

Conductor's Note

As I was preparing to conduct the La Jolla Symphony for this series of concerts, I was drawn into the sound world of Vivian Fung's *Biennale Snapshots*, a work that will receive its American premiere this weekend. In it, Vivian has allowed 'the visual to inspire the aural.' Each movement is based on another work of art featured in the Open Air Museum of the Vancouver Biennale. The work is a powerful example of how the arts, visual and performing, inform one another. It is also a statement that reflects both the timelessness of the artist's relationship with nature and a rumination on the impact that we as humans have upon our world. The piece opens with the orchestra performing a movement of whispers, sighs, and exhalations. It is a peaceful introduction in a work that quickly begins to challenge the listener. The gentle sounds of the second movement, 'Tree,' lead to violent outbursts in the orchestra. We can hear the effects of deforestation. The aural representation forces itself upon the listener. Before the piece ends, the listener journeys through Brazilian folk music, hip hop, the cascading sounds of waves, and a fanfare to cap it all off.

While listening to the piece, you'll be able to watch the videos created by Tina Tallon for our performance. The aural has now inspired the visual and each artist's involvement adds a new level of interpretation and understanding to the work as a whole. This common thread, the collaborative nature of art, runs through this weekend's concerts. As the concert opens with the Nielsen *Flute Concerto*, not only will you have a chance to hear an exciting young soloist, but also the interchange between that player and the orchestra. The music showcases the extraordinary ability of the La Jolla Symphony, with virtuosic writing for the woodwinds and a trombone part that is among the most tricky and exciting in all the repertoire.

Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* ends the concert. It is Mussorgsky's own aural impression of the visual works of his dear friend Viktor Hartmann. Moved to write the music after the sudden death of his friend, and inspired by the posthumous exposition of Hartmann's works, Mussorgsky has not only crafted a musical depiction of visual art but also a remembrance of the artist that was so dear to him. Today, we will play Maurice Ravel's orchestration of the original piano piece. Here, Ravel has transformed the pianistic stylings of Mussorgsky into beautiful trumpet solos, sensual saxophone melodies, and sweeping brass fanfares. It is a masterpiece but the music takes on even more meaning when one understands its transformation from the work of Hartmann to the piano solo of Mussorgsky and eventually into the orchestral showpiece that Ravel has created.

Artists will always find inspiration in the world around them. But the composers featured tonight have engaged in a conversation with their peers, with the very work that inspires them. The final piece in this equation is, of course, you. All this work, the sublime and beautiful, the thought-provoking and challenging, the soothing and the shocking, would mean nothing if there were no one to hear it. If you have come here for *Biennale Snapshots*, I hope that you find joy in the arrival at The Great Gate of Kiev. If *Pictures* is your favorite piece, I hope that you are challenged and entertained by Vivian Fung's new aural depiction of visual artwork. I hope you are inspired to engage with live art and support this very special orchestra that does so much to perform the masterworks of the past along with the music of today. Enjoy the show!

Michael Gerdes