

African-American musician and composer **Adolphus Hailstork** (b. 1941) received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he was a student of H. Owen Reed. He had previously studied at the Manhattan School of Music, under Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond, at the American Institute at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and at Howard University with Mark Fax. Dr. Hailstork has written numerous works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera.

Among his early compositions are: *Celebration*, recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976, *Out of the Depths* (1977), and *American Guernica* (1983). The latter two are two band works which won national competitions. *Consort Piece* (1995), commissioned by the Norfolk Chamber Ensemble, was awarded first prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music. Significant performances by major orchestras (Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York) have been led by leading conductors such as James de Priest, Paul Freeman, Daniel Barenboim, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel, Jo Ann Falletta and David Lockington. In March 2021, Thomas Wilkins conducted Hailstork's *An American Port of Call* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The composer's second symphony (commissioned by the Detroit Symphony, and second opera, *Joshua's Boots* (commissioned by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Kansas City Lyric Opera) were both premiered in 1999. Hailstork's second and third symphonies were recorded by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra (David Lockington) and were released by Naxos. Another Naxos recording, *An American Port of Call* (Virginia Symphony Orchestra) was released in spring 2012. Recent commissions include *Rise For Freedom*, an opera about the Underground Railroad, premiered in the fall of 2007 by the Cincinnati Opera Company; *Set Me on a Rock* for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by the Houston Choral Society (2008), and the choral ballet, *The Gift of the Magi*, for treble chorus and orchestra (2009). In the fall of 2011, *Zora, We're Calling You*, a work for speaker and orchestra, was premiered by the Orlando Symphony. *I Speak of Peace*, commissioned by the Bismarck Symphony (Beverly Everett, conductor) in honor of and featuring the words of President John F. Kennedy, was premiered in November 2013.

Hailstork's newest works include *The World Called* (based on Rita Dove's poem *Testimonial*), a work for soprano, chorus and orchestra commissioned by the Oratorio Society of Virginia (premiered in May 2018) and *Still Holding On* (February 2019) an orchestra work commissioned and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He is currently working on his Fourth Symphony and *A Knee on a Neck*, a tribute to George Floyd, for chorus and orchestra.

Dr. Hailstork resides in Virginia Beach Virginia, and is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. Of his *Epitaph for a Man Who Dreamed*

(2000), Hailstork told audiences in a 2020 Classic FM interview: I believe that African Americans deserve to have the same homage paid to their suffering, and to their glories when they occur, as has happened throughout all of Western history. [...The canon includes music] commissioned by a king, a prince or a pope, or for the opening of a cathedral, or for the funeral of a great person. So why not have pieces [that are] the same type of consideration to represent the history of African Americans in the United States?" Hailstork describes King as his hero, someone of great moral dignity. "I wanted to try to capture the nobility of what he stood for. So the piece starts very quietly, and I had a picture in my mind of people gathering around the graveside. [...] Through the music we can remember the great deeds he did, and the people lift their heads at the end and say that they're determined to carry on – that's what the piece means to me and what I tried to represent."

from adolphushailstork.com and Rosie Pentreath, Classic FM December 18, 2020

Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns was born October 9, 1835 in Paris. A child prodigy pianist, Saint-Saëns gave his first recital at age eleven. He studied organ and composition at the Paris Conservatory, premiering his Symphony No. 1 in 1855. Saint-Saëns became organist at the Church of the Madeleine in Paris two years later, a professional association that lasted for two decades. Franz Liszt, with whom Saint-Saëns formed a lasting friendship and fond collegiality, considered him as the greatest organist in the world. From 1861 to 1865 he taught piano at the Niedermeyer School, where his pupils included Gabriel Fauré and André Messager.

After the Franco-Prussian War, Saint-Saëns assisted in founding the National Society of Music, which promoted performances of French orchestral works composed by promising young artists. In 1871, he wrote his first symphonic poem, *Le rouet d'Omphale* (Omphale's Spinning Wheel); another of his symphonic poems, *Danse macabre*, would become one of his most enduring compositional legacies. His opera *Samson et Dalila*, at first rejected in Paris for its portrayal of biblical characters on-stage, was eventually premiered (in German) at Weimar in 1877, with great support by Liszt. It was later staged in Paris in 1890 at the Théâtre Eden, subsequently becoming the most popular of his thirteen operas.

In 1878, Saint-Saëns suffered the loss of both his young sons; three years later, he left his wife—the end of an increasingly unhappy and, as many historians posit, inauthentic, marriage. During the last decades of the century he undertook extensive tours across four continents, performing his five piano concerti and conducting his symphonic compositions. Saint-Saëns' Symphony No. 3 of 1886, dedicated to the memory of Liszt, made skilled use of the organ and two pianos. Late the same year, he completed *Le carnaval des animaux* (The Carnival of Animals) for small orchestra, a wonderfully imaginative program piece never performed during his lifetime. It has since won considerable popularity as a work for young people's concerts. In 1908, he became the first

internationally-recognized composer to craft music for the new medium of film for the movie *L'Assassinat du duc de guise*.

Though he lived during the era of Wagner's considerable formal and harmonic influence, Saint-Saëns remained staunchly traditional. He upheld an outspoken conservative approach to French music that emphasized polished craftsmanship and a sense of form. In 1921, while traveling in Algiers, he died of a heart attack at the age of eighty-six; his remarkable life spanned Schumann, Berlioz, and Chopin to Gershwin, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg. *The Times* heralded Saint-Saëns as a generational genius in its obituary notice:

The death of M. Saint-Saëns not only deprives France of one of her most distinguished composers; it removes from the world the last representative of the great movements of music which were typical of the 19th century. [...] He was only two years younger than Brahms, was five years older than Tchaikovsky, six years older than Dvorak, and seven years older than Sullivan. He held a position in his own country's music, certain aspects of which may be fitly compared with each of those masters in their own spheres.

Composed in 1880 when Saint-Saëns was 45 years old, the **Violin Concerto No. 3** is dedicated to the Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate. Melodic and exciting, it is remarkable for its taut construction: Saint-Saëns provides no cadenza for the soloist and makes unusual thematic connections between the movements. The first movement, marked *allegro non troppo*, opens with a quiet rustle of sound from the orchestra, and over this the solo violin lays out the movement's main theme. Saint-Saëns marks this theme *appassionato*, and its first five notes – vigorously stamped out by the violin – will figure importantly, both as thematic material and as accompaniment; that figure can be heard in many guises throughout this movement.

The gentle second subject, in E major, brings relief after the intensity of the opening. Perhaps to make up for the absence of a cadenza, Saint-Saëns provides the soloist with a great number of brilliant and difficult passages, and the close of this movement is especially exciting.

The *andantino quasi allegretto* is a barcarolle, a boat-song perhaps inspired by the songs of the Venetian gondoliers. The orchestra's 6/8 accompaniment mirrors a boat's rocking motion, and above this the solo violin sings its graceful melody.

The last movement is the longest and the most striking. It opens with an elaborate recitative for violin, almost reminiscent of Bach's music for solo violin. Alert listeners will discover that the violin's figurations here look both forward and backward: they grow out of the development of the main theme of the second movement and also anticipate the main theme of the last. The *allegro non troppo* bursts to life as the solo violin leaps upward

on a main theme full of rhythmic spring and showers of triplets. A soaring second subject, marked *appassionato*, is announced by the solo violin, which also has a singing third theme. Matters seem set for a virtuoso finale when Saint-Saëns springs a surprise: muted orchestral strings sing a subdued and solemn chorale marked *cantabile*, and gradually this chorale grows in strength until it blazes out triumphantly. The solo violin, plunging and soaring across its range, leads the orchestra through the exciting coda.

Notes by A. Patterson as well as Eric Bromberger (San Diego Symphony Orchestra), c. 2017

The **Symphony No. 4 in F minor, op. 36** dates from the most tumultuous period in **Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky's** difficult life (1840-1893), and its composition came from a moment of agony. When he began work on the symphony in May 1877, Tchaikovsky had for some years been tormented by the secret of his homosexuality, a secret he kept hidden from all but a few friends. As he worked on this score, one of his students at the Moscow Conservatory – a deranged young woman named Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova – declared her love for him. Knowing that such a prospect was hopeless, Tchaikovsky put her off as gently as he could, but she persisted, even threatening suicide at one point. As fate would have it, Tchaikovsky was also at work on his opera *Eugen Onegin* at this time and was composing the scene in which the bachelor Onegin turns down the infatuated young Tatiana, to his eventual regret. Struck by the parallel with his own situation, and at some level longing for a “normal” life with a wife and children, Tchaikovsky did precisely the wrong thing for some very complex reasons: he agreed to Antonina's proposal of marriage. His friends were horrified, but the composer pressed ahead and married Antonina on July 18, 1877.

The marriage was an instant disaster. Tchaikovsky quickly abandoned his bride, tried to return, but fled yet again, contemplating suicide. He then retreated to St. Petersburg and collapsed into two days of unconsciousness. His doctors prescribed complete rest, a recommendation Tchaikovsky was only too happy to follow. He abandoned his teaching post in Moscow and fled to Western Europe, finding relief in the quiet of Clarens in Switzerland and San Remo in Italy. It was in San Remo, on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean and far from the chaos of his life in Moscow, that he completed the Fourth Symphony in January 1878. The Fourth Symphony has all of Tchaikovsky's considerable virtues: great melodies, primary colors and soaring climaxes. In this case, the elements are fused with a superheated emotional content. The composer's friends guessed, perhaps inevitably, that the symphony had a program, and Tchaikovsky offered several different explanations of the content of this dramatic music.

To his friend Serge Taneyev, Tchaikovsky said that the model for his Fourth Symphony had been Beethoven's Fifth, specifically in the way both symphonies are structured around a

recurring motif, though perhaps also in the sense that the two symphonies begin in emotional turmoil and eventually win their way to release and triumph in the finale. For his patroness, Madame Nadezhda von Meck, who had supplied the money that enabled him to escape his marriage, Tchaikovsky prepared an elaborate program detailing what his symphony “meant.” One should inevitably be suspicious of such “explanations” (and Tchaikovsky himself later suppressed the program), but this account does offer some sense of what he believed had shaped the content of his music. The symphony opens with a powerful brass fanfare, which Tchaikovsky describes as “Fate, the inexorable power that hampers our search for happiness. This power hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, leaving us no option but to submit.” The principal subject of this movement, however, is a dark, stumbling waltz in 9/8 introduced by the violins: “The main theme of the *allegro* describes feelings of depression and hopelessness. Would it not be better to forsake reality and lose oneself in dreams?” This long opening movement (it is nearly half the length of the entire symphony) has an unusual structure: Tchaikovsky builds it on three separate theme-groups which evolve through some uncommon harmonic relationships. Like inescapable fate, the opening motto-theme returns at key points in this dramatic music, and it finally drives the movement to a furious close: “Thus we see that life is only an everlasting alternation of somber reality and fugitive dreams of happiness.”

After such a turbulent beginning opening, the two middle movements bring much-needed relief. The contrast is so sharp, in fact, that Taneyev complained that these were essentially ballet music made to serve as symphonic movements. Taneyev may have a point, but after that scalding first movement, the gentle character of the middle movements is welcome. The *andantino*, in ternary-form, opens with a plaintive oboe solo and features a more animated middle section. Tchaikovsky described it: “Here is the melancholy feeling that overcomes us when we sit weary and alone at the end of the day. The book we pick up slips from our fingers, and a procession of memories passes in review...”

The scherzo has deservedly become one of Tchaikovsky’s most popular movements. It is a tour-de-force for strings (which play pizzicato throughout), with crisp interjections first from the woodwinds and then from brass. Tchaikovsky creates a piquant contrast between these quite different sounds, combining all his forces only in the final moments of the movement. The composer notes: “There is no specific feeling or exact expression in the third movement. Here are only the capricious arabesques and indeterminate shapes that come into one’s mind with a little wine...”

Out of the quiet close of the third movement, the finale explodes to life. The composer described this movement as “the picture of a folk holiday” and said, “If you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity.” Marked *allegro con fuoco*, this movement simply

alternates its volcanic opening sequence with a gentle little woodwind tune that is actually the Russian folk melody “In the field there stood a birch tree.” At the climax, however, the fate-motto from the first movement suddenly bursts forth: “But hardly have we had a moment to enjoy this when Fate, relentless and untiring, makes his presence known.” Given the catastrophic events of his life during this music’s composition, Tchaikovsky may well have come to feel that Fate was inescapable, and the reappearance of the opening motto amid the high spirits of the finale represents the climax of the entire symphony both musically and emotionally. This spectre duly acknowledged, Tchaikovsky rips the symphony to a close guaranteed to set every heart in the hall racing.

Notes by Eric Bromberger (San Diego Symphony), c. 2014

Notes compiled by Dr. Aaron Patterson