A COMMUNITY SUPPORTED ORCHESTRA



PRESENTS

Mercury Orchestra

Channing Yu, Music Director

August 29, 2018
7 pm
at the DCR's Hatch Shell

MERCURY ORCHESTRA ELEVENTH SEASON • 2018

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Demi Fang
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Ashton Bush, associate principal
Shadron Davis
Leonardo Espinosa
Sumi Fasolo
Psyche Loui
Avery Normandin
Kylie Prutisto-Chang

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James Raftopoulos, associate principal
Susan Bill
David Budil
Peter Chew
Stephen Jue
Eric Lee
Arjun Mudan

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Ali Fessler, associate principal
Duke Roth
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PRESENTS

Mercury Orchestra
Channing Yu, Music Director
with New World Chorale
Holly MacEwen Krafka, Artistic Director

Festive Overture, Op. 96

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

No. 8. Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens No. 17. Polovtsian Dance with Chorus

INTERMISSION (15 minutes)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- I. Andante Allegro con anima
- II. Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
- III. Valse. Allegro moderato
- IV. Finale. Andante maestoso

The concert will end at approximately 8:40 pm.

NEW WORLD CHORALE

Holly MacEwen Krafka, Artistic Director

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Jeff Pierce
Michael Prichard
A. Michael Ruderman
Benjamin Sears
Ed Wertheim

Auditions for New Members

Sunday, September 9, 2018 from 3:00–5:00 pm Wallace Chapel at Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, 207 Washington St. Wellesley Hills, MA 02481

New World Chorale is holding auditions for new members in all sections (S, A, T, B). For details, see the **Auditions for New Members** calendar event at www.newworldchorale.org.

New World Chorale is approaching its 20th anniversary season. Performances in 2018-19 include Orff's *Carmina Burana*, the Mozart Requiem, last movement of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, Beethoven's Ninth, and much more!

Founded in 2008, the MERCURY ORCHESTRA has a mission:

- To bring great works of the symphony orchestra repertoire to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in live performances of the highest quality;
- To bring amateur orchestral musicians together in the Cambridge area to play challenging repertoire;
- To educate new audiences about the rich traditions of classical music.

The Mercury Orchestra is the national winner of the 2010 American Prize for Orchestral Performance, community orchestra division. For more information, visit www.mercuryorchestra.org.

American orchestra and opera conductor **CHANNING YU** is Music Director of the Mercury Orchestra in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Associate Artistic Director of the Refugee Orchestra Project in New York City. He is the national winner of the 2010 American Prize in Orchestral Conducting in the community orchestra division.

He recently served as Music Director of the Dudley Orchestra in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Music Director of Bay Colony Brass in Watertown, Massachusetts: Leader of the Powers Community String Orchestra in Belmont, Massachusetts: and Conductor of the Massachusetts Youth Symphony Project Preparatory String Orchestra in Belmont, Massachusetts. He has also served as Artistic Director and Conductor of the Lowell House Opera, the oldest opera company in New England, where he conducted over thirty fully staged performances with orchestra, including Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin, Richard Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier, Puccini's Turandot, Verdi's Otello, and Puccini's Tosca. For his musical direction of Tosca, he was awarded second prize in the 2011 American Prize in Opera Conducting national competition. He served as guest conductor at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, in its production of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's baroque opera Les arts florissants. He was guest conductor of Atrium Winds in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. He was also invited to guest conduct the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

He began formal study of conducting at Harvard University with James Yannatos; there he served as assistant conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra and conductor of the Toscanini Chamber Orchestra. Since then, he has worked with a number of conductor teachers in the master class setting, including Kenneth Kiesler, Roberto Paternostro, Diane Wittry, Charles Peltz, and Frank Battisti. He was invited as one of fourteen conductors worldwide to work with conductors Neeme Järvi, Leonid Grin, and Paavo Järvi in master classes at the Leigo Lakes Music Days Festival in Estonia. He worked with George Pehlivanian conducting L'Ensemble Orchestral de València in Spain and with Johannes Schlaefli conducting the Plovdiv Philharmonic Orchestra in Bulgaria.

Channing Yu grew up in Pennsylvania. Originally trained as a pianist, he was a divisional grand prize winner of the American Music Scholarship Association International Piano Competition, and he has appeared as piano soloist with numerous orchestras including the Pittsburgh Symphony

Orchestra, Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra, Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, and Orchèstra Nova. He has been praised by Anthony Tomassini of Boston Globe for his "imaginative piano work." He performs with the chamber ensemble sul ponticello, in Cambridge, MA. As a violinist, he has served as concertmaster of the Brahms Society Orchestra and as violinist in the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, and currently performs as concertmaster of the Greenwich Village Orchestra and as violist with Camerata Notturna in New York City. He was a founding member of the string quartet Quartetto Periodico, and he was first violinist in the Kitchen Quartet, which was featured as the Quartet-in-Residence at the Three Rivers Arts Festival in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a lyric baritone, he has performed recently with New Jersey Verismo Opera and previously with the Boston Opera Collaborative and in the Neil Semer Vocal Institute in Coesfeld and Aub, Germany. He has also sung with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, the Grammy award-winning chorus of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops. He is a former faculty member of the Powers Music School in Belmont, Massachusetts.

The **NEW WORLD CHORALE (NWC)** is one of the most in-demand symphonic choruses in the greater Boston area. NWC has performed major choral works with the Boston Ballet, Boston Conservatory Orchestra, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra, Lexington Symphony, Longwood Symphony Orchestra, New Philharmonia Orchestra, Plymouth Philharmonic Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Symphony New Hampshire, and Symphony Pro Musica. In October 2015, the New World Chorale provided the women's chorus for the Boston Ballet's production of *Third Symphony of Gustav Mahler: A Ballet by John Neumeier*. It was the first production of this ballet by a North American company since Neumeier's Hamburg Ballet made it a signature work in 1975.

The New World Chorale was founded in 1999 by Holly MacEwen Krafka and John Zielinski and is dedicated to sharing the beauty and majesty of symphonic choral music with orchestras and audiences in greater Boston and beyond. NWC's membership comprises some of the greater Boston area's most experienced choral singers and soloists. For more information, visit NWC's web site at www.newworldchorale.org.

HOLLY MacEWEN KRAFKA, the founder and Artistic Director of the New World Chorale, has been a conductor, educator, and performer in a wide range of musical activities for many years. A native of Wellesley, MA, she is a graduate of Gettysburg College and holds a master's degree in choral conducting from Boston Conservatory. As a singer, Ms. Krafka was a member of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for 20 years.

From 2011–2014, Ms. Krafka was choral director of the Symphony NH Chorus. She also directed Colla Voce, the select 16-voice chamber vocal ensemble of the Symphony NH Chorus, from 2011–2014. In April 2013, Ms. Krafka conducted a chorus of former and current Jimmy Fund patients celebrating the 60-year collaboration between the Boston Red Sox and the

Jimmy Fund at the Opening Day ceremonies at beloved Fenway Park in Boston, MA.

A music educator for over 35 years, Ms. Krafka has been music director and vocal director in a number of local area churches and school systems, including in Wellesley, Hopkinton, and Franklin, MA and at Bishop Feehan High School in Attleboro, MA. She is currently Choral Director at Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua, NH.

PROGRAM NOTES:

Dmitri Shostakovich: Festive Overture, Op. 96

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) was one of the greatest composers of the last century, yet for much of his life he led a dual existence as both a rebellious composer and the musical face of Josef Stalin's Soviet Union. He walked a fine line and often worked in fear of his life. Things came to a head when his racy opera, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, was denounced in Pravda after Stalin attended a performance. The frightened composer responded by setting aside his audacious Fourth Symphony (written in 1936 but premiered in 1961) to produce a more conservative Fifth that he called "a Soviet artist's response to just criticism." The work served its purpose, but his fortunes varied from there. His Sixth Symphony (1939) was not denounced but played to mixed reviews. The Seventh (1940), dedicated to the besieged city of Leningrad, was popular and accepted by Stalin. Three years later, the dark, powerful Eighth was criticized for its pessimism, and in 1945, the Ninth's witty reaction to the end of the war was disparaged for its alleged lack of patriotism. The last straw was when the Eighth and Ninth (and works of other composers) were banned as "formalism" in 1948. For six years after that, Shostakovich composed several safely patriotic works like *The Sun* Shines over the Motherland and Song of the Forest. He enjoyed writing those pieces—some were indeed quite good—but he also managed to write a few that did not fit the patriotic mold.

Most scholars believe Shostakovich hid his true feelings about all this in some of his music, but what those feelings were remains a puzzle. Did he loathe the regime? Were his "patriotic" works really patriotic? Was the concluding fanfare of the Fifth Symphony festive (played fast, as marked) or oppressive (played slowly)?

The year 1953 was a major one for Shostakovich. Stalin's death in March was followed in December by the premiere of the composer's Tenth Symphony, a work that seemed to express many of his inner struggles. It was arguably the most important of his works to use the *DSCH* motif (D E-flat C B) that stood for his name. (DSCH is based on the German spelling of Schostakowitsch, with each letter standing for a note. In German, E-flat is *Es*, hence the S; B is *H*.)

Shostakovich wrote *Festive Overture* at the request of the Bolshoi Theater for a piece to celebrate the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution.

Though he called it an overture, it stands alone as an "occasional piece." The composer was given almost no lead time and either created it at great speed or used material he had written in the past. It begins with a slow brass fanfare and what sounds like a march but in 3/4 time. Then comes an exhilarating, breathless *presto* that begins in the clarinet and never lets up, with its spirited flurries of sound, kicked along by afterbeats. Interspersed are Russian-style tunes that are a little martial, but also good natured, even celebratory. The final section returns to the slower fanfare style of the opening and closes in triumph. *Festive Overture* is a popular orchestra piece and is often played by concert bands.

Alexander Borodin: Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor

Russian composer Alexander Porfiryevich Borodin (1833–1887) was the illegitimate son of a nobleman and peasant mother. His origins condemned him to serfdom, but his parents saw that he was well educated, and he was released from serf status at age ten when his father died. Like many composers, Borodin showed an early affinity for music, taking piano lessons and teaching himself cello. Also like many composers, he had other gifts—in his case, chemistry—and it was that gift that he first pursued. A degree in chemistry was not available then, so in 1850, he went to medical school. After that, he worked as a surgeon in the army where he met a fellow soldier (and composer), Modeste Mussorgsky. In 1862, he completed a post doctorate in Heidelberg, where he met Dmitri Mendeleyev, the author of the periodic table. He also did research in Italy. After marrying a pianist and establishing a family, he worked diligently as a doctor and chemist. He became known for his research on aldehydes, but frustration over lack of funding turned him to teaching. An advocate of women's rights and education, thanks to his wife, Borodin founded and, for the last twelve years of his life, ran the School of Medicine for Women in St. Petersburg.

In 1862, Borodin joined a group of Russian composers known as the "Mighty Five," "Mighty Handful," or "Russian Five," who promoted music based on Russian folk sources, as opposed to the academic and Germanic model from the West. The Five was led by Mily Balakirev and included Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Cesar Cui. (Tchaikovsky, not a member of this group, would become a bridge between the German and Russian schools.)

Borodin was not a prolific composer, partly because of his professional work, but also because of his wife's poor health; he completed no major works after age 48. He produced his first symphony in 1867 and his second (and most famous) in 1876. He died with his Third Symphony unfinished; Alexander Glazunov completed it in 1887. *In the Steppes of Central Asia* (1880) is one of his most popular works. He also wrote two string quartets and other chamber music, piano works, and songs. Another project was collaboration with Cui, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov on the balletopera *Mlada*. Borodin's responsibility was Act 4. The work was mostly completed by 1872 but never staged. (In 1890, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote his own *Mlada* to the same libretto.) Rimsky-Korsakov wrote often about how he wished Borodin would spend more time composing.

Borodin's grandest work was the opera *Prince Igor*. Perhaps the most nationalist of Russian operas, *Igor* is based on the Russian epic, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, about Prince Igor Svyatoslavich's 1185 campaign against the invading Cumans, a nomadic Turkic tribe that Russians called "Polovtsians." The opera is centered on the capture of Igor and his son by the Polovtsians. Borodin began it in 1869 and worked on the piece for years. He wrote his own libretto as he composed, as Mussorgsky did with *Khovanshchina*. Working that way may have hindered the progress of both, and neither *Khovanshchina* nor *Prince Igor* was finished. After Borodin's death, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov completed *Igor*, with Glazunov essentially writing the third of its four acts.

Some of *Prince Igor* was included in the earlier collaborative, *Mlada*. Parts were adapted for the 1953 Broadway musical *Kismet*, most notably from the first of the *Polovtsian Dances*, for the song, "Stranger in Paradise." Borodin actually won the Tony award for "Best Musical" in 1954. Borodin's best known work, *Polovtsian Dances*, is taken from Act II, where dancers entertain the captured Prince and his son. Rimsky-Korsakov helped Borodin prepare the dances so they could be performed as an orchestral concert piece, with or without a chorus. The work is colorful and Eastern-exotic in tone, including a slow, romantic, and nocturnal section and a set of highly rhythmic, even savage, dances.

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64, TH 29

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was Russia's first truly professional composer and the first to achieve fame outside Russia. He also provided the link between the Russian school and the Austro-German tradition, paving the way for Glazunov, Miaskovsky, Taneyev, Kallinikov, and others.

Tchaikovsky wrote his first song at age four and took piano lessons at five. His parents supported his musical interests, but poor employment prospects convinced them to send him instead to the School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg. His mother accompanied him to the capital, where they saw Glinka's *Life for the Tsar*, which made a strong impression on the boy. (*Life* was the basis of Russian nativist operas and the first Russian opera to enter the international repertoire.) Tchaikovsky was a sensitive boy, and his mother's leaving him alone in St. Petersburg was traumatizing; her death four years later devastated him. Nevertheless, he attended to his studies, while music provided a social life through playing, piano lessons, the opera, and composing.

After graduating in 1858, Tchaikovsky worked as a civil servant. He also studied theory with Nikolai Zaremba and piano and composition with Anton Rubinstein at the Russian Musical Society (RMS) prior to enrolling at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After graduation, he taught at the RMS in Moscow, later the Moscow Conservatory. In 1867, he established ties with the Mighty Five composers. His Symphony No. 1 was performed successfully in 1868, though he suffered a nervous breakdown revising it (1874). His breakthrough work was *Romeo and Juliet* (1870, rev. 1880), which, along with Symphony No. 2 (1872), impressed the Five. Three string

quartets followed between 1871 and 1875, along with *Tempest*, three operas, another symphony, Piano Concerto No. 1, and *Swan Lake*.

In 1876, Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow and supporter of the arts, heard some of Tchaikovsky's music and began a fourteen-year relationship with him entirely through letters. The next year, he finished *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, and entered a marriage whose difficulties caused him to flee to Switzerland and Italy. While abroad, he finished *Eugene Onegin*, the Fourth Symphony, and the Violin Concerto. He returned to Moscow to finish his teaching, but his failed marriage drove him to further travels. *1812 Overture* commemorated Alexander II's 25th anniversary as Tsar (1880) and was followed by *Serenade for Strings* and *Maid of Orleans* (1881). The Tsar ordered a staging of *Eugene Onegin* and later awarded Tchaikovsky a lifetime pension and the Order of St. Vladimir. The composer also became associated with the Belyayev Circle, a successor to the Five but more tolerant of Western practices. *Manfred* appeared in 1885.

In 1887, Tchaikovsky went on a conducting tour of Europe. His own works were well received, and he returned home eager to begin his fifth symphony. He found the project difficult, torn at the time by his craving for fame and fear of his life being exposed to the public. (Some of that probably had to do with struggling with his homosexuality.)

He also worried that he was "played out as a composer." Eventually, he began work by devising a program for his symphony, which, like the *Fourth*, would be based on Fate. To von Meck, he wrote: "The germ is in the introduction. The theme is Fate...a power which constantly hangs over us...and ceaselessly poisons the soul. The power is overwhelming and invincible. Nothing remains but to submit and lament in vain...is it not better to turn away from reality and lull oneself in dreams?" Fate in the *Fourth* was something to resist. In the *Fifth*, it was something to surrender to.

The Fifth Symphony's unique structure is tied together with a "Fate" motto (possibly drawn from *Life for the Tsar*) that appears in each movement. The slow introduction is mournful, with the motto stated by the clarinet. The ensuing Allegro rolls out a dotted triple rhythm and builds to a stormy passage and then a romantic theme. After a horn cadence, the development builds with "alert" calls in the winds that reappear in transitions. From there, the music varies from balletic to stormy. After a climax, the motto returns in the bassoon and works through the orchestra in a long multifaceted recapitulation. The gloomy ending fades darkly into the string basses and timpani.

The Andante is music of sadness, exhilaration, and depression. It begins with a series of chords, as if the subject of the first movement has only partially recovered from the gloom. A famous horn solo creates a romantic and sentimental mood until the oboe chimes in to brighten the atmosphere. The strings then take up the main melody with commentary from soloists. After a climax, the music settles back in resignation, but agitation returns, memories darken, and Fate storms forth from the brass. Passion reaches

new heights, but Fate thunders forth in the trombones. All is spent, and the music dies down, exhausted.

The Scherzo begins as a melancholy waltz, based on a street song *Pimpinella* that Tchaikovsky heard in Italy. A real "scherzo" takes over as the orchestra flits from section to section. The waltz returns in the winds, lightening the mood. A good-natured coda begins, but Fate returns in the winds like a ghost, finally to be silenced by the brass.

The festive finale begins with Fate in the strings, but less gloomy than before. After a somber brass chorale, it returns, now hopeful, and the trumpets reinforce it imperiously in triumph. The horns echo it but more seriously, and the orchestra launches a furious, defiant allegro. Fate sounds in the brass, as the orchestra continues its parade. After interludes of uncertainty, the orchestra storms back and exits in triumph.

The **BOSTON LANDMARKS ORCHESTRA** performs free outdoor concerts in the City of Boston throughout the summer, delighting thousands on a weekly basis. The Orchestra—made up of some of Boston's most accomplished professional musicians—uses great symphonic music as a means of gathering together people of all backgrounds and ages in joyful collaboration. The Orchestra regularly collaborates with a range of cultural and social service organizations to ensure participation across ethnic, economic, and cultural divides.

The Boston Landmarks Orchestra is committed to **BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS** to access for people with disabilities. It offers braille, large-print, and text-to-speech programs, assisted listening devices, and ambassadors to greet and assist people at a handicapped drop-off point. The Orchestra works with American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters as performers at select concerts.

For more information about the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, please visit **www.landmarksorchestra.org** or download the Landmarks Orchestra mobile app for iOS and Android!

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&

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