

of Tchaikovsky's passion was the Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt (who married a rival suitor), his friend Vladimir Gerard (on whom he had a schoolboy crush), or his fifteen year-old pupil Eduard Zak (who he loved deeply, but who committed suicide four years later). The *Romeo and Juliet Overture* was first performed in 1870. Revisions over the next decade brought the composition to its final form, an acknowledged masterpiece. From the first, listeners were moved by the work's great love theme. Tchaikovsky, whose personal life remained complex, became Russia's best known and most beloved composer.

Richard Rodda provides a fine description of how Tchaikovsky's music tells Shakespeare's tale: "*Romeo and Juliet* is in a carefully constructed sonata form, with introduction and coda. The slow introduction, in chorale style, depicts Friar Lawrence. The exposition (*Allegro giusto*) begins with a vigorous, syncopated theme depicting the conflict between the Montagues and the Capulets. The contrapuntal interworkings and the rising intensity of the theme in this section suggest the fury and confusion of a fight. The battle subsides, and the famous love theme (used here as a contrasting second theme) is sung by the English horn [and violas] to represent Romeo's passion. A tender, sighing phrase for muted violins suggests Juliet's response. A stormy development section utilizing the driving main theme and the theme from the introduction denotes the feud between the families and Friar Lawrence's urgent pleas for peace. The crest of the battle ushers in the recapitulation, in which the thematic material from the exposition is considerably compressed. Juliet's sighs again provoke the ardor of Romeo, whose motive is here given a grand, emotional setting which marks the high point of the work. The tempo slows, the mood darkens, and the coda emerges with a sense of impending doom. The themes of the conflict and of Friar Lawrence's entreaties sound again, but a funereal drum beats out the cadence of the lovers' fatal pact. Romeo's theme appears for a final time in a poignant transformation, and the closing woodwind chords evoke visions of the flight to celestial regions."

– Mark Furth

#### Chapel Hill Philharmonia Musicians

<b>Violin I</b>	Amanda Fox	Peggy Yates	Carolyn Taff	<b>Clarinet</b>	Kevin Pfeuffel
Mark Furth #	Heather Graff	Yuka Yoshie	Dan Thune	Alex Vogel #	Charles Porter
Regina Black	Cheryl Harward	<b>Violoncello</b>	<b>Flute</b>	Willie Davis	<b>Tuba</b>
Lisa Boorse	Lindsay Lambe	Dick Clark #	Cathy Phipps #	Steve Furs	Ted Bissette
Beth Harris	Sally Rohrdanz	Karen Daniels	Denise Bevington	<b>French Horn</b>	<b>Percussion</b>
Joseph Hoyle	Peggy Sauerwald	Jim Dietz	Pat Pukkila	Jerry Hulka #	Roger Halchin #
Elizabeth Johnson	Harriet Solomon	Steve Ellis	Mary Sturgeon	Tim Dyess	Alyssa Baucom
Lydia Kiefer	Debby Wechsler	Len Gettes	<b>Oboe</b>	Tom Panepinto	Jerry Herdon
David O'Brian	Karen Wilson	Paula Goldenberg	Judy Konanc #	Sandy Svoboda	<b>Harp</b>
Leah Schinasi	<b>Viola</b>	Jonathan Stuart-Moore	John Konanc	Adams Wofford	Winnie Garret
Megan Spokes	Kitty Stalberg #	Alice Tien	<b>English Horn</b>	<b>Trumpet</b>	
Susan Strobel	Kalman Bland	Nancy Wilson	Nancy Wilson	David Marable #	
Elizabeth Weinzierl	Jamie Bourque	Bill Wright	<b>Bassoon</b>	Renee Todd	<b>Librarian</b>
<b>Violin II</b>	Cynthia Gagne	Dorothy Wright	Paul Verderber #	Hermann Wienchol	Susan Strobel
Larry Evans #	Michelle Gladwin	<b>Double Bass</b>	Ann Hostetter	<b>Trombone</b>	
Tom Anderson	Laura Lengowski	Jim Baird #		Everette Goldston #	
Ruth Baldwin	Hanna Potkowski			Steve Magnuson	# Section Principal
Tom Beale	Pat Tennis				

#### The Chapel Hill Philharmonia gratefully acknowledges donations from

Kalman Bland	Cynthia Gagne	Bill & Lindsay Lambe	Pat Tennis
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Dr. Steve Furs	Drs. Barbara & Jerry Hulka	Sally Rohrdanz	Leon and Peggy Yates

# Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Hill Hall Auditorium — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

8:00 PM February 16, 2006

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

## “Young Romantics”

**Giuseppe Verdi** (1813 - 1901)

*Nabucodonosor (Nabucco)*

Sinfonia (Overture)

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872 - 1958)

*Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*

## Intermission

**Richard Strauss** (1864 - 1949)

*Serenade for Winds in E-flat Major, Op. 7*

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840 - 1893)

*Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*

In the Chapel Hill Philharmonia's Saint Valentine's week program "**Young Romantics**" refers not only to the star-crossed lovers of Shakespeare's drama *Romeo and Juliet* but also to the four composers whose works we present. Each was born in the nineteenth century and came to be lionized as a giant of the Romantic Era and a national icon. All but Tchaikovsky remained active well into their eighties. The single movement compositions performed tonight, however, are early works that marked breakthroughs in the careers of Giuseppe Verdi, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Richard Strauss, and Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Each identified the composer as a rising star in the eyes of the musical establishment and his countrymen. While new and fresh, each piece also was inspired by a source, musical or literary, from the distant past.

**Giuseppe Verdi** came perilously close to abandoning his calling. Born to a family of tavern keepers and refused a spot in the Milan conservatory, he bootstrapped his way to a musical education. Successes in the provinces opened doors, and his first opera, *Oberto*, gained acclaim at Milan's *Teatro La Scala* in 1839. The next, *Un giorno di regno* ("King for a Day"), Verdi's only comedy until "Falstaff" fifty years later, flopped miserably. Worse, Verdi was devastated by the deaths of his two young children and his wife Margherita. Prepared to give up opera, the composer found restoration in the libretto for ***Nabucodonosor***, better known as ***Nabucco***, based on the biblical account of the captivity of the Hebrews under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. A paraphrase of Psalm 137, *Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate* (Go, my thoughts on golden wings) had special resonance in light both of Verdi's personal loss and of Italy's chafing under Austrian rule: "Oh, my country so lovely and lost! / Oh, memory so dear and despairing! / Golden harp of the prophetic seers, / why do you hang mute upon the willow? / Rekindle our heart's memories and speak of times gone by! / Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem, / either sound a song of sad lamentation, / or else let the Lord give us the strength to bear our sufferings!" ***Nabucco***, first performed in 1842, was a huge success and *Va, pensiero*, the chorus of the Hebrew slaves, became a national anthem. Verdi's name, an acronym for the slogan *Vittorio Emmanuele Re d'Italia* (King of Italy), was chalked on walls around the country and he went on to become the most celebrated operatic composer. The overture from ***Nabucco*** features a pastiche of the opera's themes, including an extended version of *Va, pensiero* with oboe, clarinet and trumpet solos.



**Nabucco**

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** began his musical education at age nine by passing a correspondence course from the University of Edinburgh and then studied at the Royal College of Music, and Trinity College, Cambridge. Even so, he was a late bloomer. "RVW" emerged as a major composer only in his late thirties after years spent collecting English folk songs, editing works of his country's earlier masters such as Byrd and Purcell, advancing the art of choral conducting, and preparing a new edition of the English Hymnal. One of the hymns in that collection was set to the Third Mode Melody (the



**Gloucester Cathedral**

Phrygian) composed by Thomas Tallis in England's Tudor period (1567). The text, penned by Joseph Addison in 1712 during a "Sickness," begins: "When rising from the bed of death / O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear / I see my Maker face to face / O how shall I appear?" RVW, still little known, took Tallis's tune as the source of a work commissioned for the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester Cathedral. He conducted his ***Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*** there on September 6, 1910 with stunning effect. The critic William Steinberg considers it a significant moment in 20<sup>th</sup> century music: "Reaching across three and-a-half centuries, Vaughan Williams found renewal for his own musical language and, more broadly, for English music. I don't know whether he had come across

Verdi's celebrated plea to return to antiquity because that would be progress, but the *Fantasia* speaks to just that point. We don't usually find it listed with *Pierrot lunaire*, *Le Sacre du printemps*, or Debussy's *Jeux* as one of the great monuments of the revolution in music just before the 1914 war, but in its absolute liberation from the assumptions of the sonata tradition, in those modal harmonies that are the key to the marriage of the very old to the very new, even in its sound, the *Fantasia*

on a Theme by Thomas Tallis is as radical as they come. It is the great declaration of independence of English music in the twentieth century." Ironically, the *Fantasia* was written shortly after RVW devoted many months to study with the archetypal French composer Maurice Ravel. Perhaps this linked Vaughan Williams with the Paris-centered revolution to which Steinberg alludes, and freed him from a certain stodginess imparted by his own country's pedagogues.

The *Fantasia* is scored for three groups of strings – a First Orchestra, a smaller Second Orchestra comprising a desk from each string section, and a solo quartet. As in Tallis's time, RVW physically separated the groups to take full advantage of the cathedral's acoustics. In a conventional concert hall the *Fantasia's* echoes and resonances bring to mind the space for which it was intended. The form itself derives from the Tudor "fancy" in which a theme is developed freely with the expressiveness of an improvisation, but the term also connotes polyphonic repetition of a melody. RVW presents the entire theme twice with increasing elaboration, and uses Tallis's nine-part harmonization. Such formal description does little to explain the emotional impact of the work or the sense of the timeless and eternal it evokes. Film director Peter Weir used the *Fantasia* tellingly in his *Master and Commander: Far Side of the World* (2003) to highlight the most poignant moments of sacrifice of individual lives in defense of their ship and, by extension, their English homeland. Vaughan Williams, a soldier in the First World War, might well have found this consistent with his own ethos: "Art, like charity, should begin at home. If a composer's work is to be of any value it must grow out of the very life of himself, the community in which he lives, and the nation to which he belongs."

**Richard Strauss** was one of the last great representatives of German romanticism. He is remembered for operas such as *Salome* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, and tone poems including *Tod und Verklärung* ("Death and Transfiguration") and *Don Juan*. An admirer of Wagner and Liszt, the musical radicals of his day, Strauss nevertheless was imprinted from youth with the classical tradition of his German-speaking predecessors Haydn, Mozart, and Brahms (the conservative among Romantics). Much of Strauss's early training came from his father, the principal horn of the Munich court orchestra. The ***Serenade in E-flat Major for 13 Wind Instruments, Opus 7*** (scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, and a contrabassoon or tuba) was first performed in Dresden in 1882. The work favorably impressed the influential conductor Hans van Bülow, who had dismissed several earlier efforts by the eighteen year-old composer. Bülow programmed the *Serenade* regularly and in 1885 engaged Strauss to succeed himself as Music Director of the Meiningen Orchestra. The young composer clearly modeled his *Serenade* on the *Andante* of Mozart's *Serenade for 13 Winds*, K. 361, written almost exactly a century earlier. Strauss's piece "proceeds straightforwardly from its stately opening theme. Presently, six measures of fanfare-like music lead to a more animated second theme, introduced by the clarinet and horn. A quasi-improvisational oboe solo launches the brief development section, in which Strauss combines elements of both principal melodies. After an abbreviated reprise of the two subjects, a pleasing coda passage closes the work" (Paul Schiavo).

The story of *Romeo and Juliet* cannot be confined by national or epochal boundaries. Whether set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Verona, on mid-20<sup>th</sup> century New York gang turf (*West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein et al.), or in a fictional contemporary "Verona Beach" (the 1996 film), the tale of feuding gangs, a young couple falling in love despite the enmity of their families, and their inevitable tragic death appeals to the romantic soul. **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky** took Shakespeare's play as the source of the ***Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*** at the behest of Mily Balakirev, the domineering leader of "The Five" amateurs who introduced serious classical composition in Russia. At age twenty-nine Tchaikovsky had yet to produce a successful major work and seemed caught in unproductive procrastination and depression. Balakirev suggested the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* and offered a detailed program and musical plan including a key scheme and even a sketch for the first four bars. The project, if not the meddling, appealed to Tchaikovsky. Biographers concur that he identified personally with the story of tragic love, although they disagree on whether the particular object



**The lovers and the Friar**