

Saturday, August 27, 8pm, Shed

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS, conductor

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Dubinushka, Opus 62*

RACHMANINOFF **Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Opus 30**
Allegro ma non tanto
Intermezzo: Adagio
Alla breve

ALEXANDER MALOFEEV, piano

{Intermission}

COPLAND **Symphony No. 3**
Molto moderato, with simple expression
Allegro molto
Andantino quasi allegretto
Molto deliberato (Fanfare)—Allegro risoluto

Michael Tilson Thomas has appeared at Tanglewood as conductor, pianist, composer, and impresario since his debut here leading the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra as a Conducting Fellow in July 1968. He became the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Assistant Conductor in fall 1969, leading the BSO for the first time that October in Symphony Hall. He went on to serve as the BSO's Associate Conductor (1970-73), then, with Colin Davis, as Principal Guest Conductor through the 1975 Tanglewood season. He appeared here most recently in August 2018 to conduct Mahler's Symphony No. 1 and to participate in the Leonard Bernstein Centennial Concert.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)
Dubinushka (The Oaken Cudgel), Opus 62

Composition and premiere: Rimsky-Korsakov composed *Dubinushka* in autumn 1905, but later revised it, completing the score on October 11, 1906. The first performance (of the original version) took place on November 18, 1905, in St. Petersburg at one of the Ziloti Concerts conducted by Alexander Ziloti. Serge Koussevitzky led all the previous Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of the piece; the first was in November 1924 at Symphony Hall and the most recent, in December 1944, was at the Boston Garden. This is the first Tanglewood performance.

The violent political unrest that spread across Russia in 1905 severely disrupted life at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, where Rimsky-Korsakov had been teaching orchestration for more than 30 years. Strikes, demonstrations, and acts of terrorism (including the assassination of Tsar Nicholas II's brother-in-law) exploded across the country, while a disastrous war with Japan further enflamed public opinion. In February, the students at the Conservatory went on strike and classes were suspended. Moved to respond, Rimsky wrote a letter supporting the students' demands for reforms and was briefly removed from his post as professor.

In October, as the turmoil of the Revolution of 1905 intensified, finally resulting in the establishment of a new constitution that limited the Tsar's absolute power, Rimsky composed a musical response: *Dubinushka*, a short orchestral arrangement of a popular Russian folk song. Its text was originally adapted from folk sources by Vasily Bogdanov (1837-86), a well-known author of socialist poems and editorials. Like many American slave songs, *Dubinushka* was sung by workers as they toiled at heavy manual labor. The title is a diminutive form of the word *dubina*, meaning "cudgel" or "stick," usually made of green oak—the tool supervisors would use to goad workers.

Prophetically, the angry lyrics promise revenge against abusive masters: “When the people arise, they will crush the dukes and duchesses with their beloved *dubina*.” The song’s weary refrain ends with the exclamation “*Da ukhnem*”—“Pull together now!”

Dubinushka became a symbol of the revolutionary movement of the 1880s, and a rallying cry during the events of 1905. Rimsky reportedly heard striking workers singing it as they marched along the streets and wrote in his *My Musical Life* that his orchestration was composed “under the influence of rather on the occasion of the revolutionary disturbances.” At its first performance, *Dubinushka* shared the program with Alexander Glazunov’s new arrangement of another worker’s folk song, the famous “Volga Boatmen’s Song” (“*Ei ukhnem*”). Rimsky wrote that “Exactly as much as Glazunov’s piece proved magnificent, just so much did my *Dubinushka* prove short and insignificant, even though sufficiently noisy.”

Rimsky revised the piece during the summer and fall of 1906. His treatment transforms this seething anthem of brutality and oppression (as popularized by Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin and many other singers and ensembles up to the present day) into a rousing, almost jolly march. Opening with flashy brass writing, *Dubinushka* proceeds to a serene treatment in the strings of the song’s main theme before a cavalcade conclusion reminiscent of the better-known “Procession of the Nobles” from Rimsky’s opera *Mlada*.

HARLOW ROBINSON

Harlow Robinson is an author, lecturer, and Matthews Distinguished University Professor of History, Emeritus, at Northeastern University. His books include *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* and *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood’s Russians*. His essays and reviews have appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Cineaste*, and *Opera News*, and he has written program notes for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, and Metropolitan Opera.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Opus 30

Composition and premiere: Rachmaninoff wrote his Piano Concerto No. 3 at Ivanovka, Russia, in summer 1909, completing it September 23, 1909. Rachmaninoff himself was soloist for the premiere on November 28, 1909, with the New York Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Damrosch, during the composer’s first American tour. The composer was also soloist in first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances on October/November 1919, Pierre Monteux conducting. The first Tanglewood performance featured Byron Janis as soloist with Charles Munch leading the BSO on July 26, 1958. The most recent Tanglewood performance was Yefim Bronfman’s with the BSO led by Dima Slobodeniouk on August 4, 2019.

For pianists, Rachmaninoff’s Third Piano Concerto stands as the ultimate challenge. Its herculean technical demands, titanic scale (the soloist plays almost non-stop for the entire 45 minutes), and emotional richness scared off such seasoned virtuosi as Joseph Lhévinne, Arthur Rubinstein, and Sviatoslav Richter. Even the pianist to whom it was dedicated, the composer’s friend Josef Hofmann, declined to play it, dismissing it as “more a *fantaisie* than a concerto.”

The concerto’s complexity at first confused and intimidated audiences and critics, too. In 1912, the usually well-informed Sergei Prokofiev, then a 21-year-old budding composer-pianist, wrote to a friend that he preferred Rachmaninoff’s “charming” Second Piano Concerto to the Third, which he found “dry, difficult, and unappealing. In musical circles it finds little affection, and besides the composer no one is performing it so far.” Only when another Russian pianist, Vladimir Horowitz, began to tour extensively did it start to win fans. Hearing him play the solo part for the first time, Rachmaninoff declared admiringly that Horowitz had “swallowed the concerto whole!” For Horowitz, it became something of a signature piece. Horowitz was also the first to record it, but in the late 1950s, a young and photogenic pianist from Texas—Van Cliburn—further popularized the concerto after his stunning victory at the 1958 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow.

The Third Concerto emerged from a notably calm and happy period in Rachmaninoff’s life. The previous year he had conducted the triumphant premiere of his Second Symphony; eight years had passed since he completed his highly successful Piano Concerto No. 2. He was famous, wealthy, and happy in his family life. For the moment, Russia was at peace. For several years, Rachmaninoff had been spending winters in Dresden and summers at the idyllic estate of Ivanovka, deep in the steppes of Tambov province, more than 300 miles southwest of Moscow. In

summer 1909, he was preparing there for an extensive and lucrative tour to the United States—his first—scheduled for autumn. With the proceeds he was planning to buy a car. For the tour he decided (at first secretly) to write a new concerto. Although afflicted in the past by severe bouts of depression that limited his ability to compose, on this occasion Rachmaninoff apparently worked quickly and easily, completing the entire piece in a matter of weeks. He practiced it on a dummy keyboard during the trans-Atlantic crossing in preparation for the premiere in New York in late November.

Rachmaninoff's tour began in Northampton, Massachusetts, on November 4, 1909, and extended through late January 1910. The tour's artistic highlight was the premiere of the new concerto in New York on November 28 and 30 with the New York Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch. On January 16, it was repeated in Carnegie Hall with Gustav Mahler conducting.

In the Third Concerto, the piano dominates from start to finish. This distinguishes it from the Second, where the orchestra figures more prominently. The opening measures show the difference. In the Second Concerto, the piano begins with a bell-like tolling that introduces the orchestra and the main theme. In the Third, the orchestra provides a mere two measures of introduction before the soloist launches into the supple main theme. True, these first two measures contain a memorable gesture in dotted rhythm that emerges as a swelling motto, used throughout the concerto to considerable dramatic effect. The principal theme of the first movement begins on D, and then circles around it, unfolding leisurely over the long space of twenty-five bars. Some listeners have heard a folk origin or even a liturgical source in this elegant tune, but Rachmaninoff insistently claimed ownership: "It simply wrote itself! I wanted to 'sing' a tune on the piano like a singer does and find an appropriate orchestral accompaniment, that is, one that would not drown this 'song.' That's all! Just the same, I find that, against my will, this theme does take on a songlike or familiar quality."

The first movement's main theme reappears in altered form (sometimes barely recognizable) throughout the concerto, in a manner reminiscent of the Symphony No. 2. The second theme—somewhat military in character—emerges with unusual subtlety out of the first. After an extended development section comes an enormous cadenza—or rather, two cadenzas, occupying five pages in the score. Rachmaninoff provided two alternatives for the soloist in the cadenza's first part. The longer one (75 measures) was apparently composed first, while the other, somewhat shorter (59 measures) and less demanding, was added later. (The subsequent 21 measures are the same in both versions.) In performance, Rachmaninoff played the easier shorter version. At the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958, however, Van Cliburn made news by playing the original, longer version, launching a trend subsequently followed by other soloists.

For the second movement Rachmaninoff created a soulful, bleak, and melancholy main theme played first by the orchestra, a phrase falling gently into what sounds like the depths of despair. After thirty measures, the piano enters, initiating a series of virtuosic variations. The last is a Tchaikovsky-style waltz in 3/8 meter. The energetic finale follows without pause. Its themes are closely related to those of the first movement, both in rhythm and melodic contour, and give this immense work an unusual sense of formal unity and coherence. After a brief cadenza toward the end, the piano enters (*Vivacissimo*) with thundering chords triumphantly restating the opening bars of the first movement. The melancholy gloom of the second movement (and of the tonic key of D minor) now conquered, the soloist leads the way to an optimistic, march-like conclusion in D major.

HARLOW ROBINSON

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Third Symphony

Composition and premiere: Copland wrote his Symphony No. 3 on a 1944 commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation at Serge Koussevitzky's request for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 1946-47 season. He wrote the first movement in 1944, the second in summer 1945, and the third in fall 1945. The finale, incorporating the composer's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, was written in summer/fall 1946—interrupted by his teaching duties at Tanglewood. Koussevitzky led the premiere with the BSO in Symphony Hall on October 18, 1946, toured it to New York and Pittsburgh, and repeated it in Boston in December. The first Tanglewood performance was the following summer, July 26, 1947, again with Koussevitzky conducting. Andris Nelsons led the BSO in the most recent Tanglewood performance on July 12, 2019.

The monumental Symphony No. 3 of Aaron Copland, completed in 1946, has a special relationship to Tanglewood. Parts of it were actually written on its grounds, where Copland taught generations of composers for twenty-five years, and the work was commissioned for and premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the baton of its then music director, the legendary Serge Koussevitzky, during their regular concert season in Boston. Copland's relationship to the symphony as a musical form, however, is more complicated.

Despite receiving the New York Music Critics Circle Prize for the best orchestral work by an American composer during the 1946-47 season and now frequently hailed as the greatest American work in the genre, Copland's Third Symphony was disparaged as "false" by one of his greatest allies, composer-critic Virgil Thomson, shortly after its premiere. It was the last time Copland ever used the appellation "Symphony" for a musical composition. Symphony No. 3 was actually the fourth piece he had composed with the word "symphony" in its title, and the only one to bear a numeric designation from its inception. The Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, a hybrid symphony-concerto from 1924, was his earliest. In 1928, Copland created an alternate version without organ, designating it Symphony No. 1. And after finishing the Third, Copland assigned the number two slot to his single-movement *Short Symphony* (1933). But there's also a *Dance Symphony* (1930), a reworking of portions of his score for the early ballet *Grohg*.

The Third Symphony, scored for a large orchestra comprising a total of twenty-six wind and brass players, five percussionists, celesta, piano, two harps, and strings, occupied Copland for over two years. The result proved to be his longest instrumental composition and indeed it is his most clearly symphonic.

Despite Copland's concerns over the pedigree of *bona fide* symphonies, his Third Symphony contains a few quirks. Although it does not quote any folksongs or hymns, as had many of his previous works, it incorporates his own popular *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942) in its entirety, and the Fanfare's basic melodic contours permeate all four of the symphony's movements. And while having four movements is traditional symphonic practice, Copland's tempos and lengths do not conform to established orthodoxies. The first (*Molto moderato*) is extremely short and rather slow; the final two flow together without pause. Copland pointed out, in his notes for the premiere performance in 1946, that the first movement is not cast in the sonata-allegro form typical of most symphonic first movements. Rather, it plainly states three consecutive modal themes, all in different keys: an expansive fanfare in E with broad leaps introduced in the strings and then echoed in the brass and woodwinds; a stylistically similar, more hymn-like melody in the violas and oboes which begins in A and winds up in E-flat; and a fugal tune in D minor introduced by a solo trombone, then taken up by the rest of the brass with countermelodies in the other sections. After the briefest of developments, the music returns to the original key of E. Copland composed this movement during summer 1944 in Topoztlán, Mexico. Copland described the second movement (*Allegro molto*), composed the following summer in Bernardsville, New Jersey, as "closer to normal symphonic procedures [of] the usual scherzo, with first part, trio, and return." But that's somewhat of an oversimplification. Like the opening movement, it begins with a modal fanfare. But that is merely a prelude. Twitterings in the woodwinds, led by the piccolo with additional support from the xylophone and orchestral piano, lead to the real theme: an expansion of the fanfare motive played by clarinets, solo horn, and violas in unison. This theme is developed in typical symphonic fashion, occasionally stretched out or condensed with overlapping countermelodies culminating in an almost military band-like march replete with snare drum. But a key change and meter change signals a completely new idea, a pastoral waltz. This morphs into a *concertante* passage for piano that ushers in a triumphant return to the march.

In the contemplative third movement (*Andantino quasi allegretto*), composed in Ridgefield, Connecticut, in April 1946, brass and percussion remain silent throughout except for a lone trumpet, horn, celesta, and glockenspiel, whose roles are mostly marginal. According to Copland it is "the freest of all in formal structure." The movement opens with the fugal theme from the first movement. But here, now in B minor and stretched out chromatically as well as contrapuntally in the strings, this melody takes on a more somber tone. A plaintive but angular melody is introduced by the flute and then transformed through the strings and the rest of the winds. A muted trumpet initiates the next idea, a faster two-step serving as a transition. After only a few measures, piccolo, oboe, and strings take over this material, now transposed, and then the plaintive flute melody makes a brief reappearance over the celesta and harps. A vigorous passage for winds and strings further develops that theme, gradually slowing down and fading away into a series of ghost-like string harmonics ending up in A major. But a chorale passage for the reed instruments surprisingly modulates the music to A-flat major, firmly reinforced by a final chord in the low strings.

The final movement (*Molto deliberato—Allegro risoluto*) directly follows, its first quiet notes built on top of the previous movement's final chord. It is the theme of the *Fanfare for the Common Man*, though much less bombastic than in its instantly recognizable guise. But after these first tentative glimmers, the music abruptly shifts to C major and Copland's original *Fanfare*, with its famous brass and timpani call and response, emerges. A new theme

subsequently passed around throughout the rest of the orchestra is explored, with hints of the Fanfare occasionally rising to the surface. The material eventually builds to a turbulent cacophony. The syncopated countermelody and the Fanfare return together in yet new guises and harmonies along with thematic material from the first movement. It is his total summation, and it all ends resoundingly with a big D major chord played by the entire orchestra. While Copland was fleshing out the symphony, the United States emerged victorious in the Second World War. It is difficult not to hear the piece as in some way a response to that. But Copland has stated that he did not write the symphony as a direct response to the war, although he conceded that its “affirmative tone” was “certainly related to its time.” Copland worked on this final movement throughout the summer of 1946, first at the MacDowell Colony, then here at Tanglewood, and made his final touches to the symphony on September 29, 1946, in a converted barn in nearby Richmond, Massachusetts.

FRANK J. OTERI

Composer, writer, and speaker Frank J. Oteri is the Composer Advocate at New Music USA and has been the Editor of the web magazine *NewMusicBox* since its launch online in May 1999.

GUEST ARTISTS

Michael Tilson Thomas

Michael Tilson Thomas is co-founder and artistic director of the New World Symphony, music director laureate of the San Francisco Symphony, and conductor laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra. Born in Los Angeles, he is the third generation of his family to pursue an artistic career. His grandparents, Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky, were founding members of the Yiddish Theater in America; his father, Ted Thomas, was a producer at the Mercury Theater Company in New York before moving to Los Angeles where he worked in film and television; and his mother, Roberta Thomas, was the head of research for Columbia Pictures. He was named music director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra at age 19. He worked with Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Copland on premieres of their compositions at Los Angeles’s Monday Evening Concerts. During this same period he was the pianist and conductor for Gregor Piatigorsky and Jascha Heifetz. In 1969, after winning the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood, he was appointed assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That year he also made his New York debut with the BSO, gaining international recognition when he replaced music director William Steinberg in mid-concert. Subsequently named associate conductor and then principal guest conductor of the orchestra, he remained with the BSO until 1974. Tilson Thomas was music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic from 1971 to 1979, principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1981 to 1985, and principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra from 1988 to 1995. His guest conducting engagements include frequent appearances with the major orchestras of Europe and the United States. Tilson Thomas is a two-time Carnegie Hall Perspectives artist, curating and conducting series at the hall from 2003 to 2005 and from 2018 to 2019. He has won twelve Grammy Awards, appeared on more than 120 recordings, produced a myriad of projects for BBC Television and others, and composed celebrated works. Tilson Thomas’s tenure as music director of the San Francisco Symphony (1995-2020) was a period of significant growth and heightened international recognition for the orchestra. With the SFS he championed and cultivated relationships with today’s leading composers and led the orchestra in numerous summer festivals and tours of Europe, the United States, and Asia. Michael Tilson Thomas is an Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was named *Musical America*’s Musician of the Year and Conductor of the Year as well as *Gramophone* magazine’s Artist of the Year and has been profiled on CBS’s *60 Minutes*, ABC’s *Nightline*, and PBS’s *American Masters*. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts, inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and received Kennedy Center Honors in 2019. Michael Tilson Thomas’s most recent performances with the BSO were in the 2018 Tanglewood season: on August 12, leading the orchestra in his own *Agnegram* and music of Rachmaninoff and Mahler, and on August 25, conducting works by Bernstein and Copland as part of the special “Bernstein Centennial Celebration at Tanglewood” concert.

Alexander Malofeev

Russian pianist Alexander Malofeev, who makes his Boston Symphony Orchestra and Tanglewood debuts tonight, came to international attention when he won the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians in 2014 at age 13. He has quickly established himself as one of the most prominent pianists of his generation. Recent

and upcoming orchestral and recital highlights around the world include the New World Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, La Scala Orchestra, Lucerne Festival Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Prague Philharmonia, Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam—where he opened the 30th anniversary concert of the Meester Pianists series—Teatro alla Scala, Philharmonie de Paris, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, National Centre for the Performing Arts in China, Kaufman Music Center, Tonhalle in Zurich, and Celebrity Series of Boston, among many others. In addition to the Tchaikovsky Competition, he has won numerous prizes including the Grand Prix of the International Competition for Young Pianists Grand Piano Competition and second prize at the first China International Music Competition. In 2017 Malofeev became the first Young Yamaha Artist. In 2020 Malofeev recorded Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the Tatarstan National Symphony Orchestra and Alexander Sladkovsky for Sony Classical's *Tchaikovsky 2020* box set. Alexander Malofeev was born in Moscow in 2001 and is a graduate of the Gnessin Moscow Special School of Music. In 2019 he entered the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, studying under Sergei Dorensky and Pavel Nersessian.