

DAYTON PERFORMING ARTS ALLIANCE

DAYTON
Philharmonic

Far Away Places: *Scheherazade*

October 21 and 22, 2022 | Schuster Center

The Olive W. Kettering Memorial Concert

*With special support from The Schiewetz Foundation,
the AES Ohio Foundation, and the Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer Association*

2022-2023 MASTERWORKS SERIES



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Meri Sakhi ki Avaaz—My Sister's Voice

Text compiled and translated by
Niranjani Deshpande, Akila Rao,
Saili Oak, and Reena Esmail

1. Do Kaliyaan—Two Flowers

Two flowers, one branch
Ek daali, do kaliyaan

In this garden of life
Is zindagi ke bagh mein

Bahine bane saheliyaan (sisters become soulmates)*

My sister, my soul
Meri sakhi, saheliyaan

2. Meri Sakhi ki Avaaz—Sweet is the Voice

*Meri sakhi ki avaaaz (my sister's voice)**
Sweet is the voice of my sister

ranj mein
in the season of sorrow

*umeed ka ehsaas (a feeling of hope)**

3. Aks Sur Saaya—Mirror/Opposite†

Saaya nahi, pratibimb hai bahin
Not a shadow but a reflection of my sister

Vibhil chabi, ek dusre ka darpan
Lucid image, a mirror of one another

My sister is both my mirror and my opposite
Vo aks hai aur saaya bhi

*English text in parentheses translates Hindi text that the operatic soprano does not sing.

†Includes musical syllables in Hindi (sa-re-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni) and English (do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti) as well as syllables used in Hindustani music to perform percussion patterns vocally.

Musicians

Violin 1

Jessica Hung, Concertmaster*

Aurelian Oprea, Acting Concertmaster
J. Ralph Corbett Chair

William Manley, Acting Associate
Concertmaster
Huffy Foundation Chair

Youjin Na, Acting Assistant
Concertmaster
*Sherman Standard Register
Foundation Chair*

Elizabeth Hofeldt

David Goist

Mikhail Baranovsky

Louis Proske

John Lardinois

Philip Enzweiler

Dona Nouné-Wiedmann

Janet George

Violin 2

*The Peter and Patricia Torvik 2nd
Violin Section*

Kirstin Greenlaw, Principal
Jesse Phillips Chair

Kara Camfield, Assistant Principal

Ann Lin Baer

Gloria Fiore

Scott Moore

Nick Naegele

Lynn Rohr

Yoshiko Kunimitsu

Bill Slusser

Yein Jin*

Viola

Sheridan K. Currie, Principal
F. Dean Schnacke Chair

Colleen Braid, Assistant Principal

Karen Johnson
Grace Counts Finch Chair

Emilio Carlo*

Scott Schilling

Lori LaMattina

Mark D. Reis

Leslie Dragan

Tzu-Hui Hung*

Belinda Burge

Cello

Jonathan Lee, Principal
*Edward L. Kohnle Chair
in memory of Andra Lunde
Padrichelli, Principal Cellist
2003-2018*

Christina Coletta, Assistant Principal
*Gilbert and Patricia Templeton
Chair*

Lucas Song
Paul and Susanne Weaver Chair

Mark Hofeldt

Nadine Monchecourt

Zoe Moskalew

Bass

Deborah Taylor, Principal
*Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer
Association and C. David Horine
Memorial Chair*

Jon Pascolini, Assistant Principal

Don Compton

Stephen F. Ullery

Christopher Roberts

James Faulkner

Bieba Elibal

Flute

Rebecca Andres, Principal
*Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer
Association Chair*

Jennifer Northcut

Janet van Graas

Piccolo

Janet van Graas

Oboe

Eileen Whalen, Principal
Catharine French Bieser Chair

Connie Ignatiou*

Robyn Dixon Costa

English Horn

Robyn Dixon Costa, Principal
Rhea Beerman Peal Chair

Clarinet

John Kurokawa, Principal
Rhea Beerman Peal Chair

Rosario Galante

Bassoon

Rachael Young, Principal
Robert and Elaine Stein Chair

Horn

Aaron Brant, Principal
Frank M. Tait Memorial Chair

Jessica Pinkham*

Todd Fitter

Amy R. Lassiter

Sean Vore, Assistant/Utility Horn

Trumpet

Charles Pagnard, Principal
John W. Berry Family Chair

Alan Siebert

Eric Knorr

Daniel Lewis*

Trombone

Timothy Anderson, Principal
John Reger Memorial Chair

Richard Beigel

Chad A. Arnow

Bill and Wanda Lukens Chair

Tuba

Timothy Northcut, Principal
*Zachary, Rachel and Natalie
Denka Chair*

Timpani

Donald J. Donnett, Principal
*Rosenthal Family Chair in
Memory of Miriam Rosenthal*

Percussion

Michael LaMattina, Principal
Miriam Rosenthal Chair

Davi Martinelli de Lira
*Richard A. and Mary T. Whitney
Chair*

Gerald Noble

Harp

Leslie Stratton, Principal
Daisy Talbott Greene Chair

Keyboard

Joshua Nemith, Principal
Demirian Family Chair

* Denotes a musician on leave of absence

Program

Neal Gittleman, Artistic Director and Conductor

**Claude Debussy
(1862 - 1918)**

Nocturnes

1. Nuages (Clouds)
2. Fêtes (Festivals)

**Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)**

Meri Sakhi ki Avaaz (My Sister's Voice)

1. Do Kaliyaan (Two Flowers)
2. Meri Sakhi ki Avaaz (Sweet is the Voice)
3. Aks Sur Saaya (Mirror/Opposite)

Saili Oak, Hindustani Soprano
Sarah Tucker, Operatic Soprano

Intermission

**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1904)**

Scheherazade

1. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
2. The Story of the Kalendar Prince
3. The Young Prince and the Young Princess
4. Festival in Baghdad. The Sea.
The Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock
Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior
(Shipwreck)

Featured Artists



Saili Oak
Hindustani Soprano



Sarah Tucker
Operatic Soprano

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Claude Debussy

Nocturnes

1. Nuages (Clouds)

2. Fêtes (Festivals)

Debussy wanted us to hear and experience music in a new way. Each of the movements of his Nocturnes creates surprising, but delightful, visceral reactions. Completed in 1899, Nocturnes is one of Debussy's most original creations. It's music that beckons us inward; sensuous, saturated. For Debussy, Nocturnes was an expression of artistic freedom that he had been pursuing most of his career.

He was in good company in his pursuits. Living in Paris and coming of age in the 1880's, at the beginning of the mind-bending fin-de-siècle where breaking boundaries had become the rule, artists, writers and musicians all shared a table (literally, at salons and soirées) and exchanged ideas about the philosophy of expression. In this creative mix were the Symbolist writers like Mallarmé and Verlaine, who were striving to represent dreamscapes and psychological states of being in their poetry. And Impressionist painters like Monet and Renoir who were attempting to paint what it felt like to witness, for example, a sunrise over the river Seine. In the center of this heady mix was Claude Debussy, who found the existing rules of making music – approaches to melody, harmony – insufficient. As he described it in 1910, music must be “set ... free from barren traditions that stifle it. It is a free art, gushing forth, an [open-]air art, an art boundless as the elements, the wind, the sky, the sea!”

In addition to the influence of those extraordinary artists and environment, Debussy's muses were also eclectic. In 1889, he attended the Paris World Exposition where two “exhibits” made deep impressions: first, was his introduction to the colorful orchestrations (instrumentation and their groupings for effect) of the Russian master Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov who conducted two of his own works; and second was Debussy's introduction to the trance-like, mysteriously exotic Eastern sounds of a Javanese gamelan – the

Indonesian percussion orchestra, which, at the Exposition, was likely accompanied by a Wayang play (where two-dimensional leather puppets are thrown into shadow-relief onto a back-lit screen).

All of these inspirations were to come into full fruition in his Nocturnes, which had its premiere in 1901 – but the masterpiece was long in the making and represents Debussy's long musical journey.

Composed over seven years, the first version began to take shape in 1892 as “Three Twilight Scenes” based on a set of Symbolist poems by Henri de Régnier (1864 –1936). They then morphed into a violin concerto for the great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, but the soloist's disinterest temporarily halted Debussy's progress.

The work found its ultimate direction, however, from a Parisian exhibition of the American-born painter James McNeil Whistler (1834 –1903), who, while living in Paris and befriending Baudelaire and the founders of Impressionism, began expanding boundaries. He used musical terms as titles for his paintings (like “Arrangement” and “Nocturne”), and blended Eastern influences into his Western Impressionism. Whistler did this mainly by exploiting only a few colors, and creating a sense of “trying to see at twilight” in his paintings. Debussy adopted Whistler's approach to titles and misty expressions, and after tinkering for the next several years, his own Nocturnes were finally completed in 1899. But Debussy felt an explanation was warranted:

“The title Nocturnes is to be interpreted here in a general and, more particularly, in a decorative sense. Therefore, it is not meant to designate the usual form of the Nocturne, but rather all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests.”

And to do this, Debussy employed various inspirations: unconventional scales (which he heard from Rimsky-Korsakov and the Javanese gamelan) and abandoning traditional Classical musical structures. The results are like listening to music through a slowly turning kaleidoscope, where musical patterns float in front of the “lens” of our ears, emerging and disappearing. All of this creates a kind of musical hypnosis.

Debussy’s complete Nocturnes contains three movements (Clouds, Festivals, and Sirens — the mythological kind). Sirens, which uses a wordless women’s chorus, is sometimes omitted, as the Philharmonic does on this concert program.

The composer rarely wrote any explanatory narrative for his compositions, but he did so for his Nocturnes. It’s worth reprinting them]:

– Clouds renders the immutable aspect of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in grey tones lightly tinged with white.

– Festivals gives us the vibrating, dancing rhythm of the atmosphere with sudden flashes of light. There is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling fantastic vision), which passes through the festive scene and becomes merged in it. But the background remains resolutely the same; the festival with its blending of music and luminous dust participating in the cosmic rhythm.

Reena Esmail

Meri Sakhi Ki Avaaz (My Sister's Voice)

Meri Sakhi Ki Avaaz, at its core, is a piece about sisterhood. Each movement's short text epitomizes the one of the many facets of having and being a sister. It is also about what sisterhood looks like when expanded beyond a single family or a single culture—when two women, from two different musical cultures create space for one another's voices to be heard.

The first movement is a modern take on Delibes's famous Flower Duet from the opera *Lakme*. In the opera, Delibes depicts two Indian women singing by a river. In 1880s France, this orientalism was a point of entry into another culture far away. But today, that culture is easily accessible, and this is my attempt to show you what an 'updated' version of this duet might sound like with a Hindustani singer actually present to represent herself. So much of Western art music is about creating dialogue between the old and new, responding to our vast canon and musical tradition. And for the work I do, I couldn't think of a better jumping-off point than this classic duet.

For the second movement, I wrote a classical Hindustani bandish or 'fixed composition' in what they call *ati-vilambit*— a tempo that is so slow that the western metronome doesn't even have a setting for it. While Hindustani musicians would normally stay in one key for an entire piece (and, to be honest, for their entire professional career), this movement modulates once every *avartan*, or rhythmic cycle, and also allows space for improvisation within a very rigid western orchestral structure. Additionally, the singers are singing in two different raags — the Hindustani singer is in *Charukeshi*, while the soprano is in *Vachaspati* — and as the movement goes on, the switches between the raags get closer and closer.

The third movement is about mirrors and opposites. I used two different raags that are actual mirror images of one another: *Bhup*, a light and sweet raag, and *Malkauns*, a dark, heavy raag. You will hear the shifts in tonality as the phrases cross from one into the other. Also embedded in this piece is a classic

Hindustani *jugalbandi* (a musical competition) that is done completely in mirror image, and with both Indian and Western solfege systems, and it ends with both women crossing into one another's musical cultures: the Hindustani singer begins singing phrases in English and the soprano joins in for *ataranain* harmony.

This piece has been almost a decade in the making. In 2009, I wrote a piece called *Aria*, for Hindustani vocalist and orchestra – it was the first time I had ever attempted to put a Hindustani musician in my work, and it was the beginning of a long journey of discovery between these two musical cultures. This piece is the result of what I've found along that journey — an encyclopedia of sorts, of the many points of resonance I've discovered between these musical cultures. One of the greatest things I've learned is that I cannot do it alone. These ideas are as much mine as they are Saili's. We have spent hours and hours over many summers sitting at my kitchen table, drinking chai and dreaming up the ideas that have become this piece. And as Saili is quick to point out: this is a culmination, but also a beginning of everything that is yet to come. I might be a biological only-child, but I have found my musical soul sister in Saili.

—Reena Esmail

TEXTS OF *MERI SAKHI KI AVAAZ*

Texts compiled and translated by

Niranjani Deshpande, Akila Rao, Saily Oak, and Reena Esmail

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Two flowers, one branch

Ek daali, do kaliyaan

In this garden of life

Is zindagi ke bagh mein

Bahine bane saheliyaan (sisters become soulmates)*

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Sweet is the voice of my sister

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in the season of sorrow

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Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Scheherazade, Op. 351.

1. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship

2. The Story of the Kalendar Prince

3. The Young Prince and the Young Princess

4. Festival in Baghdad; the Sea; the Ship Goes to

Pieces on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior; Conclusion

As Russia sought to define its own national character in its arts and literature in the 19th Century, Orientalism (or musical influences from Eastern cultures), figured prominently. But this should not be too much a surprise. Russia's vast expanses had long straddled both the Western and Eastern worlds. Indeed, from 1480 onwards, *The Journey Beyond Three Seas*, a marvelous adventure story of travels in the East written by the Russian explorer Afanasy Nikitin, became the archetype of the classic Russian fairytale. Thus, when Russia, like so many other European countries, began to search for its uniqueness, a hearty soulfulness of the East ran in its consciousness. As for national music, the Nationalist composers, known as the Mighty Fistful –Balakirev (the leader), Rimsky-Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Borodin –took their roles with devoted seriousness, and sometimes consciously and sometimes not, their Russian music contained Eastern influences. Those influences were many –whole tone and pentatonic scales, unpredictable rhythms, lengthy melismas (wandering melodies), accelerating tempi, irregular phrasing, repeated notes, and lots of exoticsounding intervals.

Rimsky-Korsakov composed two Orientalist works, the first being his Symphony No. 2, "Antar," in 1868, based on an Arabian hero-folktale. Two decades later, in 1888, he wrote *Scheherazade*, based on the extraordinary collection of Islamic stories, *One Thousand Nights and a Night* (otherwise known as the Arabian Nights) – that colossal compilation of Middle Eastern and South Asian folktales from the Islamic Golden Age (7th-13th C.). Both works, but especially *Scheherazade*, are steeped in the Oriental musical characteristics listed above. But whether a listener can identify readily any Oriental influences in *Scheherazade* or not, the magical charm of Rimsky-

Korsakov's creativity speaks in its own magic language, and it is undeniably one of the most wonderfully loved works in Western literature.

One of *Scheherazade's* most ingenious aspects is how Rimsky-Korsakov fashioned it into a hybrid between a Classical symphony and a set of symphonic sketches—each of the typical four symphonic movements is used as the structure for a separate sketch, or story. Each movement has a subtitle to guide our imaginations, and those subtitles are unmistakably inspired by *The Arabian Nights*. *The Arabian Nights* is a masterful collection of stories upon stories, told by multiple authors who tell their own tales, and sometimes others' tales, all revolving around one "frame story," or anchoring narrative with the narrator. (*The Canterbury Tales* is a similar collection.) In *The Arabian Nights*, the frame story revolves around King Shahryar of roughly the 7th Century. When he learns that not only has his brother's wife been unfaithful (and subsequently executed), but also his own wife disloyal, he executes her and swears a deadly oath:

(All quoted excerpts are from Sir Richard Burrtton's classic 1850 translation of *Arabian Nights*)

"...King Shahryar took the brand in hand and, repairing to the seraglio, slew all the concubines and their Mamelukes. He also swore himself by a binding oath that whatever wife he married he would abate her maidenhead at night and slay her the next morning, to make sure of his honor. 'For,' said he, 'there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of earth...'"

After three years of bedding and beheading, the maidens in the kingdom were dwindling. At last, our heroine, Scheherazade, comes to the fore volunteering to be wedded by the King – and she has a crafty plan. Each night she tells the King a story that leads to the beginning of another story, at which point she abruptly stops, with the promise that she will continue the next night if only the King will spare her life another day. Bewitched with curiosity, the King agrees, and thereby Scheherazade buys for herself 1,001 nights of life.

Rimsky-Korsakov begins his musical narrative with ominous brass chords representing Shahryar's oath, a musical device that, in its longer notes, descends a whole tone scale. After a sweet, chordal woodwind reprieve introducing the fair Scheherazade, the heroine speaks. Here, Rimsky-Korsakov uses the violin, which is often regarded as the instrument closest to the human voice, and we hear an exotically wandering, melismatic strain over gorgeous harp strums –and the stories begin. Soon we are a-sail on the green sea on Sinbad's first voyage, and the tale begins to deepen with drama. The musical beckoning is irresistible. The exotic flavor of the tunes are fairytale-like, and delivered with Rimsky-Korsakov's uncanny mastery of using bits of the first two themes, Shahryar's scale, and Scheherazade's melisma, to propel the musical action. Notice also how Scheherazade's theme is taken up by many different instruments, almost like a relay, similar to the construct of the tale-telling in the Arabian Nights –where narrators begin to tell other people's tales as their own. The effect is a truly engrossing musical narrative.

The whole piece is, too, a kind of orchestral concerto, where Rimsky-Korsakov highlights virtuosity for many of the instruments, with the violin as the most virtuosic. Naturally, then, a bit of a violin cadenza is appropriate. This happens at the beginning of The Kalendar Prince (the second movement), and it also serves to allow Scheherazade to seductively win herself another night of life. Soon, open intervals drone out in the lower strings as the bassoon begins its humble tune-tale. That tune relays into the oboe, and soon the upper strings, as the tale gathers dramatic momentum. In this movement, more coloristic effects begin appearing, including the use of percussion, which creates exquisite palettes. More Eastern influences invade the music as well –repeated notes, constantly changing rhythms, and especially the strumming of the strings while the clarinet, and later other instruments, create their own fluttering melismas. The Kalendar's tale also involves some martial activity, where Rimsky-Korsakov gives us march-like music, reflecting this part:

“...But hardly had we sat down ere we heard the tomtoming of the kettledrum and tantara of trumpets and

clash of cymbals, and the rattling of war men's lances, and the clamors of assailants and the clanking of bits and the neighing of steeds, while the world was canopied with dense dust and sand clouds raised by the horses' hoofs..."

Alas, there are few good tales without love and romance, and the third movement is such:

"...where [there] was a damsel like a pearl of great price, whose favor banished from my heart grief and care and care, and whose soft speech healed the soul in despair and captivated the wise and wary. Her figure measured five feet in height, her breasts were firm and upright, her cheek a very garden of delight, her color lively bright, her face gleamed like dawn through curly tresses which gloomed like night, and above the snows of her bosom glittered teeth of a pearly white."

Here, the colors that Rimsky-Korsakov conjures are splendid, and of particular note is the way he scores the percussion instruments to sound as musically integral and, almost, as pitched as the tuned instruments.

The finale is as robust and exciting as they come, with virtuosic writing, changing meters and tempi, and repetitions that drive the drama to exhilarating climaxes.

"...when suddenly a violent squall of wind arose and smote the ship, which rose out of the water and settled upon a great reef, the haunt of sea monsters, where it broke up and fell asunder into planks, and all and everything on board were plunged into the sea."

With the ship smashed, and Sinbad adrift, the music and the narrative close back in on the heroine Scheherazade, who finishes the tale with alluring gentleness:

"O King of the Age, these are thy children, and I crave that thou release me from the doom of death, as a dole to these infants. For [if] thou kill me, they will become motherless and will find none among women to rear them as they should be reared. When the King heard this, he wept, and straining the boys to his bosom, said: 'By Allah, O Scheherazade, I pardoned thee before the coming of these children, for that I

found thee chaste, pure, ingenuous, and pious! Allah bless thee and thy father and thy mother and thy root and thy branch! I take the Almighty to witness against me that I exempt thee from aught that can harm thee.”

Musically speaking, as Scheherazade sings highly in the harmonics on the violin, Shahryar’s theme of pardon is muted and wooed, and the woodwind chords from the piece’s opening return to end the symphonic sketch in hope, smiling beauty, and quietude.

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