

MManhattan School of Music

ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

OPUS130

Leonard Slatkin (HonDMA '13), Conductor

Distinguished Visiting Artist in Conducting and Orchestral Studies

Featuring Orchestral Performance Program faculty members

David Chan, Concertmaster, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Head of the Orchestral Performance Program

Alan Stepansky, former Associate Principal Cello,

New York Philharmonic

Shmuel Katz, Associate Principal Viola,

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Kim Laskowski, former Associate Principal Bassoon,

New York Philharmonic

Javier Gándara, Horn, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Kyle Turner, Principal Tuba, American Symphony Orchestra,

Orchestra of St. Luke's

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL



Council on the Arts

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We are grateful to the generous donors who made these annual and endowed scholarships possible.

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Kyle Turner, tuba

PROGRAM

ROBERTO SIERRA
(b. 1953)

Fandangos

IGOR STRAVINSKY
(1882–1971)

The Firebird Suite (1919)

Intermission

EDWARD ELGAR
(1857–1934)

Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36 (“*Enigma*”)

Theme. Andante

Variation I. Andante (C.A.E.)

Variation II. Allegro (H.D.S.-P.)

Variation III. Allegretto (R.B.T.)

Variation IV. Allegro di molto (W.M.B.)

Variation V. Moderato (R.P.A.)

Variation VI. Andantino (Ysobel)

Variation VII. Presto (Troyte)

Variation VIII. Allegretto (W.N.)

Variation IX. Adagio (Nimrod)

Variation X. Intermezzo: Allegretto (Dorabella)

Variation XI. Allegro di molto (G.R.S.)

Variation XII. Andante (B.G.N.)

Variation XIII. Romanza: Moderato (***)

Variation XIV. Allegro (E.D.U.)

OPUS130

Leonard Slatkin (HonDMA '13), Conductor

VIOLIN 1

David Chan,
concertmaster
OP Faculty Member

Coco Sun
New York, New York

Naru Watanabe
Ube, Japan

Haegge Chung
New York, New York

Javed Wong
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Selin Algoz
New York, New York

Andy Caveda
Miami, Florida

Corinne Au
Short Hills, New Jersey

Po Hsuan Chiang
New Taipei City, Taiwan

Hao-Ning Hsu
Taiwan, Taiwan

Hao Yuan
Hamburg, Germany

Nini Giorgadze
Kutaisi, Georgia

Yulin Zhou
Guangzhou, China

Maïthéna Girault
Montreal, Canada

VIOLIN 2

Eugenia Cho, principal
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Jihyun Baik
Gwacheon, South Korea

Christophe Koenig
East Aurora, New York

Minjoo Moon
Gwangju, South Korea

Yeonsoo Jung
Queens, New York

Yen-Chih Lin
Taichung City, Taiwan

Licheng Chen
Bondi Junction, Australia

Alina Hernandez
Temecula, California

Hana Mundiya
New York, New York

Xuan Yao
Changsha, China

Jimi Kim
Seoul, South Korea

Eugene Liu
Clarksville, Maryland

VIOLA

Kunbo Xu, principal
Changsha, China

Se Lyin Hong
New York, New York

Linnea Marchie
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Jack Rittendale
New York, New York

Shmuel Katz
OP Faculty Member

Owne Xayboury
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Ella Bukszpan
New York, New York

Yat Lee
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Maria Paporoni
Mérida, Venezuela

CELLO

Alan Stepanky,
principal
OP Faculty Member

Rahel Lulseged
Richardson, Texas

Jiho Seo
Yongsan, South Korea

Zoe Hardel
Yarmouth, Maine

Chase Park
*Englewood Cliffs,
New Jersey*

Sam Chung
New York, New York

Alex Lavine
Greenville, North Carolina

Mei-Chi Wang
Taichung City, Taiwan

Wangshu Xiang
Shenzhen, China

Natalie Lin
San Ramon, California

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Bakari Williams,
principal
Oak Cliff, Texas

Antonio Suarez
Yonkers, New York

Parry Leong
McKinney, Texas

Lauren Seery
Bethpage, New York

Jielin Lei
Xiamen, China

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* SIERRA

STRAVINSKY

† ELGAR

*Fandangos**The Firebird Suite (1919)**Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36 ("Enigma")*

PROGRAM NOTES

Fandangos

Roberto Sierra

In 1987 Roberto Sierra came to international attention with the Carnegie Hall performance of his *Júbilo* by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Since then his works have been commissioned and performed by major orchestras across the United States and abroad, from the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich. Equally at home in chamber music genres, Sierra has composed for such renowned groups as the Kronos and St. Lawrence Quartets, Continuum, and Opus One.

Sierra has served as composer-in-residence with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the symphony orchestras of Milwaukee, Puerto Rico, and New Mexico. Professor of composition at Cornell University since 1992, Sierra himself studied at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, the University of Puerto Rico, London's Royal College of Music, Utrecht's Institute for Sonology, and the Hamburg Hochschule für Musik as a student of the renowned György Ligeti.

Among Sierra's recent projects, his *Salseando*, premiered in 2020 with solo trumpet Pacho Flores and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (RLPO) conducted by Domingo Hindoyan, was such a success that the RLPO and Hindoyan premiered his Sinfonia No. 6 to open their 2021–22 season. Also in 2021 Sierra's *Sonata para guitarra* won the Latin Grammy for best contemporary composition. More recently, his electric violin concerto, *Ficciones*, was premiered in February 2022 at New York's Rose Theater by renowned electric violinist Tracy Silverman and the American Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leon Botstein. The following May, Juliana Athayde and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra led by Andreas Delfs premiered his violin concerto, subtitled "a la memoria una niña valiente."

Sierra's music combines European modernist tendencies with Puerto Rican, Latin American, and African elements, a synthesis the composer describes as "tropicalization." His scores are also celebrated for their imaginative and percussion-filled orchestrations. A prime example of his "tropicalization," *Fandangos* was composed in 2000 for the National Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin, who premiered it the following year. Further, the piece was performed on the inaugural concert of the 2002 world-renowned Proms in London by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and broadcast throughout the UK and Europe.

Fandangos does for the fandango what Ravel's *Bolero* did for the bolero—epitomize the dance form in a riveting display piece for the orchestra. “There are two prevailing theories about the origins of the fandango,” Sierra writes. “One places it in the Iberian Peninsula, while the other points to the New World, the West Indies and Nueva España—modern México. Although during the eighteenth century the dance was considered to be too sensual, the fandango became very popular and many composers integrated it in their works.”

Sierra had long been fascinated, he said, by the “strange and whimsical twists and turns” of the celebrated, flamboyant keyboard *Fandango* of Antonio Soler (1729–1783). Taking this improvisatory-sounding masterpiece as his point of departure, he also incorporated elements of fandangos by Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805) and Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757).

“A basic D minor chord progression,” he writes, “can be heard through different transformations, from beginning to end, over a web of elaborated orchestration and highly virtuosic instrumental writing that brings the music of the eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries together. These transformations . . . amplify small motives and elaborate the musical fabric by varied repetition or dense superimpositions of melodic and rhythmic layers.” The kaleidoscopic refractions of Sierra’s imaginative orchestration have made this variation-fantasy among his most frequently performed works.

***The Firebird Suite* (1919)**

Igor Stravinsky

I had begun to think about *The Firebird* . . . in the fall of 1909, though I was not yet certain of the commission (which in fact did not come until December, more than a month after I had begun to compose; I remember the day Diaghilev telephoned me to say go ahead, and I recall his surprise when I said that I had already started). Early in November I moved from St. Petersburg to a *dacha* belonging to the Rimsky-Korsakov family. . . . I went there for a vacation in birch forests and snow-fresh air, but instead began to work on *The Firebird*. Andrei Rimsky-Korsakov [son of the composer] was with me at the time, as he often was during the following months; because of this, *The Firebird* is dedicated to him.

Completed in St. Petersburg in March 1910, *The Firebird*, which Stravinsky considered his first full-fledged work, was premiered by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in Paris on June 25, 1910. It marked the beginning of a long collaboration between the artists with far-reaching results for both. Stravinsky, twenty-eight years old, was relatively unknown outside Russia. “Mark him well,” said Diaghilev to Karsavina, who was dancing the title role, “he is a man on the eve of celebrity.” Not only did the production, choreographed by Michel Fokine and conducted

by Gabriel Pierné, make ballet history, but Stravinsky achieved international recognition overnight, fulfilling Diaghilev's prophecy.

The story was adapted by Fokine from Russian sources. Prince Ivan Tsarevich, wandering in an enchanted forest at night, spies a bird with plumes of fire eating golden fruit from a silver tree. After capturing the Firebird, he releases her upon receiving the gift of a glowing feather. Wandering further, he beholds thirteen dancing princesses, who are under the spell of the fearsome Kastchei, and falls in love with the thirteenth. As dawn approaches, the princesses must withdraw to Kastchei's castle. The Prince follows, only to be confronted by a horde of freakish monsters, then Kastchei himself. The Prince avoids being turned to stone by holding up the Firebird's feather. At the height of the fray the Firebird herself comes to his aid by causing the monsters to break into a frenzied dance. They seem to regain control (Infernal Dance) but collapse from exhaustion. The Firebird lulls them to sleep (Berceuse) and reveals Kastchei's secret: his immortality resides in an egg concealed in his castle. The Prince dashes the egg to the ground; Kastchei, the monsters, and his castle all disappear (omitted in the Suites); the princesses and previously petrified travelers are liberated; and Prince Ivan receives the hand of the beautiful thirteenth princess amid general rejoicing (Finale). (The egg does not figure in Balanchine's choreography; instead, the Prince kills Kastchei with a golden sword the Firebird gives him.)

In a manner similar to that of his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov in *The Golden Cockerel*, Stravinsky differentiated musically between the human and supernatural characters. The music for humans—Prince, Princesses, and characters in the finale—is all basically diatonic (within the scale), including the Russian folk melodies Stravinsky incorporated. The supernatural characters—Kastchei and the Firebird—are depicted by chromatic music (colored by notes outside the basic scale), based on the interval of a tritone.

“I was more proud of some of the orchestration than of the music itself,” Stravinsky recalled. Indeed his orchestration contains many brilliant effects, including horn and trombone glissandos (sliding between pitches), an effect borrowed from Rimsky-Korsakov, and “the natural-harmonic string glissando near the beginning, which the bass chord touches off like a Catherine-wheel [revolving firework]. I was delighted to have discovered this, and I remember my excitement in demonstrating it to Rimsky's violinist and cellist sons. I remember, too, Richard Strauss's astonishment when he heard it two years later in Berlin.”

Rhythmic ingenuities abound, including the syncopated bass of the Firebird's Dance under the fluttering woodwinds and the sustained insistent beat of the

Infernal Dance. Most notable to the composer himself, the finale shows “the first appearance in my music of metrical irregularity—the 7/4 bars subdivided into 1-2-3/1-2/1-2; 1-2/1-2/1-2-3 etc.”

Stravinsky was critical of *The Firebird* while composing it, and his own evaluation remained harsh, criticizing what he saw as a lack of counterpoint and melodic inventiveness and the use of a “wastefully large” orchestra. He made three concert suites from the ballet, in 1911, 1919, and 1945; the 1919 Suite (heard here) is the best known and most often performed.

Despite any self-induced embarrassment *The Firebird* may have caused the composer, audiences loved it from the outset, attracted by the romanticism of the tale and the expressiveness of the music. Though perhaps not Stravinsky’s most characteristic work, it identified him to much of the public, and he conducted it nearly a thousand times during his career. “To complete the picture, I was once addressed by a man in an American railway dining car, and quite seriously, as ‘Mr. Fireberg.’”

Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36 (“Enigma”) **Edward Elgar**

On October 24, 1898, Elgar wrote to his publisher and dear friend August Johannes Jaeger:

Since I’ve been back [from a visit to London] I have sketched a set of Variations (orkestry) on an original theme: the Variations have amused me because I’ve labelled ‘em with the nicknames of my particular friends—you are Nimrod. That is to say I’ve written the variations each one to represent the mood of the “party”—I’ve liked to imagine the “party” writing the var: him (or her) self & have written what I think they wd. have written—if they were asses enough to compose—it’s a quaint idee & the result is amusing to those behind the scenes & won’t affect the hearer who “nose nuffin.” What think you?

The work became known as the *Enigma* Variations, not in regard to the identity of the musical portraits but owing to something deeper, which the composer mentioned in a program note for the first performance:

The Enigma I will not explain—its “dark saying” must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connection between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through, and over the whole set another and larger theme “goes,” but is not played.

This suggests a two-fold enigma: the “dark saying” and the larger unplayed theme. Most musical detectives have concentrated on the latter, proposing such solutions as “God Save the King,” “Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay,” the slow movement of Mozart’s *Prague* Symphony, the note equivalents of B–A–C–H, the phrase “never, never, never” from “Rule Britannia,” and an altered version of “Twinkle,

Twinkle, Little Star.” The “dark saying” has been seen as a reference to “For now we see through a glass darkly” (Corinthians I). The enigmas may never be solved, but this has only added to the attraction of the work, which shines brightly on its own musical merits.

The first performance took place in London on June 19, 1899, led by the great German conductor Hans Richter. The *Enigma* Variations catapulted Elgar from a little-known composer of choral pieces to a national treasure of the stature of Purcell and into the international spotlight.

Although Elgar disguised the identities of his musical portraits by using initials or pseudonyms, the names were revealed long ago, the composer having made no attempt to keep them secret. The following brief description of the Variations refers to the initials printed for each movement on the program page. The quoted comments are the composer’s.

Theme. Stated in contrasting G minor and G major sections.

I. C.A.E. is Elgar’s wife. The variation includes Elgar’s special whistle (letting Alice know he was home) in oboe and bassoon.

II. Hew David Steuart-Powell played chamber music with Elgar; his finger warm-ups on the keyboard are mimicked.

III. Richard Baxter Townshend, an amateur actor, portrayed an old man with fluctuating voice: falsetto = upper woodwinds, low bass = bassoons.

IV. William M. Baker, the country squire, “energetic and downright,” would often bang the door when leaving the room.

V. Richard P. Arnold (son of Matthew) is portrayed, “whose serious conversation (C minor, in bass) was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks (flute).”

VI. Isabel Fitton’s viola lessons with Elgar are depicted.

VII. The architect who built Elgar’s house, Arthur Troyte Griffith, failed in his “maladroit essays to play the pianoforte.” Elgar’s attempts to make order out of chaos (strong rhythms) end in vain (final despairing “slam”).

VIII. Winifred Norbury’s tranquil eighteenth-century house once sheltered “Troyte” and Elgar in a storm.

IX. One of the most famous and moving of the variations, “Nimrod” nobly portrays Elgar’s friend Jaeger, recalling a conversation between the two concerning Beethoven’s slow movements. *Jaeger* is German for hunter, and Nimrod, Noah’s great grandson, was a mighty hunter.

X. Dory Penny's nickname was Dorabella (from *Così fan tutte*); her stammer as well as her gracefulness are evoked.

XI. George R. Sinclair's bulldog Dan rolls down a bank, falls in the river, paddles, scrambles out, and barks.

XII. Basil Nevinson played chamber music with Elgar on the cello.

XIII. Lady Mary Lygon took a voyage to Australia, so Elgar quotes Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. We can perhaps hear steamship engines in the timpani rolls played with snare drum sticks. Though the variation was inspired by Elgar's innocent friendship with Lygon and regret over her departure, the music gained an intimacy of its own, losing concrete connection with Lady Lygon. Hence Elgar replaced the initials with asterisks.

XIV. Edu was his wife's pet name for Elgar himself. The C.A.E. and Nimrod variations are recalled, referring to the most important influences on his life. The work is summed up by a triumphal presentation of the theme in the major.

—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Leonard Slatkin (HonDMA '13), Conductor

Internationally acclaimed conductor Leonard Slatkin is Music Director Laureate of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO), Directeur Musical Honoraire of the Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL), Conductor Laureate of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO), and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria (OFGC). He maintains a rigorous schedule of guest conducting throughout the world and is active as a composer, author, and educator.

Slatkin, Manhattan School of Music's Distinguished Visiting Artist in Conducting and Orchestral Activities and a member of the School's Board of Trustees and Artistic Advisory Council, has received six Grammy awards and 35 nominations. His latest recordings are Jeff Beal's *The Paper Lined Shack* on Supertrain Records and *Slatkin Conducts Slatkin*, a compilation of pieces written by generations of his musical family, including three of his own compositions, on Naxos Records. Naxos has also recently remastered and reissued audiophile editions of his recordings of Gershwin's and Rachmaninov's orchestral works (with the SLSO) for Vox. Other recent Naxos releases include works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel, and Berlioz (with the ONL) and music by Copland, Rachmaninov, Borzova, McTee, and John Williams (with the DSO). In addition, he has recorded the complete Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky symphonies with the DSO (available online as digital downloads).

The 2023–24 season includes engagements with the Oregon Symphony, Orquesta de València, Orquesta Sinfónica de Radio Televisión Española, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland), ONL, SLSO, Manhattan School of Music Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Mellon University Philharmonic, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra, OFGC, Prague Symphony Orchestra, and Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa.

A recipient of the prestigious National Medal of Arts, Slatkin also holds the rank of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. He has received the Prix Charbonnier from the Federation of Alliances Françaises, Austria's Decoration of Honor in Silver, the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton Award, and the 2013 ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Recognition Award for his debut book, *Conducting Business*. His second book, *Leading Tones: Reflections on Music, Musicians, and the Music Industry* (2017), was published by Amadeus Press,

followed by *Classical Crossroads: The Path Forward for Music in the 21st Century* (2021). Two volumes of essays that supplement the score-study process, in a new series entitled *Scores to Settle*, are scheduled for release by Rowman & Littlefield in 2024. He is also working on several new compositions.

Slatkin has conducted virtually all the leading orchestras in the world. As Music Director, he has held posts in New Orleans; St. Louis; Washington, D.C.; London (with the BBC Symphony Orchestra); Detroit; and Lyon, France. He has also served as Principal Guest Conductor in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Cleveland.

For more information, visit leonardslatkin.com.

David Chan, Concertmaster

Known as one of the most accomplished violinists of his generation, David Chan, Head of Manhattan School of Music's Orchestral Performance Program, is also quickly making a name for himself as an elegant conductor of unusual interpretive depth. *New York Classical Review* wrote of a March 2019 performance of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 that "It sounded like a kinder, gentler Toscanini was running the show." Currently in his 24th season as concertmaster of New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, he has also recently served as Music Director of the APEX Ensemble, with which he earned high praise for innovative and adventurous programming, and as Music Director of Camerata Notturna, one of New York City's foremost chamber orchestras. As Artistic Partner of Mainly Mozart's Festival of Orchestras, he has conducted the organization's famed All-Star Orchestra, as well as an entire festival combining musicians of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony, and another series bringing together members of the MET Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Increasingly in demand on the podium, Chan has had engagements in recent seasons with Belgium's l'Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and l'Orchestre Dijon Bourgogne in France; the Grant Park and Classical Tahoe summer festivals; the Juilliard Orchestra in New York City; the Apollo Orchestra in Washington, D.C.; and at Musique et Vin au Clos Vougeot, where the festival orchestra comprises musicians from the Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, and all of the top orchestras in Paris. As a soloist, he has appeared under the baton of such conductors as James Levine and Fabio Luisi, with orchestras including the MET Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, and Moscow State

Symphony. He is also a dedicated chamber musician who performs regularly in the New York area and at all the leading summer festivals.

In addition to his concert appearances, Chan is active as an entrepreneur and creative director. In 2008, combining his interest in wine with his passion for music, he cofounded the *Musique et Vin au Clos Vougeot* festival in the Burgundy region of France. During his 13 seasons as artistic director of the festival, which pairs wine tastings with music, he oversaw its growth from a small, intimate gathering to a destination event attracting many of the biggest names in classical music, including Yo-Yo Ma, Joyce DiDonato, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Matthew Polenzani, Emmanuel Pahud, Menahem Pressler, Cho-Liang Lin, Gary Hoffman, Marlis Petersen, and Ildar Abdrazakov.

A native of San Diego, Chan began his musical education at the age of four. After winning prizes at the Tchaikovsky and Indianapolis international violin competitions, he made his New York debut in 1995 at Avery Fisher Hall, and his Carnegie Hall debut in 2003, performing the Brahms Double Concerto with the MET Orchestra. A student of Dorothy DeLay, Hyo Kang, and Michael Tseitlin, he received his Bachelor's degree from Harvard University and his Master's degree from the Juilliard School. Appointed Head of MSM's Orchestral Performance Program in 2022, he is also on the faculty of Juilliard. He lives in the New York City area with his wife, violinist Catherine Ro, and their children.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

Inaugurated in 1991, MSM's Graduate Program in Orchestral Performance was the first accredited degree program of its kind in the United States. Led by David Chan, the program produces polished musicians of the highest artistic caliber, who are prepared intensively in the orchestral repertoire for careers as symphonic players. Orchestral Performance students receive individual instruction from some of the leading players on the classical scene. The program incorporates curricula specifically designed to train the exceptional, advanced student in both performance and nonmusical aspects of life in the modern orchestra, such as orchestra governance, artistic planning, community engagement, and audience development.

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Lisa Kim, Assistant Principal Second Violin, New York Philharmonic

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Qiang Tu, Cello, New York Philharmonic

BASS

Timothy Cobb, Principal Bass, New York Philharmonic

Orin O'Brien, former Bass, New York Philharmonic

FLUTE

Robert Langevin, Principal Flute, New York Philharmonic

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