The St. Olaf College
Department of Music

presents

The St. Olaf Orchestra

STEVEN AMUNDSON, conductor

Sunday, April 25, 2010 ~ 3:30 p.m.

Boe Chapel, Northfield, Minnesota
Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov was a member of the “Mighty Handful,” a group of five Russian Nationalist composers formed by Mily Balakirev in St. Petersburg during the 1860s. The group freely shared musical ideas and styles that were vital in the formation of the Russian Nationalist style. Rimsky-Korsakov was born into a noble family in a small town east of St. Petersburg. His musical training began at a young age, although his studies were those of an amateur – his older brother had decided that Nikolay was destined for a naval career. It was not until his 1861 meeting with Balakirev, in which the older man offered to be his musical tutor, that he began any serious study of music. His incredible talent was readily apparent, and he was soon offered a position at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which he accepted despite the damage it inflicted on his relationship with the rest of the Mighty Handful, who were staunch amateurists.

Rimsky-Korsakov’s Scheherazade was composed in 1888 and is based on stories from One Thousand and One Arabian Nights, the famous collection of Middle Eastern folk tales. The composer provides the following program in the score:

The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the perfidy and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her own life by interesting him in the tales she told him through 1001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan continually put off her execution, and at last entirely abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Scheherazade relate to him, citing the verses of poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale and story into story.

The work is most important for the composer’s ingenious orchestration. Following in the Russian Nationalist style, he re-orchestrates and re-colors themes through varying instrumentations, rather than developing them in the Germanic style of breaking themes into repetitive motives and carrying them through various key areas.

The first movement, “The Sea and Sinbad’s Ship,” begins with an exposition of two important themes for the piece. The first is the heavy, ponderous Sultan’s theme. Scheherazade’s tune, played by the solo violin, follows it. Each subsequent movement contains a statement of this theme, reflecting the princess’s weaving of the tales. The rest of the movement incorporates the two main themes with undulating arpeggiations evocative of the sea. The contrasting styles of the melodies are set in opposition to each other, and slight changes in orchestration bring out different aspects of the two characters. The movement unfolds in waves, building to three climaxes, only to fall back restfully after each.

The second movement, “The Story of the Kalandar Prince,” features a number of woodwind soloists. First are two statements of the movement’s primary theme by the bassoon and oboe. The stately theme becomes more lively when taken over by the first violins and later the whole woodwind section. The A section winds to a quiet close, then the low strings and bassoons jolt us awake, introducing a brass fanfare related to the sultan’s theme by its melodic shape and juxtaposition of dotted and triplet rhythms. There are two recitative-like passages that develop the movement’s initial theme, first for clarinet and later for bassoon. After the clarinet cadenza we return to the military fanfare theme, and the bassoon cadenza is followed by a return of the opening capriccioso.

Unlike the other movements, “The Young Prince and Princess” does not begin with Scheherazade’s tune. Instead, unison violins introduce the “prince” theme that is the basis of most of the movement. Statements of it are initially interspersed with solo woodwind flourishes,
an idea that later happens in tandem with the theme. Later, the snare drum and clarinet introduce a contrasting allegretto, the main theme of which recalls the earlier melody. After a cadenza for solo violin, the movement returns to where it began, but this time with (just a hair) more passion.

The sultan crashes in to open the last movement, and Scheherazade responds in kind with a modified version of her theme. One imagines a frenetic sultan demanding a story, and Scheherazade capitulates, but not before one last forceful statement of her theme. We hear the “Festival at Baghdad,” a lively tarantella in which both of the themes from the third movement return. The festival suddenly gives way to the arpeggiated figures from the first movement and we are back at sea. This time, however, the ship succumbs to the storm, with the now familiar themes dashed against chromatic scales in the woodwinds and strings. The conclusion is soft and hushed, similar to the ending of the first movement. The two contrasting themes that pervade the work come together one last time, but with the sultan’s theme transformed and calmed.

Vocalise op. 34, no. 14

Sergey Vasilyevich Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Sergey Rachmaninov was the last of the Russian Romantic composers and a highly accomplished pianist. Although he lived well into the twentieth century, he maintained his lush, late-Romantic sound throughout his career. His Vocalise, the last of fourteen songs in op. 34, is demonstrative of his distinctive style. The work was dedicated to Russian soprano Antonina Nezhdanova.

The principle feature of a vocalise is that it is a text-less piece for voice(s). The transcription performed this afternoon is by Rachmaninoff. Originally in C-sharp minor, it is here transposed into E minor. The form is simply AAB with a coda. The first violins carry the solo line throughout the work. Eighth notes comprise the first section accompaniment, and in the second section it becomes more melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically active. The melody is undoubtedly one of the most haunting and memorable in the entire classical repertoire.

Transformations of Darkness and Light

Linda Tutas Haugen

I  Journey and Celebration
II  An Empty Place
III  Each Thing is Everything Forever
IV  Rebirth and Spirits Dancing

The National Kidney Foundation commissioned Transformations of Darkness and Light to commemorate fifty years of organ transplantation, and it premiered on July 29, 2004, as part of the 2004 Transplant Games. The piece has four movements, each with a literary text relating to the varied emotional experiences of those whose lives have been affected by this lifesaving process. The word Transformation refers to the many personal changes in individual lives as well as the development of medical and surgical techniques over the last fifty years. The composition was conceived in the spirit of inspiration and hope, and is dedicated to the thousands of organ donors, patients, families, caregivers, and researchers who have made transplant surgery a life-sustaining reality.

I. Journey and Celebration

... In the worst years of our madness the memory of this sky had never left me. It was this that in the end had saved me from despair. In Tipasa, the world is born again each day in a light always new. In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me lay an invincible summer.

—Albert Camus, from Return to Tipasa
II. An Empty Place

In desperate hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking her I have come to thy door.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish—no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into the ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe. 

— Rabindranath Tagore

from Gitanjali, LXXXVII

III. Each Thing is Everything Forever

Although I die, I shall continue to live in everything that is.

The buffalo eats the grass and I eat him.

When I die the earth eats me and sprouts forth new grass.

Therefore, nothing is ever lost and each thing is in everything forever. 

— Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota

IV. Rebirth and Spirits Dancing

... All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated ....

As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness.

Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main …

Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

— John Donne, from Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, 1623

The Woodstock Chimes used in this performance were custom-made by Garry Kvistad of Woodstock Percussion, Inc.

Program notes for Rimsky-Korsakov and Rachmaninov by Isaac Chaput, ’10
Program notes for Transformations of Darkness and Light by Linda Tutas Haugen
Linda Tutas Haugen earned a bachelor of arts degree in music from St. Olaf College (class of 1976), and a master of arts degree in music composition and theory from the University of Minnesota where she studied with Pulitzer Prize winner Dominick Argento. She has written for a variety of vocal and instrumental genres, including chamber music, orchestral, solo voice, choral, and opera. Her music has received critical acclaim as “music of character and genuine beauty.” [Minneapolis Star and Tribune] Opera Today praised Haugen’s opera, Pocahontas, as “superbly crafted,” “engaging,” and “beautiful and often powerful.”

Haugen has received numerous grants and fellowships, including awards from the American Composers Forum, the Bush Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, the Jerome Foundation, and Meet The Composer. Prominent commissions include a 25th Anniversary work for the San Francisco Girls Chorus, an orchestral composition for the National Kidney Foundation in celebration of 50 years of organ transplantation, a NEA funded work for the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies, and a piece commissioned by the American Guild of Organists for its 2008 National Convention. She recently completed an ACF Faith Partners Residency, as well as an opera for the Virginia Arts Festival and the Virginia Opera commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown. A new work for wind ensemble premiered in 2009.

Her works have been performed by a variety of ensembles, including Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, Virginia Opera, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Chiara String Quartet. She is a member of ASCAP. Her website is: www.lindatutashaugen.com.

This performance is generously supported by a grant from Meet the Composer.

THANK YOU to all those who offered their time, expertise and support of the “Give To Life: Organ Donation and Transplantation” activities at St. Olaf College this month. The gracious assistance of the following individuals and organizations are most appreciated!


Thanks also to those who are ringing chimes at this performance: Kara Ilioff, Ellie Kale, Bruce King, Greg Kneser, Susan Mau Larson, Kendra Odd, Dr. Crittenden Ohlemacher, and Pete Sandberg.
THE ST. OLAF ORCHESTRA
STEVEN AMUNDSON, CONDUCTOR ~ TERRA WIDDIFIELD, MANAGER

VIOLÍN
Olivia Bailey, Port Angeles, Wash. [Anna Bakk, Medina, Minn.]
Greta Bauer, Minneapolis, Minn. [Allison Bengfort, Davenport, Iowa]
Lars Berggren, Lindberg, Kan. [Green Bouzard, Waverly, Iowa]
Madeline Brumback, Blacksburg, Va. [Michaela Gansen, Cedar Falls, Iowa]
Kiersten Holand, Park Ridge, Ill. [††Michaela Gansen, Cedar Falls, Iowa]
Olivia Krueger, Omaha, Neb. [Emily Mullaney, Gilbert, Iowa]
††Hannah Reitz, Northfield, Minn. [†Katherine Jones, Woodland Park, Colo.]
Olivia Krueger, Omaha, Neb. [Laurel Lynch, Ester, Alaska]
Emily Mullaney, Gilbert, Iowa [Ean Ulrich, Owatonna, Minn.]

VIOLÍN II
Sarah Aune, Middleton, Wis. [**Isaac Chaput, Mansfield Center, Conn.]
Janelle East, Spicer, Minn. [Ellen Hartford, Stow, Mass.]
Jonathan Henn, Golden Valley, Minn. [Lauren Kurtz, Mankato, Minn.]
Joseph Mitchell, Minneapolis, Minn. [Catherine Monson, Austin, Minn.]
Megan Peterson, Grand Forks, N.D. [Sarah Rinehart, Northfield, Minn.]
Sarah Rinehart, Northfield, Minn. [Katarina Schmitt, Naperville, Ill.]
Ean Ulrich, Owatonna, Minn. [Colleen Schaefle, Anoka, Minn.]

VIOLA
**Geoff Carlisle, Happy Valley, Ore. [Karen Erstad, Minnetonka, Minn.]
Claire Folts, Hershey, Penn. [Mary Elise Hahn, Cedar Falls, Iowa]
Brita Johnson, Anchorage, Alaska [Dayna Jondal, Austin, Minn.]
Julia Ortner, Bloomington, Minn. [Anna Nelson, Waukesha, Wis.]
Crystal Spontak, Fairbanks, Alaska [Kyle Svingen, Omaha, Neb.]
Zachary Teska, Loveland, Colo.

CELLO
Ben Arbeiter, Rapid City, S.D. [Sara Cattanach, Lake Elmo, Minn.]
Amy Chatelaine, Owatonna, Minn. [Sarah Gingerich, Conway, Ark.]

**Hilary James, Golden, Colo. [Elizabeth Knapp, Anchorage, Alaska]
Paul Sauey, Reedsburg, Wis. [Audrey Slote, Meadville, Pa.]
Stephen Sokolouski, Maplewood, Minn. [Rachel Wiers, Cincinnati, Ohio]
Laura Zimmermann, Racine, Wis. [Eri Isomura, Lauderdale, Minn.]

BASS
Evan Anderson, Golden, Colo. [**Bayard Carlson, Sioux Falls, S.D.]
Peder Garnaas-Halvorson, St. Paul, Minn. [Andrew Nail, Bloomington, Minn.]
Kara Sajjeske, Elmhurst Ill. [**Anna Hagens, Middleton, Wis.]

FLUTE
**Megan Makeever, Bozeman, Mont. [Vanamali Medina, Clarkdale, Ariz.]
Corinne Mona, Severna Park, Md. [Christopher Sherwood-Gabrielson, Scandia, Minn.]

OBOE
Megan Dvorak, Hayward, Wis. [Ashley Enke, Omaha, Neb.]
**Lauren Seidel, Minneapolis, Minn [**Hilary James, Golden, Colo.]

CLARINET
**Aaron Arcus, Minneapolis, Minn. [Joe Sferra, Toledo, Ohio]
Christopher Sherwood-Gabrielson, Scandia, Minn. [**Hilary James, Golden, Colo.]

BASSOON
**Josh John, Beaverton, Ore. [Ellie Kale, Wrenshall, Minn.]
Gwendolyn Ohlemacher, Canton, Ohio [**Hilary James, Golden, Colo.]

HORN
Jordan Kling, Ashland, Ore. [Emily Morris, Kennett Square, Pa.]
Melanie Paulsen, Center Junction, Iowa [Matthew Perry, Des Moines, Wash.]
Clayton Smith, Norcross, Ga. [**Hilary James, Golden, Colo.]

TRUMPET
Neil Hulbert, Tacoma, Wash. [**Garrett Klein, Port Orchard, Wash.]
Jaclyn Melander, Mounds View, Minn.

TROMBONE
**Michael Murchison, Laurel, Md. [Benjamin Sink, Manchester, N.H.]

Zach Gingerich, Conway, Ark.

Dan Larson, Minnetonka, Minn.

Andrew Belsaas, Rapid City, S.D. [D.J. Erickson, Bloomington, Minn.]
Thomas Fristad, Sartell, Minn. [Alex Van Rysselberge, Lake Oswego, Ore.]

Joy Gunderson, Phoenix, Ariz.

Jeremy Krahn, Manitoba, Canada

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