

Concert Program for January 14, 15, and 16, 2011

David Robertson, conductor
David Halen, violin

LIGETI *Concert Românesc* (1952)
(1923-2006) Andantino—
Allegro vivace—
Adagio ma non troppo—
Molto vivace; Presto

BRAHMS *Violin Concerto in D major, op. 77* (1878)
(1833-1897) Allegro non troppo
Adagio
Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace
David Halen, violin

Intermission

MUSSORGSKY/ *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874/1922)
orch. Ravel Promenade—
(1839-1881)/(1875-1937) Gnomus—
Promenade—
The Old Castle—
Promenade—
Tuileries -
Bydlo—
Promenade—
Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells—
Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle—
The Market at Limoges—
Catacombs (Sepulchrum romanum)—
Cum mortuis in lingua mortua—
The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga)—
The Great Gate at Kiev

David Robertson is the Beofor Music Director and Conductor.

David Halen is the Essman Family Foundation Guest Artist.

The concert of Friday, January 14, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Bert Condie, III. Doughnuts and coffee for the concert of Friday, January 14, are provided by Krispy Kreme.

The concert of Saturday, January 15, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from the Essman Family Foundation.

The concert of Sunday, January 16, is the Dr. and Mrs. Richard G. Sisson Concert.

The St. Louis Symphony's 2010-2011 Russian Festival is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mrs. Clinton W. Lane, Jr.

These concerts are presented by the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation.

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors Series.

Large print program notes are available through the generosity of Lutheran Senior Services and are located at the Customer Service table in the foyer.

**David Robertson** Beofor Music Director and Conductor

A consummate musician, masterful programmer, and dynamic presence, David Robertson has established himself as one of today's most sought-after American conductors. A passionate and compelling communicator with an extensive knowledge of orchestral and operatic repertoire, he has forged close relationships with major orchestras around the world through his exhilarating music-making and stimulating ideas. In fall 2010,

Robertson began his sixth season as Music Director of the 131-year-old St. Louis Symphony, while continuing as Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a post he has held since 2005.

Highlights of Robertson's 2010-11 season with the St. Louis Symphony included a gala concert with soprano Renée Fleming, and the orchestra's forthcoming seventh consecutive appearance at New York's Carnegie Hall. Guest engagements in the U.S. include performances with the Boston, San Francisco, New World, and San Diego symphony orchestras, and the New York Philharmonic. In March 2011 he conducts the Ensemble ACJW, the performing arm of the Academy, a professional training program for young musicians developed by Carnegie Hall, the Juilliard School, and the Weill Institute, in a program combining Mozart's unfinished opera *Zaide (Das Serail)* and the New York premiere of Luciano Berio's reconstruction of the same piece. Internationally, guest engagements include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, where Robertson appears regularly, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin as part of Musikfest Berlin, and several concerts with the BBC Symphony. In addition to his fresh interpretations of traditional repertoire, this season Robertson conducts world premieres of works by Stephen McNeff, Avner Dorman, Joey Roukens, and Christopher Rouse.

Born in Santa Monica, California, Robertson was educated at London's Royal Academy of Music, where he studied French horn and composition before turning to orchestral conducting. Robertson received Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and he and the St. Louis Symphony are recipients of three major awards from ASCAP and the League of American Orchestras, including the 2009-10 and 2008-09 Award for Programming of Contemporary Music, and the 2005-06 Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. *Musical America* named Robertson Conductor of the Year for 2000. In 1997, he received the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, the premier prize of its kind, given to exceptionally gifted American conductors. He is the recipient of honorary doctorates from Westminster Choir College, Webster University, and Maryville University, as well as the 2010 Excellence in the Arts award from the St. Louis Arts and Education Council. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. David Robertson and his wife, pianist Orli Shaham, are parents of twin boys. Robertson also has two older sons.



David Halen Essman Family Foundation Guest Artist
David Halen is living a dream that began as a youth the first time he saw the St. Louis Symphony perform in Warrensburg, Missouri. Born in Bellevue, Ohio, he didn't have to look far for his musical influences: his father, the late Walter J. Halen, was also his violin professor at Central Missouri State University; his mother, a former member of the Kansas City Symphony; and his older brother, the Acting Concertmaster of the

Houston Symphony Orchestra. Halen began playing the violin at the age of six, and earned his bachelor's degree at the age of 19. In that same year, he won the Music Teachers National Association Competition and was granted a Fulbright scholarship for study with Wolfgang Marschner at the Freiburg Hochschule für Musik in Germany, the youngest recipient ever to have been honored with this prestigious award. In addition, Halen holds a master's degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, studying with Sergiu Luca.

Halen served as Assistant Concertmaster with the Houston Symphony Orchestra under Sergiu Comissiona and Christoph Eschenbach until 1991. He then came to St. Louis, where he was permanently named Concertmaster in September 1995, without audition, by the orchestra, and with the endorsement of then Music Directors Leonard Slatkin and Hans Vonk.

During the summer he teaches and performs extensively, serving as Concertmaster at the Aspen Music Festival and School. He has also soloed, taught, and served as Concertmaster extensively at the Orford Arts Centre in Quebec, the Manhattan School of Music, Indiana University, the National Orchestra Institute at the University of Maryland, the Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, and the New World Symphony in Miami Beach. In 2007 he was appointed Distinguished Visiting Artist at Yale University, and at the new Robert McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia.

As co-founder and artistic director of the Innsbrook Institute, Halen coordinates a weeklong festival, in June, of exciting musical performances and an enclave for aspiring artists. In August, he is artistic director of the Missouri River Festival of the Arts in Boonville, Missouri. His numerous accolades include the 2002 St. Louis Arts and Entertainment Award for Excellence, and an honorary doctorate from Central Missouri State University and from the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Halen plays on a 1753 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin, made in Milan, Italy. He is married to Korean-born soprano Miran Cha Halen and has a 13-year-old son.

David Halen most recently performed as a soloist with the St. Louis Symphony in December 2009.

Musical Images

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

Ideas at Play

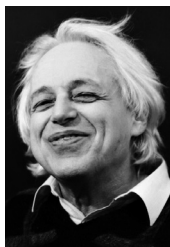
One of the oldest and most intriguing questions about music is whether, and to what extent, melody, harmony, and instrumental color can convey impressions of anything beyond... well, beyond just the phenomena of melody, harmony, and instrumental color. Can music denote events or things in the physical world? Can it conjure up images in our minds? Or is it a self-contained art form, an intricate and delightful play of sounds but having no implications beyond merely that?

The three compositions that make up our program imply different answers to these questions. On the one hand, Johannes Brahms' magisterial Violin Concerto makes the case for music as an essentially abstract art. Its music conveys different emotional states, perhaps, and maybe a subliminal sense of drama. But the specific nature of that drama, like the source of whatever emotions we perceive in the music, are unknowable. On the other hand, Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* purports a correspondence between its various movements and images created by a Russian painter and draftsman, a correspondence that implies a certain connection between musical and visual sensation.

Somewhat between these two extremes is the first work we hear, György Ligeti's *Concert Românesc*. Its music implies village singing and dancing, as well as the distant calls of mountain horns. Do these constitute musical pictures, or a more indefinite kind of association? The finale of Brahms' concerto also entails a folkloric element, the sound of gypsies fiddling. Perhaps that composition is not so abstract after all.

György Ligeti *Concert Românesc*

Born: Tirnaveni, Transylvania, May 28, 1923 **Died:** Vienna, June 12, 2006 **First performance:** August 21, 1971, in Fish Creek, Wisconsin; Thor Johnson conducted the Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra **STL Symphony premiere:** February 24, 2006, with Roberto Minczuk conducting the only previous performance **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, percussion, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 12 minutes



Ligeti

In Context 1952 *Paul Robeson awarded Stalin Peace Prize from the Soviet Union; director Elia Kazan identifies actors as members of communist cell before House Un-American Activities Committee; future Russian prime minister and president Vladimir Putin born in Leningrad*

György Ligeti, one of the most original and important musical thinkers of the last half century, was born in Transylvania, that fabled and much disputed province lying on the border of Hungary and Romania. Surviving both Nazi occupation and the first decade of communist

rule in Hungary, Ligeti escaped to the West, where he came to prominence with a series of remarkable compositions written during the 1960s. In those works, the usual details of melody, harmony, and rhythm collapsed into tightly woven webs of sound. Individual notes were absorbed into dense chords yielding cloudlike sonorities of seemingly indefinite pitch; melodic lines piled up to form tangled knots of counterpoint, or else were pulled taut in long strands of sustained sonority. The result was a strange new musical world, at once visceral and dreamlike, that became familiar to a wide audience when several of Ligeti's compositions were used in the soundtrack of Stanley Kubrick's popular film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

During the 1970s and beyond, Ligeti's music continued to evolve in fascinating and unpredictable directions. A number of his late works—most notably his Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, and Etudes for piano—have been taken up by a growing number of performers and have found a wide audience grateful for music that is both extraordinarily innovative and rewarding at the highest artistic level.

Concert Românesc, however, is an early work, written in 1952, while Ligeti was still living in Communist Hungary. (The composer fled his homeland for the West during the uprising of 1956.) Throughout the Stalinist Soviet bloc, concert music in a folkloric vein was encouraged by government officials. Ligeti, who had already had an uncomfortable brush with Party overseers, ostensibly heeded that pressure in writing *Concert Românesc*. He was, in fact, genuinely interested in Romanian folk music, which he had often heard during his youth and had studied at the Folklore Institute of Bucharest, in 1949.

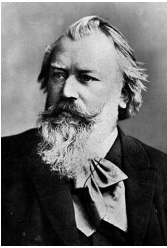
Some of the melodies Ligeti had learned during his research made their way into his "Romanian Concerto." But, as the composer observed of this piece, "not everything in it is genuinely Romanian, as I also invented elements in the spirit of the village bands." The original touches, and especially some daring harmonies in the final movement, led to the work being banned after a single rehearsal in Budapest. It did not receive a public performance until 1971.

The Music: The four short movements of *Concert Românesc* follow one another without pause. The first evokes peasant singing, while the second brings a lively folk dance scored in a particularly vibrant manner. The third movement grew out of the composer's memory of hearing the sound of the buciun, a Romanian mountain horn, during a boyhood excursion in the Carpathian mountains. Here, the composer writes an echoing duet for two horns, calling to each other from a distance, and instructs the players to use "natural" tuning, which produces a peculiar melodic inflection.

The final movement again conveys the energy and spirit of a folk dance, but in a more wild and unrestrained fashion than we heard in the second movement. Ligeti believed that it was chiefly this portion of the piece that caused it to be suppressed in Communist Hungary. And it is this movement—particularly its abrupt contrasts of texture and volume, its striking and unusual instrumental colors, and its rhythmic complexity—that hints, however faintly, at the remarkable new developments that Ligeti's music would propose after his escape to the West.

Johannes Brahms Violin Concerto in D major, op. 77

Born: Hamburg, May 7, 1833 **Died:** Vienna, April 3, 1897 **First performance:** January 1, 1879, in Leipzig. Joseph Joachim was the soloist, and the composer conducted the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra **STL Symphony premiere:** January 17, 1913, Efrem Zimbalist was soloist, with Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** April 25, 2004, Vadim Repin was soloist, with David Robertson conducting **Scoring:** Solo violin and an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 38 minutes



Brahms

In Context 1878 *Eadweard Muybridge creates “motion” pictures by utilizing multiple cameras to photograph a galloping horse; Joseph Pulitzer buys the St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 premieres*

Johannes Brahms was an obscure young pianist and fledgling composer when he first met Joseph Joachim in 1853. Already a famous violinist, and soon to become one of the foremost instrumentalists of the 19th century, Joachim nevertheless recognized the enormity of his colleague’s gift. “I have never come across a talent like his before,” Joachim wrote at the time. “He is miles ahead of me.” Before long, the two men had established a firm friendship; though not always smooth, it endured some four-and-a-half decades, until Brahms’ death, in 1897.

The Brahms-Joachim relationship produced a number of tangible results, the greatest coming in 1878. In August of that year, the composer, who habitually slighted his creative efforts, sent Joachim “a few violin passages” to try out. These “passages” proved to be the first movement and part of the finale to a concerto he had sketched during the summer. Joachim responded enthusiastically to these pages and encouraged Brahms to proceed with the work.

During the following months the two musicians corresponded frequently and met several times to try out portions of the concerto as it took shape. Brahms originally planned the work to be in four movements (he would realize this unorthodox concerto format three years later in his Piano Concerto No. 2), but eventually discarded the two central movements in favor of what he belittled as a “poor Adagio.” By pressing Brahms to work faster than was his habit, Joachim was able to perform the Violin Concerto for the first time on New Year’s Day, 1879, in Leipzig.

The Music: Knowing the esteem in which Brahms held Joachim, it is not difficult to imagine this composition as a kind of portrait of, or homage to, the violinist. The first movement is marked by the blend of unpretentious grandeur and controlled energy established in the long orchestral exposition. Characteristically, Brahms forges each of the themes presented in this passage from several brief interlocking melodies that can expand, develop, and play off each other. The violin proceeds to amplify this thematic material presented by the orchestra and contributes an exceptionally lovely melody of its own.

The “poor Adagio” is clearly an expression of great tenderness and affection. Brahms opens with one of his most beautiful and long-breathed melodies. (It is also one of the great oboe solos in the orchestral literature.) Although the music passes across more troubled thoughts in the central portion of the movement, it returns to its initial melodic impulse and the peaceful vein in which it began.

The Hungarian flavor of the finale is certainly a bow to Joachim, who not only was of Hungarian background but had himself written a “Hungarian Concerto” and dedicated it to Brahms. It is above all the recurring principal theme of this rondo-form movement that evokes the gypsy violin style that Joachim knew and Brahms loved so well. The intervening episodes contribute energy and bravura passagework.

Modest Mussorgsky/Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel

Pictures at an Exhibition

Born: Karevo, Russia, March 21, 1839 **Died:** St. Petersburg on March 28, 1881
Maurice Ravel Born: Ciboure, southwest France, March 7, 1875 **Died:** Paris, December 28, 1937 **First performance:** October 19, 1922, in Paris, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky **STL Symphony premiere:** October 31, 1930, Enrique Fernández Arbós conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** October 26, 2008, Ingo Metzmacher conducting **Scoring:** Three flutes and two piccolos, three oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, alto saxophone, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and percussion, two harps, celesta, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 35 minutes



Mussorgsky

In Context 1874 *Tolstoy writes Anna Karenina*; *Johann Strauss, Jr.’s opera Die Fledermaus produced in Vienna* 1922 *James Joyce’s Ulysses published in Paris*; *Marcel Proust dies*

In 1874, Modest Mussorgsky was immersed in the composition of his huge opera *Khovanshchina* when he received word of a memorial exhibit of pictures by the artist and architect Victor Hartmann, who had died a year earlier. Hartmann had been a close friend of the composer, and after visiting the gallery where his late companion’s pictures were displayed, Mussorgsky resolved to pay his own tribute by writing a set of piano pieces inspired by the drawings. In June he wrote to the art critic Vladimir Stasov, the organizer of the exhibition: “My ‘Hartmann’ is boiling.... Sounds and ideas fill the air, and I can barely scribble them down fast enough.” This report can scarcely be doubted. Mussorgsky worked with remarkable speed, completing the lengthy score on June 22.

The finished work represented 10 of Hartmann’s images, a format that might have made for a loose suite of unrelated movements. But Mussorgsky prefaced his musical pictures with a prelude in which he imagined himself, as he described, “roving through the exhibition—now leisurely, now briskly—in order to come close to a picture that has attracted



Ravel

[my] attention.” The theme of this “Promenade” served to unify the composition: it forms the subject of several interludes between movements and reappears in two of them—mysteriously in “Catacombs” and triumphantly in “The Great Gate at Kiev.”

Pictures at an Exhibition, like so much of Mussorgsky’s music, was performed infrequently during the composer’s lifetime. Mussorgsky’s then radically advanced harmonies and strange melodic twists were scarcely appreciated in his native Russia, and even less so in the West. (Indeed, a good deal of effort was expended in “correcting” his scores in the years after his death.) But the situation began to change during the first decades of the 20th century, as Mussorgsky found admirers among the early modernists. In 1922, conductor Serge Koussevitsky commissioned the French composer Maurice Ravel to orchestrate *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Ravel’s orchestration is every bit as original as Mussorgsky’s composition, and it perfectly captures the character of each movement.

The Music: The music is sufficiently suggestive that the individual “pictures” require but a little description. “Tuileries” is the famous gardens in Paris, here portrayed with children at play. “Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells” derives from Hartmann’s sketch of decor for a diversion by Marius Petipa, the renowned choreographer at the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg. “Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle” is a composite of two figures Hartmann drew near the Warsaw ghetto. Mussorgsky, who owned these drawings, described them as “two Jews, one rich, the other poor,” and they seem to be quarreling.

“Catacombs” is for a drawing Hartmann made of the famous Roman tombs. Its music continues directly into Mussorgsky’s meditation on an inscription there: “Cum mortuis in lingua mortua”—“With the Dead in a Dead Language.” “Baba-Yaga” depicts a witch familiar in Russian folklore. She lives in a dreadful hut adorned with human skulls and that walks through the forest on giant chicken legs.

In these and other movements, Ravel’s orchestration adds to the character of each “picture.” This is just as true, perhaps even more so, when he resorts to unorthodox choices of instruments. The saxophone’s presentation of the mournful melody of “The Old Castle,” for example, is as effective as it is unexpected. The folk tune heard in “Bydlo” (whose title refers to a three-wheeled cattle cart) is both ponderous and lyrical when sung in the high register of the tuba.

The finale depicts Hartmann’s design for a majestic stone arch to be built over a small chapel in the ancient city of Kiev. Mussorgsky imagines both the church—we hear a traditional Russian hymn and ringing bells—and the great arch sheltering it.