

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

JULY 16 • ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra
Larry Rachleff *conductor*
Nikolai Lugansky *piano*

WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

DEBUSSY: *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*
LUTOSŁAWSKI: Concerto for Orchestra
BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, op. 73, "Emperor"

LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

DEBUSSY: *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*

This piece made French composer Claude Debussy famous after its first performance in Paris in 1894. It is a tone poem, meaning that it is inspired by a poem or story. This piece describes a faun—a half-man, half-goat creature of ancient Greek legend—and how he spends his day lying around the forest and thinking of nymphs (another character of Greek legend, this one a woman that represents the spirit of nature).

A solo flute plays variations of the same notes throughout the piece, representing the faun as he wakes up and falls asleep again. Debussy, who started studying music at the Paris Conservatory when he was ten years old, was known for experimenting with new styles and techniques in music, many of which he used in this piece. Some techniques used in this piece are harp glissandos, where the notes slide one after another, and pizzicato, where the musicians use their fingers to pluck the strings of their instruments.

- Are you able to hear the flute part throughout the piece? Can you tell by the music when the faun is sleeping and when he is awake? How can you tell?
- Does this piece sound like a dream? Which parts?

LUTOSŁAWSKI: *Concerto for Orchestra*

This concerto is filled with the melodies of Polish folk songs. Lutosławski lived in Poland during both World Wars and suffered many hardships growing up, including having to escape with his family when the German army invaded his town during World War II. Then, in 1947, Lutosławski premiered his First Symphony—which the Polish government disliked so much they banned it from being performed again. Lutosławski spent the next few years composing mainly children's songs, educational music, and played the piano in restaurants around his hometown. But in 1950, he was asked by the director of a Polish orchestra to write

"something brilliant" to celebrate Poland's rebirth after World War II. In his Concerto for Orchestra, Lutosławski included the melodies of old Polish folk songs to celebrate national pride. This piece remains Lutosławski's most popular and frequently performed piece.

- Do you think music can be used to connect people?
- Can you think of any songs you know that represent national pride, here in America or in another country?

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, op. 73, "Emperor"*

A concerto is a piece written for a solo musician playing with an orchestra. This concerto was the last one completed by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who wrote it in 1809—a very difficult year. During this year, Beethoven's home in Vienna was in the warpath of French troops, and at times he was forced to hide in his brother's basement. Beethoven was already losing his hearing and had to hold pillows over his ears all night to protect them from further damage from explosions. The concerto's title, "Emperor," was not chosen by Beethoven but has stuck with the piece, possibly in reference to Emperor Napoleon, who was responsible for the conflicts in Europe at the time. It was dedicated to Beethoven's student and friend Archduke Rudolph.

Beethoven uses a cadenza in the beginning of this piece instead of at the end, where cadenzas are usually placed. A cadenza is a portion of music a soloist plays alone to show off great skill and creativity. This cadenza gives hints as to what the rest of the piece will sound like.

- What comes to mind with you think of the word "emperor?" Does this piece sound like what you're thinking?
- What skills do you have that you would show off?

music is what feelings sound like