

CELEBRATING TAKEMITSU

Saturday, April 17, 2021 at 7:30 pm

ALLEN-BRADLEY HALL

Ken-David Masur, conductor

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TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Entre-temps [In the Meantime] for Oboe and String Quartet

MAURICE RAVEL

Introduction and Allegro for Harp, Flute, Clarinet,
and String Quartet

TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Rain Coming for chamber orchestra

CHARLES GOUNOD

Petite symphonie for Wind Instruments

- I. Adagio et Allegretto
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Finale

TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Tree Line for chamber orchestra

This program is presented in part with support from the **Japan Foundation New York**. The MSO Steinway Piano was made possible through a generous gift from **Michael and Jeanne Schmitz**. The Reimagined Season is sponsored by the **United Performing Arts Fund**. The Classics Series is sponsored by **Rockwell Automation**.

TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Entre-temps [In the Meantime] for Oboe and String Quartet

Katherine Young Steele, oboe
Dylana Leung, violin; John Bian, violin
Robert Levine, viola; Adrien Zitoun, cello



MAURICE RAVEL

Introduction and Allegro for Harp, Flute, Clarinet, and String Quartet

Sonora Slocum, flute; Todd Levy, clarinet; Julia Coronelli, harp
Jennifer Startt, violin; Timothy Klabunde, violin
Nathan Hackett, viola; Scott Tisdell, cello



TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Rain Coming for chamber orchestra

Ken-David Masur, conductor
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra



CHARLES GOUNOD

Petite symphonie for Wind Instruments

Heather Zinninger Yarmel, flute
Kevin Pearl, oboe; Margaret Butler, oboe
Todd Levy, clarinet; Benjamin Adler, clarinet
Rudi Heinrich, bassoon; Beth W. Giacobassi, bassoon
Darcy Hamlin, horn; Dietrich Hemann, horn



TÔRU TAKEMITSU

Tree Line for chamber orchestra

Ken-David Masur, conductor
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

CELEBRATING TAKEMITSU

Program Notes by J. Mark Baker

On the 25th anniversary of his death, we pay homage to Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996). Three of his compositions from the 1980s surround music by Gounod and Ravel, an appropriate contrast: Takemitsu's earliest works were influenced by French composers.

Tōru Takemitsu

Born 8 October 1930; Tokyo, Japan

Died 20 February 1996; Tokyo, Japan

Entre-temps [In the Meantime] for Oboe and String Quartet

Composed: 1986

First performance: 12 May 1986; Tokyo, Japan

Instrumentation: oboe; strings



One of the most prolific composers of the second half of the 20th century, Tōru Takemitsu was the first Japanese composer fully recognized in the West. His impressive list of works includes over 180 concert pieces, 93 film scores, and several works for theater and dance. His early influences were Debussy, Webern, and Messiaen. In 1964, he met the American composer John Cage, who encouraged him to embrace traditional Japanese sounds as well. As a result, his music began to reflect what is most Asian in the European modernism he so admired: a preoccupation with tone color and an understated, crystalline sound. Because of this, pattern and development sometimes fall by the wayside, and the music seems to evolve of its own free will. Precision is ever at the forefront, and silence is fully organized. A few of his works employ Japanese instruments, but most are scored for Western orchestral and chamber ensembles.

Commissioned by the Eastman School of Music in 1986, *Entre-temps* [In the Meantime] was written for oboe professor Richard Killmer and the Cleveland Quartet, the school's resident ensemble. Takemitsu drew inspiration from lines of poetry by Tristan Tzara, a leader of the Dada movement in France. Printed in a 1946 anthology also titled *Entre-temps*, the text reads:

*on our heads a single bird
in our hands the flying hand
it is one, it is time.*

Takemitsu wrote of *Entre-temps*, "The music resembles the structure of a dream, where the episodes, arising from the same depths but differing in contour, move on through the night toward the twilight."

Maurice Ravel

Born 7 March 1875; Ciboure, France

Died 28 December 1937; Paris, France

Introduction and Allegro for Harp, Flute, Clarinet, and String Quartet

Composed: 1905

First performance: 22 February 1907; Paris, France

Instrumentation: flute; clarinet; harp; strings



In 1903, the Pleyel company commissioned Claude Debussy to write an ensemble work featuring their newfangled chromatic harp, in which all 12 strings per octave were evenly spaced in a single row. The goal of the new instrument was to eliminate the need for constant use of the pedals for passages where the tonalities changed quickly. This meant there were more strings than on a conventional harp. The resulting work was his *Danse sacrée et profane* (1904) for harp and strings.

Their rival company, Érard, the principal manufacturer of the conventional pedal harp, had no intention of being outdone. The following year, they commissioned Maurice Ravel to write a piece, requesting that it spotlight the entire expressive range of their instrument. Soon thereafter, in a rush that Ravel – who had been invited to go on a private cruise and needed to meet Érard’s deadline before he departed – characterized as “a week of continuous work and three sleepless nights,” he put the finishing touches on his *Introduction and Allegro* for harp, flute, clarinet, and string quartet.

Both Debussy and Ravel often employed the harp in their orchestral scoring – as a coloristic device. Ravel’s *Introduction and Allegro*, however, plumbs the full resources of the solo instrument. We wouldn’t be too far off the mark to call the work a miniature concerto, one in which the harp acts both as soloist, and – at times – as part of the accompanimental texture. The two movements are played without a break. The Introduction, *Très lent*, is only 26 bars long. Sensual and exotic, the piece opens quietly, as the delicate flute, the plangent clarinet, harp arpeggios, and plucked and bowed strings create a refined timbral palette.

The music becomes ever more active, heading directly into the Allegro, which is cast in a modified sonata form. The solo harp plays a translucent melody above a broken-chord accompaniment and soon the flute and clarinet enter, supported by the strings. After a fortississimo climax in the development, there’s a wondrous harp cadenza that leads into a straightforward recapitulation. A flurry of instrumental activity and a harp glissando bring this delectable work to its close.

Tōru Takemitsu

***Rain Coming* for chamber orchestra**

Composed: 1982

First performance: 26 October 1982; London, England

Instrumentation: flute (doubling alto flute); oboe; clarinet; bassoon; horn; trumpet; trombone; percussion (crotales, tam tams, vibraphone); piano (doubling celeste), strings



On its way to the sea of tonality, the piece undertakes metamorphoses, much like the circulation of water in the universe. –Tōru Takemitsu on Rain Coming

In the early 1980s, Takemitsu became increasingly absorbed with tonality – not the functional dominant-to-tonic sort of harmony that defines so much of Western music, but one more aqueous, capable of increasing from rain dropping into rivers that then would stream into what he called a “sea of tonality.” Part of the cycle *Waterscape* – which also includes *Garden Rain*, *Rain Tree*, and *Rain Spell* – *Rain Coming* captures the atmosphere of the moment just before rain starts to fall.

In the work’s textures and modal writing, Takemitsu again draws on the legacy of Debussy and Messiaen, but in terms of harmony – continuing with the “water” metaphor – we might say that there are a few rocks and rapids in the river. The inevitable 20th-century dissonances are to be expected en route to the “sea of tonality,” and *Rain Coming* ends on a richly colored D-flat major chord. Note, too, the composer’s deft use of every instrument, creating a variety of timbres to depict a sense of anticipation. The piece brings together a collage of styles and ideas to create an expressive whole.

Rain Coming was commissioned by the London Sinfonietta and its conductor, the composer Oliver Knussen, who gave the premiere in 1982.

Charles Gounod

Born 17 June 1818; Paris, France

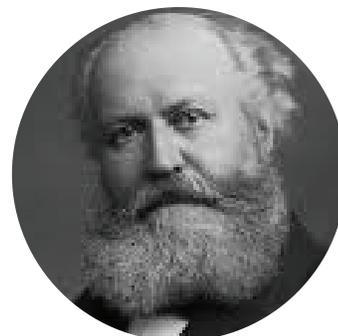
Died 18 October 1893; Saint-Cloud, France

***Petite symphonie* for Wind Instruments**

Composed: 1885

First performance: 30 April 1885; Paris, France

Instrumentation: flute; 2 oboes; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; 2 horns



Every classical music lover knows the melody Charles Gounod superimposed on Johann Sebastian Bach’s Prelude in C major, and every Alfred Hitchcock fan knows his “Funeral March of a Marionette.” But his compositional catalog lists so much more, including 12 operas, over 130 songs, two symphonies, chamber music and orchestral works, piano and organ music, and sacred choral music. His best-known operas – *Faust* (1859) and *Roméo et Juliette* (1867) – remain in the active repertory.

Gounod composed the *Petite symphonie* in 1885, at the behest of his friend Paul Taffanel, for 30 years France’s leading flutist. In 1879, Taffanel had founded the Société de Musique de Chambre pour Instruments

à Vent (Society of Chamber Music for Wind Instruments), whose mission included the commissioning of new works to expand the repertoire available to them. The work premiered at the Salle Pleyel in April 1885, but the score was not published until 1904.

Set largely in B-flat major in the four symphonic movements of Haydn's time, the *Petite symphonie* opens with a slow introduction to its sonata-form Allegro. The second movement, an Andante (quasi Adagio) in E-flat major, was obviously fashioned with Taffanel in mind. Like an operatic diva spinning out her *cantabile espressivo* aria, the flute is front and center here. The Mendelssohn-like Scherzo distributes the melodic material more evenly between the flute, oboes, and clarinets; at its center is a lilting, folk-like trio in E-flat major. The vivacious, foot-tapping Finale gives each instrument its due, with Gounod's French wit on full display.

Tōru Takemitsu

Tree Line for chamber orchestra

Composed: 1988

First performance: 20 May 1988; London, England

Instrumentation: flute (doubling alto flute); oboe;
2 clarinets (2nd doubling bass clarinet); bassoon
(doubling contrabassoon); 2 horns; trumpet; trombone;
percussion (chimes, crotales, glockenspiel; suspended cymbals,
timpani, vibraphone); harp; piano (doubling celeste); strings



Like *Rain Coming*, *Tree Line* was commissioned by the London Sinfonietta and Oliver Knussen. They gave its first performance in 1988. By the time this work was written, many of Takemitsu's compositions took on aspects of a Japanese garden: they are formally balanced, austere, intended as a reflection on nature, and conducive to meditation. And, above all, subtle.

The "Tree Line" is a row of luxuriant acacia trees lining a gently sloping road that the composer enjoyed walking. The trees, located near the villa in the mountains where he worked, always caused Takemitsu's fatigued mind to feel refreshed after he had walked under them. "This work was written as an homage to those graceful yet dauntless trees," he said.

Enjoy the work's lovely instrumental colors, its slow harmonic rhythm, and the Debussy-like chords. Listen for the gentle rising melody in the middle of the piece and for a scattering of glides in the strings and woodwinds. You'll also hear several passages with microtones, a Japanese element.

[*Tree Line* notes based on Joseph Stevenson's description at allmusic.com]

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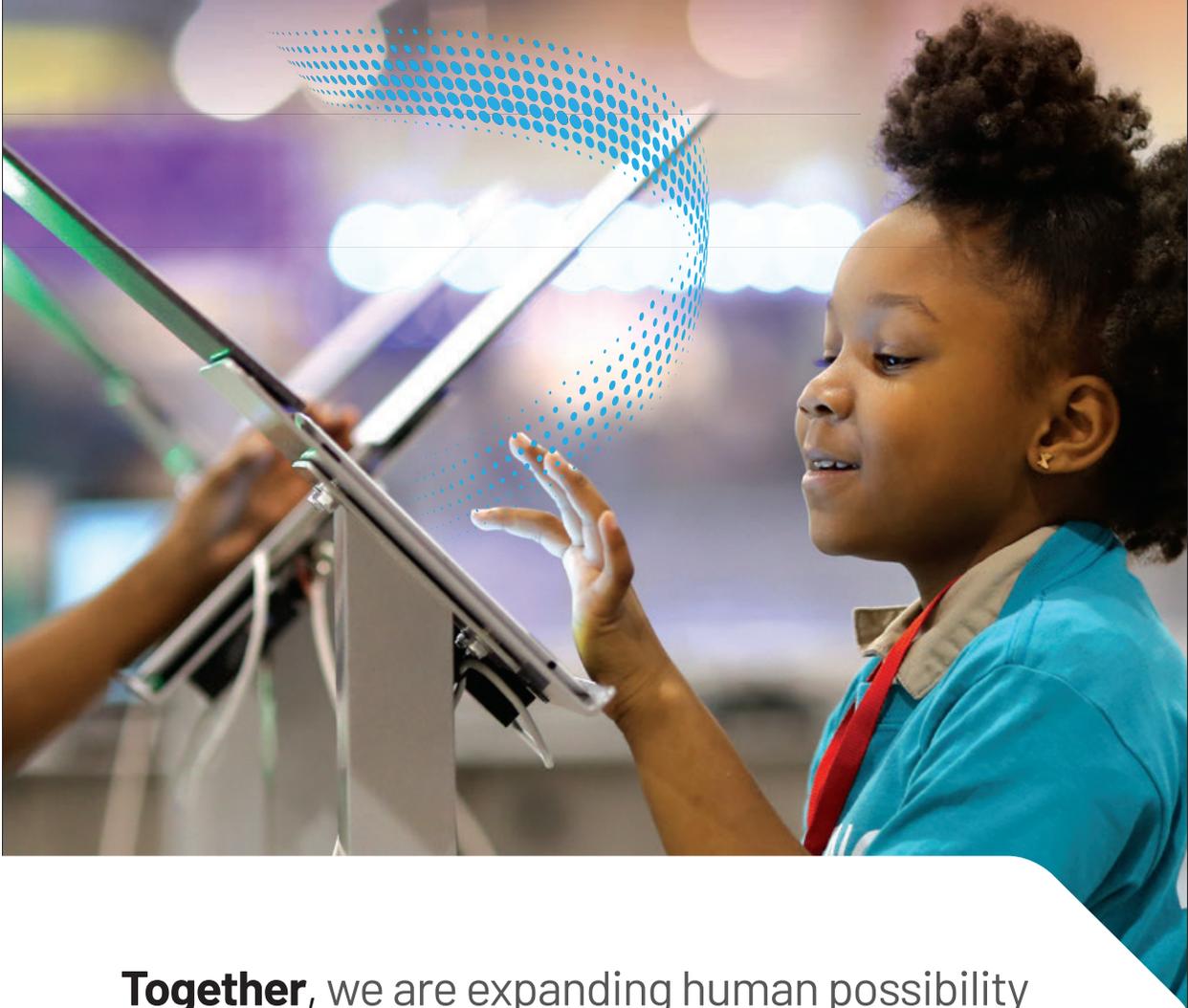
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