



School of Music
University of Missouri

2023-2024 Series | Large Ensemble

University Philharmonic Orchestra

Dr. John McKeever, conductor

**Featuring
Lucas Gonzaga, sopranoist**

**April 21, 2024 | 3:00pm
Missouri Theatre**

Program

Seven PassagesBehazad Ranjbaran
(b. 1955)

“Se Romeo t’uccise un figlio” Vincenzo Bellini
from *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* (1801-1835)

Lucas Gonzaga, soprano

intermission

Pictures at an ExhibitionModest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)
arr. Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Promenade

1. Gnomus

Promenade

2. Il vecchio castello

Promenade

3. Tuileries

4. Bydlo

Promenade

5. Ballet des poussins dans leurs coques

6. Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle.

7. Limoges – Le Marché

8. Catacombæ

Con mortuis in lingua mortua

9. La Cabane sur des pattes de poule

10. La grande porte de Kiev

Program Notes

Ranjbaran – Seven Passages (2000)

Seven Passages, the final work composed in my Persian Trilogy, draws its inspiration from an episode in the Shahnameh (Book of Kings) titled “The Seven Trials of Rostam.” All three orchestral works in the Persian Trilogy were inspired by the stories of the Shahnameh, the national epic poem of Persia/Iran. The Shahnameh was written by the poet Ferdowsi (c. 940-1020), recounting the mythological and legendary history of the country from the creation of the world up to Persia’s conquest by the Arab conquerors, who brought with them the new religion of Islam in the 7th Century. The main hero of the poem is Rostam, who spends much of his life fighting on behalf of the Persian kings, often saving them from situations in which their own pride and foolishness have entangled them.

When I was 10 years old, my mother won a contest in Tehran, Iran, for which the prize was a copy of the Shahnameh (Book of Kings). It was a 9”x14” volume, 640 pages long, and sported a magnificent picture of its main hero, Rostam, in battle with the White Demon on the cover. I would soon learn that the cover was in fact a depiction of an episode from “The Seven Trials of Rostam.” My first look at the dramatic and bloody scene sent chills down my spine. Seeing the mighty Rostam, with his wise and determined face, overcoming the hideous White Demon, had me transfixed, and captured my imagination forever.

Another strong influence in composing *Seven Passages* came from my very early years during the summer trips to Taleghan, a chain of villages on Mount Alborz, near Tehran. I always found the nights in Taleghan to be breathtaking. With its countless stars shining brilliantly, the sky at night looked spectacular. I repeatedly heard stories about genies and fairies that would come down in hordes from surrounding hills, hand in hand, in white dresses, to celebrate their nightly rituals. I was reminded often that one could only see the fairies after midnight, and only if one believed in them. There were times when I actually thought that I had seen them! But, in retrospect, it seems to have been a figment of my imagination. In writing the slow section of *Seven Passages*, those powerful images were a constant source of inspiration.

Seven Passages refers to seven epic trials Rostam endures while traveling to rescue his king, Kavus, and countrymen from an enemy territory where they have been imprisoned. In the first encounter, Rostam’s horse, Rakhsh, saves him from a lion; in the second, he traverses a waterless desert; in the third, his horse again saves him, this time from a dragon; in the fourth, he outwits a sorceress; in the fifth, he fights against an enemy hero called Ulad; in the sixth, he defeats a demon called Arzhang; and in the seventh, he vanquishes the most terrifying of his adversaries, the White Demon.

In writing *Seven Passages*, I was inspired by the symbolism evident in the story which depicts

a heroic struggle with all of its pain, tragedy, self doubt, joy, and ultimate victory. Throughout these trials, Rostam emerges triumphant from his encounters with wild beasts, witches, demons, and dragons while performing one act of heroism after another. However, I have come to realize that in real life, courageous acts are not limited only to heroes. Unsung heroes perform countless acts of courage and struggle daily.

The music reflects my general impression of the story rather than following it faithfully. It is one continuous piece that is organized tightly around a three-note-motif (B, A#, B), transforming in the heroic finale to its inversion (B, C, B). This three-note motif functions as a unifying element weaving a tight organization throughout the many contrasting sections. There are references to other pieces of the *Persian Trilogy*. For example in the slow introduction, the opening of *The Blood of Seyavash* is quoted briefly; the second movement of *Seemorg* is visited vividly; and furthermore, the three-note motif is directly derived from the first three notes of the opening theme of *Seemorgh*.

program note by Behzad Ranjbaran

Bellini – “Se Romeo t’uccise un figlio” from *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* (1830)

Bellini’s *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* (The Capulets and the Montagues) is a Bel Canto opera in two acts with a libretto by Felice Romani that is a reworking of a libretto he had previously written for Nicola Vaccai’s opera *Giulietta e Romeo*. Romani’s main source of inspiration for this libretto was the same Matteo Bandello story that Shakespeare used as the basis for his *Romeo and Juliet*. While Bellini and Romani’s work leans more into the political aspects of Bandello’s story, the setting, characters, and general story of *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* will be familiar to those listeners acquainted with Shakespeare’s play. The opera was written in just seven weeks and premiered on March 11, 1830, at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. The condensed compositional period for this opera led Romani to use a reworked libretto and, similarly, Bellini repurposed significant portions of the score from his poorly received opera, *Zaira*.

In this aria, Romeo, disguised as a Montecchi envoy and having previously killed Capellio’s son, speaks to Capellio (the head of the Capuletti), Tebaldo, and the Capuletti. He urges them to blame fate for the death of Capellio’s son and embrace Romeo as a new son by allowing him to marry Giulietta, thus bringing peace to the two families. Capellio rejects this offer, indicating that Tebaldo will marry Giulietta and declares war between the two families. Constructed in the standard bel canto two-part form, cavatina/cabaletta, the slow beginning of this aria is Romeo’s plea for peace and the hand of Giulietta. The cabaletta is his response to the declaration of war.

program note by Dr. John McKeever

Mussorgsky, arr. Ravel – Pictures at an Exhibition (1874, arr. 1922)

Originally written as a suite for piano, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a musical depiction of works of art by the Russian architect, painter, and friend of Mussorgsky, Viktor Hartmann. Shortly after Hartmann's death in 1873, there was an exhibition of his works at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg. Mussorgsky's work is a musical tour through this exhibition featuring ten movements, each inspired by specific pieces from the exhibition. Mussorgsky also wrote four promenades into this suite that conjure up images of arriving to the exhibition and traveling between the various works. Unfortunately, several of the Hartmann pieces that inspired Mussorgsky have been lost, but the paintings and clock that inspired movements 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 can still be viewed today.

Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's work was the result of a commission from the conductor Serge Koussevitzky, though it was Ravel who brought Mussorgsky's piece to Koussevitzky's attention. While there were orchestrations before Ravel, and have been several since, Ravel's version of this piece remains the most popular today. Ravel's orchestration omits a couple of promenades, but is otherwise faithful to the original work, at least as a source of inspiration. Part of what has led to the enduring success of this arrangement of *Pictures at an Exhibition* are the instrumental and musical choices that Ravel made in his orchestration that brings a vivid level of detail and life to the works of art depicted within while allowing the orchestra to truly shine as an ensemble.

After the opening promenade, the arrival to the exhibition, the first piece depicted is a wooden toy made by Hartmann, a gnome nutcracker. After another short walk we arrive at the second movement, the Old Castle. While no specific work in the exhibition carried this title, there were several watercolors in the exhibition, one of which included an old castle with a troubadour singing in front of it. The third movement, Tuileries, is a depiction of children and their nurses in the park in Paris. Movement four, Bydlo, the Polish word for "cattle," is based on a picture of an ox-drawn wagon with giant wheels. After another short walk, we arrive at the fifth image, the ballet of the unhatched chicks. This is based on images for costumes that Hartmann designed for the ballet *Trilby*, and depicts children as canaries still in their eggs, with their heads sticking out. The sixth movement, Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle is a musical combination of two drawings owned by Mussorgsky. Heard first is Goldenberg, who is wealthy, and second is Schmuyle, who is poor. We are then taken to the market at Limoges. The hustle and bustle of a thriving and joyous market is starkly contrasted by being thrown directly into the eighth movement, the catacombs below Paris. This is followed directly by a transformation of the opening promenade into the haunting "With the Dead in a Dead Language." The ninth movement is based on a clock designed by Hartmann. This movement depicts the chicken-legged hut of the witch Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga stalks the woods in this creepy home. The final movement, the Great Gate of Kiev, is based on designs by Hartmann for great stone gates to replace the original wooden gates of the city. Included in the design is a great belfry and the ringing of those bells is brilliant depicted by Ravel in the closing of this piece.

Guest Soloist Biography

Lucas Gonzaga – Soprano

Lucas Gonzaga, a soprano from São Paulo, Brazil, is a graduate student and teaching assistant in the voice area at the University of Missouri, where he is pursuing a Master of Music in vocal performance under Prof. Steven Tharp. He holds a BA in Music Education. Beginning his musical journey at age 7, Gonzaga studied violin for nine years, during which he served as concertmaster of the Youth Orchestra of the São Paulo Municipal Theatre.

As a former harpist with the São Paulo State Youth Orchestra and a soprano in the Academic Choir of the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra (OSESF), Gonzaga has also excelled as a guest harpist for various São Paulo orchestras. His orchestral performances cover a broad repertoire, including Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, Wagner/Maazel's *The Ring Without Words*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, R. Strauss's *A Hero's Life*, Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Concerto for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, and works by Mahler, Respighi, Bizet, Villa-Lobos, and others. Notably, in 2018, he played as the harpist for Andrea Bocelli's tour in Brazil.

His dedication to musical growth is evident through his participation in masterclasses with distinguished musicians, including the Russian harpist Alexander Boldachev, the Paris Conservatory's harp professor Isabelle Moretti, and the soprano Juliane Banse. He also had the privilege of learning from teachers hailing from diverse locations such as Brazil, Scotland, Italy, Canada, and the USA.

As a singer, Gonzaga's accomplishments include being one of the winners of the University of Missouri – School of Music's Emerging Artists Competition and Concerto Competition, as well as winning 2nd place in the advanced treble voice category at the NATS – central region. Between 2023 and 2024, he embraced leading roles in Show-Me Opera's productions, portraying Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Ariodante* in Handel's *Ariodante*, under the direction of Prof. Christine Seitz.

Personnel

Flute/Piccolo

John Goodson
Nadia Lake
Nicholas Wu

Oboe

Sophia Fasone
Lauren Hynes
Sadie Middleton

Clarinet

Elizabeth Ganey
James Langen
Ava Rittgers

Bassoon

Kim Foley
Luke Frith
Noah Lucas

Horn

Henry Albright
Brandon Guillen
Sydney Hendrickson
Maddie Hogan
Abby Oreskovich
Chris Wang

Trumpet

Jesse Hamilton
Emily Rahn
Douglas Schaedler

Trombone

Eva Oelsner
Titus Weinzierl
Noah Wright

Tuba

Jonah Hammontree

Percussion

Miles Bohlman
Mary Emmons
Anders Harms
Sarah Hasekamp
Luke Haymons
Olivia Sletteland

Celeste

Bryce Ramsbottom

Harp

Maria Trevor

Violin

Maya Anand
Kip Atteberry
Nathan Bronstein
Sophie Edwards
Breanne Garstang
Sofia Heredia
Tori Hollister
Wendy Kleintank *
Sam Li
Brandon Merchant
Alexandre Negrão +
Ethan Sanders
Sydney Studer
Simon Whitty
Zephyr Yellman

Viola

Ella Frank
Inyoung Kim
Parker Krudop
Kara Lawson
Elaina Maurer *
Jojo O

Cello

Broderick Beebe
Cheyenne Blair
Syd Bolden
Megan Espeland
Christopher Gentilia
Max Hartsfield
Sara Lawson
Jennifer Lochhead
Gray Morima
Mason Murphy
Drake O'Hearn
Ananta Sharma
Preston Smith
Dean Wibe *

Bass

Kelsey Atteberry
Sam Caldwell
Luke Reaume
Trey Rolfes *

Assistant Conductor

Carlos Verano

+ - concertmaster

* - principal string