

Monday Evening, November 22, 2021, at 7:30

The Juilliard School

presents

Juilliard Orchestra

John Adams, *Conductor*

STEVE REICH (b. 1936) **Three Movements** (1986)

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945) **Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta, BB 114** (1936)

Andante tranquillo

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro molto

Intermission

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957) **Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 39** (1899)

Andante, ma non troppo—Allegro energico

Andante, ma non troppo lento

Scherzo: Allegro

Finale (quasi una fantasia)

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes, including an intermission

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Alice Tully Hall

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About the Program

By Noémie Chemali

STEVE REICH

Three Movements

Born: October 3, 1936, in New York City

Currently lives in New York City

In his 1968 essay, "Music as a Gradual Process," Steve Reich writes, "I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music." Habituated to the downtown scene in New York, Reich, alongside composers such as Phillip Glass and John Adams, were to popularize what we now know as minimalist music, marked by the repetitive patterns and gradual phase shifting that pervades Reich's *Three Movements* for orchestra. Not unlike Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, also on this program, Reich divides the strings of the orchestra into two sections, highlighting the sonic effect of counterpoint between both groups.

In his essay, Reich also draws parallels between his music and that of Indian classical music and even to popular "drug-oriented rock and roll" in that all of these have an unchanging key center and "hypnotically droning and repetitive" musical fragments. He says that when these compositional elements are present, the listener can only then begin to appreciate the moment-to-moment detail in the music that invites the audience's "sustained attention." This is a direct foil to certain elements of Western classical music, which naturally highlight key modulation and strict counterpoint that, in his opinion, distract the audience.

The elements of modal stasis, repetitive figures, and gradual phase shifting are clearly present in Reich's *Three Movements*. In fact, all three movements are constructed

upon a series of chords whose roots outline the notes of a diminished seventh chord. As one should expect, this chord progression does not represent the presence of any functional harmony in the Western classical sense, but rather an ebb and flow of kinetic energy resulting in emotional phase shifts as one chord shifts to the next. The first movement begins with a vertical pulsing section, which gradually transforms into a horizontal melodic line. The slower second movement is an adaptation of his sextet, written just one year before. The final movement resumes the quick tempo of the first movement and highlights the tension between the groups of four beats against three over a 12-beat pattern. He utilizes a paradigm of Renaissance vocal music in which different layered melodic lines are elongated or condensed to form contrapuntal lines. Eventually, a hint of functional harmony emerges, bringing the piece to an A-minor close.

BÉLA BARTÓK

Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta

Born: March 25, 1881, in Sânnicolau

Mare, Romania

Died: September 26, 1945, in New York City

Béla Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* was composed according to the equilibrium found in the laws of nature. Even the position of the antiphonal strings on the stage reflect this palindromic order that Bartók exudes outwardly throughout the piece. The work was commissioned by Swiss conductor Paul Sacher who, after marrying into the family of a pharmaceutical magnate, used his newfound wealth to support the creation of new music. The commission came at a welcome time in the 55-year-old Hungarian composer's life, whose music career was largely disrupted by the Great Depression and the rise

of right-wing governments' censorship of modernist art throughout Europe.

This work is in four movements. The first (*Andante tranquillo*) begins with a sinister serpentine fugue subject in the violas, which slithers its way across the entire string section, recurring as thematic material in the entire piece. As the fugue subject gets passed around the orchestra, the music intensifies, reaching an impassioned yet incredibly disturbing climax of repeated E-flats, which is exactly a tritone—the Renaissance “devil’s interval”—away from the first iteration of the fugue subject. The palindromic effect then kicks in and the music gradually subsides, but this time the intervals from the first fugue subject are inverted, giving us a sense that we have heard this music before—but, unsettlingly, not quite.

The creative life force behind the second movement (*Allegro*) emerges from Bartók’s years-long study of folk music from his native Hungary and surrounding areas. By combining the distinctive rhythmic irregularities, speech-like accents, and modal scale patterns found in Hungarian fiddle music with a call-and-response dialogue between the two groups of strings and percussion, he creates an utterly vivacious movement bursting with energy from start to finish.

The third movement (*Adagio*) is the epitome of what we call Bartók’s “night music.” Creepy-crawly motifs evoke the terror of waking up to a swarm of centipedes crawling over you in the middle of the night. You may recognize the beginning of this movement from Stanley Kubrick’s classic 1980 horror film, *The Shining*.

The final movement (*Allegro molto*) is an explosive Bulgarian folk dance, its extremes of levity and heft highlighting the

highs and lows of village life. You may hear snapping sounds in the strings. This effect, known colloquially as the “Bartók pizz,” is used to convey what a set of highbrow classically trained ears may perceive as the uncouth rustic energy of this movement. Eventually, the music makes its way back to the opening theme of the entire work, bringing it to a triumphant close.

JEAN SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 1

Born: December 8, 1865, in Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957, in Ainola, Finland

Before the independence of Finland in 1917, it was a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire under the rule of Czar Nicholas II. Begun in 1899 and completed the following year, Sibelius’ *Symphony No. 1* was a battle cry for the Finnish people amid an increasingly repressive Russian regime stripping Finland of its autonomous legislative powers and thus its unique cultural and ethnic identity.

During this time, Sibelius’ contemporaries had deemed the symphony dead, with Debussy, Strauss, and Wagner adopting tone poems as their expressive medium of choice. Sibelius, who had written his fair share of tone poems, always circled his way back to the symphony as his compositional home base. Both traditional and progressive, Sibelius’ four-movement *Symphony No. 1* is characterized by a sense of logical thematic development yet is clever enough in its construction and transformation of musical material that the piece feels utterly modern for its time.

The first movement (*Andante, ma non troppo—Allegro energico*), though anchored in the late-Romantic tradition, has one of the most distinguishable openings of any symphony ever written. The

almost imperceptible timpani roll sets up a bleak atmosphere for the clarinet to sing its forlorn song, evoking the snow-covered Finnish countryside. Then, suddenly, the strings enter with gusto and, in true Finnish fashion, use soaring melodies, not artillery, to spark strident defiance. The brass section enters to reinforce this pro-Finnish commentary, one of Sibelius' most discernible trademarks. The intensity evaporates into a lighthearted fairy-like dance, propagated by the woodwinds and harp. The intensity returns, bringing the movement to an impassioned close, punctuated by two pizzicato notes in the strings.

The second movement (*Andante, ma non troppo lento*) is characterized, ironically enough, by the kind of gushing Russian romanticism of Tchaikovsky or Borodin. Sibelius' admiration for Tchaikovsky was no secret. After being deeply moved by a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony, in Helsinki, Sibelius admitted to his wife, "There is much of that man that I recognize in myself." Sibelius understood the inherent unity that exists between all humankind—that it is possible to resist an oppressive regime without vilifying Russians on the basis of their nationality.

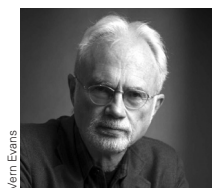
The third movement (*Scherzo: Allegro*), following in the musical lineage of Bruckner,

is characterized by a rustic energy and slapstick humor that's embodied by Sibelius' emphasis on rhythmic tension and hemiola. The trio section could not be more different—it begins with the horns in a noticeably slower tempo, almost reminiscent of a funeral march, before returning to its spritely counterpart at the end of the movement.

In the final movement (*Finale [quasi una fantasia]*), we are catapulted back to the sound world that we heard in the opening of the first movement. This time, the strings are passionately singing the opening clarinet melody. The *Allegro* section begins with a series of disjointed bits of melodic material, which eventually coalesce into a hauntingly beautiful second theme in the violins, again reminiscent of Sibelius' Slavic forefathers. This development shakes us to our very core before the magnificent melody returns, and just like the ending of the first movement, Sibelius ends with two ghostly punctuation marks in which the string *pizzicati* bring the entirety of the work to a definite E-minor close.

Violist Noémie Chemali is a second-year Master of Music candidate at Juilliard. She holds an Alfred E. Lyon & Dorothy Lyon Scholarship.

Meet the Artists



Vern Evans

John Adams

Composer, conductor, and creative thinker—John Adams occupies a unique position in the world of music. His works stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, brilliance of sound, and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes; his stage compositions, many in collaboration with director Peter Sellars, have transformed the genre of contemporary music theater. Spanning more than three decades, works such as *Harmonielehre*, *Shaker Loops*, *El Niño*, and *Nixon in China* are among the most performed of all contemporary classical music. As a conductor, Adams has led the world's major orchestras, programming his own works with a wide variety of repertoire ranging from Beethoven, Mozart, and Debussy to Sibelius, Ives, Carter, and Ellington. Among his honorary doctorates are those from Yale, Harvard, Northwestern, and Cambridge universities as well as Juilliard. A provocative writer, he is author of the autobiography *Hallelujah Junction* and is a frequent contributor to the *New York Times Book Review*. Since 2009, he has been creative chair of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Born and raised in New England, Adams learned the clarinet from his father and played in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at age 10 and his first orchestral pieces were performed while he was still a teenager. In 2017, Adams celebrated his 70th birthday with festivals of his music in Europe and the U.S., including retrospectives at London's Barbican, Paris' Cité

de la Musique, and in Amsterdam, New York, and Geneva, among other cities. In 2019, he was the recipient of both Spain's BBVA Frontiers of Knowledge award and Holland's Erasmus Prize "for notable contributions to European culture, society, and social science," and, this year, he was appointed honorary academician by the General Assembly of the Academicians of Santa Cecilia, also receiving the Glashütte Original MusicFestivalAward from the Dresden Music Festival for lifetime achievement. Adams is at work on his fifth opera, and his other conducting engagements in 2021-22 include return visits to the Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Seattle and St. Louis symphony orchestras. Music director of the 2021 Ojai Music Festival for its 75th anniversary year, he also takes part in the 2022 Colorado Music and Cincinnati May festivals. Recent conducting highlights include performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic (world premiere of Philip Glass' Symphony No. 12, "Lodger"), Philadelphia Orchestra, and Netherlands Radio and Oslo philharmonic orchestras. With the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Adams gave the European premiere of his *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* in 2020 and, in 2018, he conducted the Orchestra e Coro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia for the first time in performances of his *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. Recent recordings include the Grammy-nominated *Doctor Atomic* (featuring the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers conducted by Adams, with Gerald Finley and Julia Bullock); *Scheherazade.2*, a dramatic symphony for violin and orchestra written for Leila Josefowicz; *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* (written for and performed by Yuja Wang, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel); and the Berliner Philharmoniker's box set, *John Adams Edition*.

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 leads the Juilliard Orchestra, including John Adams, Mei-Ann Chen, Kevin John Edusei, Barbara Hannigan, Antonio Pappano, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Christian Reif, Xian Zhang, and faculty conductors Jeffrey Milarsky and David Robertson. Robertson is director of conducting studies and distinguished visiting faculty. Students from the Juilliard Orchestra have participated

in recent virtual projects, including *Bolero Juilliard*; *Of Thee I Sing*, an expansion of *Charles Ives' Variations on "America,"* co-created by David Robertson and Creative Associate Kurt Crowley, and conducted by Robertson; and a performance of "Nimrod" (Variation IX) from Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, conducted by faculty member and alumnus Itzhak Perlman. 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 to perform 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 as well as the Wind Orchestra, Lab Orchestra, and contemporary music groups AXIOM and New Juilliard Ensemble.

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