillermo Barba) and is the host of a contemporary music radio program, METAMUSICA, on Mexico City station Opus 94. Commentator Jürgen Otten has compared Chapela’s style to some aspects of Minimalism, noting that he “uses very few (fixed) motives as patterns that become players in a game. Again and again these motives recur in the musical sphere, forming a framework that holds it together... [T]hey are characterized by the rhythmic spirit of contemporary modernism rather than by a melodious potential for illusion.” Elements of surprise are also characteristic, though these are “precisely calculated and follow a dramaturgical logic.”

The impulse for *Magnetar*, his concerto for electric cello, was twofold. Chapela recounts that he wanted to find “the biggest possible magnet to base my work on,” since the power of the electric cello comes from the transformation of the strings’ kinetic energy “into electromagnetic energy that can be manipulated in numerous ways before being reconverted into sound.” From articles online, Chapela learned about magnetars, a type of neutron star whose immensely powerful magnetic field decay emits high-energy electromagnetic radiation.

The composer met with Jonathan Arons,

Chapela recounts that he wanted to find “the biggest possible magnet to base my work on,” since the power of the electric cello comes from the transformation of the strings’ kinetic energy “into electromagnetic energy that can be manipulated in numerous ways before being reconverted into sound.”

an amateur cellist and an astrophysicist at the University of California, Berkeley, who filled him in on the fascinating properties of magnetars. A colleague, Kevin Hurley, also shared “data from three flares produced by three different magnetars collected by the Venera, Ulysses and Rhesi spacecraft” — which the composer used for his compositional materials.

The other inspiration was the input of soloist Johannes Moser, to whom the work is dedicated (along with Dr. Victor Manuel Chapela Castañares, a professor at the Institute of Science in Puebla, Mexico). The composer created the instrument he envisioned as his protagonist by removing two strings from his electric guitar and tuning the remaining four strings as if they were on a cello. “Then I jammed over the materials to find out what could be done with them. I composed the solo part first and showed it to Johannes Moser, who crashed in my studio for a week. During this time we defined how the final version should sound like, leaving the score ready to add the e-cello effects patcher and the final orchestration.”

Chapela observes that the effects patcher “is the most exciting part of an e-cello concerto. This software controls all digital as well as analog effects. It’s based on MAX/MSP and does many things: it governs the effects configuration during the entire piece, analyses the audio signal, and provides a real-time stream of information that is used to adjust the response of the effects to the playing of the soloist. Finally, it performs all digital effects (delay, granulation, ring modulation, spectral freeze) while storing the MIDI data that turns on and off the analog effects (distortion, wah-wah, chorus, phaser).”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Cast in three movements, which Chapela depicts as “fast, slow and brutal,” *Magnetar* incorporates the sound worlds of experimental electronic music alongside idioms from Latin-America, jazz and heavy-duty metal. Describing its premiere in Los Angeles, *L.A. Times* critic Mark Swed notes that the orchestra part features a good deal of percussion “and the occasional 1950s avant-garde sound effects.” For example, the opening gesture calls for the orchestra players to rub their hands together in approximately notated rhythmic patterns.

The composer provides the following description of *Magnetar*:

“The data from the flares had some seconds of cosmic noise before and after the blast, so the first movement comes from and goes back to cosmic noise, which is represented by the use of hands and feet — ideal instruments for controlled-noise, chaotic textures. The core of the movement has the timeline reversed: the decay of the flare becomes a gradual buildup towards the big blast that dies out into the solo cadenza. This cadenza represents quiet and peaceful times, when magnetars chill out and return to balance.

The second movement explores melodies that build up to a mini-flare (magnetars also have small bursts), then falls into a cool jam and dies out to the same ethereal ambience of the cadenza. The third movement bursts from nowhere into a fully distorted e-cello that leads into a brutal riff that gradually builds up to the giant final flare.”

In addition to solo electric cello, Magnetar is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling alto flute), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (2nd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, 2 percussion players, harp, piano, celesta, and strings.



AARON COPLAND

Born on November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York; died on December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

Symphony for Organ and Orchestra

Composed: 1924

First performance: January 11, 1925, at Aeolian Hall in New York City, with Nadia Boulanger as the organ soloist and Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Society

First Nashville Symphony performance: December 4 & 5, 2008, with Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero

Estimated length: 24 minutes

Even though Aaron Copland has become closely identified with the development of an archetypal “American sound,” he spent the early 1920s studying under Nadia Boulanger, a French composer, organist, conductor and enormously influential teacher who instructed several generations of composers (including Quincy Jones and Philip Glass). Copland’s formative years in Paris with Boulanger exposed the young composer to trends in the European avant-garde while also enhancing an appreciation of his own musical heritage. The *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* bridges the composer’s final year in Paris with his return to New York in 1924, when he decided to devote his life to composition.

Around this time, the conductor, double bass player and composer Serge Koussevitzky — an exile from his native Russia who would become one of Leonard Bernstein’s most important mentors — was asked to take over leadership of the Boston Symphony. Aware of this development, Boulanger engineered an introduction for her protégé. Copland impressed Koussevitzky enough to be commissioned to write a new work for organ and orchestra that could showcase Boulanger (to whom the score is dedicated); she planned to

tour in the United States as a soloist during the upcoming season.

Before Koussevitzky’s premiere in Boston, the *Organ Symphony* had its official world premiere under Walter Damrosch in New York early in 1925. In a notorious aside just after he had finished conducting it, Damrosch turned to the audience and declared: “If a young man can write a piece like that at the age of 24, in five years he will be ready to commit murder!” The buzz this generated, along with two major performances back to back in New York and Boston, launched Copland’s career before the public.

The *Organ Symphony* was in fact his first major orchestral composition. Copland never heard a note of his own orchestration before the premiere. “But Nadia and Koussevitzky both said, ‘You can do it!’ ” he later recalled. “I will never forget the thrill of the glorious sound of the orchestra playing my own music for the first time.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Copland still had a long road of experimentation ahead of him, including forays into symphonic jazz and experiments with a ruggedly modernist idiom, before he was to arrive at the iconic “populist” style his name immediately conjures. Yet already in the early *Organ Symphony*, we can hear recognizable features of Copland’s authentic voice, mixed together with influences he had acquired from Europe: Stravinsky, Ravel and even Mahler to some extent. With Boulanger, Copland had carefully studied the score of Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*. It’s interesting to note that the year of the *Organ Symphony*’s premiere, he defended Mahler as a prophet of new developments in a letter to *The New York Times*.

The work’s formal design of three movements, each progressively longer, is unusual. Although the prominent role of the organist suggests aspects of a concerto, Copland emphasized his treatment of the king of instruments “as an integral part of the orchestra.” He even prepared a variant version in 1928 — known as the *Symphony No. 1* — by transcribing the organ part for an expanded orchestra.

The *Organ Symphony* opens with a brief, introspective *Prelude*, which Copland composed

while still in France. Biographer Howard Pollack notes that its “melancholy lyricism” draws on the composer’s familiarity with Jewish liturgical music. The flute’s gentle lament frames the movement, a series of glosses on the meditative theme given to the organ. A simple triadic call in B minor, almost subliminally voiced by trumpet, emerges in the ensuing two movements as the Organ Symphony’s unifying motto.

The bouncy energy of the Scherzo’s first theme, in woodwinds, contrasts with a folksy one in organ and strings (quoting “Au Claire de la Lune” in an affectionate nod to the French Boulanger). The central section revolves around an organ solo, leading back to the modernist, kinetic momentum of the first part. The rhythmic patterns here not only suggest Stravinsky, but even anticipate the spirit of American Minimalism.

Synthesizing the meditative and exuberant guises of the first two movements, the finale is the most far-ranging part of the Symphony. Copland casts it as a loose sonata form characterized by vividly contrapuntal textures. The exposition is

lengthy: strings elaborate the motto theme into a stern fugue, while timpani herald a second theme on violins and violas. Two climactic surges follow. A brief development pits the solo organ against a giddily dancelike version of the motto worked out by solo violin and leads to a clipped but thickly textured recapitulation. With a flourish to emphasize the motto, Copland pulls out all the stops for a grandly rhetorical conclusion. Whatever he witnessed of “the Lost Generation” in Paris, the young composer had returned to America bursting with optimistic confidence.

In addition to solo organ, the Symphony is scored for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 4 percussion players, 2 harps, celesta and strings.

— Thomas May, the Nashville Symphony’s program annotator, is a writer and translator who covers classical and contemporary music. He blogs at memeteria.com.

ABOUT THE SOLOIST



JOHANNES MOSER
cello

Hailed by *Gramophone* magazine as “one of the finest among the astonishing gallery of young virtuoso cellists,” German-Canadian cellist Johannes Moser has performed with the world’s leading orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, BBC Philharmonic at the Proms, London Symphony, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest and Tokyo NHK Symphony, with conductors of the highest level, including Riccardo Muti, Lorin Maazel, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Gustavo Dudamel.

Moser recently won his 3rd ECHO Klassik award as Instrumentalist of the Year 2017 for his Russian recital disk on Pentatone, for whom he records exclusively. His latest recordings include concertos by Dvořák, Lalo, Elgar and Tchaikovsky,

which have gained him the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik and the Diapason d’Or.

A dedicated chamber musician, Moser has performed with Joshua Bell, Emanuel Ax, Leonidas Kavakos, Menahem Pressler, James Ehnes, Midori and Jonathan Biss. He is also a regular at music festivals, including Verbier, Schleswig-Holstein, Seattle and Brevard.

Moser has been heavily involved in commissioning works by Julia Wolfe, Ellen Reid, Thomas Agerfeld Olesen, Johannes Kalitzke, Jelena Firsowa and Andrew Norman. He will take part in the European premiere of Gubaidulina’s Triple Concerto with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra.

Born into a musical family in 1979, Moser began studying the cello at age 8 and became a student of David Geringas in 1997. He was the top prize-winner at the 2002 Tchaikovsky Competition, in addition to being awarded the Special Prize for his interpretation of the Rococo Variations. In 2014, he was awarded the prestigious Brahms prize.