

CU Chamber Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor
Joel Schut, conductor

*Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of
the house manager.*

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 14, 2019
Grusin Music Hall
Imig Music Building



College of Music

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Program

Ruslan and Lyudmila Overture

Mikhail Glinka
(1804-1857)

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

Joel Schut, conductor

—Intermission—

Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

- I. Sostenuto assai; Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- III. Adagio espressivo
- IV. Allegro molto vivace

Program notes

Ruslan and Lyudmila Overture

Glinka's first opera, *A Life for the Czar*, premiered in 1836, established him without question as the most important composer in Russia. His next opera, *Ruslan and Ludmila*, based on a fairy tale by the greatest Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin, was eagerly anticipated but had mixed reviews when finally staged. Glinka's librettists had failed to turn Pushkin's poem into a convincing stage work. Yet the opera contains several wonderful numbers that have become known as excerpts; none is more popular than the spirited overture which is probably the best known of all of Glinka's works (at least in the West).

The opera's protagonists are Ludmila, a princess, and her suitor Ruslan. After Ludmila is kidnapped by the evil sorcerer Chernomor,

Ruslan rescues her and the lovers are finally reunited. The irresistible melodies of the overture come mostly from the final portion of the opera, where there is general rejoicing over the happy ending of the story; the lyrical theme, first played by violas, cellos and bassoons, is the voice of the amorous hero. The evil Chernomor is represented in the opera by the use of the whole-tone scale (a collection of tones that does not fit into the normal major-minor system); that scale appears at the very end of the overture like a passing cloud, but it can cast only the most transient of shadows on the surrounding, jubilant D-major sonorities.
—Note by Peter Laki

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

Painfully aware that England's musical reputation had suffered greatly since the death of Purcell in 1595, Vaughan Williams and his contemporaries sought to reestablish a national

voice by turning to music of former periods of glory. One way in which he became exposed to vast amounts of old music was by sifting through folk song and church collections for the creation of a new edition of the *English Hymnal*. The daunting job detracted from work on his own original compositions but served him well in the end. “I wondered then if I was wasting my time. But I know now that two years of close association with some of the best (as well as some of the worst) tunes in the world was a better musical education than any amount of sonatas and fugues.”

The Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis came about as a direct result of that task. Vaughan Williams had found nine melodies by Tallis in the 1597 *English Psalter*, the third of which—a melody in the Phrygian mode—inspired his first great orchestral work. Vaughan Williams clearly saw something in the melody that had little to do with its original text: “Why fumeth in sight: the Gentiles spite, In fury raging stout?” His *Fantasia* exudes peace and serenity—perhaps poignancy, but hardly any “raging.”

He completed the work in June 1910 and conducted the London Symphony in its first performance at the Three Choirs Festival on September 6 in Gloucester Cathedral. The *Fantasia* caused a sensation, bringing him national, then international recognition. One of the contributing factors to its great initial success was Vaughan Williams’s foreknowledge of the acoustics of the cathedral. He had in mind not only the resonance of the large space, but also the style of Renaissance church music consisting of spatially separated choirs. The *Fantasia* is scored for two main groups—a small string ensemble and a full string orchestra, from which a solo string quartet is extracted, sometimes forming a third group.

The piece begins with a magical narrowing wedge of chords, from which the Tallis tune enters in fragments before coming together in the cellos, violas and second violins. A second version of the melody, now with violins, leads to an interlude in which the two “choirs” are treated responsorially. Members of the solo quartet, led off by the viola, launch a more active central section, playing variants of the Tallis theme. The music builds to an impassioned climax, following which the two choirs answer one another with extreme dynamic shifts and striking harmonic contrasts. The piece subsides with fragments of the Tallis melody, ending with its last sweet chord fading away to silence. —Note by Jane Vial Jaffe

Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61

Toward the end of September, 1845, Robert Schumann wrote to his friend Felix Mendelssohn: “For several days drums and trumpets in the key of C have been sounding in my mind. I have no idea what will come of it.” Schumann did not wait long to find out. On December 12 of the same year, the diary he kept with his wife tells that he began composing a symphony, one in C major, with drums and trumpets playing conspicuous roles.

Once embarked on a composition, Schumann often worked with great speed. In this case, it took only five days to draft the new symphony’s initial movement and less than two weeks for the remainder of the work. But having made this rapid start, the composer fretted over orchestrating his piano draft, this task ultimately costing him much of the ensuing year. He finally completed the Symphony No. 2 in October 1846, less than a month before its scheduled premiere.

Shortly after its initial performance, several reviews extolled the symphony, and not just for its purely musical merits. More than one critic heard a lofty spiritual quality in the music, an aspiring toward almost religious expression. This is not entirely fanciful. Three of the symphony's four movements use chorale-like melodies, and its signature theme seems nothing so much as a call from on high. There are, to be sure, no references to actual hymns, such as we find in Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony. But in its own abstract way, this symphony seems a kind of psalm, a song of praise and rejoicing.

Schumann begins the first movement with an introduction in moderate tempo. Its initial measures present two ideas set against each other in counterpoint: a flowing line for the strings and a solemn fanfare in the brass. The latter figure will prove a "motto" theme, one that recurs at important junctures throughout the symphony. (Listeners familiar with Haydn's last symphony, the "London," will note a resemblance between its opening fanfare and the one Schumann uses here.) Soon the music grows more active, its rhythms more animated, and the motto figure sounds again before the tempo accelerates into the Allegro that forms the main body of the movement. There Schumann fashions his themes using the buoyant rhythms established in the latter part of the introduction, and he revisits the motto idea again during the accelerated coda that brings this first portion of the symphony to a close.

The second movement seems an attempt to write a scherzo after Mendelssohn's style, with light, running passagework in the violins. Yet the result is still distinctly Schumannesque, thanks chiefly to the restless harmonies the violin lines trace. Balancing this fleet music are two contrasting episodes, the second very

like a hymn. The final statement of the scherzo music includes another recollection of the motto idea.

Schumann builds the ensuing Adagio on a wide-stepping melody that seems more operatic than symphonic in character. This theme engenders the most beautiful slow movement among his orchestral compositions, a romance intimating deep poetic reverie. From the rocketing scale of its initial measure, the finale strikes a triumphal note, and Schumann maintains this for practically the full length of the movement. Eventually we hear recollections of the aria-like melody of the slow movement, as well as the motto theme.

What to Listen For:

The symphony's signature theme sounds in the opening moments: a stately fanfare played by the brass. It recurs late in the first movement, and in the second and fourth movements also. After the second movement's scherzo comes one of Schumann's most exquisite slow movements. Its principal theme first appears as a wide-stepping oboe solo, and Schumann recalls it briefly during the finale. —Note by Paul Schiavo

Personnel

Violin

Mariama Alcantara
Kimberly Bill
Seth Bixler
Maggie Brady
Anita Dumar +
Alex Han
Megan Healy
Grace Hemmer
Robbie Herbst
Marisa Ishikawa
Ryan Jacobsen
Alisa Johnson
Reuben Kebede *
Hannah Kennedy
Paul Kim
Soria Nguyen
Anna-Claire Schultz
Helena Schumann
Kendalia Spencer
Caitlin Stokes
Julia Taylor
Olivia Taylor
Terry Vis
Rosalee Walsh
Brandon Wu

Viola

Autumn Greenlee
Jordan Holloway
Jessica Kus
Noah Lykins
Elizabeth Macintosh
Aimée McNulty +
Tyler McKisson
Stephanie Mientka
Sela Park
Kayla Schlieper
Gina Stonikas

Cello

Chas Barnard
Ethan Blake
Hannah Brown
Naia Easterling
Nicholas Johnson
Jessica Lee
Pedro Sánchez +
Jake Saunders
Eric Vasquez
Joshua Vierra
Nelson Walker
Matthew Wiest

Double bass

Justin Barrera
John Bissell
Sam Conner
Alex Cormican
Isaiah Holt
Evan Indge
Jason Thompson +

Flute

Rachelle Crowell
Claire Gunsbury
Mara Riley
Brice Smith

Oboe

Brittany Bonner
Sophia Oehlers
Curtis Sellers
Grace Stringfellow

Clarinet

Charles Burnside
Anoushka Divikar

Bassoon

Gyungsun Im
Ethan Schuler
Madison Triplett
Kaitlin Zadow

Horn

Maggie Barnes
Cole Cantor
Devin Driggs
Annika Ross
Benjamin Shafer
Olivia Walt

Trumpet

Ben Chapman
Tristan Frank
Ian Mertes
Dartagnan Stephen

Trombone

Sebastian Alvarez Piras
Douglas Sternberg
Aaron Zalkind

Percussion

Andrew Quinlan
John Sevy

** Concertmaster
+ Principal*

Upcoming performances

💰 Ticketed events 📺 Live stream at cupresents.org

Nov. 15-17

Eklund Opera Program

It's a Wonderful Life

An opera by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer

Macky Auditorium 💰

Saturday, Nov. 16

Chamber Music Showcase

2 p.m., St Aidan's Episcopal Church,

2425 Colorado Ave, Boulder

West African Highlife Ensemble

4:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Sunday, Nov. 17

Japanese Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Monday, Nov. 18

Thompson Jazz Combos

7:30 p.m., Old Main Chapel

Vocal Jazz and Madrigal Singers

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Tuesday, Nov. 19

Artist Series

Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 💰

Wednesday, Nov. 20

Symphonic Band

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 📺

Thursday, Nov. 21

Wind Symphony

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 📺

Monday, Dec. 2

Chamber Music Showcase

7:30 p.m., St Aidan's Episcopal Church,

2425 Colorado Ave, Boulder

Tuesday, Dec. 3

Faculty Tuesdays

Ryan Gardner

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Wednesday, Dec. 4

Eklund Opera Scenes

5 p.m., Music Theatre

Pendulum New Music

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Events are subject to change:

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