



Stéphane Denève, conductor Christina and Michelle Naughton, pianos Friday, February 2, 2018 at 10:30AM Saturday, February 3, 2018 at 8:00PM

RAVEL (1875–1937)	Ma mère l'oye (Mother Goose) Suite (1911) Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant (Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty) Petit Poucet (Tom Thumb) Laideronnette, Impératrice des pagodes (Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas) Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (Conversations of Beauty and the Beast) Le Jardin féerique (The Enchanted Garden)
POULENC (1899–1963)	Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos and Orchestra (1932) Allegro ma non troppo Larghetto Finale: Allegro molto Christina and Michelle Naughton, pianos
GUILLAUME CONNESSON (b. 1970)	Flammenschrift (2012)
RAVEL	Valses nobles et sentimentales (1911) Modéré – Assez lent – Modéré – Assez animé – Presque len – Assez vif – Moins vif – Épilogue: lent
	NO PAUSE
RAVEL	La Valse (1920)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2017/2018 Classical Series is presented by **World Wide Technology**, **The Steward Family Foundation**, and **Centene Charitable Foundation**.

These concerts are presented by **FleishmanHillard**.

These concerts are sponsored by Steinway Piano Gallery.

Stéphane Denève is the Felix and Eleanor Slatkin Guest Conductor.

Christina and Michelle Naughton are the Bruce Anderson Memorial Fund Guest Artists.

The concert of Friday, February 2 is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Cynthia and Bill Durham.

The concert of Saturday, February 3 is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Dr. Cora E. Musial.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by Washington University Physicians.

GALLIC LIGHTNESS

TIMELINKS

- 1911 Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen's expedition is the first to reach the South Pole.
- **1920** Babe Ruth is traded by the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees.

 1932 The 20-month-old son of Charles Lindbergh is kidnapped and discovered dead in New Jersey.

2012 Walt Disney purchases Lucasfilm Ltd along with the rights to *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*. "You will find sobriety and sadness in French music just as in German or Russian," Francis Poulenc observed in 1950. "But the French have a keener sense of proportion. We realize that somberness and good humor are not mutually exclusive. Our composers also write profound music, but when they do, it is leavened with that lightness of spirit without which life would be unendurable."

The music on this concert supports Poulenc's observation. His Concerto for Two Pianos, as well as three pieces by his older compatriot, Maurice Ravel, and one by Guillaume Connesson—a contemporary French composer—are connected by this thread of lightness.

The works on the first half of the program, however, lean toward the good-humored side of the spectrum, while the pieces on the second half hold greater somberness. Connesson's *Flammenschrift* is a French ode to the German Beethoven, while Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and *La Valse* (written nearly 10 years apart, but played here without pause) invoke old Viennese dances from two perspectives—before and after the Great War.



MAURICE RAVEL Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France Died December 28, 1937, Paris

Ma mère l'oye (Mother Goose) Suite

As its title suggests, *Ma mère l'oye (Mother Goose)* was originally intended for children. Maurice Ravel wrote it as a piano duet for Mimi and Jean Godebski, the six- and seven-year-old children of close friends. After the Godebski siblings surrendered to stage fright, Jeanne Leleu and Geneviève Durony—who were six and ten at the time—debuted the suite in April 1910. The premiere went so well that Ravel arranged the work as a ballet and orchestral suite the following year.

The five sections that make up the suite are based on fairy tales by Charles Perrault and other, less famous sources. "The idea of evoking in these pieces the poetry of childhood naturally led me to simplify my style and refine my means of expression," Ravel wrote. Along with the explicitly programmatic titles, he annotated the score with brief descriptions and quoted extracts.

A Closer Listen

Inspired by Perraults "Sleeping Beauty," *Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant* is an enchanted dream. The flute sings a slow, spellbound theme as soft horn and viola provide counterpoint. *Petit Poucet* (Tom Thumb) winds along with the tiny protagonist, whose trail of bread crumbs is consumed by birds. The melody shimmers like a mirage; the meter struggles to find its footing; birds twitter and jeer. *Laideronnette, Impératrice des pagodes* depicts an ugly little empress who is shipwrecked with her serpent companion on an island populated by tiny porcelain figurines, who play instruments carved from almond and walnut shells. The pentatonic melodies and unusual sonorities point to the Chinese origins of the figurines, known as pagodas.

In *Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête* (Conversations Between Beauty and the Beast), Ravel juxtaposes the graceful and the grotesque; Beauty waltzes along to lilting wind instruments while the Beast bumbles in as a clumsy contrabassoon. When the spell is broken (listen for an abrupt cymbal followed by an eerie glissando), the Beast turns into a handsome prince, now portrayed by a solo cello,

First Performance January 28, 1912, in Paris

First SLSO Performance December 19, 1913, Max Zach conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance April 3, 2016, David Robertson conducting

Scoring 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (2nd doubling bassoon), 2 horns, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tam-tam, xylophone, glockenspiel), harp, celesta, and strings

Performance Time approximately 16 minutes

the romantic counterpart to Beauty's violin. Finally, *Le Jardin Féerique* (The Fairy Garden) returns to the initial Sleeping Beauty scenario. A sparkling celesta delivers the kiss that restores the princess to consciousness, and wedding bells and fanfares foretell her happy future with Prince Charming.



FRANCIS POULENC Born January 7, 1899, Paris Died January 30, 1963, Paris

Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos and Orchestra

In the early 1930s, the Parisian composer Francis Poulenc received two commissions from the Princess Edmond de Polignac (née Winnaretta Singer). One was for organ, strings, and timpani. The other was for two pianos and an orchestra of classical proportions. The unconventional American-born princess, painter, philanthropist, and heiress (to the Singer sewing-machine fortune) presided over one of the most celebrated salons in Paris. Marcel Proust was one of many luminaries who clocked countless hours in her drawing room. The Princess specifically requested that Poulenc's concerto be scored for two pianos so that the composer could perform it with his close friend, Jacques Février. Its initial airiness belies a bittersweet bite.

One reason that the Concerto for Two Pianos has retained its freshness almost 86 years after its premiere is that Poulenc had a restless imagination. The concerto is a compendium of his eclectic influences; Poulenc relished both the ballads of Parisian cafés and the hypnotic, densely layered gamelan music of Indonesia.

Movement by Movement

The opening movement begins with nervy, hectic energy. Dramatic plunges, rattletrap percussion, and staccato jabs subside in Impressionist incantations. In the final section, the two pianos shimmer and ripple in Poulenc's astonishing approximation of the Javanese gamelan music he'd heard at the Paris Colonial Exposition a year earlier.

First Performance September 5, 1932, in Venice, with Poulenc and Jacques Février as soloists and Désiré Defauw conducting the La Scala Orchestra

First SLSO Performance November 15, 1947, with Jack Lowe and Arthur Whittemore as soloists and Vladimir Golschmann conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance March 5, 2000, with Katia and Marielle Labèque as soloists and Leonard Slatkin conducting

Scoring two solo pianos, flute, piccolo, 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, percussion (snare drum, tenor drum, field drum, triangle, castanets, suspended cymbal, and bass drum), harp, celesta, and strings

Performance Time approximately 20 minutes

For the central movement, the composer explained, "I allowed myself... to return to Mozart, for I cherish the melodic line and I prefer Mozart to all other musicians." Indeed, the Larghetto begins with a Mozartian spirit, but soon takes on a Romantic flavor, with tangy touches of dissonance.

The finale leapfrogs between jittery Gershwin-esque jazz and wistful fragments of previous melodies. Poulenc's quick-change artistry permits seamless shifts in mood and genre: broad dance-hall melodies explode into fireworks; delicate reveries give way to frenetic clatter.



GUILLAUME CONNESSON

Born May 5, 1970, Boulogne-Billancourt, France **Now Lives** Paris

Flammenschrift

Guillaume Connesson is among the most prolific and widely performed French composers living today. His catalog covers all the major genres, from opera to pedagogical works. Stylistically, he draws from what he calls "the complex mosaic of the contemporary world."

He completed *Flammenschrift* in 2012, fulfilling a commission for a Beethovenrelated work from the conductor Daniele Gatti and the Orchestre national de France. Conceptually, *Flammenschrift* focuses on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but Connesson radically expands the Beethovenian sound-world, pushing it into new sonic terrain.

The Composer Speaks

Flammenschrift, or "fire-letter," is a word that Goethe used in his poem "Marienbad Elegy." I wished to compose a "Furies' tune" that draws a psychological portrait of Beethoven and, more generally, pays homage to the music of Germany. For Beethoven, I portray an angry, seething, impetuous man, whose interior violence shows through in numerous pages of his music. In his works, Beethoven constantly celebrated the fraternity of man, but he was often harsh with his loved ones and domestic servants. My desired musical portrait originates in this paradox. This misanthropic Beethoven—seen walking down the street looking disheveled, with his misshapen hat, this loner cursed by destiny but sanctified by genius—has

First Performance November 8, 2012, Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Daniele Gatti conducting the Orchestre national de France

First SLSO Performance this week

Scoring 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings

Performance Time approximately 9 minutes

always fascinated me: he constructed a very significant image of the artist in the 19th-century imagination that endures to the present day.

To pay tribute to him, I use the same instrumentation as in his Fifth Symphony, but also some oppositions of characteristic units (the winds against the strings), and above all, a rhythmic language that frequently alludes to his work. But in a larger sense, it was to the whole of Germanic music that I wanted to give homage, with glimpses of compositions by Brahms and Richard Strauss toward the end of the piece.

Flammenschrift is cast in a kind of double-sonata form, without the opening recapitulation. Two themes of a fierce character are revealed first; a third, initially more relaxed one (carried by the clarinets and bassoons) will experience a great number of transformations. Finally, a fourth, more lyrical theme completes the substance of the introduction. After a lengthy development, the four themes are transmuted, in the memory of the majorkey eruption in the Fifth's finale: the drama followed by a dance of joy.

— Guillaume Connesson (translated from the composer's website: guillaumeconnesson.net.)

RAVEL

Valses nobles et sentimentales

Ravel's enduring interest in the Viennese waltz first bore fruit in 1911, with his *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (Noble and Sentimental Waltzes). In his original setting for solo piano, as with his subsequent orchestration, Ravel ingeniously linked the eight waltz-based sections that make up the suite. (Some of the material came from the same sketches that would eventually lead to the 1920 "choreographic poem," *La Valse.*) Its dedicatee, Louis Aubert, Ravel's former classmate from the Paris Conservatory, performed the premiere. In March of 1912, Ravel orchestrated the piece for a ballet, *Adélaïde, ou le langage des fleurs* (Adelaide, or The Language of Flowers), which was staged for the first time a month later at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

In French, the connotations of the word "sentimental" aren't as nostalgic as English speakers might expect. (Consider, for instance, Gustave Flaubert's 1869 novel *Sentimental Education*, a deeply cynical coming-of-age story.) The tone that Ravel meant to strike with his title seems, at least at first, quintessentially French: pensive reflection, a melancholy mixture of yearning and loss. But the title also deliberately invokes two similarly titled piano collections by Franz Schubert, whom Ravel admired greatly.

First Performance May 9, 1911, Paris

First SLSO Performance November 13, 1953, Vladimir Golschmann conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance April 10, 2005, David Robertson conducting

Scoring 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle, tambourine, and glockenspiel), 2 harps, and celesta

Performance Time approximately 16 minutes

RAVEL

La Valse

Ravel began *La Valse* in 1919 and finished it late the following year, but the largescale symphonic work had percolated in his subconscious for more than a decade. He began exploring the idea in 1906, while sketching out *Wien* (Vienna), a tribute to Johann Strauss, Jr., and, as Ravel put it, "a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, with which is mingled in my mind the idea of the fantastic whirl of destiny."

Destiny, in the form of World War I, forced him to put aside the project temporarily. Ravel volunteered to join the French Air Force in 1914, but was rejected due to his middle age and physical frailty. He instead served as a truck and ambulance driver until 1916, when a bout of dysentery sent him back to Paris for a long recuperation. By the time he resumed his "Vienna" project, his beloved mother, the central figure of his life, was dead, and his wartime experiences had left him disillusioned and depressed. In the wake of the Great War, his portrait of a bygone Austrian age was now jaded and laced with menace.

In 1918, the Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev commissioned a ballet from Ravel, who quickly set to work adapting and orchestrating *Wien*, which he renamed *La Valse* in keeping with post-war prejudices. But two years later, after digesting a two-piano arrangement of the full score, Diaghilev rejected the music outright. According to Poulenc, who witnessed the dispute, Diaghilev pronounced it a "masterpiece" but added that it was not a ballet so much as "the portrait of a ballet, a painting of a ballet." Ravel stormed out and never forgave him. In 1926, Ida Rubinstein, who would dance his Boléro two years later, choreographed *La Valse*.

The Composer Speaks

Ravel chose a rather fanciful subtitle for the work: "poème chorégraphique (choreographic poem). He also wrote a programmatic preface to the score:

Through a swirling mist one discerns, in brief glimpses of clarity, waltzing couples. Little by little, the vapors dissipate: one can faintly discern an immense hall, filled with a whirling throng. The scene becomes gradually brighter. The light of chandeliers bursts forth [at the *fortissimo*]. An Imperial Court, around 1855.

First Performance December 12, 1920, Paris

First SLSO Performance January 23, 1921, Rudolph Ganz conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance May 18, 2012, Ward Stare conducting

Scoring 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, tam-tam, triangle, glockenspiel, crotales, castanets), 2 harps, and strings

Performance Time approximately 12 minutes

René Spencer Saller is a writer and music critic living in St. Louis. She has also written for the Dallas Symphony, *Illinois Times, Riverfront Times*, and *Boston Phoenix*.



Maurice Ravel as a soldier in the French army, 1916.



Stéphane Denève has been named the 13th Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, beginning in the 2019/2020 season.

STÉPHANE DENÈVE

Felix And Eleanor Slatkin Guest Conductor

In June 2017, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra announced the appointment of Stéphane Denève as its 13th Music Director, with an initial three-year term beginning in the 2019/2020 season. Denève, who has been a frequent guest conductor with the SLSO since 2003, will serve as Music Director Designate for the 18/19 season.

In his guest conducting appearances, Denève has led the SLSO in repertoire ranging from works by the contemporary French composer Guillaume Connesson and American composer Patrick Harlin to the music of Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Ravel, Strauss, and Tchaikovsky. His performances with the SLSO have received critical acclaim, and have also included collaborations with soloists from the orchestra including concertmaster David Halen and principal flute Mark Sparks.

Denève is currently music director of the Brussels Philharmonic, principal guest conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and director of the Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire. From 2011 to 2016, he served as chief conductor of Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra and from 2005 to 2012 as music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Recognized internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, he regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. He has a special affinity for the music of his native France, and is a passionate advocate for new music. Recent engagements included appearances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Vienna Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, and NHK Symphony. In North America, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2012 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with which he has been a frequent guest both in Boston and at Tanglewood. He also appears regularly with the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Toronto Symphony.

As a recording artist, his most recent releases are a disc of works by Connesson with the Brussels Philharmonic (awarded the Diapason d'Or de l'année, Caecilia Award, and Classica Magazine's CHOC of the Year) and a disc with Lucas and Arthur Jussen and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, both for Deutsche Grammophon.

A graduate and prize-winner of the Paris Conservatoire, Denève worked closely in his early career with Sir Georg Solti, Georges Prêtre, and Seiji Ozawa. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners.



STÉPHANE DENÈVE

FROM THE STAGE "T'm extremely excited to present a piece by Guillaume Connesson because I've been conducting a lot of his music. Then there is something I never did before—it will be my first time doing Ravel's Valses nobles et sentimentales followed by La Valse, without a break. Charles Munch, a conductor I adore, did that, and I've been inspired by him. It's not intended by Ravel at all, but I think it's quite strong. It's a fun program, very exciting and colorful."



Christina and Michelle Naughton are making their St. Louis Symphony Orchestra debuts.

CHRISTINA AND MICHELLE NAUGHTON

Bruce Anderson Memorial Fund Guest Artists

Christina and Michelle Naughton have captivated audiences around the globe with the unity created by their mystical musical communication. Their 2017/2018 season began with recital appearances at the La Jolla Music Society and the Ravinia Festival. Additional engagements include the duo's Lincoln Center debut as well as appearances at the Gilmore Festival, Rockefeller Evening Concerts, Purdue Convocations, Portland Piano International, Society of the Four Arts, Sharon Lynn Wilson Center, Virginia Arts Festival, and the National Gallery. Orchestral highlights include performances with the Detroit, San Diego, Midland, and Puerto Rico Symphonies. The duo will also be seen in recital and in orchestral engagements throughout New Zealand, Brazil, Belgium, and Spain.

In February 2016, the Naughtons released their debut record on the Warner Classics label titled *Visions*, featuring the music of Messiaen, Bach, and Adams. The album received critical acclaim from *The Washington Post* and was chosen as an "Editor's Choice" in *Gramophone*.

Born in Princeton, New Jersey to parents of European and Chinese descent, Christina and Michelle are graduates of the Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music, where they were each awarded the Festorazzi Prize. They are Steinway Artists and currently reside in New York City.

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Gemma New

PINES OF ROME Friday, March 23 at 10:30AM Saturday, March 24 at 8:00PM Sunday, March 25 at 3:00PM Gemma New, conductor Ann Choomack, piccolo

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Capriccio espagnol RAUTAVAARA Cantus arcticus TÜÜR Solastalgia (Piccolo Concerto) RESPIGHI Pines of Rome

Enjoy a musical voyage through Rome's majestic hills in Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. This spectacular symphonic poem explores the catacombs, flittering nightingales, and a glittering sunrise over the ancient city. Plus, head to Spain with Rimsky-Korsakov's rousing and flamboyant *Capriccio espagnol*. Resident Conductor Gemma New makes her subscription debut leading this adventurous program.



Simon Trpčeski

RACHMANINOFF PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 Saturday, April 14 at 8:00PM Sunday, April 15 at 3:00PM David Robertson, conductor Simon Trpčeski, piano

COPLAND Fanfare for the Common Man **RACHMANINOFF** Piano Concerto No. 2 **HANSON** Symphony No. 2, "Romantic"

Hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as "a remarkable pianist," Simon Trpčeski takes center stage for Rachmaninoff's beloved Piano Concerto No. 2, a lush work overflowing with gorgeous melody and outstanding technical display. Music Director David Robertson leads Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* alongside American composer Howard Hanson's "Romantic" Symphony, portraying warmth, youth and nobility.

YOU TAKE IT FROM HERE

MAURICE RAVEL

Ravel by Roger Nichols Yale University Press, 2011

Nichols, one of the foremost authorities on 19th- and 20th-century French music, explores Ravel's ambivalent relationship with modernism, drawing on a wealth of primary sources, including several newly translated interviews and other documents. Ravel provides a comprehensive account of his life in music, as well as insight into his personal relationships.

Maurice-ravel.net

A website blessed by the Maison musée de Maurice Ravel, filled with primary sources and information.

FRANCIS POULENC Francis Poulenc by Richard D.E. Burton

Absolute Press, 2003

Although relatively brief, at only 144 pages, this biography of an enigmatic man is perceptive and engaging. Burton, a professor of French and Catholic theology, discusses Poulenc's place in the revolutionary world of bohemian, gay Paris during the first half of the 20th century. He explores the ways in which Poulenc's sexuality and spirituality shaped the expression of his musical language.



GUILLAUME CONNESSON

Pour sortir au jour Brussels Philharmonic; Stéphane Denève, conductor

Deutsche Grammophon, 2016

Stéphane Denève conducts the music of Connesson on this CD. The disc includes *Flammenschrift* and two other works—*E chiaro nella valle il fiume appare* and *Maslenitsa*—which complete a symphonic trilogy paying tribute to the music of Germany, Italy and Russia.

guillaumeconnesson.net

The composer's French and English-language homepage contains a list of works as well as audio clips of his music.

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2017 Live at Powell Hall concert with Ben Folds and the SLSO.

