This organization is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Unauthorized use of cameras and tape recorders is not allowed in Jordan Hall. Please switch off cellular phones, pagers, and watch alarms.

Assistive Listening Devices are available for Jordan Hall concerts at the coatroom, or by contacting the Head Usher or House Manager on duty.

necmusic.edu/cloud
Connect with NEC and our music on Facebook, Twitter, and beyond, and sign up for e-mail news bulletins.

NEC Philharmonia
Hugh Wolff, conductor
Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras

necmusic.edu/concerts

NEC NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

Wednesday, October 1, 2014
8:00 p.m.
NEC’s Jordan Hall
PROGRAM

Hector Berlioz
(1803–1869)

Overture to Benvenuto Cellini, op. 23

Esa-Pekka Salonen
(b. 1958)


Intermission

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, op. 36
  Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima
  Andantino in modo di canzone
  Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato – Allegro
  Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Symphonic Music at NEC
—continued

NEC SYMPHONY, Paul Biss, conductor
Beethoven Symphony No. 1 in C Major, op. 21; Verdi “La forza del destino”
Overture; Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1 for Piano in B-flat Minor, op. 23
Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at 8:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, coached by Donald Palma
Schreker Intermezzo and Scherzo; Stravinsky Concerto for String Orchestra in D
Major; Mozart Divertimento in D Major for Oboe, Two Horns, & Strings, K. 251
Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at 8:00 p.m., Distler Performance Hall,
Tufts University
Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 8:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC PHILHARMONIA & CONCERT CHOIR, David Loebel, conductor
Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem, op. 45
Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at 8:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC PHILHARMONIA, Robert Spano*, guest conductor
Wagner Act III from Die Walküre; Jane Eaglen, soprano; Greer Grimsley, bass-baritone; fund-raising event to support the construction of NEC’s Student Life and Performance Center; tickets may be purchased online
Wednesday, December 10, 2014 at 7:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC LAB ORCHESTRA, led by student conductors Nathan Aspinall, Earl Lee, and David Yi
Thursday, December 11, 2014 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall
This evening’s concert features three works that put orchestral color and virtuosity front and center. Berlioz was the inventor of modern orchestral color, Tchaikovsky a master orchestrator. Esa-Pekka Salonen, better known as a conductor, now devotes considerable time to composing. His vast experience conducting complex modern scores surely helped give him the tools to write L.A. Variations, a colorful rhythmically-driven concerto for orchestra for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

The Italian sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) and the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) were outsized talents and personalities who both wrote colorful, self-serving memoirs. It is perhaps not surprising then, that the latter chose the former to be the hero of his first attempt at grand opera. Berlioz based the opera loosely on Cellini’s memoir, centering the story on the commissioning of Cellini’s bronze sculpture of Perseus. The details of the story are fiction: a patron wants the commission to go to a sculptor whose daughter, Teresa, he hopes to marry. She however is in love with Cellini, who in turn fatally stabs one of his rival’s cohorts. And so on. After the opera’s 1838 premiere, Berlioz wrote “the overture received exaggerated applause, and the rest was hissed with admirable energy and unanimity.” The Overture to Benvenuto Cellini and his Roman Carnival Overture, also based on music from this opera, are among Berlioz’s most popular works; the opera itself has fallen into obscurity. Something of the Cellini’s swashbuckling personality is audible in the power and rhythmic verve of the overture’s opening. A quieter passage, featuring Cellini’s love aria to Teresa, follows. At the climax of the overture the two musical ideas occur simultaneously, a technique which Berlioz pioneered and at which he excelled.

Esa-Pekka Salonen (b. 1958) writes: L.A. Variations (1996) is essentially variations on two chords, each consisting of six notes. Together they cover all the twelve notes of a chromatic scale. Therefore the basic material of the work has an ambiguous character; sometimes (most of the time, actually) it is modal (hexatonic), but sometimes chromatic, when the two hexachords are used together as a twelve-tone structure. This ambiguity, combining serial and non-serial thinking is characteristic of my work since the mid-eighties, but L.A. Variations tilts the balance drastically towards the non-serial.

This piece, some nineteen minutes of music scored for a large
orchestra, including a contrabass clarinet and a sampler, is very clear in its form and direct in its expression. The two hexachords are introduced in the opening bars of the work, together in the chromatic phenotype. Alto flute, English horn, bass clarinet and two bassoons, shadowed by three solo violas, play a melody which sounds like a kind of synthetic folk music, but is in fact a horizontal representation of the two hexachords transposed to the same pitch. Some of the variations that follow are based on this melody, others on the deeper, invisible (or inaudible) aspects of the material. Three are also elements that never change, like the dactyl rhythm first heard in the timpani and percussion halfway through the piece.

This is a short description of events in LA. Variations:
• The two hexachords together as an ascending scale. Movement slows down to…
• Quasi folk-music episode (as described above).
• First Chorale (winds only).
• Big Chord I. The two hexachords are interpreted three times in three different ways in a very large chord.
• Scherzando, leggiero.
• A machine that prepares for the even semiquaver movement of…
• Variation of the melody in trumpets and violin 1.
• Fastest section of the piece, $\dot{J}=150$. First, woodwinds in the highest register, then bass instruments in the lowest register. An acrobatic double bass solo leads to…
• Variation for winds, percussion, harp, celesta.
• Canon in three different tempi, scored for a chamber ensemble.
• A tutti string passage leads to Big Machine I. Percussion prepares the mantra rhythm: \[ \text{♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩apatkan
Coda. Two hexachords together as at the beginning. Scored for eight muted cellos, eight muted violins, and piccolo.

The year 1877 was pivotal in the life of Russian composer Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). That year, the thirty-seven year-old composer wrote his Fourth Symphony and the opera Eugene Onegin while embarking on highly unusual relationships with two women – relationships that would alter the course of his life. Tchaikovsky was homosexual in a society where such things could not be expressed openly. He felt the need for a wife as an important cover in high society. When Antonia Milyukova, a former student nine years his junior, wrote him impassioned love letters in May 1877, he imprudently allowed himself to go along with her. Three days after meeting her, he proposed marriage. Despite his telling her he did not and never would love her, she readily accepted his proposal. A disastrous nine-week union followed. Almost immediately, Tchaikovsky realized his profound mistake. He learned that she did not know a note of his music and found himself physically repelled by his bride, needing to flee from her presence. At the same time, another woman entered his life under virtually opposite circumstances. Madame Nadezhda von Meck, a recently widowed, wealthy music lover and excellent amateur pianist nine years his senior, had written him requesting arrangements for violin and piano to perform. She deeply admired Tchaikovsky’s music and offered a generous fee for very little work. He readily accepted. Soon thereafter she began depositing five hundred rubles into Tchaikovsky’s account every month (an extremely generous sum at the time) and they embarked on a thirteen-year correspondence that produced over one thousand letters of striking intimacy and frankness. They never actually met face-to-face; oddly, both preferred it that way. But her generosity allowed Tchaikovsky to give up teaching and compose full time; her passion for his music gave him moral support; and their letters gave him a vital emotional outlet.

Given his involvement in these sorts of relationships, it is not surprising that fate was an obsession of Tchaikovsky’s. He had written a tone poem titled Fate, two others inspired by the portion of Dante’s Divine Comedy about Francesca da Rimini and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, and was working on an opera based on Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin. The last three are stories of impossible or forbidden love, doomed by bad timing. In fact, the opera and Fourth Symphony actively occupied Tchaikovsky just as he made the decision to marry. In a letter to von Meck, Tchaikovsky described the
opening horn call of the Fourth Symphony as “the germ of the entire symphony. This is Fate, which prevents our hopes of happiness from being realized, which ... hangs over us like the Sword of Damocles, a constant, relentless spiritual torment. It is invincible, inescapable. There is no recourse but submission to suffering.” At this point in the letter he wrote out the principal theme of the first movement, first played softly by violins and cellos. This long, twisting melody has an unstable syncopated rhythm, the engine that drives the first movement. The agitated, nightmarish mood is mitigated by a quieter dotted-rhythm melody in the clarinet, melancholy falling chromatic figures in the woodwinds, and a dreamy pianissimo violin melody in thirds. But the nervous syncopation returns and, just as the exposition ends in the maximally distant key of B major, the Fate motif, now in the trumpets, interrupts. This happens again just before the coda, the motif always representing the barrier to happiness Tchaikovsky described. The final three movements of the symphony combined are just a little longer than the first movement alone. Unlike the complex tapestry of the first movement, each is more an exploration of a single emotion or idea.

The second movement is melancholy, its opening oboe solo a striking example of Tchaikovsky's ability to write a beautiful melody with extremely simple material. The oboe plays no fewer than eighty consecutive eighth notes, with no rhythmic variety at all, but the result is both expressive and memorable. The third movement is a brilliant exploration of orchestral color: the strings play exclusively pizzicato and the woodwinds and brass are reserved for short characteristic phrases. The play between sections gives the movement its color and structure. The Finale begins with a wild carnival-like outburst that quickly gives way to a simple, melancholy folk-tune. This tune, “In the Field, a Little Birch Tree Stood,” is a folk song Tchaikovsky had previously arranged. In Russian folk culture, the birch tree symbolizes marriage and spring. Perhaps it is no accident that this little tune is twisted into something angry and grotesque, like Tchaikovsky's own misguided marriage, and the Fate motif interrupts once again just before the symphony’s brilliant conclusion.

– Hugh Wolff, September 2014