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Concert: Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Jeffrey D. Grogan

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ITHACA COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA COLLEGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor

NYSSMA Conference

Lilac Ballroom

Rochester Riverside Convention Center

Friday, December 3, 2004

9:00 p.m.

ITHACA

PROGRAM

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)
Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Promenade

Gnomus

Promenade

Il vecchio castello

Promenade

Tuileries

Bydlo

Promenade

Ballet des poussins dans leurs coques

Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle

Limoges - le Marché

Catacombae - Sepulcrum Romanum

Cum mortuis in lingua mortua

La Cabane sur des pattes de poule (Baba-Yaga)

La grande porte de Kiev

PROGRAM NOTES

Modest Mussorgsky was a member of the "Fist" or "Mighty Five", a group of Nineteenth-century Russian Composers taught by Rimsky-Korsakov. Mussorgsky's style brings the Russian countryside and cathedral to the concert hall with some of the most performed works of the repertoire.

Pictures at an Exhibition was composed in June 1874, inspired by the work of a dear friend, Viktor Hartmann (1834-1873). Hartmann was a prominent painter and architect, and the scenes in *Pictures* are Mussorgsky's musical impressions of a memorial exhibition of Hartmann's works given in St. Petersburg the year after the artist's death. Mussorgsky composed the work as a suite for piano, but many orchestrators recognized its possibilities as a work for orchestra. Although many orchestrations of *Pictures at an Exhibition* exist, the most famous and regularly performed is that of Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Ravel was a French composer noted for his mastery of orchestral color. When Ravel discovered Mussorgsky's work, he asked Serge Koussevitzky to commission him to orchestrate it. Koussevitzky did so and the premier of Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* was given October 19, 1922 in Paris.

"Promenade" begins the work and comes back five times throughout the suite. The "Promenade" represents Mussorgsky's stroll through the exhibit of Hartmann's works. We hear this theme of alternating 5/4 and 6/4 bars begin in the solo trumpet, with changing orchestration throughout. The character of "Promenade" also changes as Mussorgsky looks back on his memories with Hartmann, bringing both joy and sadness at different times.

"Gnomus" breaks out of the opening "Promenade" with a musical portrait of Hartmann's grotesque nutcracker in the form of a gnarled gnome. The listener may imagine this mangled creature trying to take its first steps.

"The Old Castle" paints a picture of a medieval serenade sung by a troubadour. This strophic, melancholy melody is played by a solo alto saxophone.

"The Tuileries. Children Quarreling at Play." The Tuileries are famous Parisian gardens; in this musical sketch, the winds play young children wistfully quarreling after playing in these beautiful gardens.

"Bydlo" is the Polish word for *Cattle*. Hartmann's work was a scene of cattle in a rural Polish village. Mussorgsky drew his own version, an oxcart passing by on huge wooden wheels. Musically Ravel calls on the solo tuba for this lumbering scene.

"Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells" is based on a costume design done by Hartmann for the ballet *Trilby*. Here Ravel has the woodwinds imitate chicks dancing with their legs protruding out of their shells.

"Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle" gives a picture of what Hartmann called "Two Polish Jews; one rich, one poor." The listener first hears the heavy Goldenberg while the solo trumpet, Schmuyle, nags consistently. Schmuyle is yiddish for Samuel, the rich man using the German form of the name in a pompous manner while the poor man uses his Jewish name.

"Limoges: The Market." A scherzo gives us another French scene, this one letting us in on a gossiping woman at an outdoor market. Ravel omitted Mussorgsky's "Promenade" preceding this movement.

"Catacomb" was inspired by a painting of Hartmann himself exploring the ancient catacomb's (tombs) underneath Paris with two companions. From this we hear "Skulls begin to glow dimly from within." Mussorgsky leads us out with another "Promenade."

"The Hut on Fowl's Legs" is a clock in the shape of Baba Yaga's hut. Baba Yaga is a grotesque witch of Russian Folklore famous for her appetite for children. The music depicts the witch's ride, chasing children to grind with her mortar and pestle.

"The Great Gate of Kiev" follows immediately with a musical procession. The work was based on a design by Hartmann to commemorate an escaped assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander. The plans were never realized, as the Tsar did not want the attempt to be acknowledged to the public. The "Promenade" returns in a joyous coda, bringing the work to an end with fantastic ringing bells and liturgical chants.

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra. Since the Ithaca Conservatory of Music gave its first public concert in 1892, the orchestra program at Ithaca College has grown and flourished into one of the country's finest. The Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra is comprised of approximately 100 students, while the Chamber Orchestra is made up of some 40 more musicians. They perform regularly at New York's Lincoln Center and in April of 2005 will perform Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* at Avery Fisher Hall.

The orchestras at Ithaca College have also recently performed in Ireland and at New York University. They have enjoyed performing major works from the standard orchestral repertoire such as Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite*, Beethoven's *Symphonies Nos. 2, 5, and 8*, Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No. 2*, Brahms's *Symphony No. 2*, Haydn's *Symphony No. 104*, Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, among many others.

The Ithaca College Orchestras are dedicated to performing new works by contemporary composers. Recent performances have included works by Robert Beaser, Michael Daugherty, Joseph Schwantner, Dana Wilson, and Karel Husa. In 2004, the orchestra commissioned and gave the world premiere of Scott McAllister's *Music from the Redneck Songbook*. This work, inspired by life in the South, included hammered dulcimer, steel guitar, banjo and mandolin.

Ithaca College's School of Music, housed in the James J. Whalen Center for Music, enjoys a distinguished reputation among institutions for professional music study in the United States. A celebrated faculty teaches some 475 undergraduate music majors each year, maintaining the conservatory tradition within a comprehensive college setting. The School of Music is home to specialists in virtually every orchestra and band instrument; in voice, piano, organ, and guitar; and in music education, jazz, composition, theory, history, and conducting. Ithaca's music professors perform regularly on campus and throughout the country in recitals and concerts, contribute to publications and professional organizations, and make presentations at numerous conferences and workshops every year.

What really sets apart the Ithaca College School of Music is the faculty's combination of impressive credentials and dedication to teaching students, to fostering students' learning, developing their talent and transforming them into trained professionals ready to participate in the strongest school systems, the best graduate schools, and the finest orchestras, opera companies, and other arts organizations. Students who enroll in the School of Music are already dedicated musicians who want to study with the best. From Ithaca's unique environment, students emerge prepared to make the most of their abilities.