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Omaha Symphony brings *Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite* to life at Joslyn

New orchestral suite of Tchaikovsky's beloved music chosen by guest conductor Aram Demirjian

OMAHA, Neb., Nov. 7, 2017- In a delightful prelude to the holiday season, the Omaha Symphony brings Tchaikovsky's iconic characters like the Sugar Plum Fairy, Clara, and the Mouse King to musical life in *Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite*, Sunday, Nov. 19, 2 p.m., in Joslyn Art Museum's Witherspoon Concert Hall.

Led by guest conductor Aram Demirjian, the program will feature a custom suite of Tchaikovsky's beloved *Nutcracker* music, chosen by Demirjian. It will also include Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, and Robin Holloway's 2013 composition *Europa and the Bull (Concertante for Tuba and Orchestra)* featuring principal tuba Craig Fuller.

Although *The Nutcracker* is one of Tchaikovsky's most well known works, the composer himself didn't have high hopes for its future or any deep love for the source material (E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King"), feeling it lacked the compelling drama of his two previous ballets, *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. In fact, he procrastinated working on the project to the point of traveling to America to conduct the gala opening of Carnegie Hall. However, upon his return home, he eventually warmed to the project, producing some of his finest and most inspired music. Tchaikovsky even finished it months ahead of schedule, eventually creating a concert suite of excerpts, which he conducted nine months before the entire ballet was staged.

The Nutcracker Suite presented at this concert, however, will not be Tchaikovsky's original suite, but a custom arrangement chosen by conductor Demirjian.

"We have created our own symphonic suite from the ballet, a symphonic storytelling of the entire story of *The Nutcracker*. Most of the music we know best are the character dances from Act II, like the Waltz of the Flowers, Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy—all of the dances we've gotten to know so well from watching Disney's *Fantasia*. But we're going to expand the scope of the music, because much of the brilliant, genius music that Tchaikovsky wrote is in Act I, which is seldom heard outside the context of the ballet theatre," Demirjian said.

Demirjian explained that the suite performed on the program will tell more completely the whole story of *The Nutcracker*, including Clara decorating the Christmas tree, the battle with the Mouse King, and the dance of the snowflakes that occurs before Clara even reaches the Nutcracker Prince's enchanted kingdom full of the memorable characters in Act II.

Holloway's *Europa and the Bull* is an unusual concerto in that it features one of the lesser-featured solo instruments, the tuba. Holloway said the composition was inspired by his love of the "noble solo instrument that is usually confined to roaring or brooding at the bottom of the brass section." The piece follows the familiar story of Jupiter's lustful hankering for the beautiful nymph Europa, and wooing her in the form of a bull. The tuba, of course, represents the Bull/Jupiter.

Conductor Aram Demirjian is sought after for his dynamic performances, insightful interpretations, and charismatic rapport with audiences. He is music director of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra and maintains an

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active guest conducting schedule, including frequent appearances with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Demirjian is nationally recognized for his commitment to exploring new concert formats and new music, including Classics Uncorked with the Kansas City Symphony, and the new KSO Unstaged, an interactive, multisensory, music-based event series taking place in unconventional spaces throughout Knox County, Tenn.

Craig Fuller is the Omaha Symphony principal tuba and senior lecturer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In addition to the Omaha and Lincoln symphonies, Fuller has also performed with the Chicago Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Henry Mancini Orchestra, and the Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra in Door County, Wis., and has recorded with numerous groups, including Mannheim Steamroller, Pete Yorn, the Omaha Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony, and numerous commercial sound tracks and jingles. He holds a U.S. Patent for instrument design.

Concerts on the Symphony Joslyn Series explore the unique connections between art and music. The highlighted work paired with this concert is *Mnemonic Artifact 3*, an oil on linen painting by Hayv Kahraman. Its graceful ballet of the female form plaited with Classical references and delicate cross-cultural signifiers offers a beautiful pairing with Tchaikovsky's composition. Joslyn curators will deliver preconcert talks about this piece at 1 and 1:25 p.m. in Gallery 15.

A post-concert reception for concert attendees at EVEN Hotels, 2220 Farnam Street, will follow the program. Complimentary appetizers and a cash bar will be available from 4-6 p.m.

Tickets to *Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite* are \$33. Joslyn Art Museum members may purchase single concert tickets for \$28.80 each (a 20% savings). Joslyn members must call Ticket Omaha to reserve advance single tickets or show a Joslyn membership card if purchasing tickets at the door the day of the concert. All other tickets can be purchased by visiting www.omahasymphony.org or by calling Ticket Omaha at 402.345.0606. Student Rush tickets are available one hour prior to the concert. Any student with a valid student ID may purchase up to two Student Rush tickets for \$10 each.

The Omaha Symphony is a non-profit organization that presents more than 100 live orchestral performances from September through June. In addition to MasterWorks, Symphony Pops, Symphony Rocks, Movie, Symphony Joslyn, and Family series concerts, the Omaha Symphony's nationally recognized education programs touch the lives of nearly 31,000 schoolchildren each year. For tickets or information regarding the Omaha Symphony, call 402-345-0606 or visit omahasymphony.org.

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