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Fri, 30 Oct 2015 at 8.30 p.m.
Sat, 31 Oct 2015 at 8.30 p.m.
Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra
Giancarlo Guerrero, conductor
Matthew Prendergast, percussion

PROGRAMME
MOZART
Overture to The Abduction from the Seraglio 6 mins
SCHWANTNER
Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra 30 mins
PROKOFIEV
Symphony No.5 in B flat major 46 mins

INTERvAI  20 mins

To ensure an enjoyable performance for all, the following are prohibited within the confines of the concert hall: Smoking • Eating • Photography • Recording of performance • Talking during performance • Digital watch alarms • Mobile phones and pager alarms.

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Giancarlo Guerrero is Music Director of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra’s Miami Residency. He has led the Nashville Symphony to several Grammy wins in recent years including Best Orchestral Performance in 2011.

In the 2015/16 season, Guerrero makes his debuts with the Pittsburgh and Bilbao Symphonies, Copenhagen Philharmonic, NDR Hanover and Deutsche Radio Philharmonie. He returns to the symphony orchestras of Cincinnati, Detroit, Indianapolis, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic and the Eugene Symphony. He also maintains a close association with the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra (Brazil).

Guerrero has appeared with prominent North American orchestras, including the symphony orchestras of Boston, Dallas, Houston, Milwaukee, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Minnesota and the Philadelphia Orchestra. He is also known to audiences of major summer festivals including the Hollywood Bowl (Los Angeles) and Blossom Music Festival (Cleveland).

He has developed an active and visible profile in Europe and has worked with great success in recent seasons with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London and Brussels Philharmonics, DSO-Berlin, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse.

His recordings with the Nashville Symphony include releases of music by Richard Danielpour and Roberto Sierra on the Naxos label, and Bela Fleck's Banjo Concerto on Deutsche Grammophone. Together with composer Aaron Jay Kernis, he developed and guided the creation of Nashville Symphony’s Composer Lab & Workshop initiative to foster and promote new American orchestral music.
Matthew Prendergast began playing percussion at age twelve in Southlake, Texas. After years of performing with The Spartans Drum and Bugle Corps, he began his classical training at The Boston Conservatory with Sal Rabbio, Patrick Hollenbeck and Nancy Zeltsman. During his time at The Boston Conservatory, he won a Zildjian Young Artists scholarship and the Yamaha Young Performing Artists competition. In the summers of 2005 and 2006, he was accepted as a fellow at the Boston Symphony’s prestigious Tanglewood Music Center.

Prendergast went on to get his Master’s degree at the Manhattan School of Music with Duncan Patton (Principal Timpanist of the Metropolitan Opera) and Chris Lamb (Principal Percussionist of the New York Philharmonic, who also performed the premiere of Schwantner’s Percussion Concerto in 1995). While studying in New York, he won a position with the Huntsville Symphony and, in 2009, became Principal Percussionist of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Prendergast has performed as guest Principal Percussionist with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and The Philharmonia Orchestra under the direction of Esa-Pekka Salonen. He has worked with many renowned conductors including Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, James Levine, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Andris Nelsons. His family lives in New Hampshire.
Overture – Concerto – Symphony: This is often the formula found on orchestral programmes, and it happens again here. The Mozart overture and the Prokofiev symphony we hear tonight are standards of the repertory, and are performed often. In between comes a recently-composed concerto that is going to be new to most ears at this concert, but which is rapidly working its way into the standard repertory alongside music of Mozart and Prokofiev. Joseph Schwantner’s Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra is one of the two or three best known works of its kind, and stands as proud testimony to changing times; only a few years ago a “percussion concerto” would have been nearly unthinkable.

**WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART (1756-1791)**

**Overture to The Abduction from the Seraglio (1782)**

**The Background**

Turkey and everything Turkish had been a constant preoccupation with the Viennese for more than four centuries when Mozart received the invitation in 1781 to write a *Singspiel* (comic opera in which songs alternate with dialogue in German) on a Turkish theme. The Ottoman Empire had been making incursions into Central Europe since the mid-fourteenth century, and there was even an unsuccessful attempt to lay siege to Vienna in 1683, in the aftermath of which the Viennese discovered a taste for coffee that persists to this day. The commission came from the director of the National Singspiel Company, Gottlieb Stephanie the Younger, who also adapted the libretto for Mozart from a Leipzig author, Christoph Friedrich Bretzner. The action takes place in a Turkish harem (seraglio) presided over by a despotic Pasha. The opera was first seen in Vienna on 16 July 1782 at the Burgtheater. It was a huge success, was soon being produced all over Europe, and became Mozart’s most popular stage work during his lifetime.

**The Music**

“Turkish” music (Turkish at least to eighteenth-century Viennese ears) is heard in the opera’s opening bars, music that alternates frequently and abruptly between loud and soft, features repetitions of short melodic and harmonic formulae, and employs the instruments commonly associated with Turkish music: piccolo, triangle, bass drum and cymbals. The Overture is laid out in simple ternary (ABA) form, with the outer Turkish sections framing a quiet *Andante* passage whose plaintive theme turns out to belong to Belmonte in the first aria after the curtain goes up.
JOSEPH SCHWANTNER (b.1943)
Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra (1994)

I. Con forza
II. In Memoriam: Misterioso-
III. Ritmico con moto (with restrained energy)

The Background
Since winning the 1979 Pulitzer Prize for his orchestral work *Aftertones of Infinity*, Joseph Schwantner has become one of the most esteemed, highly visible and frequently performed composers in America. Schwantner’s musical training took place at the Chicago Conservatory and Northwestern University, where he received his Doctorate in 1968. For thirty years he taught at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. In 1999 he took up a position at Yale University, but three years later decided to abandon academia to devote himself exclusively to composing. His most recent premiere took place in April of this year in Atlanta, Georgia: *Luminosity*, a concerto for wind orchestra.

Schwantner’s music combines modernist techniques with traditional elements, but the quality of his work that most often elicits comment is a feeling for colour, sometimes in kaleidoscopic arrays, and often combined with striking theatrical gestures. He is regarded as one of the great colourists of contemporary music, and his interest in this aspect of composition can be seen in the very titles of such orchestral works as *A Sudden Rainbow, A Play of Shadows, From a Dark Millennium* and *Toward Light*. 
Schwantner wrote his Percussion Concerto in 1994 as a commission from the New York Philharmonic on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. It was premiered the following year on 6 January in New York, with principal percussionist Christopher Lamb as soloist and Leonard Slatkin conducting. It has become one of the composer’s most frequently performed compositions. Schwantner has since written a second Percussion Concerto, commissioned by the Percussive Arts Society and premiered by the Indianapolis Symphony in 2011.

The Music

Concertos for percussion are rare, so Schwantner made the most of his New York commission. The soloist hits and hammers, strokes and strikes, rattles and rustles, bangs and bonks fifteen different kinds of instrument (some in multiples), while three additional percussionists at the back of the orchestra handle some two dozen more. We get to hear standard instruments like triangle, xylophone and bass drum, but also such exotica as Japanese wind chimes, brake drum, crotales, anvil, water gong and beaded gourd. Timpani and piano add further timbres to the percussion department. The thirty-minute concerto is in three parts, with two fast movements framing a slow, central movement that acts as the centre of gravity—gravity not only in the sense of weight but of seriousness of intent, for this is Schwantner’s memorial tribute to his friend and colleague, Stephen Albert, who died in a car crash in late 1992.
SERGEI PROKOFIEv (1891-1953)
Symphony No.5 in B flat major, Op.100 (1944)

I. Andante
II. Allegro marcato
III. Adagio
IV. Allegro giocoso

The Background
Prokofiev spent the summer of 1944 at an estate outside Moscow especially allocated to members of the Soviet Composers’ Union. Here, amid nature, peace and tranquility, undisturbed by the harsh realities of war elsewhere, he composed the entire score of the longest (nearly fifty minutes) of his seven symphonies. It was written in just one month and orchestrated in an equally short time. The first performance was given by the Moscow State Philharmonic Orchestra on 13 January 1945, led by the composer. He explained that the purpose of the Fifth Symphony, written amidst the horrors and suffering of World War II, was “a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit.”

The Music
The first movement is laid out in traditional form with exposition, development, recapitulation and coda. There are no fewer than five well-defined themes or motifs. All five are worked out in the extensive development section, which culminates in a grandiose restatement of the movement’s opening theme. The coda is one of the symphony’s most memorable passages. Lasting 36 bars in slow tempo, and at the upper end of the dynamic range nearly throughout, the texture is of extreme density and crushing weight.

The second movement, playful, teasing and sardonic by turns, presents a theme that flits about from instrument to instrument 36 times, each one modified in some way. The calmer, central portion has its own theme.

The powerfully eloquent third movement too is cast in ternary form (ABA) and, like the first, reveals Prokofiev’s lyricism in full bloom. The coda quietly presents a new theme for the unlikely combination of piccolo and horns.

Fun, satire, wit and energy infuse the final movement, which is for the most part merry and capricious, though not without its moments of menace and even brutality. This movement too concludes with a coda, a high-powered affair with electrifying effects from the trumpets, high woodwinds and percussion.

ABOUT THE WRITER
Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, Robert Markow now writes programme notes for that orchestra and for many other musical organizations in North America and Asia. He taught at Montreal’s McGill University for many years, has led music tours abroad, and writes for many leading classical music journals, including American Record Guide, Fanfare, Opera, Opera News, The Strad and Symphony. He travels regularly to Europe, Asia and Australia in search of musical stimulation.
MALAYSIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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MAHLER 7

FABIO LUISI
conductor

MAHLER
Symphony No. 7

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