Making old music sound fresh: the Stravinsky touch

Stravinsky left the melodic lines of the 18th century pieces intact. By the addition of his own music in bridge passages, he succeeded in breaking up the predictability of the original. His personal imprint is both harmonic and rhythmic: the gentle dissonance created by pedal points, and clever adaptations of the dance meters with unexpected repetitions and startling sonorities. Despite the reduced orchestra, the scoring is brilliant and varied.

Two years after the première of the ballet in Paris in May 1920, Stravinsky created a concert version of the Suite in eight movements, for the same chamber orchestra forces as the original. In 1947 he made modest revisions to the Suite, largely consisting of metronome markings and one movement title change.

The score calls for two flutes (second doubling piccolo); two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, one trumpet, one trombone, solo string quartet, and strings.

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June 19, 2016, at 3pm
Burgers, Beers & Brahms

Kazem Abdullah, conductor

Alon Goldstein, piano

MANUEL DE FALLA (1876–1946)
Ritual Fire Dance from *El Amor Brujo* (1915)

WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART (1756–1791)
Symphony No. 41 in C, K.551 ("Jupiter")
I. Allegro vivace
II. Andante cantabile
III. Menuetto: Allegretto
IV. Molto allegro

Intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)
Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15 (1858)
I. Maestoso
II. Adagio
III. Rondo: Allegro non troppo

Mr. Goldstein

This season is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

This season is made possible by ArtsWestchester with support from Westchester County Government.

Program Notes - CONCERT V

Ritual Fire Dance from *El amor brujo*

MANUEL DE FALLA
Born 23 November, 1876 in Cádiz, Spain
Died 14 November, 1946 in
Alta Gracia, Argentina

- *El amor brujo* originated as a star vehicle for an Andalusian Gypsy dancer
- Lively, seductive Andalusian dances occur throughout the score
- Ritual Fire Dance captures the frenzy necessary to exorcise an evil spirit

Along with his older countrymen Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla helped restore Spanish music to a level it had not enjoyed since Renaissance times. Enormously gifted, he was drawn to music early. He decided on composition after developing a passion for the works of the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, vowing to achieve a comparable legacy for Spanish music.

In 1907, at the age of 31, Falla went to Paris, where he benefitted by his association with French composers, including Dukas, Debussy and Ravel. Falla's voice was original, however, and he learned from his French colleagues without imitating. To the contrary, both Debussy and Ravel were drawn to the sensuous harmonies and compelling rhythms of Falla's native Spain, revealing more of Spain in their French music than Falla did of France in his own.

Falla composed some twenty operas. Only one, *La vida breve*, has achieved even a secondary niche in the standard repertoire. He is best known for *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, his set of symphonic impressions for piano and orchestra, and the two ballet scores *The Three-cornered Hat* and *El amor brujo* ("Love the Magician"), the source of this afternoon's opening number.

When the Great War erupted in 1914, Falla left Paris for Madrid. Soon after his return to Spain, the librettist Gregorio Martinez Sierra told him that Pastora Imperio, a celebrated Andalusian Gypsy dancer, had requested a song and dance. The project, initially a modest scene for Imperio and 8 instrumentalists, evolved into a larger work combining ballet, song, and full orchestra. Its three dances have become some of Falla's most celebrated compositions.

El amor brujo is the story of Candelas, a young woman whose jealous lover has died. Candelas knows that the dead man was unfaithful to her. Still, his ghost haunts her, interfering with the advances of her new suitor, Carmelo.

Ritual Fire Dance, the most famous excerpt in the score, is one of Candelas's efforts to exorcise the departed lover's unwelcome spirit so that her new romance may flourish. Charged with exotic Arab/Iberian harmonies and pulsing incantations, Falla's music has retained its visceral impact. His music succeeds for Candelas as well; at the end of *El amor brujo*, her new love triumphs. The exuberant closing chords of the Ritual Fire Dance herald that happy ending.

The score calls for 2 flutes, piccolo, oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, piano and strings.

Symphony No. 41 in C, K.551 ("Jupiter")

WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART
Born 27 January, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria
Died 5 December, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

- The Roman god "Jupiter" connotes nobility, subtlety, grandeur, and power
- The symphony's nickname may have come from the entrepreneur and violinist Johann Peter Salomon
- Short themes in the finale lend themselves to elaborate counterpoint
- Listen to how skillfully Mozart weaves together the lines of his double fugue

The sublime in 18th century aesthetics

Jupiter was the sovereign god of the Romans. He held supreme rank and ultimate authority over the other deities. Throughout modern history, his name has been associated with power and might, both in natural phenomena (storms, lightning) and in political supremacy.

In music, the name "Jupiter" brings two works to mind: the fourth movement of Gustav Holst's orchestral suite, *The Planets*, and Mozart's final symphony. The former is clearly an astronomical reference, though Holst's music does suggest the character of each god who inspired those seven planetary names. The case of the Mozart is more abstract, linked to the late 18th century aesthetic of the sublime: the ultimate in artistic achievement, music of an exalted greatness beyond comparison.

Genesis of a nickname

For many years the origins of the nickname "Jupiter" for Mozart's last symphony were unknown. An arrangement of the symphony for one piano, four hands was published in England around 1820 with the sobriquet, but with no explanation. Musicologist H.C. Robbins Landon has found mention of Mozart's symphony in the diaries of Vincent and Mary Novello, a 19th century English couple who traveled widely and interviewed the composer's widow Constanze in 1829. According to them, the name was bestowed by Johann Peter Salomon, the entrepreneur responsible for Haydn's two visits to London in the 1790s.

No doubt Salomon was struck, as we must be, by the ceremonial and grand effects of Mozart's C major symphony. Assertive and forthright from its opening, it is music of majesty and sweep, convincingly bringing to mind the king of the ancient Roman gods. The slow movement is a standout. Ivor Keys calls it:

> …the apotheosis of the ornate song which bewitched Mozart since his Italian days. To the beauty of sound of the muted violins is added the woodwind counterpoint featured in so many concertos, but added to this is a new rhythmic dimension sometimes highlighted by unexpected harmony.

Mozart's syncopations and unexpected accents add to the effect.

The ultimate double fugue

The "Jupiter" is justly celebrated for its finale. Mozart had developed an interest in the music of Bach and Handel, which manifested itself in the magnificent contrapuntal fabric of this splendid conclusion. While the finale is not, strictly speaking, a double fugue, it incorporates virtually every aspect of contrapuntal technique into a sonata movement: canon, *fugato*, *stretto*, invertible counterpoint, even *cancrizans*, in which a theme is played backwards! The greatest miracle of all is that Mozart makes all this formidable intricacy sound perfectly wonderful. His extraordinary complexity and superb craft reach their peak in the

magnificent coda, where all five principal themes are interwoven in one of music's greatest triumphs.

Mozart's final three symphonies (No. 39 in E-flat, No. 40 in G minor, and the "Jupiter") date from summer 1788. The three autograph scores barely span six weeks. What an astonishing level of productivity, even for Mozart! Ironically, there is no record of any of them being performed during his lifetime.

The score calls for flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, and trumpets in pairs; timpani, and strings.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15
JOHANNES BRAHMS
Born 7 May, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany
Died 3 April, 1897 in Vienna, Austria

- Symphony? Two piano sonata? Concerto? Brahms wrestled with all three concepts
- Two-handed trills electrify the first movement
- Brahms's Adagio was a musical portrait of Clara Schumann

Brahms was notoriously harsh on himself. He destroyed a substantial number of early compositions that did not meet his high standards. Those compositions he *did* allow to be published were of astonishingly high quality, particularly for one so young. He was only twenty when his Opus 1, a Piano Sonata in C major, appeared in 1853.

In these early works, Brahms stayed where he was most comfortable: at the keyboard. Of his first ten published works, six were for solo piano, and three were songs for voice and piano. His Opus 8 is a piano trio.

Learning to write for orchestra

From the mid-1850s onward, he experimented with orchestral works, trying to master the challenges of composing for large ensemble. The first completed essay was his delightful Serenade No. 1 in D major, an outgrowth of an earlier Nonet composed in 1858. The Serenade, for full orchestra, appeared in 1860. Simultaneously, he labored on a larger, more serious symphonic work. Sketches for a symphony in D minor survive from as early as 1854 and 1855. That work remained unfinished. Although he drafted three movements, Brahms only orchestrated the first. Much of its musical material was eventually subsumed by the First Piano Concerto.

In its original conception, the unfinished symphony was intended as a tribute to Robert Schumann. The older composer had attempted suicide in February 1854 and was thereafter incarcerated in a mental asylum in Endenich. Brahms was not yet comfortable writing for large orchestra. He sketched the piece as a sonata for two pianos. In that form, he showed it to several friends: the violinist Joseph Joachim, the composer Julius Otto Grimm, Brahms's former piano teacher in Hamburg, Eduard Marxsen and—perhaps most importantly—Schumann's wife Clara. Her absorption in Brahms's extraordinary music, whose quality she recognized instantly, was one way in which she mitigated her anxiety about her husband's declining health.

The slow movement, a sarabande-like funeral march, later found its way into *A German Requiem*. The first movement of the two-piano work evolved into the concerto's opening *Maestoso*. Brahms apparently destroyed the original finale. Instead, he composed two new movements, the Adagio and the concluding Rondo, completing the score in 1859. The lengthy gestation period reflects the trouble this concerto gave him.

About the music

The first movement has been called "the trills movement." Its vivid two-handed trills are a *leitmotif* that emphasize the work's dramatic, tragic character. The sweeping melodies in 6/4 meter contribute to its majesty.

Brahms's slow movement has historically been construed as a Requiem for Robert Schumann; more likely it is a tribute to Schumann's widow. In a December 1856 letter about the concerto to Clara, Brahms wrote, "I am also painting a lovely portrait of you; it is to be the *Adagio*." Coming from the nineteenth century's greatest champion of absolute music, it is an uncharacteristic and revealing allusion to programmatic content.

He concludes his concerto with a feisty, masculine rondo that was also the last portion of the concerto to be composed. The heroic struggle so dominant in the opening movement gives way to a freer, less agonized spirit. A glorious D-major coda leaves no doubt that the internal conflict has been satisfactorily resolved.

Brahms scored the concerto for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, solo piano and strings.

SIDEBAR: AN INAUSPICIOUS PREMIERE

History is filled with incidents in which great works of art were misunderstood by their intended audiences. With respect to music, few composers have escaped the onslaught of critical abuse. For those who did, in many cases the explanation was neglect—no one paid much attention to them at all. Considered in this context, Johannes Brahms was one of the lucky ones. Robert Schumann hailed him as a genius when he was but a lad of twenty. Keenly conscious of the burden he carried by such distinguished recognition at so young an age, Brahms was stringently critical of his own compositions, destroying many early pieces.

The ones he did publish were excellent: well crafted, original music. He deserved the acclaim they earned for him. They point clearly toward the brilliant future that lay ahead. Even a great composer like Brahms occasionally stumbled, however, suffering an intensely bitter experience that wounded him deeply. The year was 1859; the piece was the Piano Concerto in D minor. Its premiere was probably the worst setback of his entire career.

It is well known that Brahms did not publish a symphony until 1877, when he was 44. Like the Serenade, Op. 11, this First Concerto was one of his "exercises" in preparation for a symphony. In the process, he forged a daring partnership between keyboard and orchestra that was completely different from the expected virtuosic display. Unfortunately this departure from the norm confused audiences and even angered critics. The concerto was disastrously received at its first performances in Leipzig. The press lambasted Brahms, accusing him of having written a symphony with *obbligato* piano part. The *Signale* called it:

> …three-quarters of an hour of laboring and burrowing, of straining and tugging…Not only must one take in this fermenting mass; he must also swallow a dessert of the harshest dissonances and most unpleasant sounds.

Brahms was nonchalant in his reportage to the violinist Joseph Joachim, writing:

At the rehearsals it met with total silence and at the performance (where hardly three people raised their hands to clap) it was regularly hissed. But all this made no impression on me. I quite enjoyed the other music.

Despite his casual dismissal of the performance, he was deeply hurt. He was to wait six years before the concerto was acclaimed as the masterpiece he knew it to be.

What was so off-putting to Brahms's German listeners in 1859? This magnificent concerto is so integral a part of our standard repertoire that the initial resistance is difficult to understand. The most likely explanation is that Brahms did not adhere to the Mendelssohnian-Chopinesque model of fleet, pianistic wizardry and gossamer melodies. His solo part is big, and very difficult, but not in the traditional virtuosic sense. The piano functions independently from the orchestra in terms of its melodic material, especially in the first movement. But basically piano and orchestra are cast as equals rather than opponents, and the piano is fully integrated into the massive orchestral texture.

Posterity has been kinder than Brahms's first audience. Symphonic in scope, his concerto salutes the majesty and nobility of Beethoven, while heralding the restrained romanticism of Bruckner.

Kazem Abdullah, conductor

A vibrant, versatile and compelling presence on the podium, American conductor Kazem Abdullah is one of the most watched up-and-coming talents on the international stage today. Since 2012 he has been Generalmusikdirektor of the City of Aachen, Germany, where he leads both the orchestral and operatic seasons. His predecessors in this tradition-rich post include Fritz Busch, Herbert von Karajan, and Wolfgang Sawallisch.

In his third season in Aachen, Kazem Abdullah conducts four opera productions: *Luisa Miller*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Jenufa*, and *West Side Story*. In addition to this he will also lead several subscription concerts and conduct Mendelssohn's *Elijah in the Aachener Dom*. As GMD in Aachen, Mr. Abdullah will also serve as the Artistic Director of the 4th International Aachen Chor Bienalle, where he will lead several concerts with choirs from Germany, the Netherlands, Israel, Iceland, and France.

A passionate advocate of new music as well as established repertoire, Mr. Abdullah continues to develop relationships with national and international orchestras and opera houses. Among his orchestral credits are the Berliner Kammerphilharmonie, Philharmonisches Orchester der Stadt Nürnburg, Staatskapelle Weimar, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México, Oregon Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Huntsville Symphony, Dayton Philharmonic, Napa Valley Symphony, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Sinfonietta, and the National Arts Center Orchestra of Ottawa. During the 2013–14 season, Mr. Abdullah was guest conductor for performances with the Pasadena Symphony, Augsburg Philharmoniker, Orkest Zuidnederland, Orchestre Symphonique et Lyrique de Nancy, and Opera national de Lorraine.

Of special note are three acclaimed orchestral engagements from the 2009–10 season: leading the Orquestra de São Paulo, one of Brazil's most celebrated classical music ensembles, on its third United States coast-to-coast tour; conducting the New World Symphony's 2009 Ives Festival by special invitation from Michael Tilson Thomas; and substituting on very short notice at the Tanglewood Music Center in performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in collaboration with the Mark Morris Dance Group. In the opera arena, Mr. Abdullah has been guest conductor with such esteemed companies as the Atlanta Opera, where he conducted *Cosi fan tutte*, and the Théâtre du Châtelet de Paris, where he led sold-out performances of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*. Mr. Abdullah made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2009, conducting Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. *The New York Times* lauded this first performance at the Metropolitan Opera as "…a confident performance…impressively responsive to

the singers during their long stretches of orchestra-accompanied recitative."

Born in Indiana, Kazem Abdullah began his music studies at the age of ten. He graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, with a Bachelor of Music in Clarinet. He then studied at the University of Southern California before joining The New World Symphony as a clarinetist under Michael Tilson Thomas for two seasons. After that he continued his musical studies at The Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Mr. Abdullah served as assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, a three-year post to which he was appointed by Music Director James Levine. In addition to Maestro Levine, while at the Met he worked with conductors such as Louis Langree, Kirill Petrenko, Lorin Maazel, and Fabio Luisi. A recipient of a prestigious 2010 Solti Foundation U.S Career Assistance Award, Mr. Abdullah was named #4 by The Daily Beast on its 2009 list of "Young Rock Stars of the Conducting World." Mr. Abdullah's conducting teachers include Jorma Panula, Gustav Meier, Stefan Asbury, Bernard Haitink, and James Levine.

Alon Goldstein is one of the most original and sensitive artists of his generation, admired for his musical intelligence and dynamic personality. Mr. Goldstein's artistic vision and innovative programming have made him a favorite with audiences and critics alike throughout the United States, Europe, and Israel. He made his orchestral debut at the age of 18 with the Israel Philharmonic under the baton of Zubin Mehta, and returned with Maestro Herbert Blomstedt for Beethoven's Concerto No.1. In recent seasons, Mr. Goldstein has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco, Baltimore, St. Louis, Houston, Vancouver, Kansas City, and North Carolina Symphonies, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, and orchestras on tour in Paris, Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

His 2015–16 season begins with performances at the Ravinia Festival and New York's International Keyboard Festival, followed by a tour of China with the Amber String Quartet. He will be performing with the Alabama, Knoxville, Fairfax, Spokane, and Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestras, among others. He will also be heard in solo recitals and with the Goldstein-Peled-Fiterstein Trio and the Tempest Trio in chamber music concerts throughout the world, including appearances in Israel, Romania, England, Germany, Ecuador, China, and across the United States. In the fall of 2015, Naxos will release his recording of Mozart Piano Concertos No. 20 and No. 21 with the Fine Arts Quartet. A passionate advocate for music education, his recent teaching engagements have included posts at The Steans Institute of the Ravinia Festival and The Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, in addition to extended educational residencies across the country.

Released in 2013, of Mr. Goldstein's acclaimed Centaur recording of Mendelssohn Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 with the Israel Chamber Orchestra conducted by Yoav Talmi was preceded by an enthusiastically received 17-concert Latin American tour. Other recent highlights included an appearance as soloist with the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia in the Mozart Double Concerto, K.365 with Katherine Jacobson Fleisher as well as in the Triple Concerto, K.242 with Leon Fleisher and Ms. Jacobson Fleisher. He also appeared at the prestigious Ruhr Piano Festival in Germany performing the Britten *Diversions* and the Poulenc Double Concerto with Mr. Fleisher, his former teacher, conducting.

Among many memorable recent experiences were nation-wide performances with the Tokyo Quartet on their final tour appearances, and the premiere *Lost Souls* with the Kansas City Symphony and conductor Michael Stern, written for Mr. Goldstein by the noted young Israel composer Avner Dorman. Highlights of recent seasons also include a successful debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski playing Mendelssohn Concerto No. 1, a return to the IRIS Orchestra for the Saint-Saëns Concerto No. 2 with Michael Stern, performances of Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1 with Jaime Laredo and the Vermont Symphony and Concerto No. 2 with the Toronto Symphony. Mr. Goldstein was also heard in Paris with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France with Leon Fleisher conducting. Among his recital and chamber music concerts were critically-acclaimed performances in Beijing, Guatemala City, Kent, Chicago, Los Angeles, Coral Gables, Seattle, St. Paul, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv.

He made his Carnegie Hall debut in the Mozart Triple Concerto with Joseph Kalichstein and Shai Wosner, and gave the world premiere of a concerto by Mark Kopytman with Avner Biron and the Jerusalem Camerata Orchestra. Mr. Goldstein was a featured panelist at a recent League of American Orchestras annual conference where he discussed his performance of a Beethoven concerto cycle with the Rockford Symphony. The concerto cycle expanded the traditional concert experience to a multi-media presentation contextualizing Beethoven's life and work, and resulted in unprecedented attendance and a subsequent surge in subscriptions.

Mr. Goldstein has appeared at the Gilmore, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Marlboro, Seattle, and Steamboat festivals in the United States as well as internationally at Prussia Cove in England, the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and the Klavier Festival in Rühr. He performed at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and at Millennium Park in Chicago with the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Over the past several years he has also taught and played at the "Tel Hai" international piano master classes in Israel.

Alon Goldstein, piano

He is the winner of numerous competitions, among them the Arianne Katcz Piano Competition in Tel Aviv, the Nena Wideman Competition in the U.S. and the Francois Shapira competition in Israel. He is the recipient of the 2004 Salon di Virtuosi Career Grant and the America Israel Cultural Foundation Scholarship. The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC chose a live recording of one of Mr. Goldstein's recitals there for its first CD release. Other recordings include solo recital programs through the Jerusalem Music Center "Mishkenot Sha'ananim" and the Israeli Music Institute featuring works by Israeli composers. Mr. Goldstein graduated from the Peabody Conservatory where he studied with Leon Fleisher and served as his assistant, a position assigned only to his most exceptional students.