



Program Notes for kids

Tchaikovsky and Friends
Friday, November 11, 2016
8:00 p.m.
Michigan Theater

Daugherty *Strut*
Shostakovich *Violin Concerto in A minor*

Intermission

Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6, Pathétique*



Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra
Music in the Key of A²

Strut

by Michael Daugherty

About the Music

When was it written?

Strut was first performed on October 15, 1989.

What is it about?

The composer Michael Daugherty says:

“*Strut* is inspired by Paul Robeson (1898-1976), the great African-American actor, singer and civil rights activist. Robeson was widely admired for his acting, and for his singing of Afro-American spirituals and folksongs. Paul Robeson was also an advocate for American racial equality and justice.”

Paul Robeson grew up during the Harlem Renaissance (1920-30), and *Strut* reflects the creative and energetic spirit of this time period. Imagine a young and happy Robeson strutting down the streets of Harlem, New York during the 1920s.



Paul Robeson, the actor, singer and civil rights activist who inspired this piece.

Listen for...

The strings playing *slap pizzicato* at the end of the piece. They pluck the strings of their instruments so hard that the SLAP against the fingerboard.

About the Composer

Michael Daugherty | Born April 28, 1954 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa | Lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan

Family & Career

Michael Daugherty grew up in a musical family and was surrounded by popular music. His father was a professional jazz and country & western drummer, and his mother was an amateur musical theater singer and tap dancer. Daugherty is the eldest of five brothers, all of whom are professional musicians. At the age of eight, he began teaching himself piano, and took lessons for ten years while teaching himself jazz and pop tunes. His father taught him rock and jazz drumming.

After studying with important composers in the United States and Europe, Daugherty went on to teach composition at various Universities in America. He currently teaches composition at the University of Michigan, a position which he has held since 1991. A Grammy award winner, Daugherty is the most widely performed, commissioned, and recorded American composer today.

Music

Thanks to his musical upbringing, Michael Daugherty's music is heavily influenced by jazz, classical, and popular music. He frequently makes use of syncopations and short, repetitive *motives*, or musical ideas, as well as rhythmic *ostinati*, or grooves. These techniques come directly from jazz and popular music styles. Daugherty often finds inspiration in “the people, places, and popular icons of the United States.” Other compositions include music inspired by Superman and Elvis.

Violin Concerto No. 1

by Dmitri Shostakovich

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

A *concerto* is a piece of music written for a solo instrument with an orchestra. In this case, the violinist is the soloist, so he stands at the front of the stage and plays the most important part. In a concerto, the soloist and orchestra can interact in different ways: the soloist could play alone, the orchestra could play alone, the orchestra could play something to support the soloist, or the soloist could join in like a member of the orchestra. Concertos usually have three *movements* or sections.

When was it written?

Shostakovich composed his *Violin Concerto* in 1947-48, but it was first performed almost 10 years later in 1955.

What is it about?

The *Violin Concerto* was one of Shostakovich's more experimental pieces. It was composed during a time when the Soviet Russian government was *censoring* a lot of things: they were controlling what people could hear, read or see by banning books, music and artwork. The government could ban a piece of music for any reason: the presence of anti-soviet material, not enough pro-soviet material, or if they simply didn't like it. People were frequently imprisoned or killed because of the things they wrote, said or created. Shostakovich kept this concerto unpublished until after the death of Russia's leader Joseph Stalin in 1953, when censorship became less strict.

Listen for...

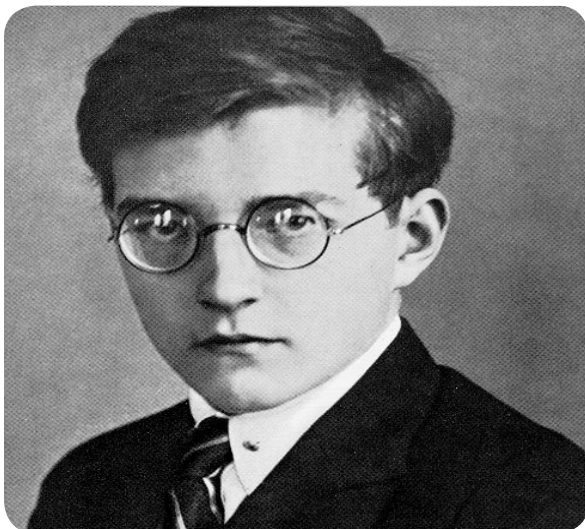
The violin *cadenza* in the third movement. A *cadenza* is a solo passage where the soloist shows off their skills. This cadenza is one of the longest and most difficult ever written for violin.

About the Composer

Dmitri Shostakovich | Born September 25, 1906 in St. Petersburg, Russia | Died August 9, 1975 in Moscow, Russia

Family & Career

Dmitri Shostakovich was a child prodigy pianist and composer. When he began piano lessons at age 9 with his mother, he took to it immediately, playing things by ear after hearing them only once. He entered a music conservatory when he was 13, and wrote his first symphony as a graduation piece at age 19. He was married four times (twice to his first wife) and had two children: Galina and Maxim. Maxim became a pianist and composer.



No, that's not Harry Potter. It's Dmitri Shostakovich!

Music

Shostakovich lived in Soviet Russia, where the government kept a tight watch on intellectuals and artists and only allowed those who supported the government to succeed. His life was a constant struggle between his own creativity and having to please the Soviet state, led by Joseph Stalin. Shostakovich frequently suffered at the hand of the government: his works were banned, he received bad reviews of his music in the official government newspaper, he was forced to give public

apologies for his works, he lost his job at the Music Conservatory, and he had to write music in praise of Stalin. Fearful of rejection (which could mean arrest, imprisonment, or even death), he wrote a lot of music that he immediately threw away or hid away in his desk drawer. Despite all this, Shostakovich wrote quite a lot of music in varying styles: 15 symphonies, 15 string quartets, 3 operas, and film music, among other things.

Symphony No. 6, Pathétique

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

About the Music

What kind of piece is this?

A *symphony* is a long piece of music containing three or four *movements*. These movements, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some movements may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more song-like.

When was it written?

Tchaikovsky wrote this piece between February and August of 1893. He died twelve days after the first performance in October of that year.

What is it about?

Though Tchaikovsky died shortly after the first performance of *Symphony No. 6*, the piece is not about a depressed or sick man. In fact, Tchaikovsky composed it when he was in good health and described it as the best thing he ever composed. The title “Pathétique” is the french translation of the original Russian title. “Passionate” or “emotional” is a more accurate English translation than “pathetic.” The symphony is a depiction of a battle between life and death, with death being the eventual winner.

Fun Facts

As a child, Tchaikovsky loved trying to play melodies on the piano. When his parents tried to limit his “piano time”, he would just bang out melodies on any surface, pretending it was a piano. He once pretended to play the piano on a pane of glass, breaking the glass and cutting his hand.

his friends – hearing the works of

When a School of Music opened in St. Petersburg in 1862, Tchaikovsky became one of its first students. Thanks to his wealthy patroness Nadezhda von Meck, who supported him financially for many years, Tchaikovsky became Russia’s first full-time professional musician.

Music

Tchaikovsky was the first Russian composer to gain international respect. During his lifetime, his works were frequently played in concerts in both Russia and Europe. Today he is best known for his three ballets (*Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*), six symphonies, and his *1812 Overture*.

About the Composer

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky | Born May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia | Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Family & Career

Tchaikovsky grew up with four brothers, two sisters, and a French nanny. When he was 10, he was sent to a boarding school 800 miles away from his family home. While there, he entertained himself by going to the opera with Rossini, Verdi, and Mozart – and by improvising variations on the piano.