

THURSDAY, MAY 2, AT 7 PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 3 & 4, AT 8 PM

### NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

ROBERT SPANO, conductor SIMON TRPČESKI, piano

#### MICHAEL GANDOLFI

The Garden of the Senses Suite from *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation* 

Audition

Olfaction

Gustation

**Palpation** 

Vision; The Sixth Sense: Intuition

#### **JEAN SIBELIUS**

Symphony No. 5 in E-Flat Major, Op. 82

Tempo molto moderato – Allegro moderato – Presto Andante mosso, quasi allegretto Allegro molto – Misterioso

- INTERMISSION -

#### **SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**

Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 30

Allegro ma non tanto Intermezzo: Adagio Finale: Alla breve Simon Trpčeski, piano

This concert will run 2 hours, including a 20-minute intermission.

# TONIGHT'S CONCERT

## AT A GLANCE



#### **MICHAEL GANDOLFI**

The Garden of the Senses Suite from The Garden of Cosmic Speculation

- Originally commissioned in 2004 by Robert Spano, one of Michael Gandolfi's biggest advocates, this piece was inspired by the expansive, intricate Garden of Cosmic Speculation, located just outside Dumfries, Scotland.
- The garden was created by Charles Alexander Jencks, a cultural theorist, architectural historian and landscape designer. He began designing the 30-plus acre garden in 1988 with his late wife to celebrate nature and his own fascination with advances in cosmology, genetics, chaos theory, fractals and other areas of contemporary science.
- After composing four movements for the original commission, Gandolfi added another seven in 2007 among them The Garden of the Senses Suite and has since composed four more movements. The composer always envisioned the work being performed in subsets, with the movements in any order, similar to how a visitor encounters the garden's many "pathways."
- The music of Johann Sebastian Bach served s a model for this suite, specifically his English and French Suites for harpsichord. Each of Gandolfi's six movements corresponds to a dance movement found in Bach's suites.



JEAN SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 5 in E-Flat Major, Op. 82

- Though the Fifth Symphony is often regarded as a work of triumphant self-assurance, Sibelius' severely self-critical attitude toward his work caused him to spend years revising the score. Sibelius began working on the piece as early as 1912, but it was not until 1919 that he settled on a final version.
- During the years he worked on this symphony, Sibelius found himself contending with a sense of isolation from the musical advances of Modernism. Even though his work sounds aesthetically conservative in comparison to the music of his peers, it stands a testament to his unique ability to evoke immense, lonely landscapes and a mythic timelessness in his music.
- Perhaps the most notable passage in the Fifth is the "Swan Theme," a melody played by the horns in the final movement. It was inspired by Sibelius encountering 16 swans one morning in April 1915, which he noted in his diary as "one of my greatest experiences!"



#### **SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**

Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 30

- Rachmaninoff penned the Third Piano Concerto in 1909 while on his first North American tour, which included both conducting engagements and performances as a soloist. The tour was not a positive experience for the composer, as it induced a bout of homesickness while he was away from his native Russia.
- Because it is so virtuosic and technically demanding, the concerto has a reputation
  as one of the most challenging pieces in the piano repertoire. The piece plays a key
  role in the 1996 film Shine, starring Geoffrey Rush as child prodigy David Helfgott,
  who experienced a nervous breakdown in the process of mastering the solo part.
- Rachmaninoff, who performed at the work's premiere, later noted that he found the Third "more comfortable" to play than its predecessor, the Second Piano Concerto. This may be because his large hands allowed him to accommodate the required chord spans with more comfort than most pianists.

## MICHAEL JAMES GANDOLFI

Born on July 5, 1956, in Melrose, Massachusetts; currently resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts Composed: 2007

#### First performance:

May 24, 2007, with Robert Spano conducting the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

#### First Nashville Symphony performance:

These are the orchestra's first performances.

Estimated length: 14 minutes

#### The Garden of the Senses Suite from The Garden of Cosmic Speculation

After cultivating a passion for the guitar as a child, Michael Gandolfi went on to study composition in his teenage years — naturally integrating a love of classical, rock, jazz and blues into his music. As a composition student, he found mentors in Leonard Bernstein and Oliver Knussen at the Tanglewood Music Center, where he now serves as Head of Composition, in addition to holding the same position at the New England Conservatory of Music.

Gandolfi has won many prestigious residencies with and commissions from major orchestras, including the Atlanta Symphony and its music director, Robert Spano, who serves as this evening's guest conductor. As one of the composer's leading champions, Spano planted the seeds for Gandolfi's massive, ongoing, GRAMMY\*-nominated project *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation*. It began with a commission by Spano for Tanglewood in 2004, the first stage of which was a four-movement work inspired by an extraordinary, intricate garden complex of the same name spread over 30 acres just outside Dumfries, Scotland.

The garden is the creation of Charles Alexander Jencks, a native of Baltimore based in the U.K., who is a widely published cultural theorist, architectural historian and landscape designer with a particular interest in landform architecture. With his late wife Maggie Keswick, Jencks began designing his Garden of Cosmic Speculation in 1988 to celebrate not only nature, but also advances in cosmology, genetics, chaos theory, fractals and other areas of contemporary science. Along with the contents one would expect from a garden, Jencks explains that he included unusual aspects: "inventing new waveforms, linear twists and a new grammar of landscape design to bring out the basic elements of nature that recent

science has found to underlie the cosmos."

For Gandolfi, these "unusual" features served as a musical motivation: "I have long been interested in modern physics, and it seemed proper for music to participate in this magnificent joining of physics and architecture." Following his 2004 commission, the composer returned to the idea in 2007 to compose an additional seven movements, among which was *The Garden of the Senses Suite*. Since then he has added another four movements, much as Jencks continues to expand his garden.

The result is a large-scale composition of 15 movements to date. If performed in total, the duration would be the length of a feature film (about 106 minutes). However, from the start, Gandolfi envisioned the piece being performed in subsets, "with any number of movements in any order," as an alternative to a complete performance. He notes: "This relates to the way in which one experiences the garden's myriad 'pathways.'"

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The music of Johann Sebastian Bach served as a model for *The Garden of the Senses Suite*, specifically the Baroque composer's English and French Suites for harpsichord. These works, like the Suites for Solo Cello, present a sequence of movements deriving from Baroque dance forms (often originating from court entertainment), which normally include the Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue. Into this partita skeleton Bach interpolated additional dance types, such as minuets and passepieds, both of French origin. The latter developed particular associations with pastoral scenes from its use in French Baroque opera.

Gandolfi explains that each of the six movements comprising his neo-Baroque *Garden of the Senses Suite* was "inspired by a manicured, geometrical plot, located in a smaller garden within the larger garden that Jencks names as the 'DNA Garden.' Each plot features a sculptural object dedicated to one of the senses. I tethered a sense to a particular dance movement found in Bach's suites."

Commenting on the *Suite*, the composer writes: "In the stately Allemande (audition), moments of Baroque orchestration are surrounded by sections treated in more modern chromatic language, piquing the sense of hearing with the contrasting sounds. Courante (olfaction) is based on a lively dance in triple time. Sudden changes of tonality and instrumentation mimic the abrupt changes of mind/memory caused by different scents. Sarabande (gustation) is a re-harmonization of an elegant Bach melody: here the sense of taste is replaced with that of aesthetic notions of good taste or judgment. Passepied (palpation), or the sense of touch, centers on two solo violinists 'touching' their instruments with quick, Paganinilike pizzicati, accompanied lightly by strings. Gigue (vision) takes a lively, triple-time Bach gigue as its source and treats the melody in contrapuntal imitation, inviting listeners to visually follow the entrances of the various instrumental voices.

Chorale (the sixth sense: intuition), [which] follows the gigue without pause, addresses the sense of intuition. As intuition is not a classic 'sense,' it follows that a chorale is not a member of a Baroque suite. Intuition includes anticipation, a tendency to juxtapose past, present and future. I selected a Bach chorale ["O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen"], scored it for strings, overlaid it with a faster version of itself in the winds, percussion and harp (i.e., they play the same chorale, in extremely high registration and running at a slightly higher rate of speed), achieving an ethereal sonority that variously anticipates and follows the string chorale. The result is music that anticipates or intuits itself."

Garden is scored for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 percussion players, harp, piano and strings



## JEAN SIBELIUS

Born on December 8, 1865, in Hämeenlinna, Finland; died on September 20, 1957, in Järvenpää, Finland

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 82

**Composed:** 1912-15; revised for final version, which was completed in 1919

#### First performance:

December 8, 1915, with the composer conducting the Helsinki Municipal Orchestra; the complete revised version premiered on October 21, 1921

**First Nashville Symphony performance:**January 10, 1956, with music director Guy Taylor

Estimated length: 30 minutes

ean Sibelius's Fifth Symphony manages to sound as fresh as if it had been newly composed, even though it was premiered in its final, revised version almost a century ago. The story of that revision is bound up with the composer's severely self-critical attitude toward his own work, as a sense of creative doubt played a significant role in the genesis of the Fifth Symphony.

That's not without irony, for the Fifth is often perceived as a work of triumphant self-assurance. Even so, the process of shaping it into its familiar final form was protracted, with many bouts of second-guessing. Sibelius at one point even briefly considered radically amputating his third, already pared-down version of the score and publishing only the first movement. "Confession: I reworked the entire finale once again," he wrote in his diary on May 6, 1919. "Now it's good. But, oh, this wrestling with God."

The long slog that eventually produced the Fifth as we know it began during a period of crisis. Although Sibelius had just returned from a highly successful American tour in June 1914, he would soon find himself cut off from the rest of Europe with the outbreak of World War I. It was around this time that he plunged into serious work on the Fifth, which was intended as the centerpiece of a gala honoring Sibelius on his 50th birthday in December 1915. He initially presented

Sibelius' Fifth has been regarded as a counterpart to the "regressive" move made by Richard Strauss in his 1911 opera Der Rosenkavalier, as both works return to a more accessible language after each composer attempted their boldest musical experiments.

a four-movement work, but then made substantial alterations, which he introduced a year later and continued to revise over the next several years. Not until 1919 was he satisfied that the Fifth Symphony, now in its three-movement format, was finished.

Sibelius spent the war years at his secluded home in the forests just north of Helsinki, though the violence of the Finnish Civil War between Reds and Whites forced a brief exile in the city. Being cut off from Europe had a metaphorical significance as well. It underscored the composer's increasing sense of isolation from the musical advances over the past decade, especially the direction taken by Schoenberg and his circle. This isolation had already precipitated an artistic crisis that found expression in the bold experimentalism of the prewar Fourth Symphony. But the terms of that crisis shifted as Sibelius continued to rethink basic questions about the validity of tonally based harmonic language and the symphony as a genre.

The Fifth Symphony has sometimes been regarded as a counterpart to the "regressive" move made by Richard Strauss in his 1911 opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. Both works could be said to return to a more accessible language after each composer had attempted their boldest musical experiments with the Fourth Symphony and *Elektra*, respectively.

Yet even as Sibelius accepted his status as "an eclipsed modernist," observes the musicologist James Hepokoski, he remained driven by a determination to follow his own "interior journey" — a lonely path "that sought to uncover a deeply intuitive and nature-mystical relationship to sound itself through a process of meditative inwardness and ruthless self-criticism."

For this composer, acclaimed for his uncanny capacity to evoke immense, lonely landscapes and a mythic timelessness, the "nature-mystical" dimension comes explicitly into play in an epiphany Sibelius recorded in his diary on April 21, 1915, while he was sketching out early ideas for the Fifth: "Today at ten to eleven I saw

16 swans. One of my greatest experiences! Lord God, that beauty! They circled over me for a long time. Disappeared into the solar haze like a gleaming, silver ribbon.... The Fifth Symphony's finale theme.... That this should have happened to me, who have so long been the outsider." The theme to which Sibelius refers — often tagged the "Swan Theme" — is the wheeling melody that emerges from the horns, like a hymn of joy, at the first climax of the final movement.

"I intend to let the musical thoughts and their development determine their own form in my soul," Sibelius wrote a few years earlier. What was available to be taken for granted by previous generations had been undermined by modernism and thus needed to be painstakingly reconstructed anew here, according to Hepokoski: "In this sense, the symphony may be perceived as simultaneously valedictory and triumphant."

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

nigma emerges in the music's opening paragraphs. The horns — which will later deliver the Swan Theme - are undergirded by rolling timpani and answered by woodwind calls. This material elicits a sense of primal, emergent nature, alluding to models from Romantic composers. But instead of a seamless, "organic" flow of closely related ideas, the texture fluctuates unpredictably, with mysterious swellings of sound, as three more thematic ideas are presented. Each is associated with a distinctive blend of orchestral timbre: a bucolic duetting of pairs of woodwinds, followed by an angular theme to a short-long-short rhythm, and then an almost lullaby-like repetition of an idea that foreshadows the Swan Theme.

The first movement reexamines and realigns these four ideas from varied perspectives. Sibelius compared his compositional process to reconstructing a mosaic from its scattered pieces.

After a kind of "breakthrough" of the opening horn music, he engineers an acceleration into the movement's final section, which reconsiders the earlier ideas, now through the lens of a scherzo. It speeds up even more into a final frenzied outburst.

The middle movement offers an interlude that incorporates keening dissonances into its melodic unfolding. In the final movement, a restless whirlwind sets the stage for the Swan Theme to emerge. This, in turn, becomes accompaniment for an expressive countermelody sung above by woodwinds. But for all its noble simplicity, this is still not the goal of the work. The next section

varies all of these ideas, but then — in contrast to the parallel moment in the first movement — Sibelius alters the tempo, slowing it and thickening the texture into vast, pealing sonorities. The Swan Theme at last seems to give definite form to the inchoate calls with which Sibelius launched this journey. Six pillar-like chords conclude the Fifth, separated by strategic silences that echo long after.

The Fifth Symphony is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; timpani; and strings.



### SERGEI RACHMANINOFF \_\_

Born on April 1, 1873, in Semyonovo, Russia; died on March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California Composed: 1909

**First performance:** November 28, 1909, in New York, with the composer as the soloist and Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony.

**First Nashville Symphony performance:** April 8, 1952, with music director Guy Taylor

Estimated length: 39 minutes

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30

longside his reputation as a composer who carried the torch of late Romanticism into the 20th century, Sergei Rachmaninoff is also celebrated as a superstar of the Golden Age of pianists at the dawn of recorded music. According to Arthur Rubinstein, he had "the secret of the golden, living tone which comes from the heart and which is inimitable." Yet it was relatively late in his career, when the Russian Revolution forced him to leave his native country and settle in the West, that Rachmaninoff had to concentrate full-time on his work as a concert pianist, which was a more secure guarantee of income than composing. With his estate lost forever, income was in short supply, and Rachmaninoff's compositional output correspondingly dwindled in those final decades.

Earlier in his career, Rachmaninoff balanced activities as a composer, conductor and piano virtuoso with a repertoire largely drawn from his own compositions. In 1909, he embarked on his first North American tour — an experience he loathed — alternating conducting engagements

with performances as a soloist. For this occasion he wrote the Third Piano Concerto. The tour induced a fearsome bout of homesick melancholy while he was away from his native Russia, a harbinger of the separation anxiety he would suffer permanently after the Revolution.

Rachmaninoff played the solo part in the world premiere, and the Third Piano Concerto received further attention when Gustav Mahler - who was simultaneously reinventing himself as a musical force in the New World — conducted a performance after the premiere. Even though Rachmaninoff intended the Concerto to present a vivid portrait of his skill as both a performer and a composer, the work is often described as little more than a virtuoso vehicle for its soloist. Much mythology has sprung up around "Rach 3" — which was dramatized in the 1996 film Shine starring Geoffrey Rush as the child prodigy David Helfgott — as a battlefield mined with diabolical challenges that actually lead to a nervous breakdown. It's interesting to note that the composer himself found the Third "more

Rachmaninoff himself played the solo part in the Third Piano Concerto's world premiere, and the piece received further attention when Gustav Mahler — who was simultaneously reinventing himself as a musical force in the New World — conducted a performance after the premiere.

comfortable" to play than its predecessor, the Second Piano Concerto. Then again, his unusually large hands allowed him to accommodate the required chord spans with much more comfort than most pianists.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening theme — a chant-like D minor encompassing a narrow range, faintly reminiscent of Russian liturgy — is the essence of simplicity and directness. The gentle introductory measures also demonstrate the sensitive coloring of Rachmaninoff's orchestration. Intending to display not just his skills as a pianist but his full prowess as a composer, Rachmaninoff makes the ensemble an integral player in his musical argument rather than mere background accompaniment.

The opening melody, which Rachmaninoff once claimed "simply wrote itself," unspools to an unexpected length. Its leisurely ambling carries little hint of the dramatic contrasts which will eventually spring forth. Rachmaninoff's elaborate heralding of a rapturous second theme, marked by mini cadenzas and changes in tempo, signals that the first movement will be expansive. When the opening melody then returns, a subtle flattening of one note within its pattern triggers the development proper, where Rachmaninoff exploits the symphonic potential buried in his theme.

A whole spectrum of music-making is entrusted to the keyboard, from lines that spin in lucid counterpoint to the massively tolling chords of the soloist's gigantic cadenza. The cadenza is another example of Rachmaninoff tailoring his pianistic showmanship to larger compositional ambitions. It forms a structural bulwark rather than interrupting the momentum with a non sequitur of preening display. This is the case even in the flashier alternate cadenza the composer also furnished. The coda arrives at a surprisingly anti-climactic ending, the piano trailing off like a

candle suddenly snuffed.

The slow movement, titled Intermezzo, proceeds as a set of variations on the melody announced by the oboe shortly after the beginning. But this music turns out to be much more substantial than the lightweight moniker "intermezzo" might suggest. Here we encounter the elegiac Rachmaninoff, sneaking the sensibility of his beloved Tchaikovsky into a new century. The pianist waits in the wings for a spell — one of the few "offstage" moments allowed during the whole Concerto — before entering to steer the music's mood of self-absorbed pathos into new territory. One of the variations, for example, spins into a little waltz in which the opening theme of the concerto reappears, albeit it in a different guise. When the elegiac music of the opening returns, the soloist disrupts the mood with a swaggering outburst, slapping the ensemble back to its senses and leading into the finale without pause.

Rachmaninoff crowds multiple ideas into this last movement, from the quasi-martial bravado of the first theme to the stuttering chords that begin the lyrical flight of the second. The latter descends to rest on a chord, introducing a marvelous musical parenthesis in which a series of variations mixes with the first two themes of the opening movement. The recapitulation gets back on track with a parade of earlier themes, shining a light on musical relationships that were previously implicit or subliminal. Rachmaninoff's pianistic persona is given freer rein until he seals the Concerto with a strongly rhythmic stamp — long-short-short-long — often perceived as a signature.

In addition to solo piano, the score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; 4 horns; 2 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani; snare drum; bass drum; cymbals; and strings.

Thomas May is the Nashville Symphony's program annotator.

## **ABOUT THE SOLOIST.**



ROBERT SPANO conductor

Conductor, pianist, composer and teacher Robert Spano is known

worldwide for the intensity of his artistry, for his distinctive communicative abilities, and for creating a sense of inclusion and warmth among musicians and audiences. Now in his 18th season as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Spano brings local audiences inspired, thoughtful programming, including the conclusion of the two-year "LB/LB" celebration commemorating Leonard Bernstein and Ludwig van Beethoven, featuring six Bernstein works and nine Beethoven Symphonies, and vocal masterpieces including Verdi's *Otello* and Bernstein's *Candide*.

Spano is a fervent mentor to rising artists, responsible for nurturing the careers of numerous celebrated composers, conductors and performers. As music director of the Aspen Music Festival and School since 2011, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and rising artists.

Highlights of Spano's 2018/19 season include his Metropolitan Opera debut, leading the U.S. premiere of *Marnie*, the second opera by American composer Nico Muhly, as well as appearances with the San Diego Symphony and Fort Worth Symphony. His recent concert highlights have included several world premiere performances, including *Voy a Dormir* by Bryce Dessner at Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's; the Tuba Concerto by Atlanta School of Composers alumna Jennifer Higdon, performed by Craig Knox and the Pittsburgh Symphony; and *Melodia, For Piano and Orchestra* by Canadian composer Matthew Ricketts at the Aspen Music Festival.

In addition to his leadership of the ASO, Spano recently returned to his early love of composing. His most recent works include *Sonata: Four Elements* for piano, and a new song cycle, *Hölderlin-Lieder*, written for and performed by soprano Jessica Rivera. Spano has won six GRAMMY® Awards with the Atlanta Symphony and has compiled a critically acclaimed discography of recordings on Telarc, Deutsche Grammophon and ASO Media.

Spano is on faculty at Oberlin Conservatory and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Emory University and Oberlin. He is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and makes his home in Atlanta.



















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## SIMON TRPČESKI

acedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski has been praised for his powerful

virtuosity and deeply expressive approach, as well as his charismatic stage presence and commitment to strengthening Macedonia's cultural image. A frequent soloist with major orchestras in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, he is also an acclaimed recitalist who has given solo performances at major concert halls around the world and a dedicated chamber music performer who has appeared at festivals including Aspen, Verbier, Risor, Bergen and the Baltic Sea Festival.

Highlights of Trpčeski's 2018/19 season in North America include summer festival appearances at Ravinia with the Chicago Symphony, Blossom Music Festival with The Cleveland Orchestra, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, where he premieres a new concerto written by Macedonian composer Pande Sahov. Internationally, he performs with the Oslo Philharmonic in Oslo and on tour in Spain; in the U.K. with the London Symphony, Philharmonia

Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; and in a six-concert tour of New Zealand.

Trpčeski has recorded for EMI Classics, Avie Records, Onyx Classics and Wigmore Hall Live, garnering widespread critical acclaim for his diverse discography. His 2002 debut release of works by Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Stravinsky and Prokofiev received both the "Editor's Choice" and "Debut Album" awards at the Gramophone Awards, and of his most recent recording, featuring Prokofiev's Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 3, *The Guardian* noted Trpčeski's "fiery articulation, brazen rhythms, [and] an ability to navigate corners with a swagger that feels sturdy and nimble at once."

Trpčeski works regularly with young musicians in Macedonia to help cultivate the talent of the country's next generation of artists, and his Makedonissimo project is dedicated to introducing the world to traditional Macedonian folk tunes and melodies.

Trpčeski is a graduate of the School of Music at the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje. He was honored in 2009 with the Presidential Order of Merit for Macedonia, andbecame the first-ever recipient of the title National Artist of Macedonia in 2011.