

The Soldier's Tale premiered on September 28, 1918, in Lausanne, conducted by Ansermet, founder of the Geneva-based Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. When the deadly “Spanish Flu” pandemic of 1918–1919 swept through Switzerland, the hoped-for tour never happened. Musicians, actors, and stagehands all succumbed to the flu, and the Swiss government ordered the closing of every public performance venue.

In 1920, Diaghilev considered mounting the work as a proper ballet with designs by Picasso. This came to naught, but gradually the work’s reputation spread and eventually it gained status as a curious masterpiece, performed throughout the world.

The Soldier's Tale, originally to be staged as a drama with three actors, a dancer, and seven instrumentalists, is a dark, Faustian story about a soldier who sells his violin to the Devil in exchange for future wealth and knowledge. The soldier later becomes disillusioned, gets the Devil drunk, beats him in a card game, and repossesses his violin. In the meantime, the soldier falls in love with an ailing princess. He cures her of her illness by playing dances for her—a tango, a waltz, and a ragtime. Later they marry and all goes well until the soldier decides to leave his newly adopted town and return to his hometown. As soon as he enters the land where he first encountered the Devil, the Devil again accosts him, retakes the violin, and leads the soldier away.

For today’s performance, Robert Baker, in addition to being our narrator, will take on the roles of the soldier and the Devil.

Program notes by Dennis Ferry

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The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Cover Cornelis Ploos van Amstel after Hendrick Avercamp, *The Winter King on the Ice* (detail), 1766, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Sherwood B. Smith, Jr.

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76TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

DECEMBER 10, 2017 / NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



Program

The Swiss-American Musical Society

Christophe Sturzenegger, conductor

Robert Baker, narrator

Zino Bogachek, violin

Paul Cigan, clarinet

Eric Dirksen, bassoon

Dennis Ferry, cornet

Douglas Rosenthal, trombone

Laura Ruas, double bass

Greg Akagi, percussion

DECEMBER 10, 2017 / 3:30

WEST BUILDING, WEST GARDEN COURT

Christophe Sturzenegger (b. 1976)

The Snow Queen

Based on “Snedronningen,” by Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

The Soldier’s Tale

Libretto by Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947)

The Musicians

CHRISTOPHE STURZENEGGER

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, Christophe Sturzenegger holds advanced degrees from major conservatories in french horn, piano, and music theory. As a horn player, he has played in orchestras in Zürich and Basel under the direction of such conductors as Abbado, Levine, Santi, Marriner, von Dohnányi, and Ashkenazy, and appeared as a soloist under Emmanuel Krivine. As a pianist, Sturzenegger has won competitions (Friedl Wald, Dénéreáz), in addition to the Neumann and Dumont awards. He has taught piano and keyboard harmony at Geneva’s Haute école de musique since 2003. As a composer, he is published by Woodbrass Music and has a catalogue of more than thirty works, including commissioned compositions, primarily for the Swiss Musical Competition for Youth, various festivals, and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He has been the conductor and the music director for numerous productions in Switzerland and France. In 2016, he conducted fifty performances of Kurt Weill’s *The Threepenny Opera*. He has performed at festivals in Salzburg, Verbier, Hong Kong, Istanbul, London, Budapest, Tokyo, and Aix-en-Provence.

ROBERT BAKER

Robert Baker, today’s narrator, is a central figure in the Washington-area classical music scene, and with the Washington National Opera has been featured in more than 250 performances. He has recently been seen in *Appomattox* and *Dead Man Walking* with the company and this season will appear in Verdi’s *Don Carlos*. His career highlights include the role of Ishmael in the world premiere of Peter Westergaard’s *Moby Dick* at Princeton University (recorded for Albany Records) and his Metropolitan Opera debut in Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*, which he recorded during the Spoleto Festival’s 1999 production (Chandos label). Baker’s performances outside Washington include the title role in Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* at Princeton University and Quint in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* with the New Jersey Opera Festival, for which the *New York Times* praised him for being “riveting and dynamic.” Baker is chair of the music department at George Washington University.

ZINO BOGACHEK

Ukrainian-born American violinist Zino Bogachek has received broad critical acclaim for his technical facility and emotional expressiveness. As a recitalist and chamber musician, he has performed throughout the former Soviet Union, Poland, Austria, Italy, Mexico, and the United States. His solo appearances have been with the Lviv and the Centennial Philharmonics, the Cape Ann and the Knoxville Symphonies, Eclipse Chamber Orchestra, and Summer Music from Greensboro Festival Orchestra. Bogachek has participated in the National Virtuosi Festival in Ukraine, the Haydn

Festival in Austria, the Summer Music from Greensboro Festival, and the Orfeo Music Festival in Italy. A graduate of Lviv Conservatory, he continued his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music and at Boston University. He has received numerous awards, including the Boston University Directors Award, honorary diplomas from several international competitions, and election to the Pi Kappa Lambda Chapter of the National Music Honor Society. His teachers have included Yuri Mazurkevich and Berl Senofsky. Currently, he is a member of the Washington National Opera Orchestra.

DENNIS FERRY

Dennis Ferry, playing the cornet, was principal trumpet of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva from 1977 to 2008. Previously, he was principal trumpet in the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Schleswig-Holsteinische Sinfonieorchester, the Düsseldorfer Sinfoniker, and the Rotterdam Philharmonic, as well as a member of the United States Air Force Concert Band, Washington, DC. For thirteen summers, Ferry was principal trumpet of the Colorado Music Festival. He performs regularly with Opera Lafayette, the Alexandria Symphony, the Pittsburgh Opera, and the Washington Concert Opera. Ferry holds degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University and Catholic University of America. He has performed with major baroque ensembles in Europe and the United States, including La Chapelle Royale, Les Arts Florissants, Gli Angeli Genève, and the Boston Early Music Festival. As principal trumpet for more than three decades, Ferry has participated in more than seven hundred radio broadcasts and has played for thirty commercial recordings.

PAUL CIGAN

Appointed to the National Symphony Orchestra's clarinet section by Maestro Leonard Slatkin in 1999, Cigan enjoys a career as orchestral clarinetist, chamber musician, concerto soloist, and teacher. In addition to the National Symphony Orchestra, Cigan can frequently be heard performing with the Eclipse Chamber Orchestra, the 21st Century Consort, and the Smithsonian Chamber Players, as well as in recordings with those ensembles on the Dorian, Bridge, and Naxos labels. In 2012, Cigan premiered Donald Crockett's *Dance Concerto* with the 21st Century Consort and performed a special wind ensemble version of the piece with the University of Maryland Wind Orchestra in 2015. Prior to his position with the National Symphony Orchestra, Cigan held principal posts with the San Antonio, Colorado, and Virginia Symphonies. An active teacher in the Washington, DC, area,

Cigan is currently on the faculty at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is also active in the National Symphony's education department, instructing members of the Youth Fellowship Program and the Summer Music Institute. Other activities include performing at the Halcyon Music Festival and the Grand Teton Music Festival and teaching at the University of Maryland's National Orchestral Institute and the Philadelphia International Music Festival. Cigan studied with Anthony Gigliotti, former principal clarinetist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and David Breedon, former principal clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony.

ERIC DIRCKSEN

Eric Dirksen studied bassoon and saxophone at Indiana University in Bloomington and at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He later played utility bassoon and saxophone with the Jerusalem Symphony. In the Washington area, he enjoys an active freelance career playing principal bassoon with the Washington Concert Opera, the Virginia Chamber Orchestra, the Amadeus Orchestra, the Chesapeake Orchestra, and the Washington Ballet, as well as extra bassoon/contrabassoon with the Washington Opera, the Alexandria Symphony, and the National Philharmonic. Dirksen also plays in the orchestras for the Cathedral Choral Society, the Washington Chorus, the Washington City Choir, and the Choral Arts Society.

DOUGLAS ROSENTHAL

Douglas Rosenthal was appointed assistant principal trombonist of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra in 2012. Since moving to Washington, he has performed with the Smithsonian Chamber Players, the Post-Classical Ensemble, and the Washington Symphonic Brass. Rosenthal is also a frequent guest musician with other orchestras, including those of Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Utah. He pursued a trombone performance degree at Northwestern University and sought further training in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida.

LAURA RUAS

Laura Ruas is one of the region's most sought-after double bassists. She is principal bass of both the Baltimore Chamber and the Concert Artists of Baltimore Orchestras. She is also guest bassist with the National and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras and a member of the former Baltimore Opera Orchestra. She has worked with conductors Michael Tilson Thomas, Neeme Järvi, Leonard Bernstein, Christoph Eschenbach, Zubin Mehta, and Marin Alsop, the last of whom invited Ruas to join the Cabrillo

Music Festival in 2005. Her tours have included South America, France, China, Japan, and Hong Kong. Ruas teaches double bass at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Goucher College, and the Baltimore School for the Arts (BSA) high school. Ruas is dedicated to music education and teaches in the BSA's TWIGS program, which provides free music lessons for Baltimore City children. Ruas is also program director for the Bridges Program, providing after-school string instruction to Baltimore City youth. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Juilliard School, where she studied with renowned bass pedagogue Homer Mensch.

GREG AKAGI

Percussionist Greg Akagi grew up in Aloha, Oregon, and has been performing music his entire life, starting with the piano at age three and taking up the drums in third grade. Akagi attended Oberlin College and Conservatory and earned a double degree in music performance and biology, with a minor in chemistry. At Oberlin, Akagi was one of the original members of the Ragtime Ramblers group and part of many other ensembles. He earned his master's degree in music performance at Cleveland State University. In 2000, he became a section member of both the Canton and the West Virginia Symphony Orchestras. Four years later, Akagi also became principal percussionist with the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra. Since 2006, Akagi has been assistant principal timpanist and a section percussionist with the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra and the Washington National Opera in Washington, DC.

Program Notes

THE SNOW QUEEN

Swiss composer Christophe Sturzenegger's *The Snow Queen*—composed in Geneva in 2009—has been performed more than seventy-five times for thousands of spectators in Switzerland and France. Written for the same group of instruments as Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, Sturzenegger's composition is based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale of the same name. (The Disney movie *Frozen* was also inspired by Andersen's story.) In the *Snow Queen*, the devil, in the form of an evil troll, constructs a magic mirror that distorts everything—everything “good” appears “bad.” When the mirror breaks into thousands of pieces, one fragment lodges in the eye of a little boy named Kay and another piece enters his heart. One day, when Kay disappears, his friend Gerda goes out looking for him. It turns out Kay has been kidnapped by the Snow Queen, and she has locked him away in her castle in the north. Gerda needs to brave the Arctic cold in order to find Kay in time to save him.

THE SOLDIER'S TALE

Igor Stravinsky began work on this virtuosic piece in 1917, while secluded in Morges, Switzerland, during the First World War. Previously, while living and working in Paris from 1910 to 1914, Stravinsky and his family continued to spend their summers at their home in Ustyúl, Ukraine. In the winter of 1914, however, they relocated for a temporary, therapeutic stay in the Swiss Alps. When World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, Switzerland became the composer's home base until he and his family could move back to France in 1920.

Despite his early successes for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes—*The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, and *Les Noces*—Stravinsky was in financial straits. The war had cut off access to his family's estate and funds in Russia. In addition, his publisher, Édition Russe de Musique (headquartered in war-torn Berlin), had stopped sending him royalties. During this time, Stravinsky was assisted financially by the Swiss philanthropist and amateur clarinetist Werner Reinhart.

In 1915, the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet introduced Stravinsky to Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz, a Swiss novelist, and the two men quickly became friends and collaborators. Since Ramuz's royalties had also been cut off, he and Stravinsky planned a stage work that could be produced inexpensively and would require only a handful of performers, making it portable enough to tour.