

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra****Riccardo Muti** Zell Music Director**Yo-Yo Ma** Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Friday, October 14, 2016, at 8:00

Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at 7:30

**Riccardo Muti** Conductor**John Sharp** Cello**Dvořák***Husitská* Overture, Op. 67**Schumann**

Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

Not too fast—

Slow—

Very lively

JOHN SHARP

**INTERMISSION****Hindemith**

Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass, Op. 50

Part 1: Moderately fast and with power—Very broad, but always flowing

Part 2: Lively—Slow—Lively

**Mussorgsky, orch. Ravel***Pictures from an Exhibition*

Promenade

1. Gnomus

Promenade—

2. The Old Castle

Promenade—

3. Tuileries

4. Bydlo

Promenade—

5. Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells

6. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

7. The Market Place at Limoges

8. Catacombs: *Sepulcrum romanum*—Promenade: *Con mortuis in lingua mortua*

9. The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba-Yaga)—

10. The Great Gate of Kiev

**This evening's performance is generously sponsored by Margot and Josef Lakonishok.****CSO Tuesday series concerts are sponsored by United Airlines.****The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to WBBM Newsradio 780 and 105.9 FM for their generous support as media sponsors of the Tuesday series.****This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.**

This document has been modified to include only the material specific to Pictures at an Exhibition from the October 2016 CSO Program Notes found here: <https://csosoundsandstories.org/multi-conducts-pictures-from-an-exhibition-october-2016-cso>  
COMMENTS are by Phillip Huscher

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## Modest Mussorgsky

Born March 21, 1839; Karevo, Russia

Died March 28, 1881; Saint Petersburg, Russia

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### ***Pictures from an Exhibition*** (Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel)



When Victor Hartmann died at the age of thirty-nine, little did he know that the pictures he left behind—the legacy of an undistinguished career as artist and architect—would live on. The idea for an exhibition of Hartmann’s work came

from Vladimir Stasov, the influential critic who organized a show in Saint Petersburg in the spring of 1874. But it was Modest Mussorgsky,

so shocked at the unexpected death of his dear friend, who set out to make something of this loss. “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,” he is said to have asked, paraphrasing King Lear, “and creatures like Hartmann must die?”

Stasov’s memorial show gave Mussorgsky the idea for a suite of piano pieces that depicted the composer “roving through the exhibition, now leisurely, now briskly, in order to come closer to a picture that had attracted his attention, and at times sadly, thinking of his departed friend.” Mussorgsky worked feverishly that spring, and by June 22, 1874, *Pictures from an Exhibition*

was finished. Mussorgsky may well have had an inflated impression of Hartmann's artistic importance (as friends often do), but these *Pictures* guaranteed Hartmann a place in history that his art alone could never have achieved. There's no record of a public performance of *Pictures* in Mussorgsky's lifetime, and the composer didn't even play the work on his extensive 1879 concert tour, perhaps finding it too personal for the stage. It was left to Rimsky-Korsakov, the musical executor of Mussorgsky's estate, to edit the manuscript and bring *Pictures* to the light of day.

The thought of orchestrating *Pictures* evidently never occurred to Mussorgsky. But it has intrigued musicians ever since his death, and over the years several have tried their hand at turning Mussorgsky's black-and-white pieces into full color. The earliest was that of Rimsky-Korsakov's student, Mikhail Tushmalov, conducted (and most likely improved) by the teacher himself. (The Chicago Symphony's first performances, in 1920, were of this version.) In 1915, Sir Henry Wood, an eminent British conductor, produced a version that was popular until Maurice Ravel unveiled his orchestration in 1922.

Although Ravel worked from the same Rimsky-Korsakov edition of *Pictures* that Tushmalov and Wood used (he had tried without success to find a copy of Mussorgsky's original, which wasn't published until 1930), his orchestral version far outstrips theirs in the brilliance of its colors and its sheer ingenuity. Ravel was already sensitive to Mussorgsky's style from his collaboration with Igor Stravinsky on an edition

of *Khovanshchina* in 1913, and, since most of his own orchestral works started out as piano scores, the process of transcription was second nature to him. Ravel remained as faithful as possible to the original; only in the final Great Gate of Kiev did he add a few notes of his own to Mussorgsky's.

The success of Ravel's edition inspired still further efforts, including one by Leopold Stokowski that was popular for many years (the Chicago Symphony played it as recently as 1998). Mussorgsky's *Pictures* also has been rescored for rock band, brass ensemble, acoustic guitar, massed accordions, and even *rearranged* for solo piano by Vladimir Horowitz. (Essentially a piano transcription of Ravel's orchestration—a translation of a translation, in other words—Horowitz's *Pictures* are far removed, stylistically, from Mussorgsky's). But Ravel's orchestration remains the best-known guide to Mussorgsky's picture collection.

Mussorgsky chose eleven of Hartmann's works for his set of piano pieces. He owned the sketches of Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle, which were combined in one "picture"; most, though not all, of the other works were in Stassov's exhibition. Some of the original pictures have since disappeared. (Of the four hundred Hartmann works exhibited, less than a hundred have come to light; only six of those in Mussorgsky's score can be identified with certainty.)

Mussorgsky referred to *Pictures* as "an album series," implying a random, ad hoc collection of miniatures, but the score is a coherently designed

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#### COMPOSED

for piano: 1874; orchestrated by Maurice Ravel: summer 1922

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

October 22, 1922; Paris, France

#### INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and two piccolos, three oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, alto saxophone, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel, bells, triangle, tam-tam, rattle, whip, cymbals, side drum, bass drum, xylophone, celesta, two harps, strings

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

March 19 & 20, 1920, Orchestra Hall. Frederick Stock conducting (Mikhail Tushmalov orchestration)

July 11, 1937, Ravinia Festival. Ernest Ansermet conducting

#### MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

July 8, 2014, Ravinia Festival. Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting

September 19, 2015, Orchestra Hall. Riccardo Muti conducting

#### CSO RECORDINGS

1951. Rafael Kubelík conducting. Mercury

1957. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

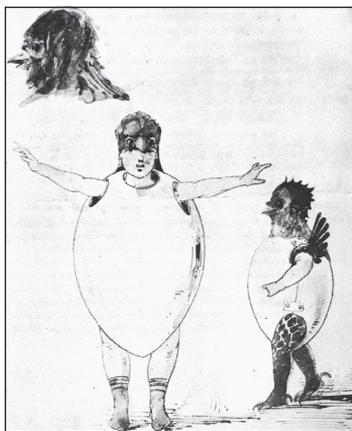
1967. Seiji Ozawa conducting. RCA

1976. Carlo Maria Giulini conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

1980. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

1989. Neeme Järvi conducting. Chandos

1990. Sir Georg Solti conducting. Sony (video)



**V. Hartmann. Canary Chicks in their Shells; a costume sketch for Gerber's ballet *Trilbi*. Watercolor**



**V. Hartmann. A Rich Jew in a Fur Hat. Pencil, sepia, lacquer**



**V. Hartmann. A Poor Jew. Pencil, watercolor**

whole, organized around a recurring theme and judiciously paced to progress from short pieces to a longer, majestic finale—creating a kind of crescendo effect like that of Schumann's *Carnaval*. Mussorgsky had no use for the conventional forms of the earlier classical masters—"I am not against symphonies," he once wrote, "just symphonists, incorrigible conservatives." We don't know when Mussorgsky settled on the overall layout of his picture series, but a letter he wrote to Stassov suggests that he had worked on at least the first five in order, and apparently had the entire set in mind when he started.

**M**ussorgsky begins with a promenade, which takes him into the gallery and later accompanies him as he walks around the room, reflecting a change in mood from one picture to another. (Despite his considerable girth, Mussorgsky apparently was a fast walker—the promenade is marked *allegro*, rather than *andante* [Italian for "walking"]—and Mussorgsky was precise in his tempo markings.)

**1. Gnomus.** Hartmann's drawing, which has since been lost, was for a Christmas tree ornament—"a kind of nutcracker, a gnome into whose mouth you put a nut to crack," according to Stassov's commentary in the catalog. Mussorgsky's music, with its awkward leaps, bizarre harmonies, and slippery melodies, suggests the gnome's "droll movements" and "savage shrieks."

**2. The Old Castle.** Two drawings of medieval castles are listed in the catalog, both sketched while Hartmann was in France, just before he met Mussorgsky. The music gives song to the troubadour standing in front of the castle. Mussorgsky's melody, which Ravel memorably gives to the alto saxophone, is clearly indebted to Russian folk music, despite the provenance of the castle.

**3. Tuileries.** Hartmann lived in Paris long enough to get to know the famous park with its squabbling children and their nurses.

**4. Bydlo.** Stassov describes a Polish wagon ("bydło" is Polish for cattle) drawn by oxen. Although Mussorgsky wanted the piece to begin *fortissimo*—"right between the eyes," as he told Stassov—Rimsky-Korsakov switched to a *pianissimo* opening followed by a crescendo to create the illusion of the approaching cart and the tread of hooves.

**5. Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells.** Hartmann designed costumes for a ballet, *Trilbi*, in 1871. The music depicts a scene where "a group of little boys and girls, pupils of the Theatre School, dressed as canaries, scampered on the stage. Some of the little birds were wearing over their dresses big eggshells resembling breastplates."

**6. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle.** Mussorgsky owned these two drawings entitled "A Rich Jew in a Fur Hat" and "A Poor Jew," to which he gave proper names. Hartmann,

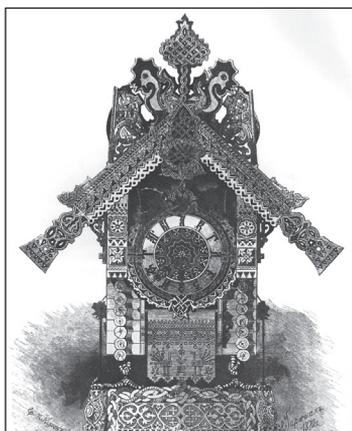


**V. Hartmann. Paris Catacombs. Watercolor**

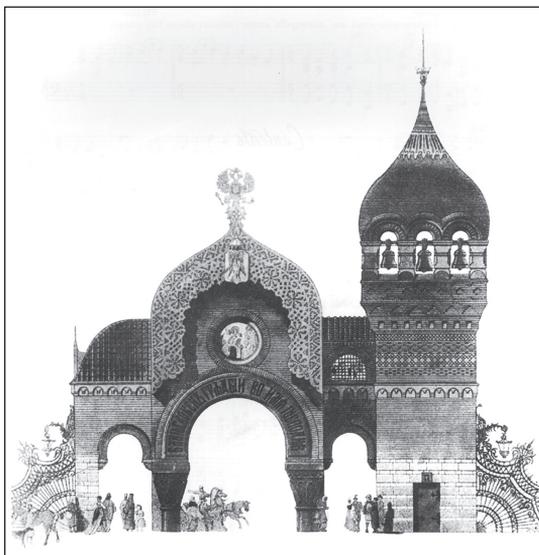
whose wife was Polish, visited Sandomierz, in southern Poland, in 1868; there he painted scenes and characters in the Jewish ghetto, including these two men, as well as Bydlo. Mussorgsky begins with the commanding Goldenberg; Ravel makes Schmuyle's whining reply wonderfully grating.

**7. The Market Place at Limoges.** Hartmann did more than a hundred and fifty watercolors of Limoges in 1866, including many genre pictures. In the margin of his score, Mussorgsky brings the scene to life: "Great news! M. de Puissangeout has just recovered his cow . . . Mme de Remboursac has just acquired a beautiful new set of teeth, while M. de Pantaleon's nose, which is in his way, is as much as ever the color of a peony."

**8. Catacombs: *Sepulcrum romanum*.** Hartmann, a friend, and a guide with a lamp explore underground Paris; to their right in Hartmann's watercolor is a pile of skulls.



**V. Hartmann. Baba-Yaga's Hut on Hen's Legs. Sketch for a clock in Russian style, pencil**



**V. Hartmann. Design for Kiev City Gate: Main façade. Pencil, watercolor**

**Promenade: *Con mortuis in lingua mortua*.** At the end of Catacombs, Mussorgsky penciled in his manuscript: "Con mortuis in lingua mortua" (With the dead in a dead language), signaling the start of this mournful rendition of the promenade.

**9. The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba-Yaga).** Hartmann sketched a clock of bronze and enamel in the shape of the hut of the witch Baba-Yaga. Mussorgsky concentrates not on the clock, but on the child-eating Baba-Yaga herself, who, according to Russian folk literature, lived deep in the woods in a hut on hen's legs, which allowed her to rotate to confront each approaching victim. (Incidentally, Stasov's first impression of Hartmann was of him dressed as Baba-Yaga at a masked ball in 1861.)

**10. The Great Gate of Kiev.** Hartmann entered this design in a competition for a gateway to Kiev that was ultimately called off for lack of funds. Hartmann modeled his gate on the traditional headdress of Russian women, with the belfry shaped like the helmet of Slavonic warriors. Mussorgsky's piece, with its magnificent climaxes and pealing bells, finds its ultimate realization in Ravel's orchestration. ■

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**Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.**