

**BERKELEY
SYMPHONY**



09|10 SEASON

**JOANA CARNEIRO
MUSIC DIRECTOR**



**STUCKY
SIBELIUS
STRAVINSKY**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2009 | UC BERKELEY ZELLERBACH HALL

BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2009–10 SEASON



JOANA CARNEIRO
CONDUCTOR/MUSIC DIRECTOR

JAMES A. KLEINMANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

8:00 pm, Thursday, December 3, 2009
Zellerbach Hall

STEVEN STUCKY
Radical Light

JEAN SIBELIUS
Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105

— INTERMISSION —

STEVEN STUCKY
"Elegy" from August 4, 1964

West Coast Premiere

IGOR STRAVINSKY
Suite from *The Firebird (L'oiseau de feu)*

Introduction
The Firebird and Its Dance—Variation
Round Dance of the Princesses (*Khorovode*)
Infernal Dance of King Kashchey
Berceuse (Lullaby): Andante
Finale: Lento maestoso—Allegro non troppo—Maestoso

Season Sponsors

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Presentation bouquets are graciously provided by Jutta's Flowers.

Tonight's concert will be broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM,
Sunday, March 28, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

Berkeley Symphony is a member of the League of American Orchestras
and the Association of California Symphony Orchestras.

Program Notes

Radical Light

STEVEN STUCKY (b. 1949)

Radical Light was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and premiered under Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen at Walt Disney Concert Hall in October 2007.

The European premiere at London's Barbican Centre followed in November 2007. Scored for three flutes (one doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn), three clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, three percussionists (performing on crotales, chimes, glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba, bass drum, and tam-tam), harp, and strings. Duration ca. 17 min.

The composer has provided the following comments:

According to Lao-tse, "Nothing that can be said in words is worth saying." And according to Goethe, "Music begins where words end." If they are right, then to say what my new orchestral work is "about" is doubly impossible. Still, man is not only the animal that sings, but also the animal that speaks, the animal that cannot resist the urge to explain himself.

I could say, then, that *Radical Light* was influenced by its role as a companion to two Sibelius symphonies in a festival of that composer's music. It was daunting to play the role of the upstart who dares to stand between two monuments like the Sibelius Seventh and Fourth, but there was nothing for it but to meet the assignment head-on. Sibelius has been a strong influence on me for many years, and I especially admire his Seventh Symphony as an architectural marvel.

Having long wanted to attempt something like that myself, in *Radical Light* I tried to emulate something about the architecture of that peerless masterpiece: a single span embracing many different tempi and musical characters, but nevertheless letting everything flow seamlessly from one moment to the next—no section breaks or disruptions, no sharp turns or border crossings. The idea of music that unfolds in a gradual, seamless evolution is a lesson I have also been learning lately from two other Finns, Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen, and from my Swedish colleague Anders Hillborg. (I hasten to add that the actual sound of the music has nothing to do with Sibelius or the other composers just mentioned, at least not intentionally.) *Radical Light* is a fundamentally slow piece, but it is infiltrated more than once by livelier music.

And the title? That came after the fact, and not easily. From my favorite poet, A.R. Ammons, I found these striking lines:

He held radical light
in his skull: music
turned, as
over ridges immanences of evening light
rise, turned
back over furrows of his brain
into the dark, shuddered,
shot out again
in long swaying furls of sound.

This poetry seemed—even if accidentally—to capture something about the role of the artist in general, about the personality of Sibelius in particular, and even about the very architecture and physicality

I had attempted in my own new piece. So I adopted Ammons's title, and at the same time I dedicated the piece to my colleague and friend Elinor Frey, who helped me not only in choosing the title but also through a great deal else in the making of the piece.

What I hope for this music is, I think, what Ammons hopes for poetry: that it "leads us to the unstructured sources of our beings, to the unknown, and returns us to our rational, structured selves refreshed. Having once experienced the mystery, plenitude, contradiction, and composure of a work of art, we afterward have a built-in resistance to the slogans and propaganda of oversimplification that have often contributed to the destruction of human life. . . . Nothing that can be said about it in words is worth saying."

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Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Jean Sibelius was born in Hämeenlinna (*Tavastehus*) on December 8, 1865, and died in Järvenpää on September 20, 1957. Scored for two flutes doubling on piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings. Duration ca 22 min.

Sibelius wrote his last symphony—his Seventh—in 1924. At first he was loath to call it a symphony because of its unusual one-movement form. He conducted the work's first performance, in fact, under the title *Fantasia sinfonica* in Stockholm on March 24, 1924. His aim was always one of unity through interconnected motives and of letting the material dictate the evolution of its own form. Such tendencies can already be seen in his first six symphonies, which often show motivic connections between movements and

individual approaches to structure.

With the Seventh, Sibelius crowned his own symphonic achievement and—dare we say—that of all nineteenth-century composers who strove toward a one-movement unified form. We think, for example, of Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy, Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor, and Strauss's tone poems. Here in his Seventh Symphony, Sibelius smooths over the distinction between an abstract symphonic form and a narrative tone poem. We do hear different sections, contrasting moods, and reprises of material, but they do not follow the conventional four-movement pattern. Even more remarkably, these episodes flow from one to the other in such a manner as to play with the listener's perception of what is fast and what is slow, thereby confounding our sense of where one section begins and another ends.

One might say it was a symphonic achievement beyond which the composer himself could not go. Sibelius's only important orchestral work after the Seventh was his tone poem *Tapiola*, written in 1926. He tried to write an Eighth Symphony and even got so far as to send the opening portion to a copyist, saying seven more comparable fascicles would be coming. But despite much prodding from conductors through the 1930s for the completed work, Sibelius had reached a compositional crisis and was unable to complete it. It is said that he consigned a full laundry basket of manuscripts to the flames in the mid-1940s, most likely including his work on the Eighth Symphony. Until his death in 1957 he added only a few inconsequential choral and chamber pieces to his output.

Though feted in his native Finland as a national hero, Sibelius's reputation abroad fluctuated as wildly as that of any composer in history. His Second Symphony and Violin Concerto never disappeared from the concert hall, but

periods existed when his other works were scarcely played outside of Finland and historians glossed over his contribution. Currently, a long overdue scholarly assessment of his work is underway, and many more of his works, including the Seventh Symphony, are again finding the audiences they richly deserve.

Because of the Seventh Symphony's original approach to form, widely divergent interpretations have been offered. Most agree, however, on certain underlying concepts, including the "bookends" of the slow, majestic opening and closing sections in C major and the importance of the glorious trombone solo that emerges out of the climax of the opening section. This trombone solo—possibly a reference to the famous horn call in the finale of Brahms's First Symphony—returns twice more at structurally important moments. The next occurrence, in somber C minor, follows a fast section about halfway through, when the strings have wound down into a kind of ominous unison slow eddying. The theme makes its third appearance near the opening of the final slow section in panoramic splendor over pulsating strings. The Symphony concludes broadly in the home key, with a final yearning dissonance, whose resolution in the last measure resonates deeply and satisfyingly.

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"Elegy" from August 4, 1964

STEVEN STUCKY (b. 1949)

August 4, 1964 is a concert drama commissioned by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and premiered in September 2008. The "Elegy" from this work is scored for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contra-bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, two percussionists, harp, and strings.

August 4, 1964 was commissioned by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in celebration of the 100th anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's birth. It focuses on two events that came to a head on August 4, 1964, events that defined LBJ's presidency and defined that time for many Americans: the discovery of the bodies of three slain civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and the bombing of North Vietnam, which accelerated U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

Several people who worked in LBJ's White House were consulted by Mr. Stucky and librettist Gene Scheer, including longtime United States District Judge and counsel to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Harold Barefoot Sanders, Jr., and Harry Middleton, a Johnson speechwriter and, later, Director of the LBJ Library and Museum. Mr. Scheer's libretto was thoroughly researched at the LBJ Library and elsewhere, and includes actual words from transcripts of White House phone conversations and government documents, as well as letters from the mothers of the slain civil rights workers. In fact, over 95% of the words sung in the full version of the work are the actual words of people involved in those turbulent times.

At the conclusion of the piece, a haunting poem by Englishman Sir Stephen Harold Spender, noted for his works expressing the politically conscience-stricken, is set to music. This poem held special meaning for the mother of stricken civil rights worker Andrew Goodman.

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Suite from *The Firebird* (*L'oiseau de feu*)

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky was born "in Oranienbaum (now Lomonosov) in Russia on June 17, 1882. He died in New York

City on April 6, 1971. He began work on The Firebird (also known by its Russian title, Zhar'-ptitsa) in the autumn of 1909 while staying at the country home of the Rimsky-Korsakov family (even before receiving the commission from Sergei Diaghilev), and completed it early in the spring of 1910 in St. Petersburg. Its premiere took place at the Paris Opera on June 25, 1910 with G. Pierné conducting. The complete ballet is a substantial work, running about 45 minutes. Stravinsky prepared three different concert suites from the complete ballet in 1911, 1919, and 1945. The version heard at tonight's performance dates from 1919. The scoring of this suite (much reduced from the original work) is for 2 flutes (both doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, xylophone, harp, piano, and strings. Duration ca. 23 min.

In February of 1908, the Paris Opera mounted a spectacular production of Modest Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, starring the great Fyodor Chaliapin. Staged and performed entirely by Russians, its huge success brought fame to its guiding genius, the theatrical impresario Sergei Diaghilev. Thus encouraged, Diaghilev resolved to institute a full season of theatrical performances employing the best Russian dancers and musicians in productions created by outstanding Russian visual artists. The new company, called *Les Ballets Russes*, had its debut in May of 1909, and was a smash hit from the very start.

During its first season, Diaghilev relied mostly on pre-existing music from the Russian repertory, or potpourris of other composers' music. For example, Stravinsky's first commission from Diaghilev was to orchestrate some piano pieces by Chopin for the ballet *Les*

Sylphides—a task he shared with five other composers: Anatoliy Lyadov, Nikolai Tcherepnin, Alexandr Glazunov, Nikolai Sokolov, and Sergei Taneyev. Nevertheless, it was clear from the beginning to Diaghilev and his colleagues that for the fledgling ensemble to make its mark they needed a series of new works. These works would tell stories drawn from Russian folktales and use décors by Russian artists that drew on themes and elements from Russian native art.

The centerpiece of the 1910 season would be a work in a new genre, writes Professor Richard Taruskin of UC Berkeley's Music Department, namely:

... a Russian neonationalist ballet that could take the place of the operas that were no longer economically feasible to produce but that had represented for the French an authentically and seductively exotic Russian art.*

Choosing the subject for the new work was easy; it had to be the *Firebird*. The *Firebird* is a prominent figure in Russian folklore. As Professor Taruskin informs us, she was:

Gorgeous yet enigmatic, a thing of preternatural, elemental freedom; she personified the indifference of beauty to the desires and cares of very mankind. In this, she was the very symbol of art-for-art's-sake

The only problem was that there is no Russian fairy story in which the *Firebird* takes a major role in the plot. The solution was to create a new folktale, combining features from various stories. Pyotr Potyomkin, a poet in Diaghilev's circle, sketched the basic idea for the plot by drawing on a popular poem by Yakov

**Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Polonsky, “A Winter Journey.” The task of fleshing out this sketch into a full-fledged ballet scenario was assigned to a committee, but the bulk of the work seems to have been done by Mikhail Fokine, Diaghilev’s choreographer.

The plot, summarized by Stravinsky biographer Eric Walter White, runs as follows:

A young Prince, Ivan Tsarevich, wanders into [the evil ogre] Kashchey’s magic garden at night in pursuit of the Firebird, whom he finds fluttering round a tree bearing golden apples. He captures it and extracts a feather as forfeit before agreeing to let it go. He then meets a group of thirteen maidens and falls in love with one of them, only to find that she and the other twelve maidens are princesses under the spell of Kashchey.

When dawn comes and the princesses have to return to Kashchey’s palace, he breaks open the gates to follow them inside; but he is captured by Kashchey’s guardian monsters and is about to suffer the usual penalty of petrification, when he remembers the magic feather. He waves it; and at his summons the Firebird appears and reveals to him the secret of Kashchey’s immortality [his soul, in the form of an egg, is preserved in a casket]. Opening the casket, Ivan smashes the vital egg, and the ogre immediately expires. His enchantments dissolve, all the captives are freed, and Ivan and his Tsarevna are betrothed with due solemnity.†

[The suite performed this evening contains only about half of the music in the ballet, so not all of these episodes are represented.]

Stravinsky was not Diaghilev’s first

choice to compose *Firebird*. Diaghilev began by approaching his principal musician, Tcherepnin, who composed several numbers but then abandoned the work. Diaghilev then went to the rest of the composers who had contributed to *Les Sylphides*, one after the other, with no success. Stravinsky, meanwhile, was aware of what was going on, and assumed that at some point Diaghilev would get around to asking him. So confident was he that he began work on the score in October or November of 1909, well before receiving the commission! Finally, Diaghilev decided to entrust the work to the relatively unknown Stravinsky.

The young Igor Fyodorovich certainly rose to the occasion. The dazzling score is a rich amalgam of Russian folk song, exotic harmonies, and brilliant orchestration—the fruits of his labors with Rimsky-Korsakov. Stravinsky sets up different harmonic realms for the different classes of characters. The humans (the prince and the princesses) inhabit a diatonic (if occasionally chromatically inflected) world marked by folksong-like melodies. The music of the magical creatures (including both the Firebird herself and Kashchey) is suffused with chromaticism, indulging in tonality-bending devices such as octatonic scales (another Rimskian trademark) and tritones.

This is laid out at the very opening of the ballet, in the brief Introduction. The ominous figure in the low strings is the motive representing the Firebird herself: a descending melodic tritone containing a major third and two half-steps. After reaching the bottom, the figure reverses itself and rises, this time incorporating a minor third. This figure repeats as an ostinato, enabling us to hear the oscillation between major and minor thirds more clearly. Eventually, the trombones enter playing a series of major and minor thirds in alternation—this music represents Kashchey. Thus, both major characters

from the realm of magic derive their musical material from the same source. In the ballet proper, Stravinsky distinguishes them primarily through instrumental color, giving the Firebird brilliant orchestration (as one would expect) and relegating Kashchey to the nether regions of the orchestra.

The Introduction leads without break into the Firebird’s dance. This introduces the title character, who is being pursued by Prince Ivan in Kashchey’s enchanted garden. Stravinsky uses dizzyingly acrobatic orchestral gestures (derived from the Firebird’s motive) to depict the flight of the bird as she flits through the garden. The glittering orchestration of the passage (employing primarily the upper winds, piano, harp, and plucked strings) matches the radiance of her plumage.

The very beautiful “Round Dance of the Princesses” provides a stately accompaniment to the thirteen young women under Kashchey’s spell. Its melody is folk tune of the type known as “khorovod,” an ancient Russian dance traditionally performed by women. After a brief introductory passage based on a diatonic version of the Firebird’s motive, the solo oboe plays one of the two actual Russian folk-songs in the ballet. The end of the tune is a foretaste of the grand melody which is the basis for the Finale. A section in a quicker tempo uses another tune in Russian folk style. The quiet ending leaves one unprepared for the Infernal Dance of King Kashchey, which begins with one of the most ear-splitting chords in all of music. Stravinsky uses syncopated rhythms and snarling brass to depict the violence of the evil ogre and his henchmen. Brief lyrical moments express the sorrows of his suffering victims.

The lyrical Berceuse (Lullaby) features a solo for the bassoon in the style of a Russian folk melody, accompanied by harp and strings. In the second half, Stravinsky combines the diatonic bassoon melody with the chromatic Firebird

theme—a magical effect. A series of eerie chromatic string chords leads into the Finale, which represents the general rejoicing after the defeat of Kashchey. A solo horn plays another khorovod, whose text tells of the love of a noble youth for a young girl—appropriate for the betrothal of Prince Ivan and his Tsarevna. The tune is repeated many times, with different harmonizations and orchestrations, building in power through the course of the movement. Just before the climax, the strings interrupt with one last statement of the Firebird’s theme, as she blesses the throng before flying away for good. At the folk tune’s apotheosis, Stravinsky shifts it into the unusual meter of 7/4 and harmonizes it to sound like the ringing of huge bells.

Firebird was an immediate success. It made the reputation of the Ballets Russes and established Stravinsky as one of the most important composers of the 20th century. His collaboration with Diaghilev continued until the latter’s death in 1929, but in the intervening years they produced such masterpieces as *Petrushka* (1911), *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913), *Pulcinella* (1920), and *Les Noces* (1923). Eventually, Diaghilev also commissioned works from non-Russian composers, including Claude Debussy (*L’après-midi d’un faune*, 1911, and *Jeux*, 1913), Maurice Ravel (*Daphis et Chloë*, 1913), Erik Satie (*Parade*, 1917) and Manuel de Falla (*Il tricorno*, 1919).

As the years passed, Stravinsky came to resent the popularity of *Firebird*, although he conducted more than one thousand performances of it in his lifetime. But still he worried that the success of *Firebird* overshadowed his later accomplishments. “And, oh yes, to complete the picture,” he later wrote, “I was once addressed by a man in an American railway dining car, and quite seriously, as ‘Mr. Fireberg.’”

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†Stravinsky: *The Composer and his Works*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.