

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director

Friday, May 24, 2019 at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 25, 2019 at 8:00pm

Sir Andrew Davis, conductor

Simon Rivard, conductor*

Louis Lortie, piano

Gioachino Rossini
Overture to *William Tell**

Camille Saint-Saëns
Piano Concerto No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 44

I. Allegro moderato – Andante

II. Allegro vivace – Andante sostenuto – Allegro

Intermission

Jordan Pal
Colour of Chaos (World Première)

Ottorino Respighi
Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)

I. I pini di Villa Borghese (The Pines of the Villa Borghese)

II. Pini presso una catacomba (Pines near a Catacomb)

III. I pini del Gianicolo (The Pines of the Janiculum)

IV. I pini della via Appia (The Pines of the Appian Way)

The appearances of Sir Andrew Davis this season are made possible by Hans and Susan Brenninkmeyer.

Louis Lortie's performances are generously supported by the Whitmer Trudel Foundation.

The performance on May 25 is dedicated to the memory of David Broadhurst.

As a courtesy to musicians, guest artists, and fellow concertgoers, please put your phone away and on silent during the performance.

ABOUT THE WORKS

Gioachino Rossini

Overture to *William Tell*

12
min

Born: Pesaro, Italy, February 29, 1792

Died: Paris, France, November 13, 1868

Composed: 1828–1829

During the first half of the 19th century, opera was Europe's favourite kind of music, and its favourite composer of opera (comedies and tragedies alike) was unquestionably Gioachino Rossini, whose operas earned him an immense fortune. Financial security, ill health brought on by excessive work, and a feeling that he was out of step with new developments in music, led him to retire from composing for the stage in 1829. By the time he set to work on *Guillaume Tell*, his 40th opera, he had already announced that it would be his final one, and he bent every effort to make it a suitably monumental farewell. Based on a play by German author Friedrich Schiller, it tells the story of the 13th-century Swiss patriot who led his countrymen in a heroic struggle against their Austrian oppressors. The resulting four-hour spectacle, with its mighty choruses, elaborate ballet interludes, and sweeping scenic effects, literally and metaphorically set the stage for the Grand Opera school that Meyerbeer, Berlioz, and Massenet would bring to the peak of its glory.

Fittingly, the opera begins with an expansive and superbly orchestrated overture. In the opening section, five solo cellos take the spotlight for a gently lyrical meditation. Rossini next marshals the full orchestra—trombones and bass drum feature prominently—to vividly depict an Alpine storm, then, in its wake, a gentle pastoral scene, based on a traditional Swiss cow herding song, the *ranz des vaches*, presented as a duet between the throaty, expressive voice of the English horn, and the silvery, fluttering sound of the flute.

The brass then abruptly announces the vigorous *galop* of the concluding section in which Rossini portrays the daring charge and victory of William Tell's patriotic followers, but which generations of listeners will instantly recognize as the theme for *The Lone Ranger*, a long-running, mid-20th-century radio and television series, accompanying that masked avenger each time he set out to do battle on behalf of truth and justice.

Program note by Don Anderson

Camille Saint-Saëns

Piano Concerto No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 44

25
min

Born: Paris, France, October 9, 1835

Died: Algiers, Algeria, December 16, 1921

Composed: 1875

The première of the Fourth, in Paris, on October 31, 1875, with Saint-Saëns at the keyboard, had been a triumph, a highpoint

of his career. These days it is not the blockbuster it once was perhaps because, unlike most 19th-century solo concertos, it is *symphonic* in

form and profile. Saint-Saëns himself once told the French pianist Alfred Cortot (whose 1935 recording is a classic account of this concerto) that he should “*jouer le solo comme une rôle*”—play the piano part as though it were a character in a play.

This is a fascinating and unusual concerto, in its forms as well as its details. For all its structural rigour, the music sounds free, rhapsodic, and almost improvised. The work comprises five major sections that Saint-Saëns divides into two large parts: in Part I, a fast-ish first movement (*Allegro moderato*) is followed by a slow movement (*Andante*); in Part II, a scherzo (*Allegro vivace*) is followed by a brief transition (*Andante*) that leads into a fast finale (*Allegro*). Within each part the music is continuous, the sections linked without breaks. There is a clean break between the two parts in the published score, though Saint-Saëns’s manuscript apparently indicated that Part II should follow hard upon the end of Part I.

Clearly influenced by such precedents as the symphonies of Schumann and, above all, the concertos, symphonic poems, and piano sonatas of Liszt, Saint-Saëns sought to bind both parts together into a coherent cycle. Thus, throughout Part II he reinterprets important themes, and many details, from Part I, drawing on his Lisztian gift for thematic transformation. The work’s structure is laced with thematic cross-references, and his use of variation form in both the first movement and the finale was unprecedented in a concerto. Michael Stegemann, in a book on Saint-Saëns’s concertos, wrote that the innovative form of the Fourth “has no parallel in the music of the 19th and early 20th centuries and certainly had a decided influence on what is probably the most significant concertante variation work by a French composer: César Franck’s *Variations symphoniques* for piano and orchestra (1885).”

Saint-Saëns’s concerto opens with a surprise. No lengthy orchestral introduction to build up expectation of the soloist’s entrance; no sudden, dramatic unveiling of the soloist; no

splashy cadenza or other *coup de théâtre*—just a hesitant, gapped theme in C minor, introduced quietly by the strings and then taken up modestly by the piano, the two forces engaging in sober discourse rather than dramatic confrontation. The theme is then subjected to two variations. The first begins with lush, more chromatic string writing and features arabesques in the piano part; the second marks the entrance of the woodwinds, brass, and timpani. The piano writing becomes increasingly virtuosic, as the second variation evolves into a cadenza. The first section of Part I ends with a big cadence in C major, but a quick modulation leads at once into the slow second section, in A-flat major. After a fantasy-like prologue, there are two main themes—the first, like a chorale, in the woodwinds; the second, more lyrical, in the piano. Both melodies are restated several times in new guises as the section unfolds—at one point, the piano plays the chorale in massive rolled chords—though the movement ends quietly and beautifully.

In Part II the thematic cross-references are apparent at once: the scherzo, in C minor, opens with scampering figuration borrowed from the end of the first movement, while the first real melody we hear (in the strings) is the variation theme from the opening bars of the concerto, now at a much faster tempo. These two ideas are reprised at the end of the section; in between, there is a long Trio in a march-like 6/8 time, featuring the only genuinely *new* theme in all of Part II. In the slower transition that follows, both themes from the *Andante* of Part I are recalled, but in a darker, more troubled and searching mood. The first of these themes, the chorale, becomes the principal subject of the finale, now in C major and completely altered in tempo and character; it is introduced, strikingly, by the pianist’s right hand accompanied only by *pizzicato* strings. The chorale (in whole and in fragments) is subjected to varied restatements throughout the finale, which, taking a cue from Liszt, offers not only a grand conclusion but a kind of summation of the whole concerto.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

ABOUT THE WORKS

Jordan Pal

Colour of Chaos (World Première)

min

Born: Toronto, Canada, August 5, 1983
Composed: 2019

Asked for his comments on the new work being premièred in this concert, composer Jordan Pal offered the following:

We come from the chaos. The inanimate stuff of stellar nurseries, galactic collisions, and deep space pyrotechnics. Those electric purples clashing with scarlet reds in violent dances of dust and gas. And, billions of years ago, on this planet—one world out of trillions—our ancestral DNA began an impossible journey that extended across time to make you.

We need only look up to appreciate the absolute fragility and privilege of our life on Earth. The fact that we sit on a rapidly spinning orb ricocheting around a nuclear fireball is nothing short of a miracle. But when you consider that out from the violence and chaos of the universe, from that treacherous cosmic swamp, life, against all odds, emerged, you realize just how truly remarkable it all is.

We come from the chaos. The inexplicable, unforgiving, awe-evoking chaos.

Jordan Pal was the TSO's RBC Affiliate Composer from 2015 to 2018, and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada's 2014/15 RBC Composer-in-Residence. In May 2017, the TSO took his work *Iris* on tour to Israel, subsequently receiving praise from legendary violinist Maxim Vengerov. With recent and upcoming performances of his works by the Montreal Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Hannaford Street Silver Band, and many more, two-time JUNO nominee Jordan Pal is one of the most frequently performed Canadian composers of his generation.

His work has been variously described as “scintillating, exhilarating, genuinely attractive, well-crafted and brilliantly executed” (*WholeNote*), “masterfully developed, infectious, clever” (*Ludwig van Toronto*), “beautifully crafted” (*American Record Guide*), and “shimmering and warm, quivering with life and intelligence” (*CBC*).

He holds a doctoral degree in composition from the University of Toronto, which he received under the mentorship of Gary Kulesha, who also serves as the TSO's Composer Advisor.

Program note by David Perlman

Ottorino Respighi

Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)

23
min

Born: Bologna, Italy, July 9, 1879
Died: Rome, Italy, April 18, 1936
Composed: 1923–1924

In the 1920s, the symphonic poem, wildly popular in the late 19th century, was in rapid decline; the “pure music” of neo-Classicism

and dodecaphony was in, and program music was out. There have been symphonic poems since—Shostakovich wrote one as late as 1967—

but Respighi's *Pines of Rome* (1924), Sibelius's *Tapiola* (1926), and Gershwin's *An American in Paris* (1928) were the last such works to find a place in the standard symphonic repertory.

According to his wife Elsa, the subject of *Pines of Rome* percolated in Respighi's mind for years, so that by the time he began serious work on it, in May of 1923, "the four scenes were vivid and complete in his mind... only waiting to come to life in organized composition." *Pines of Rome* was, she believed, "one of the compositions in which the Maestro was most emotionally involved." At the première, in Rome, on December 14, 1924, there was booing and hissing at the end of the first movement, but as the music progressed the audience was won over: a huge ovation began even before the final bars. The work quickly became an international hit.

Pines of Rome does not, like the tone poems of Strauss, explore depths of character and psychology; instead, it depicts sounds and images and events with breathtaking intensity. What has been called the "hedonistic pictorialism" of this music has its source in Respighi's glittering orchestration. To an already large orchestra he added a huge percussion battery, a harp, bells, *three* keyboards (celeste, piano, organ), and a few oddments—in the second movement, an offstage trumpet; in the third, a gramophone recording of a nightingale; in the fourth, six brass instruments that imitate *buccine*, curved brass instruments of ancient Rome. Yet, according to Elsa, "nothing irked him more than to hear someone praise his orchestration," for he said that specific musical ideas always suggested—no, *demand*—a certain specific instrumentation.

Pines of Rome comprises four distinct movements, but there is nothing Classical about the form or style of the work: from the astonishing opening bars, Respighi's only concern is to evoke images of ancient, Renaissance, and modern Rome as directly and brilliantly as possible. In the first movement he creates a dense, swirling kaleidoscope of orchestral colours, surely some of the wildest

and brightest noise in the history of music. The "shininess" of this movement comes in part from its high tessitura: *not a single bar* is notated in bass clef, not even in the cello or bassoon parts. In the second movement, we are plunged suddenly from the sun-dappled surface into the subterranean depths. Now the music is slow, dark, gloomy, vague; an offstage trumpet evokes "heartfelt psalm-singing," which swells then dissipates. The "moonlit" third movement opens with an expressive clarinet solo and closes, hushed, with the song of a nightingale, its mellifluous textures enriched by sensuous figuration in harp, celeste, and piano. And in the concise, simple closing march, Respighi conjures up an advancing ancient Roman army, bringing the work to a blaring, triumphant close.

What follows is Respighi's own program note, written only *after* the piece had been composed, and inserted at the beginning of the published score:

I. The Pines of the Villa Borghese. Children play among the pines of Villa Borghese: they dance in circles, they play at soldiers, marching and fighting, they become intoxicated by their own cries, like swallows in the evening, and swarm around. Suddenly, the scene changes...

II. Pines near a Catacomb. We see the shadows of the pines that crown the entrance to a catacomb; from the depths comes heartfelt psalm-singing, floating solemnly through the air like a hymn and mysteriously dispersing.

III. The Pines of the Janiculum. A quiver runs through the air: the pines of the Janiculum are outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale sings.

IV. The Pines of the Appian Way. Misty dawn on the Appian Way. The tragic countryside is guarded by solitary pines. Muffled, ceaseless, the rhythm of innumerable footsteps. The poet has a fantastical vision of ancient glories: trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly risen sun, a consular army bursts onto the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

THE ARTISTS



Sir Andrew Davis conductor

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director, served as TSO Music Director from 1975 to 1988, when he was named TSO Conductor Laureate.

Sir Andrew Davis is the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Davis's career spans over 40 years, during which he has been the musical and artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra (conductor laureate; chief conductor, 1991–2004), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (music director, 1988–2000), and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Conductor Laureate; Music Director, 1975–1988), where he has also been named Interim Artistic Director from 2018 to 2020. He also holds the honorary title of Conductor Emeritus from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. One of today's most recognized and acclaimed conductors, Sir Andrew has conducted virtually all of the world's major orchestras, opera companies, and festivals.

Born in 1944 in Hertfordshire, England, Maestro Davis studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before taking up conducting. His wide-ranging repertoire encompasses the Baroque to contemporary, and spans the symphonic, operatic, and choral worlds. A vast and award-winning discography documents Sir Andrew's artistry, with recent CDs including the works of Berlioz, Elgar, Grainger, Delius, Ives, Holst, Handel, and York Bowen. The recording of Handel's *Messiah* (with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir) was nominated for a 2018 GRAMMY for Best Choral Performance, and the York Bowen recording was nominated for a 2012 GRAMMY for Best Orchestral Performance. Maestro Davis currently records exclusively for Chandos Records.

In 1992, Maestro Davis was made a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1999, he was designated a Knight Bachelor in the New Year Honours List.

Simon Rivard conductor

Simon Rivard made his TSO début in October 2018. For a detailed biographical note, please see page 32.

Louis Lortie piano

Louis Lortie made his TSO début in January 1978. For a detailed biographical note, please see page 20.