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MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

Eduardo Gutterres (BM '23), guitar

Winner of the 2021–22 Eisenberg-Fried Competition

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2022 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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PROGRAM

IGOR STRAVINSKY
(1882–1971)

Song of the Nightingale

MARIO
CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO
(1895–1968)

Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 99
Allegretto
Andantino. Alla romanza
Ritmico e cavalleresco

Intermission

CARLOS SIMON

John Henry from *Tales: a folklore
symphony for orchestra*

RICHARD STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks

MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

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concertmaster
Guangzhou, China

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Rye Brook, New York

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New York, New York

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Song of the Nightingale

Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 99

John Henry from Tales: a folklore symphony

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks

PROGRAM NOTES

Song of the Nightingale Igor Stravinsky

The thought of extracting a symphonic poem from his opera *The Nightingale* occurred to Stravinsky soon after the opera was performed in 1914. He realized that an orchestral work, derived from just the last two acts, would have the homogeneity in style that the opera had lacked. There had been a great gap between his completion of the first act in 1909 and resumption of work on the opera in 1914 when the Free Theater of Moscow had asked him to complete it. (The Free Theater went bankrupt, so it was actually the Paris Opera that produced the opera the following season.) Stravinsky's musical style had changed almost beyond recognition—*Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* had intervened, after all. But the composer felt the contrast would be justified dramatically by the naive vision of the nightingale and the fisherman in the open-air setting of the first act against the subsequent action amid the sophisticated surroundings of the Chinese court.

The symphonic poem—first proposed by Diaghilev as a ballet with the singers in the pit with the orchestra, but modified by Stravinsky—was not actually completed until April 4, 1917. It was finally premiered on December 6, 1919, in Geneva with Ernest Ansermet conducting the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. The audience's reaction was violent on that occasion, much like the infamous reception of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1913. (*The Rite of Spring* had not yet been performed in Switzerland.) Shortly thereafter, on February 2, 1920, *Song of the Nightingale* was premiered as a ballet at the Paris Opera, with scenery and costumes by Matisse, choreography by Massine, and Karsavina in the title role.

The dramatic basis of *Song of the Nightingale* is the beloved fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen. The opening presto describes the Emperor's palace. ("The walls and flooring, which were of porcelain, gleamed in the rays of thousands of golden lamps. The most glorious flowers, which could ring clearly, had been placed in the passages. There was a running to and from and a through draft, so that all the bells rang loudly"—Andersen.) Here and in several other scenes Stravinsky used elements of a pentatonic (five-note) scale—especially the characteristic lack of half steps—to evoke the exotic Chinese atmosphere.

Following the Chinese March, which accompanies the entrance of the Emperor under his baldachin (ceremonial canopy), the song of the nightingale is heard beginning with a flute cadenza (later solo violin). The presto then returns in varied form for reasons of formal balance. A mechanical nightingale, a gift

from the Emperor of Japan, begins its stiff song (oboe) to the accompaniment of a drone bass and whirring figure in the harp. The Emperor discovers in a tempestuous passage that the offended live nightingale has flown, banishes it forever, and marches out with his entourage. The “act” closes with the only remnant of the opera’s first act, the song of the fisherman (solo trumpet), who has recovered his lost friend, the nightingale.

The ensuing solemn music portrays the Emperor lying mortally ill in his chamber. The song of the mechanical nightingale is of no help, but the live bird returns, thwarting death. The courtiers enter to a grotesque sort of funeral march, expecting to find the Emperor dead. Instead he cheerfully greets them, “*Bonjour à tous*” (two harps in octaves, timpani). The symphonic poem ends with the song of the fisherman (trumpet), again rejoined by the nightingale.

The rich, yet often chamber-orchestral scoring of *Song of the Nightingale* makes it a truly virtuoso piece. According to the composer he “laid the stress on the concertante side, not only of the various solo instruments, but also gave this role to whole groups of instruments.” Because of this treatment he concluded—regretfully, since he was the composer of many works for the theater—that a perfect rendering could only be achieved in the concert hall where it could receive exclusive consideration.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

Guitar Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 99 **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco**

Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s talents as a composer and pianist blossomed early, and at age 13 he entered the Cherubini Conservatory in Florence. By 1910 he had already composed his first publishable piece for piano. Having attracted the attention of Alfredo Casella, who promoted his works in Italy and abroad, Castelnuovo-Tedesco rapidly rose to fame and spent the years between the World Wars as a freelance composer and pianist in Florence.

The anti-Semitic campaign in Italy forced him to flee with his family in 1939. After a year in Larchmont, New York, they settled in Beverly Hills, California, where he not only composed film scores and taught but continued to produce a steady stream of operatic, orchestral, choral, vocal, chamber, and piano works. Critics were especially harsh with Castelnuovo-Tedesco even by the 1930s, judging, perhaps unfairly, that he had not lived up to his initial promise. Over two hundred of this prolific composer’s works have been published, but full assessment cannot properly be made because many of his works—some that he considered his most significant—remain unpublished and unperformed.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's lifelong interest in Spanish music first surfaced in 1915 with his song cycle *Coplas*, Op. 7, based on popular Spanish poetry. His involvement with the guitar began at the International Festival in Venice in 1932 when Andrés Segovia solicited a work from him, resulting in his *Variations across the Centuries*, Op. 71. Spanish idioms naturally inhabit his works for guitar, notably his popular Guitar Concerto, Op. 99, and the Quintet for guitar and string quartet, Op. 143, works also written for Segovia.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco completed his Guitar Concerto No. 1 in January 1939, just months before leaving for New York before the outbreak of war. He dedicated the work to Segovia, with whom he had consulted closely on the first movement and who gave the premiere in Montevideo with Uruguay's national orchestra (Servicio Oficial de Difusión, Representaciones y Espectáculos or Sodre), led by Lamberto Baldi, on October 28, 1939.

Like other composers for the guitar—such as Rodrigo, who wrote his famous *Concierto de Aranjuez* the same year—Castelnuovo-Tedesco strove to balance the orchestra with the characteristically quieter sound of the guitar, aiming, he said, “to give more the appearance and the color of the orchestra than the weight.” Segovia later endorsed Castelnuovo-Tedesco's success in that regard.

Often considered his finest Neoclassical work, the Guitar Concerto opens with a cheerful theme in regular four-bar phrases with slightly piquant inflections that remove it from the Mozartean realm. The guitar's rendition of the theme soon cascades into the second theme with its cheeky opening and more pensive continuation. The brief development and recapitulation culminate in an elaborate cadenza and tossed-off ending.

The *Andantino alla romanza* features a poignant guitar melody, which gives rise to some lovely give-and-take between clarinet and flute. Segovia described this movement, which Castelnuovo-Tedesco drew inspiration for from three Italian folk tunes, as “a tender farewell to the hills of Tuscany which he was about to leave.”

After the ethereal ending of the slow movement, the finale provides supreme contrast with its jaunty opening theme marked “*ritmico e cavalleresco*” (rhythmic and chivalrous). Here Castelnuovo-Tedesco has clearly left Italy for Spain. Following a contrasting middle section—sometimes quietly restless and at others chordally forthright—the composer gives the guitar a brilliant wide-ranging cadenza before returning to the opening high spirits.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

John Henry from Tales: a folklore symphony for orchestra **Carlos Simon**

The story of John Henry is traditionally told through the work song, each with wide-ranging and varying lyrics. The well-known narrative ballad of *John Henry* is essentially the battle between man versus machine. Enslaved/prisoners would usually sing the story more slowly and deliberately, often with a pulsating beat suggestive of swinging the hammer. These songs usually contain the lines “This old hammer killed John Henry / but it won’t kill me.”

Writer Scott Nelson explains that

workers managed their labor by setting a ‘stint’, or pace, for it. Men who violated the stint were shunned.... Here was a song that told you what happened to men who worked too fast: they died ugly deaths; their entrails fell on the ground. You sang the song slowly, you worked slowly, you guarded your life, or you died.

—Carlos Simon

Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks, Op. 28 **Richard Strauss**

The Till Eulenspiegel of folk legend is based on a supposedly real fourteenth-century character. The tales of his roguery multiplied through the centuries, all centered on his practical jokes and wit. His exploits were first published anonymously in 1515 as *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dyl Eulenspiegel geboren uss dem land zu Brunsswick* (*A short reading of Till Eulenspiegel, born of the land of Brunswick*), which was soon translated into many languages. Strauss was familiar with the Till character from childhood and was something of a prankster himself—he jokingly called himself Till on occasion. He may have been inspired by Belgian writer Charles de Coster’s nineteenth-century version of the story, *Légende de Thyl Uylenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak*, and even began sketching a libretto for an opera based on Till. At some point, however, he abandoned the project for an orchestral tone poem.

Strauss worked on *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (*Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks*) during the winter of 1894–95, completing the score on May 6, 1895. The work was first performed in Frankfurt in September 1895 and in Cologne in November. At the time of the Cologne performance, the composer provided a program note at conductor Franz Wüllner’s request:

It is impossible for me to furnish a program for Eulenspiegel; were I to put into words the thoughts which its several incidents suggest to me, they

would often make a quite strange impression and might even give rise to offense. Let us leave it, therefore, to our hearers to crack the nut which the rogue presents to them.

By way of helping them to a better understanding it seems sufficient to point out two Eulenspiegel motives:



and:



[*The motive actually has a C# between this C and the F. Strauss curiously omitted it in his letter to Wüllner.]

which in the most manifold disguises, moods, and situations, pervade the whole up to the catastrophe when Till is strung up on the gibbet after the sentence:



[Death] has been pronounced upon him. For the rest let the merry citizens of Cologne guess at the musical pranks that a rogue has played on them.

The complete title of the work, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, after Old-Time Roguish Fashion, in Rondeau Form*, suggests the form of the work, yet Strauss's handling of the rondo form, in which Till's adventures ingeniously form the episodes between refrains, is as freely adapted as sonata form had been in his earlier tone poems. The two Till motives recur often—almost to the point of saturation—and in clever variants.

Although Strauss would not provide a program for *Till*, he apparently gave composer-critic Wilhelm Mauke information for the latter's analysis of the work and sanctioned Wilhelm Klatte's guide. Strauss also wrote pertinent descriptions into the score at appropriate places, beginning with "once upon a time there was a clowning rogue." He penned the words ". . . whose name was Till Eulenspiegel!"

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

George Manahan is in his 12th season as Director of Orchestral Activities at Manhattan School of Music, as well as Music Director Emeritus of the American Composers Orchestra. He served as Music Director of the New York City Opera for 14 seasons and was hailed for his leadership of the orchestra. He was also Music Director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for 12 seasons. Recipient of Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award, Mr. Manahan was also honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his "career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time." His Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* was hailed by audiences and critics alike. "The fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have ever encountered," said the *New York Times*.

Mr. Manahan's guest appearances include the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Atlanta, San Francisco, Hollywood Bowl, and New Jersey, where he served as acting Music Director for four seasons. He has been a regular guest with the Curtis Institute and the Aspen Music Festival and has appeared with the opera companies of Seattle, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe, Paris, Sydney, Bologna, St. Louis, the Bergen Festival (Norway), and the Casals Festival (Puerto Rico). His many appearances on television include productions of *La bohème*, *Lizzie Borden*, and *Tosca* on PBS. The Live from Lincoln Center telecast of New York City Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly*, under his direction, won a 2007 Emmy Award.

George Manahan's wide-ranging recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Tebillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas's *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson's *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*. He has conducted numerous world premieres, including Charles Wuorinen's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, David Lang's *Modern Painters*, Hans Werner Henze's *The English Cat*, Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, and Terence Blanchard's *Champion*.

He received his formal musical training at Manhattan School of Music, studying conducting with Anton Coppola and George Schick, and was appointed to the faculty of the school upon his graduation, at which time the Juilliard School awarded him a fellowship as Assistant Conductor with the American Opera Center. Mr. Manahan was chosen as the Exxon Arts Endowment Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony the same year he made his opera debut with the Santa Fe Opera, conducting the American premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*.

Eduardo Gutterres (BM '23), guitar

Eduardo Gutterres, a student of Mark Delpriora at Manhattan School of Music, was the winner of the 2021–22 Eisenberg–Fried Competition.

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Manhattan School of Music's Centennial Project was an ambitious program of improvements to the School's architecturally distinguished campus coinciding with MSM's 100th anniversary. The centerpiece of the Project was the renovation of Neidorff-Karpati Hall, MSM's principal performance space, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art venue to showcase our talented students. Built in 1931 and designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building, the hall has been called "one of the Art Deco treats in the city" by the *New York Times*. The Project also included a dramatic and welcoming new campus entrance on Claremont Avenue, new practice rooms, and an expansion of the main entryway and lobby.

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The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a highly competitive and professionally oriented Saturday music program, dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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