

Program Notes for Ginastera's Harp Concerto May 14 & 16

***Last Round for String Ensemble* OSVALDO GOLIJOV (B. 1960)**

Composed in 1992 and 1996.

Premiered on October 25, 1996 in Birmingham, England, conducted by Stefan Asbury.

In our increasingly interconnected world, the multi-cultural music of Osvaldo Golijov speaks in a voice that is powerful yet touching, contemporary yet timeless. Golijov's parents, a piano teacher mother and a physician father, emigrated from Russia to Argentina, where Osvaldo was born on December 5, 1960 in La Playa, thirty miles from Buenos Aires, into a rich artistic environment in which he was exposed from infancy to such varied musical experiences as classical chamber music, Jewish liturgical and klezmer music, and the tango nuevo of Astor Piazzolla. He studied piano and composition at the local conservatory before moving in 1983 to Jerusalem, where he entered the Rubin Academy as a composition student of Mark Kopytman and immersed himself in the colliding musical traditions of that city.

Golijov came to the United States in 1986 to do his doctoral work with George Crumb at the University of Pennsylvania, and spent summers at Tanglewood on fellowship studying with Lukas Foss and Oliver Knussen. In 1990, he won Tanglewood's Fromm Commission, which resulted in *Yiddishbuk*, premiered by the St. Lawrence String Quartet at Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music in July 1992 and winner the following year of the prestigious Kennedy Center Friedheim Award. Golijov came to wide public notice in 2000 with the *Pasión según San Marcos* ("Passion According to Saint Mark"), commissioned in remembrance of the 250th anniversary of Johann Sebastian Bach's death by German conductor Helmut Rilling and the International Bach Academy of Stuttgart. The *Passion* integrates popular and classical idioms in a work that embraces multiple manifestations of the Christian faith in Latin America (and Golijov's own Jewish heritage), and subsequent performances have been received with a tumultuous enthusiasm rarely seen in the concert hall; the recording (on Hänssler Classic) earned a Grammy nomination.

Golijov's works, with their syntheses of European, American and Latin secular cultures and their deep spirituality drawn from both Judaism and Christianity, have brought him international notoriety and, in 2003, a coveted MacArthur Foundation "Genius Award." He was named *Musical America's* "2005 Composer of the Year," and in 2006, Lincoln Center presented a festival called "The Passion of Osvaldo Golijov," featuring performances of his large works (including the *St. Mark Passion* and the opera *Ainadamar*), chamber music and film scores. In 2008, he received a Vilcek Foundation Prize, which annually recognizes "foreign-born individuals for extraordinary contributions to society in the United States" in the fields of arts and biomedical research. His recent compositions include: the song cycle *Ayre* (commissioned by Carnegie Hall and premiered in March 2004 by Dawn Upshaw as part of the inaugural season of Zankel Concert Hall); a contribution to *Holocaust — A Music Memorial Film* (a television documentary directed by James Kent for BBC Two); the opera

Ainadamar ("Fountain of Tears"), with a libretto by Tony Award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang (M. Butterfly) inspired by the life of Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca, which was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra for the Tanglewood Music Center and performed in concert at Tanglewood in August 2003 and given its stage premiere in July 2005 by Santa Fe Opera; Azul for Cello and Orchestra, a 125th Anniversary Commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, premiered at Tanglewood in August 2006 by Yo-Yo Ma and conductor Donald Runnicles; and the score for Francis Ford Coppola's 2007 film Youth Without Youth. He is currently at work on a commission for the Metropolitan Opera.

Oswaldo Golijov is Loyola Professor of Music at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he has taught since 1991; he also teaches at the Boston Conservatory and the Tanglewood Music Center. He has held residencies with the Marlboro, Ravinia, Spoleto USA and Cape and Islands music festivals, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Merkin Hall and the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Music Alive series.

The composer writes of Last Round, "Astor Piazzolla, the last great tango composer, was at the peak of his creativity when a stroke killed him in 1992. He left us, in the words of one old tango, 'without saying goodbye,' and that day the musical face of Buenos Aires was abruptly frozen. The creation of that face had started a hundred years earlier with the unlikely combination of African rhythms underlying gauchos' couplets, sung in the style of Sicilian canzonettas over an accompanying Andalusian guitar. As the years passed, all converged towards the bandoneón: a small accordion-like instrument with buttons rather than a keyboard that was invented in Germany in the 19th century to serve as a portable church organ and which, after finding its true home in the bordellos of Buenos Aires' slums in the 1920s, went back to Europe to conquer Paris' high society in the 1930s. Since then it has reigned as the essential instrument for any tango ensemble.

"Piazzolla's bandoneón was able to condense all the symbols of tango. The eroticism of legs and torsos in the dance was reduced to the intricate patterns of his virtuoso fingers (a simple C major scale on the bandoneón zigzags so much as to leave an inexperienced player's fingers tangled). The melancholy of the singer's voice was transposed to the breathing of the bandoneón's continuous opening and closing. The macho attitude of the tangueros was reflected in his pose on stage: standing upright, chest forward, right leg on a stool, the bandoneón on top of it, being by turns raised, battered, caressed.

"I composed Last Round in 1996, prompted by Geoff Nuttall and Barry Shiffman [of the St. Lawrence String Quartet]. They heard a sketch of the second movement, Deaths of the Angel, which I had written in 1992 upon hearing the news of Piazzolla's stroke, and encouraged me to finish it and write another movement to complement it. The title of both the work and the opening movement — Last Round — is borrowed from a short story on boxing by Julio Cortázar, a metaphor for an imaginary chance for Piazzolla's spirit to fight one more time (he got into fistfights throughout his life). The piece is conceived to evoke the sound of an idealized bandoneón. The first movement represents the act of a violent compression of the instrument and the second a final, seemingly endless opening sigh (it is actually a fantasy over the refrain of the song My Beloved Buenos Aires, composed by the legendary Carlos Gardel in the 1930s). But Last Round is also a sublimated tango dance.

Two quartets confront each other, separated by the focal bass, with violins and violas standing up as in the traditional tango orchestras. The bows fly in the air as inverted legs in crisscrossed choreography, always attracting and repelling each other, always in danger of clashing, always avoiding it with the immutability that can only be acquired by transforming hot passion into pure pattern."

Concerto for Harp and Orchestra, Op. 25
ALBERTO GINASTERA (1916-1983)

Composed in 1956; revised in 1958

Premiered on February 16, 1965 in Philadelphia, conducted by Eugene Ormandy with Nicanor Zabaleta as soloist.

Alberto Ginastera, Argentina's most famous and widely performed composer, was the outstanding creative figure in South American music following the death of Villa-Lobos in 1959. Ginastera's career was divided between composition and education, and in this latter capacity he held posts at leading conservatories and universities in Argentina and at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. His musical works, many written on American commissions, include three operas, two ballets, six concertos, eleven film scores, eight orchestral works, various vocal and choral compositions, and much music for chamber ensembles and piano. Ginastera traveled extensively to oversee the presentation of his scores and to adjudicate major musical competitions. For his contributions to music, he was honored with many awards, including memberships in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The Harp Concerto marked a significant turning point in the development of Ginastera's musical style. The composer categorized his works before the mid-1950s as "Nationalistic," drawing inspiration and material for them from the rhythms and melodies of the Argentine folksongs and dances known as *musica criolla*, though he seldom used literal quotations. This nationalistic music is imbued with the symbolism of the pampas and the "gauchesco" tradition, for which Ginastera became the leading musical spokesman. His second style ("Neo-Expressionism") began around 1958, and encompassed most of his later compositions, works in which he employed such avant-garde techniques as polytonality, serial writing, quarter-tones and other micro intervals, and an extension of instrumental resources. The Harp Concerto stands at the threshold between Ginastera's two musical idioms, blending the vibrant rhythms and characteristic melodic leadings of indigenous Argentine music with the expanded harmonic, textural and coloristic resources of his gestating later manner. The strongest thread tying together his old and new modes of musical speech is not technical, however, but expressive, as he indicated in writing about his 1961 Piano Concerto: "A work must produce a feeling of comprehension, a flow of attraction between public and artist, independent of structural implications.... Art is first perceived by our senses. It then affects our sentiments and in the end awakens our intelligence. A work which speaks only to the intelligence of man will never reach his heart.... Without sensibility the work of art is only a cold mathematical study, and without

intelligence or technique it is only chaos. Thus the perfect formula would be sensitive beauty plus technical skill." The Harp Concerto is such a work.

The Concerto follows the traditional three movements, though the form is amended by the inclusion of an extended solo cadenza as the bridge to the finale. The opening movement follows the usual sonata-form pattern: a close-interval main theme is presented by the harp to the accompaniment of whirring figures in the strings and sharp punctuations from the winds and percussion; the second theme, marked in its first measure by a wide-ranging arpeggio from the harp, follows after some soft timpani taps, a brief silence and a sentence of simple prefatory chords from the soloist. The middle of the movement contains a passage of dynamic energy exploiting the rhythmic ambiguity inherent in the movement's meter (and calling for "col legno" — tapping with the wood of the bow — from the strings) and a development of the main theme initiated by string tremolos and flutter-tonguing on the flutes. The main theme and second theme in abbreviated versions (separated by a brief cadenza) round out the first movement.

The second movement consists of a large central section framed at beginning and end by strongly contrasting music. A lugubrious imitative passage rising from the low strings, a timbre and texture reminiscent of the fugue in Strauss' Zarathustra, opens the movement. The harp and woodwinds trade expressive comments on the strings' opening statement. The principal part of the movement is given over to a paragraph of "night music" in which the harp's snapping figures are set against an eerie, rustling background, a quality perhaps indebted to the slow movements of several of Béla Bartók's orchestral compositions. The return of the tiny string fugue and the harp's comments upon it close the movement. A dramatic and virtuosic cadenza serves as the gateway to the finale, a rondo whose structure is marked by the sharp reports of the tom-toms heralding the appearances of the main theme.

Siegfried Idyll

RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)

Composed in 1870.

Premiered on December 25, 1870 at Tribschen, conducted by the composer.

Few moments in Richard Wagner's life were ruled by tenderness — he was almost certainly the meanest and most self-centered of all the great composers, rivaled perhaps only by Jean-Baptiste Lully, who ruthlessly quashed the careers of potential rivals for three decades with the blessing of Louis XIV. The only cell of Wagner's life that consistently elicited any soft emotions from him was the relationship with his second wife, Cosima, and the family they reared together. The Siegfried Idyll is touching testimony to Wagner's domestic happiness.

Cosima Liszt, daughter of the redoubtable Franz and the Countess Marie d'Agoult, was born on December 24, 1837 at Bellagio, on Lake Como. She was raised among Europe's cultural

elite, and chose for a husband the brilliant pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow. They were married on August 18, 1857, and settled in Munich, where Bülow became one of Wagner's most ardent disciples. Wagner, unhappy in a childless marriage to Minna Planer, noticed Cosima, too much, it seems, and they became lovers in the summer of 1864. They conceived a child, born the following August, and brazenly named her Isolde. Bülow, who conducted the premiere of *Tristan* two months later, acknowledged the child as his own. In 1867, a second daughter, Eva, was born of the liaison. Minna died that same year. Bülow again accepted the baby; in June of the following year, he premiered *Die Meistersinger*. The local uproar forced Wagner to retreat from Munich, and he took a house in Switzerland at Tribschen (now a Wagner museum) overlooking Lake Lucerne, where Cosima frequently came for extended visits. She left Bülow for good in November 1868, and joined Wagner at Tribschen. ("If it had been anyone but Wagner, I would have shot him," was Bülow's resigned comment.) In March 1869, Wagner resumed work on the Ring, dormant for eleven years. A third child, Siegfried, was born at Tribschen on June 6th; Bülow's divorce was final in July; Cosima and Wagner were married in August. "She has defied every disapprobation and has taken upon herself every condemnation," Wagner wrote of his new wife. "She has borne me a wonderfully beautiful boy, whom I boldly call Siegfried; he is now growing, together with my work; he gives me a new, long life, which has at last attained a meaning. Thus we get along without the world, from which we have wholly withdrawn."

It was Cosima who started the family tradition of celebrating birthdays with a bit of Hausmusik. On Richard's birthday in 1869 (May 22nd), he was awakened by a musician blasting Siegfried's horn call outside his bedroom door at dawn. The following year Cosima assembled a military band of 55 players in the grounds of Tribschen to serenade her husband with his own *Huldigungsmarsch* ("Homage March"). To return the kindness, Wagner wrote a chamber orchestra piece during November 1870 as a surprise for Cosima's birthday, celebrated since her childhood on Christmas, a day after the actual date. He gave the score to the young Hans Richter, who was to be the first music director of Bayreuth, who copied out the parts, traveled to Zurich to engage musicians, and arranged rehearsals for December 11 and 21 in that city. (Cosima was a bit unsettled by her husband's unexplained absences on those dates, but kept her peace.) The musicians arrived at Lucerne early on Christmas Eve, when Wagner held a final rehearsal in the *Hôtel du Lac*. The next morning, a Sunday, the small band of fifteen musicians — four violins, two violas (one played by Richter, who also handled the few trumpet measures in the last pages), cello, bass, flute, oboe, bassoon and pairs of clarinets and horns — tuned in the kitchen, quietly set up their music stands on the narrow staircase leading to Cosima's bedroom, with Wagner on the top landing, and began their music at exactly 7:30.

"I can give you no idea, my children, about that day, nor about my feelings," Cosima wrote in the diary she left for her family. "As I awoke, my ear caught a sound, which swelled fuller and fuller; no longer could I imagine myself to be dreaming: music was sounding, and such music! When it died away, Richard came into my room with the children and offered me the score of the symphonic birthday poem. I was in tears, but so were all the rest of the household." Wagner had inscribed the score, "Tribschen Idyll, with Fidi's Bird-Song and Orange Sunrise, presented as a Symphonic Birthday Greeting to his Cosima by her Richard, 1870." "Fidi" was Siegfried's nickname; Wagner heard a bird song — "Fidi's bird song" — at the moment of the boy's birth, noted it down, and used it in this piece; the "orange sunrise"

was the memory of the dawn light washing the walls on Siegfried's first morning. The new piece was played twice again that day, separated by a performance of Beethoven's Sextet. The "Triebchen Idyll" remained strictly a family affair until the financial distress caused by Wagner's extravagant life style forced him to give it a public performance, at Meiningen on March 10, 1877, and sell the score for publication a year later, when it was titled Siegfried Idyll. "My secret treasure has become everybody's property," Cosima lamented.

Wagner incorporated into this orchestral lullaby the German children's song Schlaf, mein Kind ("Sleep, my Child"), his son's "Bird Song," some newly composed strains and two motives from the opera Siegfried, to which he was applying the finishing touches at the end of 1870. The Siegfried themes were apparently taken from a projected string quartet that Wagner had promised to write for Cosima at the beginning of their relationship, but never finished. (Some truthseekers of small poetic vision have questioned this romantic story by asserting that none of this quartet ever existed as more than part of Wagner's powerful imagination, and that these motives were originally written for the opera.) At any rate, the Siegfried Idyll, as Tovey observed, is "connected with the opera only by a private undercurrent of poetic allusion." It is best heard without making programmatic associations, instead simply enjoying its still sweetness and its "rainbow-coloured orchestration" (Tovey).

Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21 **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)**

Composed in 1799-1800.

Premiered on April 2, 1800 in Vienna, conducted by the composer.

"He was short, about 5 feet, 4 inches, thickset and broad, with a massive head, a wildly luxuriant crop of hair, protruding teeth, a small rounded nose, and a habit of spitting whenever the notion took him. He was clumsy, and anything he touched was liable to be upset or broken. Badly coordinated, he could never learn to dance, and more often than not managed to cut himself while shaving. He was sullen and suspicious, touchy as a misanthropic cobra, believed that everybody was out to cheat him, had none of the social graces, was forgetful, and was prone to insensate rages." Thus the late New York Times critic Harold Schonberg, in his book about The Lives of the Great Composers, described Ludwig van Beethoven, the burly peasant with the unquenchable fire of genius who descended, aged 22, upon Vienna in 1792. Beethoven had been charged by his benefactor in his hometown of Bonn, Count Ferdinand von Waldstein, to go to the Austrian capital and "receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn." He did study for a short time with Haydn, then universally regarded as the greatest living composer, but young Ludwig proved to be a recalcitrant student, and the sessions soon ended, though the two maintained a respectful, if cool, relationship until Haydn's death in 1809.

Beethoven was not to make his first impression upon the Viennese as a composition student, however, but as a pianist — a pianist unlike any seen before. In a world still largely accustomed to the reserved, genteel musical style of pre-Revolutionary classicism, he burst

upon the scene like a fiery meteor. Rather than the elegant, fluent style of a Mozart (dead less than a year at the time of Beethoven's arrival), he played with a seeming wild abandon, thrashing upon the keyboard, breaking strings, trying to draw forth orchestral sonorities from the light, wood-frame Viennese pianos that regularly suffered under his onslaught. He repeatedly entreated piano manufacturers to build bigger, louder, sturdier instruments. (By the 1820s, they had.) Like his style of performance, the music he composed reflected the impassioned, powerful emotions that drove him throughout his entire life.

The Viennese aristocracy took this young lion to its bosom. Beethoven expected as much. Unlike his predecessors, he would not assume the servant's position traditionally accorded to a musician, refusing, for example, not only to eat in the kitchen, but becoming outspokenly hostile if he was not seated next to the master of the house at table. The more enlightened nobility, to its credit, recognized the genius of this gruff Rhinelander, and encouraged his work. Shortly after his arrival, for example, Prince Lichnowsky provided Beethoven with living quarters, treating him more like a son than a guest. Lichnowsky even instructed the servants to answer the musician's call before his own, should both ring at the same time. In large part, such gestures provided for Beethoven's support during his early Viennese years. For most of the first decade after he arrived, Beethoven made some effort to follow the prevailing fashion in the sophisticated city. But though he outfitted himself with good boots, a proper coat, and the necessary accoutrements, and enjoyed the hospitality of Vienna's best houses, there never ceased to roil within him the untamed energy of creativity. It was only a matter of time before the fancy clothes were discarded, as a bear would shred a flimsy paper bag.

The year of the First Symphony — 1800 — was a crucial time in Beethoven's development. By then, he had achieved a success good enough to write to his old friend Franz Wegeler in Bonn, "My compositions bring me in a good deal, and may I say that I am offered more commissions than it is possible for me to carry out. Moreover, for every composition I can count on six or seven publishers and even more, if I want them. People no longer come to an arrangement with me. I state my price, and they pay." Behind him were many works, including the Op. 18 Quartets, the first two piano concertos, and the Pathétique Sonata, that bear his personal imprint. At the time of this gratifying recognition of his talents, however, the first signs of his fateful deafness appeared, and he began the titanic struggle that became one of the gravitational poles of his life. Within two years, driven from the social contact on which he had flourished by the fear of discovery of his malady, he penned the Heiligenstadt Testament, his *cri de coeur* against this wicked trick of the gods. The C major Symphony stands on the brink of this great crisis in Beethoven's life.

Beethoven's music of the 1790s showed an increasingly powerful expression that mirrored the maturing of his genius. The First Symphony, though, is a conservative, even a cautious work. In it, he was more interested in exploring the architectural than the emotional components of the form, and relied on the musical language established by Haydn and Mozart in composing it. In its reliance on a thoroughly logical, carefully conceived structure, this work also set the formal precedent for his later music: though Beethoven dealt with vivid emotional states, the technique of his music was never founded upon any other than the most solid intellectual base. Romain Rolland made this point in his insightful, if flowery essay on "Beethoven in his Thirtieth Year": "The Ego of Beethoven is not that of the

Romantics.... Everything that was characteristic of them would have been repugnant to him — their sentimentality, their lack of logic, their disordered imagination.” Thus Beethoven, “at thirty, already the conqueror of the future,” in Rolland’s phrase, first flexed his symphonic muscles in a work reliant on the style and spirit of the past, not simply to “show he could do it,” but rather to explore and set into his imagination the possibilities of the form that he was to electrify as had no other.

The First Symphony begins with a most unusual slow introduction. The opening chord is a dissonance, a harmony that seems to lead away from the main tonality, which is normally established immediately at the beginning of a Classical work. Though not unprecedented (the well-known and influential C.P.E. Bach consistently took even more daring harmonic flights), it does reinforce the sense of striving, of constantly moving toward resolution that underlies all Beethoven’s works. The sonata form proper begins with the quickening of the tempo and the presentation of the main theme by the strings. More instruments enter, tension accumulates, and the music arrives at the second theme following a brief silence — a technique he derived from Mozart to emphasize this important formal junction. The woodwinds hold forth here, and the remainder of the exposition is given over to two large paragraphs of rising intensity, each punctuated with a firm cadence. The compact development section deals exclusively with the main theme. The recapitulation follows the events of the exposition, but presents them in an intensified setting. The coda again recalls the main theme, and introduces one of the composer’s characteristic traits — the extended repetition of the cadential chords to release the accumulated harmonic tensions of the movement.

The slow second movement, another sonata form, has a canonic main theme and a delicately airy secondary melody. The development employs the melodic leaps of the subordinate theme; the recapitulation is enriched by the addition of contrapuntal accompanying lines. The third movement is the most innovative in the Symphony. Though marked “Menuetto,” its tempo indication, “very fast and lively,” precludes the staid gait of the traditional courtly dance. This is rather one of those whirlwind packets of rhythmic energy that, beginning with the Second Symphony, Beethoven labeled “scherzo.” Its tripartite form (minuet — trio — minuet) follows the Classical model, with strings dominant in the outer sections, and winds in the central portion.

The finale begins with a short introductory sentence comprising halting scale fragments that preview the vivacious main theme of the movement, “let out as a cat from a bag,” assessed Prof. Donald Tovey. Yet another excursion in sonata form, this bustling movement is indebted to the sparkling style of Haydn, and even gives off much of the brilliant wit associated with that composer. All is brought to an end with ribbons of scales rising through the orchestra, and the emphatic concluding measures.

Olin Downes wrote, “Beethoven is trying, in this first symphony of his, to respect the forms and standards of earlier masters than himself, particularly Haydn and Mozart. He is a little constrained in their mold, however, and occasionally cannot help revealing the cloven hoof of the revolutionary beneath the gown of the respectful disciple.”

