The Juilliard School

presents

Juilliard Orchestra

Ken-David Masur, Conductor Blaire Kim, Violin

TŌRU TAKEMITSU (1930-96) Star-Isle (1982)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904) Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53 (1880)

Allegro, ma non troppo Adagio, ma non troppo

Finale: Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo

BLAIRE KIM, Violin

Intermission

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-93) Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 (1878)

Andantino in modo di canzona Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, including an intermission

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About the Program

By Carys Sutherland

Star-Isle TŌRU TAKEMITSU

Born: October 8, 1930, in Tokyo Died: February 20, 1996, in Tokyo

Star Trek made famous the idea of space as the final frontier, but in many ways, it's always been the first. It's recently been proposed that some prehistoric cave paintings previously thought to be of animals are actually depictions of the night sky. Composers have sought to encapsulate the wonder of the heavens for many centuries, from Bach's very first cantatas on the 'Morning Star' to Holst's The Planets and Debussy's Clair de lune. Tōru Takemitsu's series of astronomically inspired orchestral pieces, to which Star-Isle belongs, is an elegant and mesmerizing contribution to this literally star-studded list.

Takemitsu is best known for his ability to transcend genre, most notably through his works that integrate and juxtapose traditional Japanese instruments with the Western orchestra—but this was not always the case. Takemitsu was forced into military service during World War II at age 14, an experience that initially led him to reject and rebel against traditional Japanese music. During this time, a secret hearing of Lucienne Boyer's "Parlez-moi d'amour" on the radio served as a pivotal moment in his musical life. For Takemitsu, the popular French love song was a beacon of light and humanity amid the violence.

After the war, when the self-taught Takemitsu began to pursue music more seriously, he found himself adrift: The German school was too rigid and formal, and Japanese music was tainted by his bitter memories of war. The only option was to carve his own path. He fell in with the avant-garde artist

circle Jikken Kōbō, where he was introduced to the work of John Cage, one of his greatest influences, and began to find his unique voice. Takemitsu enjoyed the admiration of some of his more famous contemporaries, including Stravinsky and Copland, and when he eventually circled back to embracing Japanese music, in the 1960s, he gained widespread success in America, where New Age interest in non-Western cultures was on the rise. Takemitsu disputed this idea, however, claiming "there is no such thing as east and west in art," and indeed you'll find this idea on display in *Star-Isle*.

Characteristic of Takemitsu's oeuvre, this piece is a practice in timbre and texture, not melody. *Star-Isle*, composed in 1982 for the centennial celebrations for Waseda University in Tokyo, may seem deceptively understated at first. It begins with a delicate four-note call-and-response in the cornets and trumpets, accompanied by eerie brass harmonies reminiscent of French Impressionism. Throughout the piece, the theme is painted with many different orchestral colors: muted brass, hauntingly high-pitched woodwinds, rumbling low strings, and of course the twinkling harp, starlight embodied.

It's easy to imagine Takemitsu as a sort of celestial puppetmaster, drawing sound in and out of existence with the wave of a hand. He builds up chords and yanks them away again just as easily, like an ethereal game of Jenga, creating the sensation of a resolution just out of reach. The charged silences between passages seem to be manifestations of *ma*, a Japanese concept of negative space that fascinated him. The gentle swells of the strings are interrupted now and again by dramatic outbursts led by the brass and percussion: perhaps a distant supernova, a dying star not going gently.

Let yourself be swept away in the undertow of this piece, in the undulation of Takemitsu's "sea of tonality." When the final wave rolls out, it does so with a whisper (literally "dying away" in the score), and you'll wake standing at the edge of the water with the stars reflected, grasping at the memories of a fading dream and wondering how you got there.

Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53 ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born: September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Czechia Died: May 1, 1904, in Prague

There's a quote from John D. Rockefeller that goes something like "A friendship built on business can be glorious, while a business built on friendship can be murder." There may have been no murder involved in the composition of Dvořák's Violin Concerto but it certainly is the story of a friendship soured, of an artist rejected by his muse.

Dvořák began work on his only violin concerto in 1879, long before the creation of his iconic "New World" Symphony or Cello Concerto, after meeting Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, a 19th-century rock star and a close friend and champion of many of the classical canon favorites: Brahms, the Schumanns, and Liszt, to name a few. Dvořák must have been struck by Joachim's artistry, because he was inspired almost immediately to write a piece for him to premiere. When presented with the finished product, however, Joachim was less than thrilled. He was a staunch traditionalist and disapproved of Dvořák's abrupt transitions between sections and movements (to his credit, Joachim never publicly expressed his opinions). Joachim claimed to be editing the piece, but after stalling, the partnership crumbled and the concerto was instead premiered by František Ondříček in 1883. The piece has since become a standard in the solo violin repertoire.

The concerto has all the trademarks of Dvořák's style: charm, wit, and the delight-

ful fusion of folklike melodies with classical forms. Dvořák, along with Chopin and Smetana, is largely responsible for reviving Central European folk music and introducing it to wider classical audiences; Dvořák was able to elevate the Czech tradition, in the minds of his contemporary listeners, from country dances to grand stages. At the heart of most of Dvořák's compositions is his love for his homeland, and this concerto is no exception.

The first movement follows sonata-allegro form, although Dvořák takes significant liberties: The violin often jarringly interrupts the orchestral tutti and vice versa, and the first movement flows attacca into the Adagio. This may have been off-putting to Joachim, but the subversion of form creates a sense of freshness, of perpetual modernity. Dvořák knows exactly how to bend the rules without breaking them. The orchestra introduces the first half of the main theme with bravado, and the violin sings the more delicate second half, creating a compelling back-and-forth dialogue that reappears throughout the piece.

The pastoral Adagio is Dvořák wearing his heart on his sleeve; the solo violin alternates between rustic, romantic melodic lines and more fervent minor passages, which are echoed back by the horn, like a shepherd in the distance who's warning of an approaching storm. The Adagio is representative of Dvořák's dreamier side, with a nostalgic quality that foreshadows the famous English horn solo in his Ninth Symphony, and might just be the highlight of this whole work.

The final movement is based on a *furiant*, a spritely Bohemian dance rhythm with the emphasis on shifting beats. After the technically demanding Allegro and passionate Adagio, the soloist can finally let loose with the classical equivalent of a hoedown. The solo violin part is riddled with folk-like double stops before sweeping scale patterns and four glorious notes in the tutti orches-

tra close the piece with a bang, conjuring images of dancers upon tables, skirts held in the air, panting and smiling with joy at the number they've just completed.

Joachim may have frowned upon this piece, but legions of violinists since have fallen in love with its charm and beauty as well as Dvořák's ability to build on his motherland's traditions without ever cheapening or parodying them. The overall effect is of a much more intimate concert experience than you may expect from a classical performance, like a family get-together around a campfire, singing and dancing and laughing until dawn.

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born: May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia Died: November 6, 1893, in Saint Petersburg

One of the more fascinating relationships in music history is that of Tchaikovsky and his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck. The eccentric Baroness von Meck, a recluse and a fierce matriarch, came into her fortune after persuading her first husband to enter the Russian rail industry, and she lived her life simultaneously promoting and chafing against the norms of aristocratic society. For more than a decade, she financially supported Tchaikovsky's career so he could dedicate himself completely to composition, with one stipulation: they were never to meet in person, ever.

Over the years, they exchanged thousands of letters detailing their innermost feelings and secrets, becoming each other's closest confidants even with the exchange of money pervading every interaction. Their relationship suffered underneath familial strife and a scandalous reputation, however, and von Meck suddenly and melodramatically cut Tchaikovsky off in 1890, citing bankruptcy. Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 was written toward the

end of his sunny days with von Meck and is a testament to their strange but powerful bond—it is dedicated to the baroness, essentially acknowledging her as an equal in its creation.

This Fourth Symphony is somewhat akin to a tone poem. In his own program note, Tchaikovsky says that the ominous brass fanfare that opens the piece is representative of Fate, the "fatal power which prevents one from attaining the goal of happiness," making this piece a sort of response to Beethoven's Fifth. Given Tchaikovsky's lifelong struggles with depression, his sexuality, and his personal relationships, this piece seems like a reflection of his own inner battles. The symphony follows the usual structure for a four-movement piece, including rare glimpses of joy in the Scherzo and the coda of the Finale, but everything is tinted by Tchaikovsky's melancholy. Blue sky is fleeting; the rain persists.

The aforementioned opening brass chorale is one of the most famous excerpts in the repertoire for the horns, which introduce the Fate theme with somber power. The motif reappears to function as a transition between sections of the sonata form throughout the movement, with different melodies painting Tchaikovsky's heartache in all sorts of colors. The first movement the longest in the symphony—is a microcosm of the entire work. A highlight is the guirky waltzlike section, which features a strange lilting melody surrounded by woodwind flourishes before transforming into a dance so dramatic it deserves its own stage. Images of chandeliers, fog, and ballerinas floating en pointe are inevitable. The movement's various themes are like vignettes, with the Fate motif signaling every set change and curtain call.

Solo oboe introduces the Andantino's dirgelike theme before passing the baton to the lush cellos. Tchaikovsky's slow movements

are always the gems of his orchestral works, and this one is true to form. Where the first movement was despondent and forlorn, the second is more pleading and insistent in its heartache. The few major passages don't last for long before Tchaikovsky wounds listeners with another heart-rending harmony or yearning woodwind entrance. When the bassoon returns with the opening melody at the end, it's full of regret, like a letter never sent, feelings reciprocated too late.

The Scherzo starts with a playful chorus of pizzicato strings before the oboe cues in the woodwinds. The flute and piccolo parts are quintessential Tchaikovsky writing, balletic and light-footed, and would be right at home in *The Nutcracker*. As always with Tchaikovsky, the unrealized choreography to this music is visceral and transcendent: One can almost feel the brush of a phantom tutu. The brief, perky Scherzo is a much-needed reprieve from the angst that bookends this piece.

The Finale begins with boom. foreshadowing the circus-like melody of the coda. The battle is not won, however, and Tchaikovsky's lamentation continues. When the opening fanfare of the piece returns after minutes of climactic buildup, it feels like both a cathartic homecoming and a betrayal, like a knife in the heart. Fate is inescapable. The fervent coda is unsettling despite, or perhaps because of, its major key. The ending does not feel like a triumph, but rather a sinister celebration, like the Witches' Sabbath in Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique.

The Russian Romantics have always had a singular grasp on the expression of angst, and Tchaikovsky's Fourth may just be the final word on melodrama. That he composed this piece before his catastrophic "breakup" with Baroness von Meck feels like the universe's twisted sense of humor—or simply fate. French horn player Carys Sutherland is in the final year of her bachelor's studies at Juilliard.

Meet the Artists



Ken-David Masur

Ken-David Masur is celebrating his fifth season as music director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO) and principal conductor of the Chicago Symphony's Civic Orchestra. He has conducted orchestras including the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra. Orchestre National de France, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, National Philharmonic of Russia, and others throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia, Masur's tenure in Milwaukee has been marked by innovative thematic programming, including a festival celebrating the music of the 1930s, when the Bradley Symphony Center was built, and the Water Festival, which highlighted local community partners whose work centers on water conservation and education. He has also instituted a multiseason artist in residence program, and he has led acclaimed performances of major choral works including a semistaged production of Peer Gynt. This season, he begins a residency with bass-baritone Dashon Burton and leads the MSO in an inaugural citywide Bach festival, celebrating the diverse and universal appeal of J.S. Bach's music in an ever-changing world. Last season, Masur made his New York Philharmonic debut in a gala program featuring John Williams and Steven

Spielberg. He also debuted at the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and at Classical Tahoe in three programs that were broadcast on PBS. He also led a John Williams 90th birthday concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Per-Iman, Branford Marsalis, and James Taylor at Tanglewood. This past summer marked Masur's debuts with the Grant Park Festival and National Repertory Orchestra; this season, he returns to the Baltimore Symphony and the Kristiansand Symphony. Masur was associate conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for five seasons, leading numerous concerts at Symphony Hall and Tanglewood. For eight years, Masur was principal guest conductor of the Munich Symphony, and he served as associate conductor of the San Diego Symphony and resident conductor of the San Antonio Symphony. Music education and working with the next generation of young artists are of major importance to Masur. In addition to his work with Civic Orchestra of Chicago, he has conducted orchestras and led master classes at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Peck School of the Arts. the New England Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, Boston University, Boston Conservatory, Tokyo's Bunka Kaikan Chamber Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and Juilliard. Passionate about contemporary music, Masur has conducted and commissioned dozens of new works, many of which have premiered at the Chelsea Music Festival, an annual summer festival in New York City founded and directed by Masur and his wife, pianist Melinda Lee Masur, that celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2024.



Blaire Kim

Born in South Korea, Blaire Kim (Pre-College '22, violin) started playing violin at age 5. She is the winner of this year's Juilliard Dvořák Violin Concerto Competition and the Pre-College's 2019 Tzigane Competition as well as the top prizewinner in the Irving Klein International Strings Competition. From an early age, Kim won a variety of national competitions in Korea, including the Daejeon Catholic and Music competitions, where she received a special prize from the mayor of Daejeon. She won first prize in the fifth Hong Kong International Violin Competition and was a featured young talent at age 10 on

the program Parents on Korea's Educational Broadcasting System. Kim has participated in summer festivals including the Forum Musikae International Summer Festival in Spain. where she was the youngest performer; the Academie Internationale d'Ete de Nice Festival in France: and the Crans Montana Summer Camp, hosted by Shlomo Mintz, Kim also attended the Perlman Music Program in 2021 and 2022. She studied with Sunny Lee and Jaesung Jeon while attending Yewon Arts Middle School before attending Juilliard Pre-College, where she studied with Li Lin. She is a second-year undergraduate at Juilliard, studying with Itzhak Perlman, Li Lin, and Kenneth Renshaw. Kim usually plays a 2021 Samuel Zygmuntowicz violin generously loaned by Friends of Musique et VIn; this evening, she is performing on a violin by Antonio Stradivari on generous loan from Jonathan Solars Fine Violins.

Juilliard Orchestra

Juilliard's largest and most visible student performing ensemble, the Juilliard Orchestra is known for delivering polished and passionate performances of works spanning the repertoire. Comprising more than 375 students in the bachelor's and master's degree programs, the orchestra appears throughout the season in concerts on the stages of Juilliard's Peter Jay Sharp Theater, Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall. The orchestra is a strong partner to Juilliard's other divisions, appearing in opera, dance, and drama productions as well as presenting an annual concert of world premieres by Juilliard student composers. This season, an impressive roster of world-renowned conductors lead the Juilliard Orchestra, including John Adams, Marin Alsop, Joseph Colaneri, JoAnn Falletta, Ken-David Masur, Tito Muñoz, Nimrod David Pfeffer, Donald Runnicles, Jörg Widmann, and Thomas Wilkins as well as faculty conductors David Robertson, the director of conducting studies and distinguished visiting faculty, and Jeffrey Milarsky. Among the virtual projects students from the orchestra participated in during the 2020 lockdown was Bolero Juilliard, which became a viral sensation. The Juilliard Orchestra has toured across the U.S. and throughout Europe, South America, and Asia, where it was the first Western conservatory ensemble allowed to visit and perform following the opening of the People's Republic of China in 1987, returning two decades later, in 2008. In summer 2019, the orchestra traveled to London, where they performed alongside the Royal Academy of Music in Royal Albert Hall at the BBC Proms. Other ensembles under the Juilliard Orchestra umbrella include the conductorless Juilliard Chamber Orchestra, Wind Orchestra, Lab Orchestra, and contemporary music group AXIOM.

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