



# Program Notes

for kids

**Romantic Tchaikovsky**  
**Saturday, October 24, 2015**  
**8:00 p.m.**  
**Michigan Theater**

**Kodály** Suite from Háry János  
**Tchaikovsky** Pezzo Capriccioso  
**Tchaikovsky** Variations on a Rococo Theme

*Intermission*

**Dvořák** Symphony No. 6 in D major



**Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra**  
*Music in the Key of A<sup>2</sup>*



# Suite from Háry János

by Zoltán Kodály

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

Háry János is an *opera* by Kodály based on folk stories and folk music. Kodály took six parts of the opera, arranged the music for orchestra, and put them together in this *suite*.

### When was it written?

Kodály wrote the suite in 1927, just one year after the first performance of the opera.

### What is it about?

The opera is about a soldier (Háry) who sits in a village inn regaling his listeners with fantastic tales of heroism. He tells them how the Emperor Napoléon's wife fell in love with him, causing Napoléon's army to declare war on Austria. Háry then defeats Napoléon's army single-handedly and dumps Napoléon's wife.

## About the Composer

**Zoltán Kodály** | Born December 16, 1882 in Kecskemét, Hungary | Died March 6, 1967 in Budapest, Hungary

### Career

Throughout his life, Kodály worked to improve music education in Hungary. He wanted every child to be able to read music and sing and he wrote an enormous amount of music for children and amateur musicians.

### Listen for...

This suite uses an instrument called the *Cimbalom*. It is a traditional Hungarian instrument with strings stretched across a trapezoid-shaped wooden box. The musician strikes the strings with two beaters.

Look for and listen for the cimbalom in the third movement, where the use of this Hungarian instrument and a sad viola solo portray Háry's homesickness.



A Cimbalom player

### Fun Facts

Kodály was a song collector. He traveled the countryside writing down folk-songs that he heard people sing.

### Listen for...

About halfway through the piece, the *tempo*, or speed, of the music changes from slow to fast. Watch for the cellist's fingers to move down the *fingerboard* to play the highest notes. Her fingers will be very near to where the *bow* brushes the strings. Then listen for this fast section to return at the very end of the piece.

# Pezzo Capriccioso

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

This is a piece for Cello and Orchestra. It is like a *concerto* in that it features a soloist who sits at the front of the stage, but it contains only one movement and is only

seven minutes long. *Pezzo Capriccioso* means “whimsical piece.”

### When was it written?

Tchaikovsky composed this piece in a single week in the summer of 1877.

### What is it about?

Though the title suggests that this piece is “whimsical,” its minor key and slow *tempo* (speed) make it pretty somber. The mood reflects the fact that he wrote it around the time that one of his good friends was dying.

### Listen for...

The piece begins with the orchestra playing an introduction. Then the cello plays the main *theme*.

The cellist plays a *cadenza* after Variation 5. This is a section where the soloist plays by herself and is allowed to *improvise*, or make up music on the spot. This is a chance for the cellist to show off her technical skill and her musical imagination. You'll notice the other musicians will put down their instruments and the conductor will stop conducting to listen.

After the *cadenza* you will hear Variation 6, which is the saddest sounding of the variations, and the final variation which is the fastest and most difficult.

# Variations on a Rococo Theme

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

Like the *Pezzo Capriccioso*, this piece is *almost a concerto* for cello and orchestra. It is in the form of *Theme and Variations*: The piece begins with a main melody, which is then changed in different ways for each of the following seven variations.

### When was it written?

Tchaikovsky completed this piece in 1877.

## About the Composer

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** | Born May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia | Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

### Family & Career

Tchaikovsky grew up with four brothers, two sisters, and a French nanny. When he was 10, he was sent to a boarding school 800 miles away from his family. While there, he entertained him-

### Fun Facts

As a child, Tchaikovsky loved trying to play melodies on the piano. When his parents tried to limit his “piano time,” he would just bang out melodies on any surface, pretending it was a piano. He once pretended to play the piano on a pane of glass, breaking the glass and cutting his hand.

The music from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* is used in the Disney movie of the same name.



self by going to the opera with his friends and by improvising music on the piano. When a School of Music opened in St. Petersburg in 1862, Tchaikovsky became one of its first students. Tchaikovsky later became Russia's first full-time professional musician.

## Music

Tchaikovsky is best known for his three ballets (*Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*), six symphonies, and the *1812 Overture*.

# Symphony No. 6 in D major

by Antonín Dvořák

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

A *Symphony* is a long piece of music containing three or four *movements*. These movements, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some movements may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more song-like. This symphony has four movements and is about 40 minutes long.

### When was it written?

Dvořák wrote this piece for the Vienna Philharmonic in 1880. However, members of the orchestra objected to playing Dvořák's music due to "Anti-Czech feelings," so the orchestra in Prague gave the premiere of the Symphony in 1881.

## About the Composer

**Antonín Dvořák** | Born September 8, 1841 in Nelahozeves, Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) | Died March 26, 1827 in Prague, Bohemia

### Career

Dvořák was very interested in the music, culture and folklore of his homeland. His first successful composition, the *Slavonic Dances*, was based on the folk music of Bohemia. In 1892, he came to the United States to direct the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. His goal while in the U.S. was to discover "American music," just as he had done with the music of his own country. He wrote newspaper articles in New York in which he suggested that African-American and Native American music should be the basis for a new style of American classical music. Dvořák's most popular piece is his *New World Symphony*, which he wrote while in America and which was premiered by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1893.

### Listen for...

The third movement of the Symphony is a lively Czech dance. Listen for the *piccolo* - the smallest and highest-sounding woodwind instrument - which plays only in this movement. It has a sweet solo accompanied by plucked, or *pizzicato*, strings.



Traditional Czech folk dancers

### Fun Facts

Dvořák was so popular during his lifetime in England and America that Dvořák souvenirs were sold in shops: Dvořák ties, Dvořák walking sticks, Dvořák trading cards. None of these items were endorsed by the composer and he didn't receive any profits from their sale.