SEATTLE **SYMPHONY** LUDOVIC MORLOT

RASKATOV

PIANO CONCERTO "NIGHT BUTTERFLIES"

TOMOKO MUKAIYAMA, PIANO

STRAVINSKY

THE RITE OF SPRING

SEATTLE SYMPHONY MEDIA

ALEXANDER RASKATOV

Piano Concerto, "Night Butterflies"

IGOR STRAVINSKY

The Rite of Spring

Part I: The Adoration of the Earth

Part II: The Sacrifice

TOTAL TIME 63:19

SEATTLE**SYMPHONY.ORG**

SEATTLE **SYMPHONY**

Founded in 1903, the Seattle Symphony is one of America's leading symphony orchestras and is internationally acclaimed for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Symphony is heard live from September through July by more than 300,000 people. It performs in one of the finest modern concert halls in the world — the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall — in downtown Seattle. Its extensive education and community-engagement programs reach over 100,000 children and adults each year. The Seattle Symphony has a deep commitment to new music, commissioning many works by living composers each season, including John Luther Adams' *Become Ocean*, which won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Music. The orchestra has made more than 140 recordings and has received 12 Grammy nominations, two Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades. In 2014 the Symphony launched its in-house recording label, Seattle Symphony Media. For more information, visit seattlesymphony.org.

Photo: Larey McDaniel

Photo: Ben VanHouten

LUDOVIC MORLOT, CONDUCTOR

As the Seattle Symphony's Music Director, Ludovic Morlot has been received with extraordinary enthusiasm by musicians and audiences alike, who have praised him for his deeply musical interpretations, his innovative programming and his focus on community collaboration. Morlot is also Chief Conductor of La Monnaie, one of Europe's most important opera houses.

In the U.S. Morlot has conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony. Additionally, he has conducted the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Dresden Staatskapelle, Israel Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Saito-Kinen Festival Orchestra and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Trained as a violinist, Morlot studied conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in London and then at the Royal College of Music as recipient of the Norman del Mar Conducting Fellowship. Morlot was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in 2007 in recognition of his significant contributions to music. He is Chair of Orchestral Conducting Studies at the University of Washington School of Music.

TOMOKO MUKAIYAMA, PIANO

Pianist, performer and visual artist Tomoko Mukaiyama was born in Japan and studied in Tokyo, Indiana and Amsterdam. Since her debut recital in Japan in 1990 she has been invited to perform with many outstanding orchestras and ensembles, among them Ensemble Modern, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Tokyo City Philharmonic. Mukaiyama's unique approach to the piano and to music in general has inspired many composers to write new works for her, including Frederic Rzewski, Louis Andriessen and Alexander Raskatov. As a multimodal artist she develops art installations and performing arts projects that combine music with contemporary dance, fashion and visual art. Mukaiyama has cooperated with many different artists, among then Marina Abramović and choreographer Jiří Kylián.

Photo: Takashi Kawashima

SEATTLE **SYMPHONY**

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Zartouhi Dombourian-Eby
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E-FLAT CLARINET
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THE SEATTLE SYMPHONY WISHES TO RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS WHO PERFORMED ON THIS RECORDING:

Neil Balm, Blayne Barnes, Natasha Bazhanov, Joseph Berger, Matthew Berliner, Sue Jane Bryant, Jennifer Caine, John Carrington, Catherine Case, Oliver de Clercq, Anthony DiLorenzo, Allison Farkas, Joseph Gottesman, Jonathan Hill, Bruce Hudson, Carson Keeble, Cara Kizer, Matthew Kocmieroski, Frank Kowalsky, Alexander Lipay, Matthew McGrath, John Michel, Jennifer Nelson, Sean Osburn, Victoria Parker, Joy Payton-Stevens, Robin Peery, Toby Penk, Francine Peterson, James Ross, David Sogg, Shannon Spicciati, Alicia Suarez, Rob Tucker, Dan Williams and Leyla Zamora.

RASKATOV
PIANO CONCERTO, "NIGHT BUTTERFLIES"

Called "one of the most interesting composers of his generation" by Alfred Schnittke, Alexander Raskatov was born in Moscow in 1953 and trained at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. In 1994 he relocated to Germany and then France, where he won the 2013 Grand Prix Antoine Livio from Presse Musicale International, an honor previously held by Henri Dutilleux, Placido Domingo and Simon Rattle. Raskatov has been commissioned by violinist Gidon Kremer, violist Yuri Bashmet and conductor Valery Gergiev. His most important work to date, the opera *A Dog's Heart* (2010), has received performances in four major European opera houses, including Italy's famed Teatro alla Scala and English National Opera.

Raskatov's works display an exceptional sense of musical form, skillfulness in orchestration and harmonic confidence. The composer expresses himself with extreme candor, touching the strings of pain and hope, sorrow and expectation.

In 2012–13, while living near Paris, Raskatov wrote a concerto for pianist Tomoko Mukaiyama, co-commissioned by the Seattle Symphony and the Netherlands' Residentie Orkest. The concerto was inspired by an evening visit to a butterfly greenhouse somewhere in Western Europe and subtitled "**Night Butterflies**." Hundreds of beautiful wood nymphs, each with its own behavior, color, size and flight pattern, filled 12 brief movements combined into a cycle of miniatures similar to Schumann's *Papillons* or Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*. Though a 12-movement structure is unusual for an instrumental concerto, this genre indication appropriately refers to the incredible "flying" virtuosity of the piano part that is interwoven here into a brilliantly diverse orchestral texture in a kaleidoscopic display of colorful images.

The elusive and fleeting butterflies of the Chopin-esque first movement yield in the second to a dark and heavy brass chorale that supports the prowling piano steps of a ghostly apparition. The third study hovers in the realm of uncatchable staccato leaps. In the fourth, the growling phantom, seemingly from a haunted world, returns in the midst of a chromatically flowing river of piano figurations. The bell ringing, in turn, brings on a series of mysteriously crawling tritonic triplets shadowed by owl-like screeches. The fifth movement is a study on furiously repeated notes in the piano, violently interrupted by chromatic passages in double octaves. In the next piece, another set of images from an unknown and threatening fantasy world is represented by disparate and eerie chords and then by more bell ringing and sinister brass statements. The graciously hovering butterflies return in the following movement.

An army of the big-winged creatures (supported by full orchestra clusters in *fortissimo*) collides in the eighth piece with a lonesome voice pleading in the very high register of the piano. An oriental place is featured in the ninth piece through pentatonic relationships. The brief 10th movement introduces quickly leaping and skipping piano chords. The recurrent bell strokes are interspersed in the 11th movement with a simple syncopated melody in the piano part that charms with an openhearted sincerity.

The austere but strong emotional break into the final movement of the piece presents an impressive surprise: While playing the piano, the soloist begins to sing without words in an untrained voice, humming at first and

then getting louder. The opening measures from an old northern Russian folk song about the sagebrush — the bitter herb — that Raskatov found in a collection called *Songs from Pinezhie* get unveiled in his own manner. At the end, this beautiful song gets dramatically swept off by simple but active brass and woodwind chords and then by broken chords on the piano, bringing the realization that the song was nothing more than a mirage that was dissolved in a sinister reality. The entire concerto, in the composer's words, becomes a nostalgic reference to the life he has left behind:

> I still remember a forest clearing near Moscow where I saw some powder-blue butterflies when I was 5–6 years old. I remember how they hovered from one flower to another, and I was entranced by the rhythm of their flight. More than 50 years later, when I was working on the piano concerto, I remembered those pale butterflies of my country. It was important for me to get transferred to this fantastical North in my imagination because it reflected my sadness related to the loss of my country and showed my anxiety for the lost youth, health and hope.

STRAVINSKY
THE RITE OF SPRING

Exactly a century separates the two compositions presented on this recording, Alexander Raskatov's Piano Concerto, "Night Butterflies," and Igor Stravinsky's ballet ***The Rite of Spring***. That century was one of far-reaching developments in Western music. Among those developments were a thorough rethinking of harmony, with traditional consonances and dissonances replaced, or at least augmented, by more complex sonorities; a radical expansion of rhythmic possibilities; new conceptions of instrumental color and texture; and novel approaches to compositional form.

All of these innovations, the legacy of a century of modern and postmodern musical thinking, contribute in various ways to shaping Raskatov's "Night Butterflies," and all of them appear in seminal form in *The Rite of Spring*. This is not to draw any direct parallel between the two compositions. But neither Raskatov's concerto nor countless other musical works of the last century could have been written in quite the way they were without the precedent of Stravinsky's great ballet score. Its thrilling rhythms, hypnotic phrases, audacious discords and bold orchestral effects represented a radical break with the past when they first appeared in 1913, and they opened broad new musical horizons for succeeding generations of composers.

It seems appropriate that the inspiration for this visionary composition should have come to its creator in a vision. In the spring of 1910 Stravinsky was finishing the score to his ballet *The Firebird*, which had been commissioned by the impresario Serge Diaghilev for his Paris-based dance and theater company, the Ballets Russes. Perhaps Stravinsky's

preoccupation with the ancient, mythical world of *The Firebird* made him particularly susceptible to intimations from the distant past. In any event, he experienced one day a fleeting daydream of a scene out of Russian prehistory. "I saw in [my] imagination," the composer remembered, "a solemn pagan rite: wise elders, seated in a circle, watching a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring."

Stravinsky related this vision to Diaghilev, who immediately decided to base a ballet upon it. But the composer was not certain how to approach his subject in musical terms, and he began instead to compose a work for piano and orchestra that eventually grew into the score for the ballet *Petrushka*. Diaghilev, however, continued to urge Stravinsky to produce his "pagan rite" music, and in the summer of 1911 the composer at last set to work. The score was completed in early March 1913 and first performed 12 weeks later.

The Paris premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, by the Ballets Russes on May 29, became a defining moment in the aesthetic wars of the early modern era. The performance ignited a near riot in the audience. Some of the controversy was provoked by the sets and choreography, but the principal point of contention was Stravinsky's contribution. According to one eye-witness,

> ... a certain part of the audience was [outraged] by what it considered a blasphemous attempt to destroy music as an art, and, swept away with wrath, began very soon after the rise of the curtain to make cat-calls and to offer audible suggestions as to how the performance should proceed. The orchestra played unheard, except when a slight lull occurred. The figures on the stage danced in time to music they had to imagine they heard, and beautifully out of time with the uproar in the audience.

Despite this daunting baptism, *The Rite of Spring* has emerged as one of the most highly regarded and frequently heard compositions of the 20th century. The music is in two parts. Each begins in an atmosphere of mystery and progresses through a succession of increasingly animated episodes to a shattering conclusion. The ease with which Stravinsky's music has made the transition from ballet stage to concert hall is due in part to the fairly indefinite nature of its choreographic scenario. While a brief outline of this is given in the headings of the various sections of the score, *The Rite of Spring* might be more profitably heard in general rather than specific narrative terms, as a hymn to the violence and mystery of nature rather than as music for particular scenes in a ballet story.

In this respect, a remark Stravinsky made late in his life seems particularly revealing. When asked what he most loved about Russia, the composer answered: "The violent Russian spring that seemed to begin in an hour and was like the whole earth cracking. That was the most wonderful event of every year of my childhood."

The Seattle Symphony is grateful to Joan Watjen for her generous support of SEATTLE **SYMPHONY** MEDIA in memory of her husband Craig.

Recorded live in concert at the S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, Washington, on March 20, 22 and 23, 2014 (Raskatov), and June 19 and 21, 2014 (Stravinsky).

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Produced, engineered and edited by Dmitriy Lipay
Executive Producer: Simon Woods
Art direction and design: Jessica Forsythe

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