

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer, *conductor*

SATURDAY | DECEMBER 14 | 8PM
ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER



Daniel Gurskis
Dean, College of the Arts

Anthony Mazzocchi
Director
John J. Cali School of Music

John J. Cali
School of Music

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

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PROGRAM

The Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1. *Overture*
2. *March*
3. *Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy*
4. *Trepak*
5. *Coffee*
6. *Tea*
7. *Dance of the Merlitons*
8. *Waltz of the Flowers*

Symphony no. 9 in d minor

Ludwig van Beethoven

iii. Adagio molto e cantabile

INTERMISSION

Three Black Kings

Duke Ellington

1. *King Balthazar*
2. *King Solomon*
3. *Martin Luther King Jr.*

(Movements 1 and 2 performed attacca)

THE NUTCRACKER

Loosely based on the ETA Hoffman novel *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, (as well as a far lighter adaptation by French writer *Alexandre Dumas, pere*) Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* has cemented itself as a true staple in the orchestral repertoire. Written and debuted in 1892, this orchestral suite preceded the premiere of the ballet proper. Initially, the ballet, the third of Tchaikovsky's three ballets (following *Swan Lake* and the lesser known *Sleeping Beauty*), was not met with glowing critiques. Due to a variety of issues with the initial production, critics and audience members were greatly underwhelmed. The composer in his lifetime never got the chance to see the true success of his ballet. It has since become a "household" name of classical music and ballet as it is accessible to adults and children alike and is also often used to introduce children to classical music.

This orchestral suite was premiered in March 1892 in Russia at the famed Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia with the ballet seeing its debut in December of that year. The US premiere did not come to fruition until the 1940's when the San Francisco Ballet company debuted it. In 1954, it premiered in New York and from that point forward, it became a true hit.

The suite contains three movements: a miniature overture, a collection of 6 "Characteristic Dances" and concludes with the undeniable *Waltz of the Flowers*.

The Overture, performed only with a selection of the full orchestra, provides an amuse-bouche of sorts before the journey through the Land of the Sweets in *The Characteristic Dances*. The famous march begins with the ever-so-familiar trumpet herald followed by dainty and deft runs in the strings. The *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* introduces the also famous melody

of the celesta; a keyboard instrument in which the hammers connected to the keys strike small bells rather than the strings as with a piano. The celesta creates the ever-so-famous melody and creates a dream-like or trance-like atmosphere as the main character (a child) meets the titular character of this scene. The *Russian Dance* is a fast, lively, and brisk dance inspired by the Russian Trepak dance; hence the alternative title *Trepak*. The *Danse Arabe: Coffee* creates a foundation on a repeated rhythmic line (musically an ostinato) in the cellos and violas. The winds and violins take us on a journey with almost snake charmer-like melodies. The *Danse Chinoise: Tea* brings about lively runs in the winds overtop a jovial bassoon rhythm. *Le Danse des Mirlitons* (or Dance of the Reed Flutes) opens in the flutes with very tongue-in-cheek, almost childlike melodies. The trumpets and violins soon take over with a moving line that almost ebbs and flows as the rest of the orchestra joins them in a crescendo that ultimately returns us to the chirps and bright sounds of the beginning melody.

The end of this journey brings us to the most recognizable selection in this illustrious ballet: The Waltz of the Flowers. The opening harp arpeggios maintain the dream-like state of the ballet. The waltz tempo is first established by the violas, cellos, and basses with then the horns and woodwinds alternating melodies leading to the lush string melody for which Tchaikovsky is so renowned, culminating in a truly triumphant ending to an eclectic and diverse adventure. While the composer himself never was able to see the immortality to which his ballet would ascend, this piece is one of the most important in the orchestral and ballet repertoire. This piece serves as the quintessential segue into the holiday season.

-Alec Hamilton

ELLINGTON - THREE BLACK KINGS

A prolific composer, accomplished pianist, and charismatic leader of an internationally-renown jazz orchestra, Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899-1974) was admired for composing music celebrating the unique skills of specific members of his orchestra. “Concerto for Cootie” for trumpeter Cootie Williams, and “Jeep’s Blues” for saxophonist Johnny Hodges are just two examples of Ellington’s personality-based compositions.

This emphasis on personality is the hallmark of Ellington’s final composition, “Three Black Kings.” Built upon a three-movement structure, “Three Black Kings” musicalizes Ellington’s impressions of and reverence for a triumvirate of powerful Black men who lived during three distinct historical eras.

The first movement is dedicated to King Balthazar, one of the Magi and the last king of Babylon (modern day Iraq) who ruled from 550 to 539 BCE. He traveled widely, not only to Bethlehem to visit the baby Jesus but also to Egypt, only one of two countries where pyramids had been built.

The music conjures up the image of a hive of activity at a construction site, where a legion of workers is building a ziggurat, a pyramidal-stepped temple tower, from the ground up. The foundation starts with a primal, urgent, and repetitive four-note motif introduced by the marimba and piano. An insistent conga drum provides the drive, and like the methodical layering of baked mud bricks, the brass and woodwinds are piled on.

As the movement progresses, one can imagine the ziggurat’s towers rising majestically over a desert horizon as an ascending glissando from the strings, piano, and harp suggests a sudden and sweeping cinematic vista.

The second movement is dedicated to King Solomon, who reigned over the United Kingdom of Israel(modern day Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria) from 970 to 931 BCE. King Solomon himself composed over 1,000 songs and is said to be the author of the Book of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes.

This movement slows the pace with languid and sweet melodies from the oboe and trumpet that sound like they’ve been dipped in honey. A bossa nova, a rhythm that took American popular music by storm in the 1960s, makes a short cameo appearance. A hard-swinging affair follows, with the tenor saxophone leading the proceedings while the orchestra chips in, providing both a lush bed of sustained chords and some punchy big band accents from the trombones and trumpets for good measure.

In 1963, Ellington met Dr. Martin Luther King for the first time on windy Michigan Avenue in Chicago. According to Marian Bruce, a singer and mutual friend of both men who arranged the impromptu encounter, “Dr. King jumps out of the car, and he runs over to him and they embrace like they were old friends. He was in awe of meeting Mr. Ellington. He didn’t realize that Edward was as in awe of having met Dr. King.” The two men remained life-long friends.

In honor of Dr. King, Ellington sets the third movement in a Black church where gospel music is the heart and soul of the service. This movement can be divided into three sections corresponding to three core elements of a church service: Preaching, Improvisational Music, and Affirmation of Faith.

The Preaching section presents the melody in a 12/8 meter – the rhythmic backbone of gospel music - and is introduced by the strings and piano. The soprano saxophone “preaches

the sermon” with a theme echoed by the violins, concluding with an “Amen” (a IV chord resolving to a I chord) from the trombones and French horns.

The Improvisational Music section begins with a second repetition of the “sermon” theme by the woodwinds and strings, as a springboard for improvisation by the soprano saxophone soloist. The trumpets play the role of the gospel choir as they build gradually to a full-throated and stratospheric “shout” chorus.

The return of a more subdued and understated main theme heralds the coming of the Affirmation of Faith section. A short, brassy coda brings us home, concluding with a solemn and final “Amen” from the entire orchestra.

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These program notes are dedicated to the late, great jazz trumpeter Clark Terry, one of my beloved musical mentors and a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra from 1951-1959. Today is Mr. Terry's birthday. He would have turned 104.

-Gary Blackman

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

New York City-based conductor

Kyle Ritenauer is a rising presence in the classical music world. Kyle is currently serving as Interim Director of Orchestras at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University, he is on faculty at the Manhattan School of Music as a member of the conducting staff, and is a cover conductor for the New York Philharmonic and National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC).

Throughout his career, Kyle has appeared as guest conductor with the Elgin Symphony, the Norwalk Symphony, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Symphony New Hampshire, and Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect. In the role of cover and assistant conductor, Kyle has worked with Opera de Montreal, the Des Moines Metro Opera, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain (Montreal), American Composers Orchestra, the Utah Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Kyle is a student of David Robertson and a graduate of The Juilliard School's Orchestral Conducting Program where, upon graduation, he received the Charles Schiff Conducting Prize for outstanding achievement. Kyle has also studied conducting with Kurt Masur, Gianandrea Noseda, Robert Spano, Tito Muñoz, Jeffrey Milarsky, and Michael Jinbo.

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1ST VIOLIN

Zach Wood
Chelsea Xuereb
Jonathan Frelix
Carlos Santamaria
Judith Kim
Sommer Altier
Katia Baranova

2ND VIOLIN

Brianna Almonte
Rafael Linares
Miguel Paniagua
Rachel O'Connor*
Park Choy
Haydn Ng
E'nyla Latta
Adriana King
Karina Kilbashian
Brayden Williams

VIOLA

Jasmine Tunac
Valentino Otero
Noah Stevens
Denton Moreland
Sydney Link
Geanelly Vallecillo
Carissa Dienes
Adeline Balfour
Josephine Dambeck
Callie Justice

CELLO

India Enter
Cecilia Grossman
Alec Hamilton
Kelvin Guillen
Shayna Barkan
Amelia Smerz
Max Caulkins

Rachelle Romero
Paige Stewart
Annamaria Witek
Justeen Valere
Valentina Corona
Yitian Huang

BASS

JP Bernabe
Niles Scott
Neil Sanchez-Cruzalegui
Carlie Senatore
Ilana Zeidman
Tommy Horner

FLUTE

Anaya Torrence
Jacob Medina
Luiza Ribeiro

OBOE

David Reinstein
Iva Verba
Quinten Hansen

CLARINET

Erin Smith
Jacob Han
Tristan Shafran

BASSOON

Dareen Butler
Jonathan Hart
Taylor Lee

TRUMPET

Clifton Little
Ryan Branco
Will Schetelich
Manny Reyes

TROMBONE

Aidan Andreoli
Dan Harkins
Sophia Huf

TUBA

JT Adinolfi

HORN

Faith Santana
Jeison Campoverde
Sheldon Senek
Patricia Schmitt

PERCUSSION & TIMPANI

Hannah D'elia
Isabella Cruz
Nik Pothos

KEYBOARD

Ana Rosa Hernandez

HARP

Esther Chung

JAZZ COMBO

Ryan Huston
Karen Xie
Tommy Horner
Rolan Bansil

SAXOPHONES

Piano
Bass
Drums