

# CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

JULY 30 · ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

## WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra  
Robert Spano *conductor*  
Inon Barnatan *piano*  
Renée Fleming *soprano*

## WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS: *Dreamtime Ancestors*  
ALAN FLETCHER: *Piano Concerto* (World Premiere)  
MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS: *Selections from Poems of Emily Dickinson*  
BJÖRK/HANS EK: *Selected Songs*  
STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird Suite* (1919)

## LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

### CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS: *Dreamtime Ancestors*

American composer Christopher Theofanidis was commissioned to write this piece for New Music in America in 2015. *Dreamtime Ancestors* contains three movements that are based on an Australian myth from the continent's early people known as Aborigines. A myth is a story that is passed down through generations of people, and often no one really knows where the story came from originally. The dreamtime ancestors myth is one of the oldest myths (about 40,000 years old!) and says that everyone is connected to their family members from the past, present, and future, all at the same time!

### ALAN FLETCHER: *Piano Concerto* (World Premiere)

This is the world premiere of AMFS President and CEO Alan Fletcher's *Piano Concerto*. A world premiere is a work being played for the very first time. The piece is about singing, but not with a voice. Instead, the piano and the orchestra "sing" to each other, sometimes together and sometimes apart. It is made up of three movements. The first, called "Song in a Time of War" refers to an old German song called "St. Anne." The second movement, "Song Without Words," draws on a poem by famous English poet William Wordsworth. The final movement is called "Quodlibet," which is an ancient musical form that combines many songs or parts of songs.

### MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS: *Selections from Poems of Emily Dickinson*

Michael Tilson Thomas was inspired by soprano Renée Fleming to write *Selections from Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Emily Dickinson was a poet born in 1830 who wrote hundreds of poems and is one of the greatest American poets in history. While writing these pieces, Tilson Thomas tried to imagine what Emily Dickinson was doing when she wrote each poem. In one, he imagined her walking through a forest; in another,

sitting in a boat on a pond; or listening to hymns in a church. Then Tilson Thomas tried to match those places with music that represented them.

### BJÖRK/HANS EK: *Selected Songs*

Björk is a singer, songwriter, producer, actress, and DJ from Iceland. She is known for her combination of different styles of music. These selected songs were chosen by soprano Renée Fleming for this concert today. The first song is called "All is Full of Love" and is about spring. The second is called "Virus," which looks at our relationship with nature. Both of these songs were originally pop songs with a lot of electronic instruments.

### STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird Suite* (1919)

Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird Suite* (1919) is taken from a ballet he wrote in 1910 based on a Russian fairytale. A suite is formed by combining important excerpts from a larger piece of work so that you still get the whole story, but it is much shorter and can be performed at a concert. This story is about an evil ogre who captures princesses and imprisons them in his enchanted garden. A young prince accidentally discovers the garden while following the rare, magical Firebird, introduced by loud and colorful trills from the harp and piano. The prince falls in love with one of the princesses in the garden, but he is soon taken prisoner by the ogre's guards. The ogre threatens to turn him into stone, but the prince calls to the magical Firebird for help. The Firebird enchants the guards into a dance and the prince destroys the ogre's soul to free the princesses.

The *Firebird Suite* (1919) combines the key parts of the ballet. As the story continues, the musical style changes from the exotic and mysterious music of the magical world to the lyrical melodies of Russian folk songs. The ending of this piece depicts the Firebird's last lullaby, played mainly by the bassoon—a large woodwind instrument with a long reed.

*music is what feelings sound like*