

Bruocsella Symphony Orchestra

Conductor: Gabriel Hollander

Soloist: Tina Zhao (Double Bass)

16. March 2024 – 20:00

Conservatoire Royal

Tan Dun

“The Wolf” - Concerto for Double Bass (2014)

1. Largo Melancholia - Allegro

2. Andante molto

3. Allegro vivace

(ca. 20 minutes)

Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky

“Manfred”-Symphony (1896)

1. Manfred wanders, desperately, in the Alpine mountains

Lento lugubre - Andante (Astarte) - Andante con duolo

2. The Alpine Fairy appears

Scherzo – Trio (Alpine Fairy) - Scherzo (repeated)

3. Pastorale - Free and peaceful mountain folk

Andante – Piu animato – Andante

4. Palace of Arimanes – Astarte appears– Manfred’s death

Allegro con fuoco – Andante (Astarte appears - Manfred’s death) – Andante con duolo

(ca. 60 minutes)


1. Tan Dun (*1957) - “The Wolf” - Double Bass Concerto (2014)

Tan Dun was born in China. When he was relocated and forced to work as a rice planter during Mao’s “Cultural Revolution”, he learned to play the Chinese violin. He became violinist and arranger at the Peking Opera, studied composition and moved to the U.S. in the 80ies. His music mixes Chinese and Western elements and made him already win an Oscar (for the score for Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).



“**The Wolf**” (also named: “Wolf Totem”) is inspired by the Chinese novel “[Wolf Totem](#)” by Jiang Rong, which describes the dying culture of the Mongols and the parallel extinction of the animal they believe to be sacred: the fierce and otherworldly Mongolian wolf. The symbol of the Mongolian wolf and its life in the grasslands for Tan Dun is a mirror of the human spirit and our relationship to the natural world. The three-movement concerto shows the virtuosic potential of the double bass, with a sound range reaching from a Chinese violin to a ship horn or percussion instrument. Tan Dun uses orchestral techniques inspired from the style of ancient Mongolian Fiddle playing, such as a the frequently used dropping string sound patterns, noted as follows:



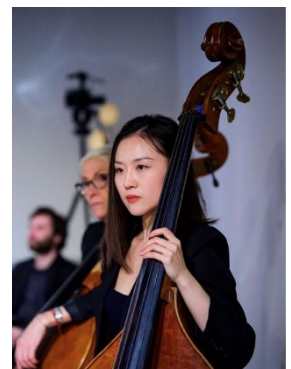
BSO-musicians loved this symbol  which means: “play any note you want”.

The **first movement** starts with a long bass solo, accompanied by the full orchestral bass section and the mysterious sounds of Tibetan singing bowls (“Largo Melancholia”). From the pentatonic Asian mood, the music then changes gradually into a depiction of the running of the wolves and wild horses across the Mongolian grasslands (“Allegro”) – reminding of famous horse-riding themes such as ‘Wilhelm Tell’ or ‘Bonanza’. Rhythmic patterns in the brass, winds, percussion, and pizzicato strings drive the movement forward. The melody changes from section to section while the solo bass — the wolf — also takes up the running gestures to drive the movement faster and faster to its close.

In the exceptionally beautiful **second movement** (“Andante molto”), the soloist depicts the loneliness of a young wolf missing its mother. This intensely lyrical and tender movement offers the soloist an opportunity to revel in the rich and singing sound of the contrabass.

The explosive **final movement** (“Allegro vivace”) returns us to the scene of running wolves and horses, heard in the galloping figures of the orchestra while the soloist alternates between lyrical episodes and joining the orchestra's rhythmic gestures. In contrast to the previous movement, the solo line is dominated by large interval leaps alternating with pulsing notes as the work reaches its dramatic climax.

Our **soloist, Tina Zhao**, started to play the [Guzheng](#) (a Chinese zither) at the age of 4, and changed to the double bass 7 years later. She holds a diploma from the Conservatory of Toulouse and the *Fabrique des arts* des Carcassonne (France). Currently, and currently studies at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels with Adrien Tyberghein.



See for an introduction by the composer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkV9GYbPZK8>

2. Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (*1840): ‘Manfred’ Symphony (1886)

Tchaikovsky's ‘Manfred’ Symphony is a *program symphony*, depicting different scenes of the dramatic poem ‘Manfred’ by Lord Byron, who was extremely popular in the 19th Century. Throughout the symphony, Tchaikovsky, uses different “leitmotifs” to describe the main characters (see => [Cheat Sheet](#), next page). While less played than other works of Tchaikovsky, *Manfred's* melodic intensity does not stand behind any of his famous masterpieces.



Lord Byron was a gifted *enfant terrible* of his time, innovative writer and inventor of the “Byronic Hero” (inspiring male figures from Humphrey Bogart to Batman), bisexual, having numerous affairs, including with his half-sister – a theme that made it also into ‘Manfred’ poem (in the form of the beloved *Astarte*). He died at an age of 36 as a freedom fighter in Greece. Byron’s “Manfred” is a Faustian character, searching for the meaning of life and tortured by the loss of his beloved Astarte, not surrendering to the devil (unlike Faust), but also not asking forgiveness (*‘I won’t surrender to hell and ghosts - I’m my own destroyer’*).



The symphony follows the hero through the Alps in his quest. The **first movement** describes his desperation (*Lento lugubre*), interrupted by the short appearance of Astarte (*Andante*), leaving Manfred in despair (*Andante con duolo*).

In the **second movement**, which starts with a *Scherzo*, an alpine fairy appears under a waterfall (*Trio*). However, she doesn’t bring back Astarte, and the nervous water music (*Scherzo*) resumes.

For his **third movement**, Tchaikovsky composed a beautiful *Pastorale*, to contrast Manfred’s inner fight with the peaceful life of the peasants. Some recall a famous Beatles song, and a horn pipe is hidden in the middle of the movement.

The **fourth movement** plays in the palace of *Arimanes*, the master of the evil spirits, who are dancing and bewitching Manfred in a wild bacchanal. He calls for Astarte and she appears again, but only to announce his near death. A dramatic epilogue recalls the “Manfred” theme, and the piece ends, after a last hymnic organ theme, softly and in silence.

Bruocsella Symphony Orchestra – Members:

Conductor: **Gabriel Hollander** – Soloist (Double Bass): **Tina Zhao**

Violin 1 Patrik Peynsaert Lena Widefjäll Rosie Birchard Stephanie Gradstein Wiebke Pankauke Dorothee Starck Georges Bonheure Oliver Koch Liliane v Meulebeke Sofie Temmerman Karen Downie Rachel Haggar Emese Kárpáti	Violin 2 Sebastian Obertuner Frauke Wiarda Elsa Sependa Cécile Delfosse Michael Johnson Isabelle Combes Guillaume Fine Judith Krommer Thibault Deleu Amélie Beauville Zinaida Lifshitz Anne-Cathrin Defraigne	Viola Florence van Giesel Gabriel Rayfield Guy Laycock Thomas Usher Leo Whitlow Raphael Goulet Francoise Schubert	Cello Jennifer Branton Géraldine Coop-D. Matthieu Delescluse Michael Fridrich Céline Gauer Ulrike Hein Greta Hopkins Izabela Jurczik-Arnold Maud Meijer Annette Teutsch	Double Bass Tina Zhao Simon Dalferth Anne Good Chris Jenkins Mieke Joostens Tobias Voget
Flute Helen Spence-Jackson Anna Kelber Laurence Schubert	Oboe Frans Van Hulle Carla Holm Raphaëlle Nenert	Clarinet Vincent De Boever Abbie Tress Iker Condon	Bassoon Bénédicte Masurel Charlotte Boigelot Kamil Szulc	Harp Anke de Gersem Lisa Bartholomé
Trumpet Maxime Wastiels Rosi Hingsamer Tomas Tena Munos Chris Rawden	Trombone Catriona Graham Mags Bird John Fallas David Lloyd	Tuba Carl-Albert Hjelmhorn	Horn Paul Litterio Anna Riepe Florence Bellière Pierre Baudhuin Clare Morley	Percussion Ruth Ripoll John Brown Pau Iborra Mark Beamish Ole Canenbley

Manfred – Cheat Sheet (Themes and Story)

- The symphony is based on a number of key themes, linked to the four ‘images’ (=> movements) of the symphony. They reflect key scenes in Byron’s poem. A number of the themes are recurring (‘Leitmotive’).
- Text in “ “ are Tchaikovsky’s own explanations / titles of the movements;
- Click on the => [YouTube-links](#) for the respective themes; see also [Manfred Symphony - Wikipedia](#).

I. Movement (+/- 15 minutes)

“Manfred wanders in the Alpine mountains.” => [Manfred Theme 1](#) (Beginning)



“His life is shattered, but he is obsessed with life's unanswerable questions. In life nothing remains for him except memories.” => [Manfred Theme 2](#) (first time: after 60 seconds)



NB: Manfred had a forbidden affair with his half-sister, Astarte, who died from sorrow.

“Images of his ideal Astarte permeate his thoughts and he vainly calls to her” => [Astarte Theme](#) (~ minute 8:00)



“Only the echo from the cliffs repeats her name. Memories and thoughts bum and gnaw at him. He seeks and begs for oblivion, which no-one can give him.” NB: In the poem, Manfred asks the spirits to help him, but without success.

II. Movement (+/- 10 minutes)

Flurries of notes mimic the mist of a waterfall => [Waterfall Theme](#), the movement remains in mystical flight until the very end (Scherzo – Trio (Fairy) – Scherzo) (~ minute 16)



“The Alpine Fairy appears to Manfred beneath the rainbow of a waterfall” => [Fairy Theme](#) (~ minute 19)



N.B.: In the poem, he asks the fairy for help to awake Astarte. She requests obedience, then he rejects the proposal.

III. Movement: (+/- 10 minutes)

“Pastorale. A picture of the simple, free and peaceful life of the mountain folk.” => [Peasants’s Theme](#) (similar to “Norwegian Wood”/Beatles :-)) (~ minute 26)



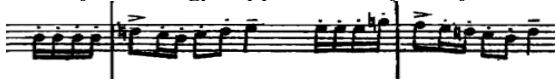
NB.: In the poem, Manfred almost jumps from a cliff and is saved by a peasant; Manfred clashes with the way of life of the peasants, to which he is himself in stark contrast.

IV. Movement (+/- 20 minutes)

“The subterranean palace of Arimanes [NB: an ancient master of evil spirits, surrounded by other spirits] => [Arimanes Theme](#) [NB: comes also later, letter N - fugato] (~ minute 40)

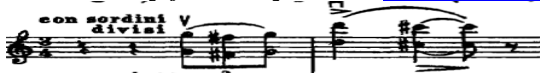


“An infernal orgy. Appearance of Manfred in the midst of a bacchanal.” => [Bacchanale Dancing Theme](#) (~ minute 42)

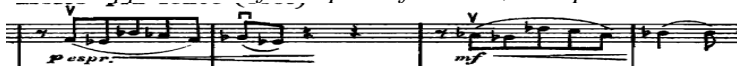


NB: In the poem, an abbot offers to forgive his sins if he just regrets – Manfred rejects the offer. Also the evil spirits ask Manfred in vain to surrender (“I won’t surrender to hell and ghosts - I’m my own destroyer”)

“Evocation [of Astarte] ...” => [Calling Astarte Theme](#), adagio non troppo (~ minute 50)



“...and appearance of the spirit of Astarte, who pardons him...” => [Astarte Theme](#), molto piu lento (~ minute 51)



NB: Astarte doesn’t get back to life, but promises him that his suffering will soon end and disappears.

“...death of Manfred” => [Manfred's Death](#) – Allegro molto vivace (~ minute 53)



The piece ends with an epilogue/postlude with the full orchestra rising beneath him => [Epilogue with organ/apotheosis](#)

