

# Concert Program for January 27, 28, and 29, 2012

Vassily Sinaisky, conductor  
Louis Lortie, piano

**SIBELIUS** *En saga, op. 9* (1892, rev. 1902)  
(1865-1957)

**LISZT** **Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major** (1835-56)  
(1811-1886) Allegro maestoso. Tempo giusto—  
Quasi adagio; Allegretto vivace; Allegro animato—  
Allegro marziale animato

Louis Lortie, piano

## Intermission

**TCHAIKOVSKY** **Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36** (1877)  
(1840-1893) Andante sostenuto; Moderato con anima  
Andantino in modo di canzona  
Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato: Allegro  
Finale: Allegro con fuoco

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Vassily Sinaisky is the Edna W. Sternberg Guest Artist.

Louis Lortie is the Essman Family Foundation Guest Artist.

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These concerts are presented by Thompson Coburn LLP.

Pre-Concert Conversations are presented by Washington University Physicians.

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors Series.



**Vassily Sinaisky** Edna W. Sternberg Guest

Vassily Sinaisky's international career was launched in 1973 when he won the Gold Medal at the prestigious Karajan Competition in Berlin. His early work with Kirill Kondrashin at the Moscow Philharmonic and with Ilya Musin at the Leningrad Conservatoire provided him with an incomparable grounding. Soon after his success at the Karajan Competition, Sinaisky was appointed Chief Conductor of the Latvian National

Symphony Orchestra, a post he held from 1976 to 1987. He then became Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic, leading numerous high-profile projects with the Orchestra both in Russia and on tour.

In September 2010, Sinaisky was announced as the new Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow. Highlights of the first season in this new role included a new production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel* as well as tours to Athens and London. This season will see the reopening of the Bolshoi's main stage after extensive refurbishment. Other highlights will include a new production of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* with the British director Stephen Lawless, the Bolshoi's first ever production of this opera.

Highlights of upcoming seasons include a return to the London Philharmonic in London and on tour in the Netherlands, and concerts with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Netherlands Philharmonic, and Russian National Orchestra.

Sinaisky additionally holds the positions of Conductor Emeritus of the BBC Philharmonic and Honorary Conductor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Sweden. Memorable projects with the BBC Philharmonic have included the "Shostakovich and his Heroes" festival in 2006, tours to Europe and China, and many appearances at the BBC Proms. With the Malmö Symphony, Sinaisky has toured to the U.K. and to Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and recorded an acclaimed four-disc series of the symphonies of Franz Schmidt. Sinaisky has also held the positions of Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Philharmonic and Music Director of the Russian State Orchestra.

Sinaisky has a distinguished pedigree as an operatic conductor. In addition to his projects at the Bolshoi Theatre, Sinaisky recently conducted *Boris Godunov* at San Francisco Opera with Samuel Ramey. Other projects have included productions of *Carmen* and *Der Rosenkavalier* for English National Opera. Sinaisky's conducting of a new production of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* at the Komische Oper Berlin received unanimous critical acclaim in the international press.

Vassily Sinaisky most recently conducted the St. Louis Symphony in March 2010.



**Louis Lortie** Essman Family Foundation Guest Artist  
French-Canadian pianist Louis Lortie has attracted critical acclaim throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States, not least for extending his interpretative voice across a broad repertoire range.

Celebrated for his interpretation of Beethoven, Lortie has performed complete sonata cycles at London's Wigmore Hall, Toronto's Ford Center, Berlin's Philharmonie, and the Sala Grande del Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan. With the Montreal Symphony, as both pianist and conductor, he has performed all five Beethoven concertos and all of the Mozart concertos. He opened the Bonn Beethoven Festival in 2003 playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 with Kurt Masur, with whom he has since established a fruitful partnership.

In 2011 Lortie celebrated the bicentenary of Liszt's birth by performing the complete *Années de pèlerinage* at Germany's Liszt Kunstfest Weimar, the Bayreuth Festival, and Rheingau Musik Festival, the Aldeburgh Music-Snapes Proms, New York's Lincoln Center, London's Wigmore Hall, and other venues, as well as the opening of the 2011-12 Cliburn Concerts Series. His schedule also featured Liszt performances in Europe with French actress Fanny Ardant, during which Ardant read letters of George Sand.

Other 2011-12 engagements include play/conducting the Slovenian Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, and the Quebec Symphony; concerts with the Toronto Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Sydney, Bournemouth, Calgary, North Carolina, San Diego, and Oklahoma City; a tour in Italy with the Kremerata Baltica, and a performance of the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2 at the Brussels Brahms Festival.

Lortie studied in Montreal with Yvonne Hubert (a pupil of the legendary Alfred Cortot), in Vienna with the Beethoven specialist Dieter Weber, and subsequently with Schnabel disciple Leon Fleisher. He made his debut with the Montreal Symphony at the age of 13; three years later, his first appearance with the Toronto Symphony led to a historic tour of the People's Republic of China and Japan. In 1984, he won First Prize in the Busoni Competition and was also prizewinner at the Leeds Competition. In 1992 he was named Officer of the Order of Canada, and received both the Order of Quebec and an honorary doctorate from Laval University. As his schedule permits, he teaches at Italy's renowned piano institute at Imola. Lortie has lived in Berlin since 1997 but also has homes in Canada and Italy.

Louis Lortie most recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony in December 2008.

# Window on the Soul

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

## *Ideas at Play*

“I compose,” Piotr Il’ych Tchaikovsky once told a correspondent, “so that I might pour out my emotions in music.” This might not seem a remarkable statement. We have come to regard self-expression, and especially the expression of personal feelings, as one of music’s primary purposes. Yet this notion is, historically speaking, a relatively new one. Before the 19th century musicians certainly used their art to express emotion, but these emotions did not originate with the composer. Rather, they were universal affects associated with shared, or at least widely understood, experiences. The anguish conveyed in the “Crucifixus” movement of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* or the terror suggested at the climax of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* are vivid human feelings. But they aren’t unique to either composer or anyone hearing the music.

The concept that music can convey deep personal truths—that it can serve as a window on the soul of an individual composer—is part of the artistic and philosophical legacy of 19th-century Romanticism. Two of the pieces on our program are explicitly rooted in that concept. Most especially, Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 4* was described by the composer himself as a document of his belief that his life was a continual battle against a malevolent destiny. Similarly, if less specifically, Jean Sibelius stated that his tone poem *En saga* “is the expression of a state of mind” born of existential trials, and the most personally revealing of all his compositions.

Between those two pieces we hear the E-flat Piano Concerto of Franz Liszt. We have no word from the composer to indicate that he intended this work as a reflection of his inner life. But Liszt was given to openly emotional expression in his music, something that accords with what was by all reports his ardent personality. Moreover, his dazzling ability as a pianist can be seen as an aspect of his tremendous mental energy, ambition, and visionary frame of mind. In view of this, it is not too much to suggest that the E-flat Piano Concerto, too, tells us something personal and fundamental about its author.

## Jean Sibelius *En saga*, op. 9

**Born:** Hämeenlinna, Finland, December 8, 1865 **Died:** Järvenpää, Finland, September 20, 1957 **First performance:** February 16, 1893, in Helsinki, the composer conducted the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra **STL Symphony premiere:** November 7, 1913, Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** December 16, 1971, Okko Kamu **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and other percussion, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 20 minutes



Sibelius

**In Context** 1892 *Ellis Island opens in New York harbor; General Electric Co. formed; Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 premieres*

An element of uncertainty surrounds the creative impulse that led to Jean Sibelius's tone poem *En saga*. In 1892 Sibelius scored a conspicuous success with his symphonic poem *Kullervo*. Based on a Finnish epic legend, this ambitious work deeply affected many listeners when the composer conducted its premiere in Helsinki, but its great length (nearly 90 minutes) and complexity augured poorly for widespread performances. Accordingly, Robert

Kajanus, director of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and a longtime champion of Sibelius's music, suggested that the composer write a shorter and more accessible piece.

Sibelius recalled that he was "not at all disinclined to write [such] a piece," and in the autumn of 1892 he composed a single-movement work for orchestra, using thematic ideas he had sketched a year or two earlier, mostly in connection with an octet for woodwinds and strings he had begun but abandoned. But late in his life, the composer denied that he had been swayed by Kajanus. "Nothing came of [the conductor's suggestion]," he asserted. "Instead I completed the orchestral work that I had started and to which I gave the name *En saga*. This tone poem was by no means the result of Kajanus's request to write a popular piece. I never complied with that request." It remains uncertain which of these contradictory accounts accurately reflects the genesis of the composition.

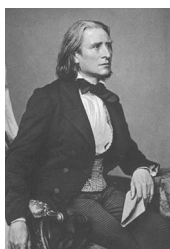
Be that as it may, Sibelius conducted the first performance of *En saga* in February 1893. This brought no repeat of the triumph of *Kullervo*, and the composer subsequently withdrew the work. Nearly a decade later, in 1902, he completed a thorough revision of the score, trimming it and improving the orchestration. In its new form the piece enjoyed considerable audience favor, and it still does today.

**The Music** One might think that music titled "A Saga," to translate Sibelius's title, would tell a particular story. Yet *En saga* carries no specific narrative program; rather, it imparts merely the atmosphere of Nordic legend. Sibelius indicated that the music held personal meaning for him, but he declined to specify what this might be. Late in his life, the composer declared: "*En saga* is the expression of a state of mind. I had undergone a number of painful experiences at the time, and in no other work have I revealed myself so completely. It is for this reason that I find all literary explanations quite alien."

The piece begins with an introductory passage in moderate tempo. Shimmering string sonorities, sustained horn tones, and a phrase in the woodwinds sounding like a primitive folk melody all contribute to a mythic impression. So, too, does a bardic theme, which sounds in the rich voice of the bassoons and, moments later, again in the horns. With its acceleration to a faster tempo, the music assumes a more dramatic character, though the rich orchestral fantasy that develops concludes, much as it began, in a quietly poetic manner.

## Franz Liszt Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major

**Born:** Raiding, Austria, October 22, 1811 **Died:** Bayreuth, Bavaria, July 31, 1886 **First performance:** February 17, 1855, in Weimar, the composer played the solo part, and Hector Berlioz conducted **STL Symphony premiere:** January 20, 1911, Ferruccio Busoni was soloist, with Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** April 18, 1987, Peter Orth was soloist, with Raymond Leppard conducting **Scoring:** Solo piano and an orchestra of two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and other percussion, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 19 minutes



Liszt ca. 1860

**In Context** 1835-56 Liszt conducts the premiere of Wagner's *Lohengrin* in Weimar, Germany; first-ever World's Fair held in London's Hyde Park; plans for the modernization of Paris outlined

Franz Liszt was in many ways the quintessential musician of the of the 19th century, one whose work and personality embodied the Romantic spirit of his era. A pianist of legendary ability, Liszt cut a dashing figure and enjoyed a number of flamboyant love affairs. As a composer, he ventured a number of significant innovations.

His extraordinary mastery of the keyboard allowed him to devise piano sonorities that had not previously been heard, and he championed the practice of unifying large-scale musical works through tangible thematic connections between various movements and sections.

Despite his famous virtuosity as a pianist and his prolific output, Liszt was not an especially facile composer. His creative process frequently involved extensive and repeated revisions of a score, sometimes years after its original composition. An extreme instance is provided by his Piano Concerto No. 1 in Eflat major. Liszt made initial sketches for this work as early as 1830, when he was not yet 20 years old. During the next quarter of a century, he wrote no fewer than four drafts of the piece before at last arriving at one that he felt worthy of performance.

The concerto was heard for the first time in February 1855, at the Ducal court at Weimar, where Liszt served as music director. The composer played the solo part, while the orchestra was directed by Hector Berlioz, who was visiting Weimar at Liszt's invitation. Even then, Liszt was not entirely satisfied with the work, and he revised it one last time in 1856 before committing it to print.

**The Music** The First Piano Concerto partakes of many of the expressive and formal innovations that distinguish Liszt's music. In view of the composer's well-known virtuosity, it is hardly surprising that the solo part entails passages requiring formidable keyboard technique. Yet the work's chief interest lies as much in its innovative approach to concerto form as in its displays of pianistic skill. Its sections flow seamlessly, one from the next, to form an uninterrupted stream of music.

This unusual arrangement yields a composition that is compressed and coherent, yet varied in its moods and tempos. Further unity is gained through Liszt's much-remarked procedure of "thematic transformation," in which a small number of melodies recur in various forms repeatedly (or "cyclically," to use the term favored by music theorists) in different sections of the composition. This procedure reveals itself most clearly in the finale, which is constructed entirely from themes heard earlier in the concerto, themes that Liszt now charges with great energy as the work proceeds to its conclusion.

## Piotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36

**Born:** Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840 **Died:** St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893 **First performance:** February 22, 1878, in Moscow, Nikolai Rubinstein conducted the orchestra of the Russian Music Society **STL Symphony premiere:** December 22, 1910, Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** October 28, 2007, Leonard Slatkin conducting **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 45 minutes



Tchaikovsky

**In Context** 1877 *Russia and Turkey at war; Russian Imperial Ballet stages first performance of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake; Brahms's Symphony No. 2 premieres in Vienna*

Tchaikovsky completed his Symphony No. 4 late in 1877, following the most harrowing emotional crisis of his life. Earlier that year, in what was surely a desperate attempt to quell his homosexuality and find some measure of the domestic tranquility for which he longed, he had entered into a hasty marriage with a young woman who had once been a student at the Moscow Conservatory, where Tchaikovsky taught. Their union was brief and disastrous. Within weeks Tchaikovsky suffered an almost complete nervous collapse and attempted suicide. He was rescued by his brother Anatoly, who spirited the composer out of Russia and arranged dissolution of the marriage. Though shamed and chagrined, Tchaikovsky eventually recovered enough composure to resume working, but he emerged from the ordeal shaken and convinced that he was destined to a life of personal torment.

This background is keenly relevant to the Symphony No. 4. We know from his letters and diary that Tchaikovsky believed his happiness was thwarted by forces beyond his ken and control, and that the Fourth Symphony constituted a musical expression of this belief. In a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow who provided him financial support and sympathetic confidence, Tchaikovsky declared that the "symphony has a program that can be put into words." He went on to describe this narrative as a struggle against "Fate, which prevents our hopes of happiness from being realized ... a constant, relentless spiritual torment."

That struggle results sometimes in agitation and despair, sometimes in attempts to escape into “ephemeral dreams of happiness,” all conveyed by the music of the first movement.

The second movement represents further effort to evade “cruel reality,” as Tchaikovsky called it, through indulgence in pleasant memories. The third movement, the composer stated, “expresses nothing so definite. Rather, it is a succession of capricious arabesques that pass through the mind when one has had a little wine and feels the first glow of intoxication.” In the finale, temporary release from mental oppression is gained through revelry and pleasure. “But no sooner do you abandon yourself to merriment,” the composer observed, “than Fate reappears, reminding you of your suffering. Others pay no attention to your sorrow... Join them, and life will yet be bearable.”

All this raises questions that have persistently surrounded narrative, or “program,” music: How concretely can any poetic or narrative program be expressed in music? Is knowledge or acceptance of the program a prerequisite for appreciating a composition? Tchaikovsky himself was ambivalent on this point. “Most assuredly my symphony has a program,” he told the critic and composer Sergei Taneyev in connection with the work that concludes our concert, “but a program that cannot be expressed in words; the very attempt would be ludicrous.”

**The Music** Regardless of whatever connection to Tchaikovsky’s biography it may have, the music of the Symphony No. 4 reveals a power and internal cohesion that function in purely musical terms. The themes of the first movement may be the emblems of existential angst the composer explained so vividly to Madame von Meck, but they also present a typical symphonic opening movement: two contrasting principal melodies preceded by a fanfarelike “motto” idea. (Comparable constructions can be found in Schumann’s “Spring” Symphony and those of other 19th-century composers.) Similarly, the rest of the work provides a slow movement, scherzo, and finale, much as we would expect from any composer writing within the general framework of the expanded classical-style symphony. Of course, the musical details bear unmistakably the imprint of Tchaikovsky’s own style and musical values.

Perhaps this last point is the most important. Perhaps the essential thing is that this symphony partakes of Tchaikovsky’s unique sense of melody, rhythm, and orchestral color, not that it relates any specific details of his biography or extends any particular tradition of symphonic thinking. But one can ponder such issues indefinitely. Ultimately, the choice of how to hear this symphony, and what to hear in it, is up to each listener.