CHAMPAIGN-URBANA
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRA IN RESIDENCE AT KRANNERT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Rite of Spring



SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025
KRANNERT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor
East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra, Kevin Kelly, Director



2025/26 SEASON 66!

CHAMPAIGN URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Professional Orchestra in Residence at Krannert Center
Stephen Alltop, Music Director and Conductor

SEASON OPENING: THE THRILL OF THE ORCHESTRA
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Saturday, November 22, 2025 |4:00 pm Faith United Methodist Church

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Saturday, May 2, 2026 |7:30 pm Krannert Center

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Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

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WELCOME

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the final concert of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra's 2024-25 season. Tonight we present one of the most epic and groundbreaking scores ever composed, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring.*

We are delighted to be collaborating again with the fine young musicians of the East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra in the first half of this concert. Thanks to their Music Director Kevin Kelly, music teachers and member's parents for all they do to support the ECIYO and the wonderful musical experiences it provides.

Our program begins with Glinka's quicksilver overture to his opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla.* This dashing showpiece keeps the foot on the accelerator the whole time and is as fun to play as it is to hear.

You'll be afforded a somewhat rare opportunity to hear Mussorgsky's stirring tone poem, *St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain,* in its original form. It was from this score that Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov made the more frequently played adaptation that one hears in the 1940 Disney film *Fantasia*. Mussorgsky's ideas are strikingly bold, descriptive and inimitably his own and should be heard as he conceived them.

Also in the first part of tonight's concert we will share some of the wonderful stories about how Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* came to be, and offer some sonic guideposts to enhance your experience with this remarkable work. We hope that hearing *The Rite of Spring* in the Foellinger Great Hall, with this work's enormous orchestra and intense palette of instrumental colors, will be an experience you never forget.

Musically yours,

Stephen Alltop
Music-Director and Conductor

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

CUSO is the professional orchestra in residence at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts and is a member of the League of American Orchestras, the Illinois Council of Orchestras, the American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers (ASCAP), and Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI). CUSO is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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The "Champaign-Urbana Civic Symphony Orchestra" was founded in 1959 by music lovers in our community who had the dream of establishing a local, professional symphony orchestra. Funded by local businesses and more than 300 subscribers, the orchestra performed the opening concert in Smith Hall on October 20,1960 under the leadership of Bernard Goodman. The concert was hailed "a magnificent success" by *The News-Gazette* and the new orchestra flourished with the help of the Symphony Guild that was formed in 1962.

CUSO began performing at the newly-built Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in 1969 and was designated the professional orchestra in residence at Krannert Center in 1988. Over the years, CUSO has performed more than 350 concerts and showcased the talents of thousands of local, professional musicians, bringing the magic of music to audiences of all ages. In partnership with the Guild, CUSO youth music programs have introduced thousands of grade school children to the vibrancy of live orchestral music, with Youth Concerts at Krannert Center and free concerts in the schools.

For the past 65 years, CUSO has thrived with community support. The orchestra is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and receives no funding from Krannert Center or the University of Illinois. Like orchestras throughout the country, more than 60% of our budget is funded by the generous support of sponsors and donors.

Your gift to the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra makes these performances of great music by talented local musicians possible. To make a donation, call the CUSO office at 217-351-9139 or visit our website at **cusymphony.org.** Thank you for your support!



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The Maestro Circle recognizes individuals who have made gifts of $1,000 or more for the current season. CUSO gratefully acknowledges these donors for Maestro Circle gifts made to CUSO and the Guild from April 13, 2024 through April 3, 2025, to support the programs and performances of the 2024-2025 season.

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It is with sincere gratitude that we recognize donations made to CUSO in the past 12 months for memorials and gifts made in honor of an individual for a birthday, anniversary, or special occasion.

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Jiny McTavish,
Acting Associate Concertmaster
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Wei-Ting Chen
Noel Chi
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[Raymond E. Williams Memorial Chair]
Armgard Haken, Associate Principal
Jacy Jacobus
Alice Lee
Johnny Lusardi
Eun Namkung
Juliana Scofield
Anna Wallace

VIOLA
Erin Rafferty, Principal
[Wyndham J. Roberts Memorial Chair]
Isaac Henry, Associate Principal
[Ernest and Lois Gullerud Endowed Chair]
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Matthew Nowlan
Andreas Ruiz-Gehrt
Rebecca Saul
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[CUSO Guild Memorial Chair]
Zora Yo, Acting Associate Principal
[Carl and Nadja Altstetter Endowed Chair]
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Bob Hauser
Kirsten Landowne
Oskar Norell

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Joe Bauer, Acting Principal
Margaret Briskin
Todd Gallagher
Mingzi Han
Ian King
Sara Neilson

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Jonathan Keeble, Acting Principal
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Rebecca Johnson

ALTO FLUTE
Brynna Paros

PICCOLO
Ellen Elrick
Rebecca Johnson

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John Dee, Principal
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Wesley Boehm

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Wesley Boehm

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Emily Cook

E-FLAT CLARINET
Janice Minor

BASS CLARINET
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Emily Cook

BASSOON
Timothy McGovern, Principal
Claire Taylor
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Bradley Sarmiento
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The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

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DIAMOND CIRCLE

The dream to establish the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra was made possible by extraordinary community support. When CUSO celebrated the important milestone of the 60th Anniversary in 2019, the Board of Directors launched the Diamond Campaign, a fundraising initiative to establish a secure financial foundation for the orchestra.

The Diamond Campaign Vision for the Symphony

CUSO is deeply committed to achieving program and performance excellence. Diamond Campaign funds have enabled the CUSO Board to raise musician pay rates to match other area orchestras. The Board continues to fully support Music Director Stephen Alltop and his programming goals, to secure outstanding guest artists, to perform ambitious works, and to pursue vibrant artistic collaborations.

CUSO seeks to expand and maximize community relevance with live orchestral music. In partnership with the CUSO Guild, we will continue to provide youth music education programs, including the annual Youth Concerts at Krannert Center, free ensemble concerts in the schools, and auditions and scholarship awards for young musicians. CUSO will also fund creative concert initiatives to reach new audiences and to perform in venues throughout the community.

The Diamond Circle

The Diamond Circle recognizes individuals who have made major gifts and pledges to the Diamond Campaign Fund. CUSO thanks these generous donors for their commitment to insure that the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra continues our long tradition of bringing fine orchestral music performed by local musicians, to our community.

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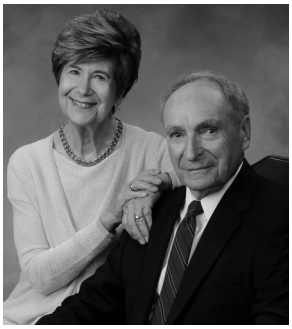
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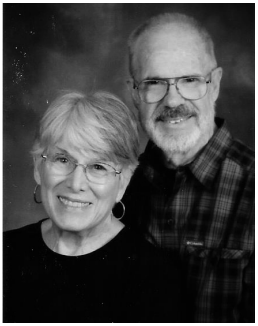


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IN MEMORY OF RICHARD "DICK" COGDAL



RICHARD "DICK" COGDAL
1917—2024

"The Rite of Spring" concert is supported by a generous gift from Dick Cogdal, who served on the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra board and was President during the 1968-1969 season. CUSO is grateful to perform this music in his memory. Richard Boyd Cogdal was born on April 4, 1917, in Urbana, and passed away Tuesday, April 30, 2024, in Urbana, at the age of 107.

Dick grew up attending Urbana schools before attending the University of Illinois, where he received a B.S. in accounting and a master's in accounting and finance. He was a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and proudly played the bass drum with the Marching Illini for five years. Dick spent his college summers as stage manager at the Interlochen School of Music in Michigan. He was an avid piano player and continued playing until he was 106.

After college, Dick enlisted in the U.S. Navy and received his commission as an ensign in 1942. He was assigned to the Bureau of Ordinance in Washington, D.C, where he met and married Shirley Conner, who was also a Naval officer. He was reassigned to the USS Makassar Strait CVE 91, where he served as officer of the deck and gunnery officer. During his time on the Makassar Strait, the aircraft carrier was assigned to the Western Pacific, where it supported the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa and was awarded two battle stars.

After the war, Dick joined the firm of Arthur Anderson and Company as an accountant. In 1947, Dick and Shirley returned to Urbana, where Dick joined his father and enjoyed a long career working at Cogdal and Hobbs, Real Estate and Insurance, until well into his 90's.

Dick gave back to his community and was a proud member of Urbana Rotary for over 70 years. He served on many boards, including Urbana Rotary, the Urbana Library, the Boys and Girls Club, Wesley Foundation, Urbana Chamber of Commerce, Sinfonia da Camera, and the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra.

He enjoyed playing golf, handball, poker, piano, singing, reciting poetry, traveling all over the world, following his beloved Illini football and basketball teams, watching the Chicago Cubs, and spending time with his family and friends. CUSO welcomes Dick's daughters, Sara Elsasser and Ann Hoops, and their families as we celebrate his memory in one of his favorite places, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

THE RITE OF SPRING

THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor
Concert No. 318, April 12, 2025 | 7:30 pm
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Foellinger Great Hall

Stephen Alltop, conductor
East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra, Kevin Kelly, music director

Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila
Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857)

East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra

Introduction to The Rite of Spring

St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain (original version)
Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)

East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra

INTERMISSION

The Rite of Spring
Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Part I: The Adoration of the Earth
Introduction—
The Augurs of Spring—
Dances of the Young Girls—
Ritual of Abduction—
Spring Rounds (Round Dance)—
Ritual of the Rival Tribes—
Procession of the Sage—
The Sage—
Dance of the Earth

Part II: The Sacrifice
Introduction—
Mystic Circles of the Young Girls—
Glorification of the Chosen One—
Evocation of the Ancestors—
Ritual Action of the Ancestors—
Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)


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MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR



STEPHEN ALLTOP

Stephen Alltop is celebrating his 12th season as Music Director and Conductor of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as Music Director and Conductor for the Apollo Chorus of Chicago and the Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Alltop has been a member of Northwestern University's conducting and keyboard faculties since 1994, where he conducts the Alice Millar Chapel Choir and the Baroque Music Ensemble.

Stephen Alltop has appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as both a harpsichord and organ soloist, and performs frequently with Chicago's Music of The Baroque. He has performed with Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, Chicago Bach Project, Chicago Sinfonietta, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, the Peninsula Music Festival and Ravinia Festival. Alltop served as Coordinator and performer for WFMT's Bach Organ Project in the fall of 2014, a live performance series of all of Bach's organ works, and the WFMT Bach Keyboard Festival for the fall of 2015. His recordings are on the Albany, American Gramaphone, Cedille and Clarion labels.

Alltop has performed with many leading musicians and actors of our time, including Hilary Hahn, Orli Shaham, Tony Randall, Martin Sheen, and Brian Dennehy. He has prepared ensembles for the Ravinia Festival, Chicago Opera Theater. The Oprah Winfrey Show, Star Wars in Concert, and Josh Groban on Tour. Dr. Alltop has guest conducted numerous orchestras and choruses across the United States, Europe and Korea. His guest conducting engagements have included "A Celebration of Celtic Music" at Chicago's Symphony Center, the Iowa All-State Orchestra,

(continued on page 24)



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EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS YOUTH ORCHESTRA

KEVIN KELLY, MUSIC DIRECTOR



Kevin Kelly moved to the northwest Chicago suburbs in 2014, after 23 years living in Champaign-Urbana, where he served the musical community in multiple roles. In 1996, he founded a uniquely entertaining professional chamber orchestra called The Prairie Ensemble, with a mission to "make first-rate music fun, approachable and affordable." Kevin was honored four times by the Illinois Council of Orchestras for his work with the Ensemble—for "Chamber Orchestra of the Year," for "Meritorious Service in Orchestral Conducting" and twice for "Programming of the Year." He has conducted the East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra since 1993; the orchestra was named "Youth Orchestra of the Year" by the Illinois Council of Orchestras in 1999, and Kevin continues to commute to Champaign for Sunday rehearsals. After 13 years as a classical music host at public radio station WILL-FM in Urbana, he served as host and producer of "Live and Local," which featured interviews with, and frequent live performances by, local and visiting artists across many musical genres, plus theater and dance.

In the fall of 2015, he became Artistic Director of the Allegro Community Chorus, a program of the Palatine Park District, and served for four years as Conductor at the Lake County Núcleo of Sistema Ravinia, an outreach program of the Ravinia Festival. Kevin was Artistic Director of the Northwest Choral Society from 2018 to 2020. He was named Artistic Director of the Sing to Live Community Chorus in 2021, which became the Voices of Hope Community Chorus in 2023.

Kevin previously directed the Sangamon Valley Youth Orchestras in Springfield and the Illini Statesmen Barbershop Chorus in Champaign-Urbana. He was active in musical theater for many years with the Illini Union Board and the Champaign-Urbana Theatre Company.

Kevin Kelly holds bachelor's degrees in English (essay writing) and music history and criticism from Northwestern University, and master's degrees in orchestral and choral conducting from the University of Illinois. He has studied conducting with Kenneth Kiesler, Paul Vermel, Victor Yampolsky, Harold Farberman, Kirk Trevor and Emil Simon.

Kevin lives in Elgin with his wife, Ayano Sakai (a scientist at Tate & Lyle Americas), and their golden tabby, Mugi.

EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS YOUTH ORCHESTRA

The East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra is a program of The Conservatory of Central Illinois. ECIYO is organized to provide a high-quality orchestral experience to young musicians and an opportunity to explore a variety of original orchestral repertoire, develop rehearsal skills, improve sight-reading and enhance musicianship with other students from the region.

Participation in ECIYO enriches the musical experience and education of its members and complements other ensemble activities in which students may be involved. Led by Music Director Kevin Kelly, the orchestra rehearses on a weekly basis throughout the academic year, presenting several concerts annually. A program of Honors Chamber Ensembles includes the ECIYO String Quartet, Wind Quintet and Brass Quintet.

ECIYO and its chamber ensembles have performed in area communities, including Paxton, Monticello, Villa Grove, Mahomet and Charleston. The orchestra has played side-by-side with the Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic of the Czech Republic, The Prairie Ensemble, Eastern Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra, University of Illinois Philharmonia and the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. In the fall of 2011, the ECIYO Strings were featured with Dan Zanes at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

The East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra has been honored by the Illinois Council of Orchestras as Youth Orchestra of the Year. The group was selected as a featured youth orchestra performing at the 2022 Illinois Music Educators Conference in Peoria.

Alumni of ECIYO have gone on to pursue professional musical careers with organizations such as the Boston Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, United States Coast Guard Band and the JACK Quartet.

EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS YOUTH ORCHESTRA
Kevin Kelly, Music Director
Nick Wurl, Manager
Jo Ellen DeVilbiss, Executive and Artistic Director,
The Conservatory of Central Illinois

VIOLIN
Jonathan Cai
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Paul Ouyang
Teo Percoco

HORN
Ben Leeb
Maddie Scully

TRUMPET
Jonathan Chen
Egan Curry

TROMBONE
Dan Rosu
Eli Pelz
Alex Tartakovsky
Sophie Wills

PERCUSSION
Joseph To



MIKHAIL GLINKA

Born June 1, 1804, Novospasskoe, Russia.
Died February 15, 1857, Berlin, Germany.

Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila

Before there was Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and even Mussorgsky, there was Glinka. The latter is the precursor of all the great Russian composers so familiar to today's concertgoer, but he is known to audiences in this country for only one composition: the sparkling overture to his opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila.* Composer of many songs, chamber works, and other compositions, his major contributions to musical history are both that opera (1842) and his earlier opera, *A Life for the Tsar* (1836). Both works are infused with Russian elements—musical and narrative—and are ample evidence of his position as the father of the Russian nationalist school.

Scion of a distinguished and wealthy family, Glinka received a musical education along with a thorough general education that was intended to lead him into the Russian governmental bureaucracy. A good job in the Board of Communication ultimately was pushed into the background by ever-increasing musical activities. By 1834, he came under the literary influence of Russian nationalism, and his opera, *A Life for the Tsar,* was the perfect vehicle for the official state dogma exalting the tsar, the Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian ethnicity. Glinka's talents shone brightly in the work, especially his gift for scintillating orchestration. *A Life for the Tsar* was a great success, and paved the way for his treatment of Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila*. Pushkin was not able to collaborate with the composer, owing to the poet's death in an ill-advised duel, but, Glinka worked with others, and the fantastic tale of magic, sorcerers, and the supernatural became his second opera. In it, a tradition that leads right through Rimsky-Korsakov and on to Stravinsky was born: innovative harmonies and scales, supernatural tales, brilliant orchestration—all in the service of dramatic music. Unfortunately, the opera was not a great success, but the overture did survive and became a worthy chestnut of the orchestral literature.

Cast in the familiar sonata form, it opens with a driving frenzy in the strings serving as the first theme, with the usual broad, lyrical contrasting theme following shortly in the lower strings. Snatches of the tune are developed in an atmosphere that evokes a bit of the mysterious, magical elements of the opera. A loud, descending, whole tone scale in the low brass evokes the opera's evil sorcerer, as this brilliant curtain raiser careens to a rousing conclusion.

—William E. Runyan



MODEST MUSSORGSKY

Born March 21, 1839 in Karevo, Russia.
Died March 28, 1881 in St. Petersburg, Russia

St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain (original version)

Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* is most famous in its Disney rendition, which accompanies the hallucinatory cartoon *Fantasia.* Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's revision of Mussorgsky's score is the version most commonly presented in concert settings. The original version presents Mussorgsky's own orchestration—violent and unflinching, savage to the end. To strip away Rimsky's layers of polish turns the tone poem Technicolor.

An alcoholic who died at 42, Mussorgsky published very little. If not for his colleague and former roommate Rimsky-Korsakov, who "corrected" his work before its posthumous publication, Mussorgsky might have faded into obscurity. His most famous work, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, was probably never performed publicly during his lifetime. Maurice Ravel, whose orchestration is used in most performances and recordings, never even saw Mussorgsky's original score; Ravel worked from Rimsky's heavily revised version.

Mussorgsky revised his *Ivanova noch' na Lïsoy gore* ("St. John's Night on Bald Mountain") several times, but he never got to hear it performed (except by himself, at the piano). Widely known as *Night on Bald Mountain* in English, the first version, for piano, was completed on St. John's Eve, June 23, 1867. In 1872, when he revised the score, he added a chorus; later that year he worked it into an opera. Five years after Mussorgsky's death, Rimsky led the Russian Symphony Society in the St. Petersburg premiere, but the version he conducted, much like his edition of Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, was substantially different from its original. He cut out at least two minutes' worth of music and gave it a completely new ending: a kinder, gentler one. Mussorgsky's own orchestration wasn't published until 1968. Although listeners remain more familiar with the Rimsky re-write, Mussorgsky's meaner, leaner, less compromising score is a revelation. Mussorgsky based his tone poem on the witches' sabbath of St. John's Eve (June 23 to June 24), a well-known legend in Russia and many other countries. Although the details vary somewhat, there is usually a barren and isolated mountain top, where demons, witches, sorcerers, and malevolent spirits celebrate the holiday in a splendor of debauchery.

Mussorgsky's own program is terse but vivid: "[1] An underground noise of inhuman voices. Appearance of the Spirits of Darkness followed by appearance of Satan and [2] his adoration. [3] A Black Mass. [4] Joyful dancing of the Witches' Sabbath. All of which is ended by the ringing of a church bell and the appearance of dawn."

—René Spencer Saller



STEPHEN ALLTOP *(continued from page 17)*

and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Busan, South Korea for the International Schools Choral Music Society. He has conducted opera and orchestral concerts with a number of Italian orchestras, including I Soloisti di Perugia, Fondazione Arturo Toscanini (Bologna), Teatro Reggio Orchestra (Parma), Festival Mozart (Roverto), Orchestra Sinfonica (Bari), Teatro Piccinni (Bari), and the Festival Duni (Matera). His performances have been broadcast on Medici TV, RAI Italian Radio and Television, and the WFMT Fine Arts Network. Dr. Alltop has worked closely with leading composers of the day, including residency projects with Stacy Garrop, John Corigliano, Jeff Beal, Eleanor Daley, Stephen Paulus and Eric Whitacre, and has conducted world premieres of works by John Luther Adams, Jan Bach, Frank Ferko, Stephen Paulus, Joseph Schwantner, Alan Terricciano, and others.

Dr. Alltop lectures frequently for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Northwestern University Alumnae Continuing Education Series, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and other organizations. Since 2014, he has given presentations on leadership for various programs in the Kellogg School of Business.

Stephen is an avid squash player and baseball fan, and recently completed a personal fitness goal of running ten marathons and twenty half marathons over a ten-year period.



IGOR STRAVINSKY

Born June 17, 1882 in Oranienbaum, Russia.
Died April 6, 1971, in New York City.

The Rite of Spring

Composed in 1910-1913; revised in 1921 and 1943.
Premiered on May 29, 1913 in Paris, conducted by Pierre Monteux.

Stravinsky's conception for *The Rite of Spring*, one of the most influential musical works of the 20th century, came to him as he was finishing *The Firebird* in 1910. He had a vision of "a solemn pagan rite; wise elders, seated in a circle, watching a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring." Stravinsky knew that Nicholas Roerich, a friend who was an archeologist and an authority on the ancient Slavs, would be interested in his idea, and he mentioned it to him. Stravinsky also shared the vision with Serge Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballet Russe, the company that had commissioned *The Firebird*. All three men were excited by the possibilities of the project — Diaghilev promised a production and encouraged Stravinsky to begin work immediately. Having just nearly exhausted himself with the rigors of completing and staging *The Firebird*, however, Stravinsky decided to compose a Konzertstück for piano and orchestra as a change of pace before undertaking his pagan ballet. This little "concert piece," however, grew into the ballet *Petrushka*, and he could not return to *The Rite* until the summer of 1911.

"What I was trying to convey in *The Rite*," said Stravinsky, "was the surge of spring, the magnificent upsurge of nature reborn." Inspired by childhood

(continued on page 26)

memories of the coming of spring to Russia ("which seemed to begin in an hour and was like the whole earth cracking," he remembered), he worked with Roerich to devise a libretto that would, in Roerich's words, "present a number of scenes of earthly joy and celestial triumph as understood by the ancient Slavs." Stravinsky labored feverishly on the score through the winter of 1911-1912, realizing by that time that he was composing an important piece in a startling new style. "I was guided by no system whatever in *The Rite of Spring*," he wrote. "Very little immediate tradition lies behind it. [Debussy was the only influence he admitted.] I had only my ear to help me. I heard, and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which *The Rite* passed."

Diaghilev scheduled the premiere for May 1913, and Nijinsky was chosen to do the choreography. Stravinsky, however, objected to Nijinsky's selection because of the dancer's inexperience as a choreographer and his lack of understanding of the technical aspects of the music, but preparations were begun and continued through more than 120 rehearsals. Conductor Pierre Monteux drilled the orchestra to the point of anxious readiness. The guests invited to the final dress rehearsal seemed to appreciate the striking modernity of the work, but gave no hint of the donnybrook that was to roar through the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées at the public premiere on May 29th, driven in equal parts by the iconoclastic angular choreography and the revolutionary music.

Almost as soon as the curtain rose, a riot broke out the like of which had not been inspired by a piece of music since Nero's song of antiquity. Shouts, catcalls, whistles, even fisticuffs grew so menacing that often the orchestra could not be heard. Diaghilev flashed the house lights on and off in a vain attempt to restore order; Nijinsky, when he was not on stage, pounded wildly on the scenery with his fists to keep the dancers together; Stravinsky ran out of the auditorium ("as angry as I have ever been in my life") and spent most of the evening backstage pacing in the wings. Somehow Monteux ("cool as a crocodile," recalled Stravinsky) guided the performance through to the end. Giacomo Puccini, who attended the second performance, on June 2nd, thought *The Rite* "might be the creation of a madman"; a critic for the New York Sun nominated the composer as "the cave man of music." No one could deny, however, the ferocious, overwhelming power of the music, and when audiences began to listen to the work on its own, revolutionary terms, they could not help but be swept away by its awesome, exquisitely executed orchestral world. Within a year of its stage premiere, Koussevitzky in Russia and Monteux in Paris had conducted concert performances of *The Rite*, and the value of the work began to be recognized. A somewhat edited version of the score in

Disney's animated cartoon movie of 1938, *Fantasia*, brought the piece to a wide audience, and its position in the orchestral repertory was soon secured.

The following summary of the stage action of *The Rite of Spring* is excerpted from *The Victor Book of Ballet* by Robert Lawrence: "The plot deals with archaic Russian tribes and their worship of the gods of the harvest and fertility. These primitive peoples assemble for their yearly ceremonies, play their traditional games, and finally select a virgin to be sacrificed to the gods of Spring so that the crops and tribes may flourish. There is a prelude in which the composer evokes the primitive past. Insistent, barbaric rhythms are heard, shifting accent with almost every bar. The first rites of Spring are being celebrated, and a group of adolescents appears. They dance until other members of the tribe enter. Then the full round of ceremonies gets under way: a mock abduction, games of the rival tribes, the procession of the Sage, and the thunderous dance of the Earth. The curtain falls, and there is a soft interlude representing the pagan night. Soon the tribal meeting place is seen again. It is dark and the adolescents circle mysteriously in preparation for the choice of the virgin to be sacrificed to the gods. Their dance is interrupted, and one of the girls is marked for the tribal offering. The others begin a wild orgy glorifying the Chosen One and — in a barbaric ritual — call on the shades of their ancestors. Finally the supreme moment of the ceremony arrives: the ordeal of the Chosen One. It is the maiden's duty to dance until she perishes from exhaustion. Throughout the dance, the music gathers power until it ends with a crash as the Maiden dies."

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CUSO YOUTH CONCERTS



"Carnival of the Animals"

Tuesday, April 22, 2025 | 10:00 am
Wednesday, April 23, 2025 | 10:00 am

The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra annual Youth Concerts at Krannert Center bring the magic of live music to thousands of school children each year. Educators and students in grades 3–6 are invited to join Maestro Stephen Alltop and CUSO for an interactive, educational concert in the Foellinger Great Hall at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

From fish to fossils, donkeys to kangaroos, *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns turns the orchestra into a marvelous zoo! Enjoy this humorous musical suite and the fun ways these many creatures come to life in orchestral instruments. Each concert is 45 minutes.

ADMISSION: FREE, Advance Registration Required

For program information, the Educator's Guide, and the registration link, visit CUSO's website at www.cusymphony.org. The Youth Concerts are funded by CUSO and presented free of charge as part of the Krannert Center Youth Series. To register for the free concert, educators must complete the online ticket form at **krannertcenter.com.**

The CUSO Youth Concerts are presented in partnership with Krannert Center for the Performing Arts with funding from the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra,the Guild of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, the CUSO Youth Music Appreciation Endowment Fund, the Robeson Family Benefit Fund, The Meredith Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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