



ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY
DAVID ROBERTSON, CONDUCTOR
Wednesday, March 29, 2017, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY

David Robertson, music director and conductor

John Adams
(b. 1947)

The Chairman Dances, Foxtrot for Orchestra (1985)

Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

Appalachian Spring, Ballet Suite for Orchestra (1944)

20-minute intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

Symphony No. 7 in A major, op. 92 (1812)

Poco sostenuto; Vivace

Allegretto

Presto; Assai meno

Allegro con brio

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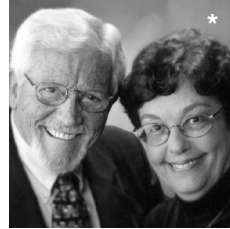


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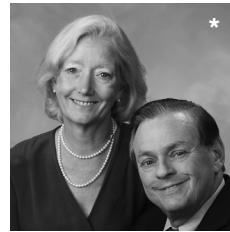
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PROGRAM NOTES

JOHN ADAMS

Born February 15, 1947, in Worcester,
Massachusetts

The Chairman Dances, Foxtrot for Orchestra

Dancing With Mao

John Adams' "breakthrough" composition, the one that brought him international attention, was his opera *Nixon in China*. Completed in 1987 after two years of work, *Nixon in China* imagines in fantastical, sometimes surreal, terms the historic 1972 visit of the 37th President to the People's Republic of China and his meeting with Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong.

At the time he had begun working on the opera, Adams also was obligated to fulfill a commission from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra for a new orchestral piece. Engrossed in the sound-world and *mise en scène* of *Nixon in China*, he wrote a "Foxtrot for Orchestra" that he originally planned to include in the opera's third act. This music, *The Chairman Dances*, ended up being, in the composer's words, "an out-take" from *Nixon in China*, but it has acquired a life of its own as a concert piece.

The scene for which *The Chairman Dances* was conceived centers, Adams explains:

On Chairman Mao and his bride, Chiang Ch'ing, the fabled 'Madame Mao,' firebrand, revolutionary executioner, architect of China's calamitous Cultural Revolution, and (a fact not universally realized) a former Shanghai movie actress. In the surreal final scene of the opera, she interrupts the tired formalities of a state banquet, disrupts the slow-moving protocol and invites the Chairman, who is

present only as a gigantic forty-foot portrait on the wall, to 'come down, old man, and dance.' The music takes full cognizance of her past as a movie actress. Themes, sometimes slinky and sentimental, at other times bravura and bounding, ride above a bustling fabric of energized motives.

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AARON COPLAND

Born November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York
Died December 2, 1990, in Sleepy Hollow,
New York

Appalachian Spring, Ballet Suite for Orchestra

American Music For An American Ballet

Aaron Copland's standing as one of America's most significant composers rests on those of his works that capture something essential, even mythic, about our country. Chief among these is his most famous composition, *Appalachian Spring*.

Appalachian Spring developed out of a collaboration with the esteemed choreographer and modern dancer Martha Graham. In 1943, Graham approached Copland about providing music for a new ballet. The scenario she devised was unpretentious: a young pioneer couple, beginning life together in rural Pennsylvania, celebrates the building of a new farm house. Joining them are their neighbors and a revivalist preacher.

Modest as this seems, no subject could have better suited Copland at the time. Like many artists, and more than most, he had been strongly

affected by the wave of populist sentiment that swept the country during the Depression. As a result, the composer sought in the mid-1930s to make his style more distinctively American and more accessible. To this end, he turned to American folk music as a source of thematic material. Copland's use of traditional dance tunes and song melodies was highly personal, however. Instead of quoting them literally, he usually transfigured his folkloric sources in subtle yet telling ways. Nevertheless, they imbued his work with a distinctly national flavor.

From its initial performance in October 1944, *Appalachian Spring* enjoyed a success unequalled by any American work of its kind. It remained for years a staple of Graham's repertory, and Copland's music received the Pulitzer Prize in 1945. The original ballet was scored for a theater orchestra of 13 instruments, but the composer later revised this into a concert suite for full orchestra. In this form it has become one of the most widely heard compositions of the last century.

The music vividly suggests the setting and action of the ballet: the pastoral countryside, the gathering of the farm folk, their barn dance, the frightening admonitions of the preacher, the shy affection of the young couple. The final section presents a set of variations on the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts," which Copland made famous through his ballet score. All this, however, hardly conveys the achievement of *Appalachian Spring*. With this work, Copland captured not only an appealing frontier atmosphere but something greater: a transcendent feeling of rural life as a wellspring of purity and harmony with nature.

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December, 1770, in Bonn, Germany
Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria
Symphony No. 7 in A major, op. 92

Spacious And Sensual Sound

Beethoven embarked on his career as a symphonist at the start of the 19th century—his Symphony No. 1 appeared in 1800—and rapidly completed six diverse and original works in the genre over a span of scarcely eight years. Then, beginning in 1808, the composer brought no symphony before the public for some four years, a period during which he concentrated his creative efforts chiefly on keyboard and chamber music. Despite this hiatus, the Seventh Symphony, completed in 1812, picked up much where the previous Sixth, or "Pastoral," Symphony had left off. Both works offer a feeling of relaxed spaciousness and the kind of warm, almost luxuriant orchestral sound not otherwise notable in the composer's output. These symphonies are, if one may use the term in connection with so thoughtful an artist, the most sensual of Beethoven's compositions.

Moreover, neither piece expresses the implicit drama of struggle and triumph so central to Beethoven's other large symphonies (the Third, Fifth, and Ninth). As a piece of "pure" music—that is, one with neither explicit nor implied literary narrative—the Seventh Symphony expresses as much as anything the wonders of music itself. Forgotten for the moment are the composer's well-known battles with fate, deafness, and loneliness. One senses here—more, perhaps, than in any of Beethoven's other orchestral works—the joy he could find in his own creative powers, in simply combining melody, rhythm, harmony, and instrumental colors for the purpose of coherent and beautiful musical invention.

Pervasive Rhythm

The broad chords that punctuate the oboe's melody in the symphony's opening moments define one of the work's important attributes: sheer sonority, a reveling in the physical reality of orchestral sound. Another element that emerges near the end of the moderately paced introductory passage is rhythm, as repeated-note figures decelerate incrementally, then metamorphose into a tripping rhythmic motif. Beethoven carries this figure into the Vivace that forms the main body of the first movement, where the tripping rhythm of the introduction underlies all of the principal thematic ideas.

The ensuing Allegretto is one of Beethoven's most popular creations, so much so that orchestras in the 19th and early 20th centuries often performed it alone, apart from the rest of the symphony. From its humble beginning as a narrow melody anchored to a single tone, the 16-measure phrase upon which the movement is built soars through successive variations to unexpected heights.

The scherzo that follows is full of commotion, and its contrasting central section, or Trio, whose melody is based on an old Austrian pilgrims' hymn, attains a degree of grandeur never before encountered at this point in a symphony. In closing the movement, Beethoven toys with our expectations: a restatement of the opening bars of the Trio promises another repetition of this section, until five swift chords bring matters to a decisive conclusion.

The English conductor and commentator Donald Francis Tovey described the finale as "a triumph of Bacchic fury." However one might characterize this movement, there is no denying its very considerable energy, nor the fact that this quality springs in large part from rhythm. The opening measures present a sharply etched rhythmic motif, and as in the first and second movements, this provides the seed from which practically all subsequent developments spring.

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PROFILE

DAVID ROBERTSON is one of today's most sought-after conductors. Celebrated worldwide as a champion of contemporary composers, an ingenious programmer, and a masterful communicator, Robertson is a consummate and deeply collaborative musician. With an extensive orchestral and operatic repertoire that spans the classical to the avant-garde, he has forged close relationships with major orchestras and opera companies around the world. This marks Robertson's 12th season as music director of the storied 137-year-old St. Louis Symphony. He also serves as chief conductor and artistic director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia.

As music director of the St. Louis Symphony, Robertson has solidified the orchestra's standing as one of the nation's most enduring and innovative. Under his leadership, the St. Louis Symphony's notable relationship with composer John Adams has produced the 2014 release of *City Noir* on Nonesuch Records, which won the Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance; the 2016 release of Adams' violin symphony, *Scheherazade.2*, performed by Leila Josefowicz; and 2017 will see the release of Adams' *Violin Concerto*, also with Josefowicz.

A highlight of Robertson's 2016–17 guest conducting engagements includes The Metropolitan Opera's revival of Janáček's *Jenůfa*. He has held other titled posts with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra National de Lyon, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and the Ensemble Intercontemporain.

Robertson received Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and he and the St. Louis Symphony are recipients of several major awards from ASCAP and the League of American Orchestras. *Musical America* named him the 2000 Conductor of the Year. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2011 a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*.

Born in Santa Monica, California, Robertson was educated at London's Royal Academy of Music, where he studied horn and composition before turning to orchestral conducting. He is married to pianist Orli Shaham.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY

Celebrated as one of the today's most exciting and enduring orchestras, the St. Louis Symphony is the second-oldest orchestra in the United States and is widely considered one of the world's finest. In September 2005, American conductor David Robertson became the 12th Music Director in the orchestra's history and has since solidified the St. Louis Symphony's standing as one of the nation's most vital and innovative ensembles. In its 137th season, the St. Louis Symphony is committed to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community connection—all in service to its mission of enriching people's lives through the power of music. In addition to its regular concert performances at home in Powell Hall, the Symphony is an integral part of the diverse and vibrant St. Louis community, presenting hundreds of free education programs and performances throughout the region each year. The Grammy Award-winning St. Louis Symphony's impact beyond its home market is realized through regular Saturday night concert broadcasts, celebrated recordings, and regular touring activity.

In the 2016-17 season, Robertson and the Symphony made a three-city concert tour of Spain (Valencia, Madrid, and Oviedo), the orchestra's first visit to Spain since 1998.

The St. Louis Symphony performs numerous works by composer John Adams throughout its Powell Hall concert season, including his Violin Concerto, featuring soloist Leila Josefowicz, in the fall of 2016. The concerto was recorded by Nonesuch Records for a future release that will include Adams' violin symphony, *Scheherazade.2*, which was recorded with Josefowicz at Powell Hall in February 2016.

In 2015, the St. Louis Symphony received a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance for Adams' *City Noir* and Saxophone Concerto, with Robertson conducting and featuring soloist Timothy McAllister, also recorded on Nonesuch. This was the orchestra's sixth Grammy and 57th nomination.

In the 2015-16 season the St. Louis Symphony completed a highly successful California tour, which included stops in Berkeley and Los Angeles' Walt Disney Concert Hall. With Robertson conducting, the tour featured performances of Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles . . .*, which included video images of the American Southwest landscapes that inspired the composer, created by the artist Deborah O'Grady especially for the St. Louis Symphony.

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2016-2017**

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