PROGRAM NOTES
December 3 and 4, 2016

Concerto grosso in G Minor, Op. 6, No. 8, "Christmas Concerto"
Arcangelo Corelli
Born in Fusignano, near Bologna, February 17, 1653
Died January 8, 1713 in Rome

First performances by the Wichita Symphony

Corelli's public had long awaited the publication of his sixth and last opus of concertos, but Corelli, a perfectionist, took his time choosing and revising them. Some may have been written as early as 1682 and are thus among the earliest concerto grossos composed. His ill health prevented final preparations, and three days before he died he entrusted the planned Opus 6 to Fornari, his student and assistant, who had them published at last in 1714. The twelve Concertos, Op. 6, fulfill in every way the prediction of Corelli's contemporaries that they would "render his name for ever more immortal."

Of the twelve, the eighth in G minor is the most widely known. The subtitle "Christmas Concerto" stems from Corelli's own inscription on the title page: "*Fatto per la notte di natale*" (written for Christmas Eve). The composer also wrote "*Pastorale ad libitum*" after the last Allegro, indicating that the work could be performed without the final Pastorale, which was meant for performance in church on that night. The piece, however, is seldom heard without the Pastorale—it would be difficult to omit such a beautiful movement. Records show that Corelli was paid in 1690 for a Christmas concerto, which may have been the present work. The *Christmas* Concerto, which became extremely popular even during his lifetime, was played at his funeral service.

Like all the Opus 6 works, the *Christmas* Concerto is a concerto grosso, which contrasts and alternates a solo group of performers (solo or concertino) with a larger ensemble (tutti or ripieno). "Tutti" signifies that all join in, including the concertino. In Corelli's concertos the concertino was usually performed by two violins and basso continuo (keyboard and supporting bass instrument) giving the texture of a trio sonata, from which Corelli's concerto-grosso form grew.

The contrast of the groups permeates most of the work, accounting for many of its structural niceties. It is of considerable interest then that Corelli decided not to employ such a separation of players in the first movement. After a short Vivace introduction, the Grave unfolds a wonderful series of suspensions, a harmonic tension-and-release device that Corelli often used to great effect. The ensuing Allegro consists of two parts each repeated, a favorite Baroque form for sonata and dance-suite movements. The slow movement, Adagio, again features chains of suspensions. Corelli provides contrast with an Allegro middle section.

The Vivace resembles a *corrente* or *courante*, a fast dance in triple meter; again it follows binary form. Corelli seldom wrote for virtuosic display, but occasionally he gives the concertino

more brilliant passages as in the final Allegro of the present work. The fiery nature of the binary-form movement serves to highlight the Pastorale, which closes the work in serene repose.

In seventeenth-century Italy the pastorale became associated with Christmastime as a representation of the shepherds who attended Jesus' birth. Baroque composers imitated shepherd music with simple melodic upper parts, often in parallel thirds and sixths, over a drone similar to that of bagpipes—Corelli uses the drone sparingly. Pastorales also traditionally employed compound meter (6/8, 9/8 or 12/8) and the major mode, thus Corelli's switch to G major for the movement. Corelli appears to have been the first to include a pastorale in a concerto and to have such a piece performed in church on Christmas Eve.

Canzon septimi toni No. 2
Giovanni Gabrieli
Born probably in Venice, c. 1554–57
Died August 1612 in Venice

First performances by the Wichita Symphony

As organist at Venice's church of San Marco, Giovanni Gabrieli had at his fingertips the best choirmasters, choirs and instrumental musicians in all of Italy. The church's architecture with its multiple choir lofts had led to a tradition of antiphonal choral and instrumental works; the polychoral style reached its peak with Gabrieli.

Instrumental *canzoni* share with their French-chanson vocal prototype such characteristics as lively chordal textures alternating with passages of imitation, simple harmonies, flexible sectional repetitions and a signature long-short-short repeated-note opening. The present *canzon* features all these characteristics except that the opening is even fancier: short-short-short-short-long. Gabrieli's forty *canzoni*, perhaps the greatest in the literature, fully explore contrasting sonorities, taking advantage of the antiphonal layout at St. Marks.

Canzon septimi toni No. 2, comprising eight parts in two antiphonal choirs, comes from Gabrieli's monumental collection of church music, *Sacrae symphoniae*, published in 1597. He specified instrumentation for only four of his works in the collection, but it is easy to imagine a performance at St. Marks played by two antiphonal brass choirs, as it often is in modern times. "*Septimi toni*" identifies the piece as being written in the Mixolydian church mode, a type of medieval/Renaissance scale beginning on the "seventh tone."

One of the most famous and festive *canzoni* in the collections, the *Canzon septimi toni No. 2* consists of several sections that offer contrast by means of duple versus triple meter, homophonic (chordal) texture versus more contrapuntal passages, and short versus long intervals between antiphonal answers of the two choirs. He also uses the combined force of the eight parts to delineate sections and unifies the whole by recalling the exuberant opening at the end.

Sinfonia concertante in B-flat Major, Hob. I/105
Joseph Haydn
Born in Rohrau, Lower Austria, March 31, 1732
Died May 31, 1809 in Vienna

First performances by the Wichita Symphony

As soon as impresario and violinist Johann Peter Salomon learned of Prince Nicolaus Esterházy's death in 1790, he traveled to Esterháza to arrange Haydn's first trip to London, for he rightly assumed the newly free Haydn would go along. The composer was thrust into a mad social whirl as soon as he arrived in London in January 1791. He found he had to impose limits in order to protect his health and his time for composing and preparing performances. He wrote to his friend Marianna von Genzinger after a week:

> My arrival caused a great sensation throughout the whole city, and I went the rounds of all the newspapers for three successive days. Everyone wants to know me. I had to dine out six times up to now, and if I wanted I could dine out every day; but first I must consider my health, and second my work. Except for the nobility, I admit no callers till two o'clock in the afternoon.

The Salomon Concerts took place in the Hanover Square Rooms every Friday during the spring season, rivaling the Professional Concerts, with which Salomon had formerly been associated and which took place every Monday in the same location. As composer-in-residence for Salomon, Haydn presided at the keyboard, helping to lead the typically more-than-four-hour concerts, which consisted of a remarkable variety of music—symphonies (often called overtures in the concert announcements), concertos, vocal pieces, and chamber music. His new *London* Symphonies provided the cornerstones for these concerts, but he also contributed music in other genres.

Haydn composed his extraordinary "Concertante" (to use his own designation) for solo oboe, bassoon, violin and cello with orchestra for performance on March 9, 1792, with Salomon himself in the solo violin part. That Haydn embarked on such an unusual undertaking was a direct result of the rivalry with the Professional Concerts. That organization had hired Ignaz Pleyel, Haydn's former student, for the 1792 season, and he had arrived straight from Paris, where his *sinfonias concertantes* were all the rage. Pleyel's Sinfonia concertante for six instruments and orchestra—a novel genre for London audiences—had been performed by the Professional Concerts on February 28, and Salomon no doubt wanted to take the wind out of his rival's sails by producing a similar work by Haydn. We should note that the renewed relationship between Haydn and Pleyel was nothing but cordial, and both Sinfonias concertantes were enthusiastically received. The Professional Concerts, however, could not withstand Salomon's competition and folded the following season.

Haydn's only Sinfonia concertante gives no aural sign of the haste with which he committed it to paper and shows him entirely comfortable with the genre. He has his four soloists enter unobtrusively, entwined with the orchestral ensemble, thus doing away with the traditional orchestra-only exposition. Other salient features of the first movement include a

development section primarily in the minor mode and a cadenza for the four soloists—written out by Haydn—that includes a passage of especially intriguing harmonies.

Haydn reduced the size of the orchestra in the slow movement and limited its tutti or non-background role to a mere four measures toward the middle—a rare if not unique occurrence in eighteenth-century concertos. In this way Haydn created a chamber-music effect that puts the interplay among the four solo parts in the spotlight.

The most striking feature of the finale is Haydn's use of the solo violin as a soprano recitative. Though he had done this in all seriousness in his Symphony No. 7, "Le midi," in the present case he treats it as a mock-heroic gesture soon banished by the playful entrances of the main theme. The recitatives return toward the end of the merry movement, which gives the soloists many opportunities for brilliant display and introduces some delightful harmonic surprises along the way.

Selections from *The Nutcracker, The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*
Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky
Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka province, May 7, 1840
Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg,

The Nutcracker last performed by the Wichita Symphony December 20/21, 1986
The Sleeping Beauty last performed by the Wichita Symphony January 31/February 2, 2014
Swan Lake last performed by the Wichita Symphony January 31/February 2, 2014

The Nutcracker

In 1888 Tchaikovsky suggested pointedly to Director of Imperial Theaters Ivan Vsevolozhsky that he'd like to write an opera based on Heinrich Hertz's play *King René's Daughter* (after Hans Christian Andersen). Vsevolozhsky—who had recently brought Tchaikovsky together with choreographer Marius Petipa for the groundbreaking ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*—said what he'd really like was a ballet on a libretto he'd written himself based on Alexandre Dumas *père*'s version of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Nussknacker und Mausekönig* (Nutcracker and Mouse King). With the opera as a bargaining chip, Vsevolozhsky persuaded Tchaikovsky to compose the ballet to be presented in a double bill with the opera.

Tchaikovsky found Vsevolozhsky's *Nutcracker* libretto dramatically uninspiring—as have many critics since—but he nevertheless began work in March 1891, mainly to get the ballet out of the way, he told his brother, so he could work on *Iolanta*, as his opera was to be called. First he completed a suite of eight numbers from the ballet, which he conducted to great acclaim in St. Petersburg on March 19, 1892. The remainder of *The Nutcracker* was ready by April 4.

The double bill premiered at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg on December 18, and, though the opera was enormously successful with the audience, the ballet was a little less so, in part because Petipa had fallen ill and the choreography had been completed by his less talented assistant, Lev Ivanov. The critics, on the other hand, panned *Iolanta*, but were divided on *The Nutcracker*—many finding fault with the libretto and choreography but praising Tchaikovsky's music.

The double bill closed after eleven performances and the works went their separate ways. *The Nutcracker* was heard mainly in its suite version with only rare performances of the complete ballet until several mid-20th-century productions led to its being performed every Christmas throughout the United States.

The scenario divides starkly between two worlds and two kinds of action: the first act, which takes place on Christmas Eve at the luxurious home of the Silberhaus family (Stahlbaum in some versions), contains all the drama, and the second, in the fantastical Kingdom of Sweets, unfolds largely as a series of decorative tableaux. In Act I, after family and friends have decorated the Christmas tree, the famous **March**—with its proudly stepping outer sections framing a delightfully scurrying middle section—accompanies the children marching and dancing around the room as the party starts. The bubbly **Danse chinoise** celebrates tea from China in the second act's series of dances from around the world that takes place in the Kingdom of Sweets. Tchaikovsky's wide-spacing between the steady bassoons and the flute arabesques was a novel sonority. The divertissement concludes with all of the "sweets" joining in the justly celebrated **Waltz of the Flowers**, introduced by one of the great passages in the literature for the harp.

The Sleeping Beauty

Before their collaboration on *The Nutcracker* and always hopeful that he could interest Tchaikovsky in composing another ballet, Vsevolozhsky had suggested in May 1888 that he write one on Perrault's fairy tale *La belle au bois dormant* (The Sleeping Beauty), for which he, the director, would write the libretto, and Marius Petipa would supply the choreography. By September Vsevolozhsky had sent a manuscript to Tchaikovsky, who responded just as he had hoped, "I'm charmed, delighted beyond description. It suits me perfectly, and I ask for nothing more than to set it to music."

Despite his enthusiasm it took until the beginning of January 1889 for Tchaikovsky to begin composing in earnest. A European tour interrupted work and scoring went slowly, but in the end Tchaikovsky was immensely proud of the result, saying, "the music of this ballet will comprise one of my best works."

With such a high opinion of the work he was understandably disappointed at the reserved "Very nice" verdict of the tsar at the dress rehearsal and the similarly polite audience response at the premiere on January 15, 1890. Nevertheless, *The Sleeping Beauty* went on to win acclaim as one of Tchaikovsky's greatest—and profoundest—musical achievements.

The well-known story involves Princess Aurora, who at her christening is showered with gifts by the attending fairies. The wicked, uninvited fairy Carabosse arrives to deliver her "gift"—a curse. She proclaims that one day Aurora shall prick her finger on a spindle and die. **The Lilac Fairy**, to a graceful waltz, emerges to mitigate the curse's effect with one final gift: the prick will cause a deep sleep rather than death, and 100 years later she will be restored to life by a prince's kiss.

This action all happens in the ballet's prologue, followed by the first act celebration of Aurora's sixteenth birthday, at the end of which she indeed pricks her finger. Act II takes place 100 years later when Prince Desiré discovers the sleeping princess and awakens her with his kiss.

Act III depicts the wedding celebrations, concluding with dances by characters from many of Perrault's other fairy tales: **Puss-in-Boots and the White Cat** (a dance full of hesitations and humor), Cinderella, Red Riding-Hood, and Hop-'o-My-Thumb.

To return to Act II, the beloved **Sleeping Beauty Waltz** occurs in the form of a garland dance for the peasant boys and girls at Princess Aurora's birthday celebration. The rising gestures of the introduction generate great excitement, followed by the famous main waltz melody in the strings. This first waltz section also contains a merry second strain and a varied return of the main melody. The middle section features the winds, decorated by delicate chiming bells (glockenspiel). After the return of the entire first waltz section, a festive coda rounds off the proceedings.

Swan Lake

To step back further chronologically, in 1871, while on a summer break at his sister's home in Kamenka, Tchaikovsky composed a little ballet on the subject that several years later would become his first full-length ballet, *Swan Lake*. His nephew Yury left a delightful account of this production, for which Tchaikovsky's brother Modest danced the role of the Prince, his ten-year-old niece Tatyana presumably danced Odette, seven-year-old Anna played a cupid, Uncle Vasily Davidov designed the scenery—which included several large wooden swans—and Tchaikovsky himself demonstrated the steps and pirouettes required of the dancers.

When Tchaikovsky received a commission for a ballet in the spring of 1875, he doubtless remembered the subject of this family divertissement. He may have even borrowed some of its music—most likely the iconic oboe theme representing the swans—though no proof exists. Two other early works provided themes for *Swan Lake*—his failed first opera, *Voyevoda*, and his ill-fated second opera, *Undine*, which was never produced.

Completed late in April 1876, *Swan Lake* met with a distinct lack of success at its premiere on March 4, 1877, at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. Critics blamed the unimaginative choreography by Julius Reisinger, poor scenery and costumes, a lack of first-rate dancers, the inexperience of conductor Ryabov—and Tchaikovsky's score, though one report noted many beautiful moments. The orchestra musicians complained of the music's complexity, and the dancers were indeed challenged by Tchaikovsky's innovations which required new technical standards.

Swan Lake's great success did not begin until two years after his death when a new production was mounted with the libretto revised by Modest Tchaikovsky and choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. Though mutilated by cuts, additions, and reordering, the music at last began to be recognized for its daring achievement.

The story revolves around Prince Siegfried, who must take a bride, and Odette, a princess turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer. When Odette appears to him in human form, he falls instantly in love. She confides that they regain their human form only at night, and the enchantment can be broken only by a lover who has never pledged himself to another. The next day at the ball where the Prince is to choose a bride, he is tricked into declaring his love to Odile, daughter of the sorcerer, whom he mistakes for Odette. Devastated, he rushes to find Odette, who already knows that the spell cannot now be broken. The original ballet ends with the ill-

fated lovers sinking into the lake, whereas later productions have adopted endings ranging from romantic apotheosis to “happily ever after.”

The ballet is famous for its **Main Theme (Swan’s Theme)**, with its haunting oboe solo over rippling harp figuration that represents Odette and the swans throughout. The **Dance of the Swans** comes from a variation danced in Act II by four swans holding hands across their bodies and making quick steps in exact unison to music with the quality of a Russian folk dance—rhythmic and slightly exotic. The **Hungarian Dance**, a colorful czardas with its characteristic contrasting slow and fast sections, comes from Act III’s ball scene where Siegfried is to choose his bride from women of many nationalities.