

NEWS RELEASE

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Marin Symphony presents multi-media context for Stravinsky powerhouse, *The Rite of Spring*

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Concerts on April 5 & 7 feature costume display and pre-concert performance by Ballet Afsaneh

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MSA principals Levitan and Daniel-Barker solo in Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp

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SAN RAFAEL, CA—The Marin Symphony continues "The Wind Beneath the Wings," its 2008-09 season program highlighting the symphonic music of dance, with a performance of Stravinsky's towering *The Rite of Spring*, presented in a multi-media context designed to convey the pagan roots and design elements of the originally staged ballet.

Audiences at the Sunday, April 5 and Tuesday, April 7 concerts in Marin Center will be able to view the cultural and artistic context of the original ballet *The Rite of Spring* via a pre-concert talk, hosted by Maestro Alasdair Neale in partnership with guest dancers of Ballet Afsaneh, and a display of tunic-and-pant costumes akin in style and nature to those used in the original production. The pre-concert talk and dance performance will explore the ancient, pagan dance forms and that became the source of inspiration of Nikolas Roerich, Stravinsky's close collaborator and the pioneering visionary behind *The Rite of Spring*.

The Rite of Spring (also known by its original French title, *Le Sacre du Printemps*) is a ballet first performed by the Ballets Russes in Paris in May, 1913 under impresario Serge Diaghilev. Stravinsky's driving rhythms, dissonance and polytonality—combined with Nijinsky's radical choreography and set designer Nikolas Roerich's fanciful depiction of pagan ritual—created a performance so shocking that the audience rioted at the premiere. While this event made *The Rite of Spring* one of the most internationally well-known and controversial works in performance history, today it remains the unparalleled benchmark of musical innovation. In his *Six Talks at Harvard*, composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein said of Stravinsky's work, "it's never been topped for sophisticated handling of primitive rhythms...it's also got the best dissonances

anyone ever thought up, and the best asymmetries and polytonalities and polyrhythms and whatever else you care to name.”

Marin Symphony’s music director Alasdair Neale says of the work, “I first encountered *The Rite of Spring* when I was thirteen years old and have been fascinated by it ever since. There’s no work like it in the classical music repertoire. I can’t wait to bring this to the stage.”

The original costumes, crimson and white, were hand-dyed and handmade based upon antique folk costumes in the collection of Roerich’s patron, Princess Maria Tenisheva. Like the Roerich costumes, the Ballet Afsaneh tunic and pants outfits are made of red silk-cotton, intricately embroidered in multi-colored threads. These traditional outfits were designed and made in Tajikistan, a country just north of Afghanistan, and brought back to the United States by members of the Ballet Afsaneh troupe. Highly representative of the costumes worn in the original ballet production, they will be worn in the pre-concert performance, and also by live models circulating through the audience in the Marin Veterans’ Memorial Auditorium pre-concert and at Intermission.

Ballet Afsaneh, whose dancers join the Maestro pre-concert, is the professional performance ensemble of the Afsaneh Art & Culture Society, based in the San Francisco Bay Area. This dynamic group presents performances and activities featuring dance, poetry, and music of the Silk Road—the historic trade route stretching 7,000 miles across Central Asia from the China Sea in the east to the Mediterranean in the west.

Afsaneh Art & Culture Society (AACS) serves the Central Asian, Iranian- and Afghan-American communities and people who appreciate art from all cultures. AACS programs provide eloquent testimony to the unique Central Asian expressive arts and promote appreciation for the diverse expressions of our mutual humanity.

Two Marin Symphony principals, Dan Levitan (harp) and Monica Daniel-Barker (flute), take center stage to perform another renowned work on the concert program: Mozart’s Concert for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299. This concerto—the only piece Mozart wrote that contains the harp—has been an audience favorite for centuries, favored primarily for its lyrical and serene second movement (the *Andantino*).

Harpist Levitan notes of the concerto, “It’s beautifully transparent. Where the notes are going to be is somewhat predictable with Mozart. I think that’s why the work is so accessible.” But Mr. Levitan observes

that the composition's gorgeous transparency hardly makes it easy to play. "This is a very challenging work. It's on most harp auditions. There are a lot of fast, intricate notes."

Mr. Levitan is Principal Harpist of three professional orchestras: the Marin Symphony, Symphony Silicon Valley (and San Jose Symphony before that, previous to its reformation as Symphony Silicon Valley), and Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley. He performs with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera, and Ballet orchestras, and is frequently sought after as a soloist with orchestras, choirs, and other ensembles throughout Northern California.

In the prestigious 10th International Harp Competition in Israel, Mr. Levitan was a semi-finalist. He won first prize in the Trenton Symphony Harp Competition, the San Jose Music Study Club Competition, and the Bay Area Inez Stafford Harp Competition. Dan was honored by an invitation to perform two works for harp and string quartet at the Seventh World Harp Congress in Prague, Czech Republic.

Born and educated in Philadelphia, Mr. Levitan received two degrees (both magna cum laude) from Temple University: Bachelors of Music Performance and Music Education. He studied with Margarita Montanaro, Co-Principal Harpist with the Philadelphia Orchestra; internationally acclaimed harpists Susann McDonald and Susanna Mildonian; and renowned San Francisco Bay Area harpists Anne Adams, Marcella DeCray, and the late Phyllis Schlomovitz. He is featured on several commercial recordings.

Ms. Daniel-Barker joined the Marin Symphony orchestra as Principal Flutist in 2007. She also makes appearances in the Bay Area as the Principal Flutist of both the California Symphony in Walnut Creek, and the Modesto Symphony. Previous to coming to the Bay Area, she held positions with the Santa Fe Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, the Tulsa Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Albuquerque, and the IRIS Orchestra.

She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Joshua Smith, principal flutist of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Ms. Daniel-Barker has been the winner of numerous competitions, including the Utah Flute Association competition and the National Flute Association Young Artist Competition. She was also prizewinner at the Internazionale di Flauto "Domenico Cimarosa", held in Aversa, Italy. She resides in the Houston, TX area, with her husband and stepchildren.

Sunday, April 5 and Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at 7:30pm

Marin Center, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael, CA

Alasdair Neale, conductor
Monica Daniel-Barker, flute
Dan Levitan, harp

Sierra	<i>Carnaval</i> (Magnum Opus commission)
Mozart	Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299
Stravinsky	<i>The Rite of Spring</i>

Single tickets \$27 / \$50 / \$65 (students half price) at 415.499.6800 and www.marinsymphony.org

Free pre-concert talk featuring Maestro Neale and Ballet Afsaneh from 6:30-7pm in the concert hall.

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Jpgs:

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Aliah Najmabadi, Ballet Afsaneh dancer, performs dance from the Silk Road

Photo Credit: Juan Carlos Bettancourt

[DanLevitan©JamesHall.med.jpg](#)

Harp soloist and Marin Symphony Principal Harp, Dan Levitan

Photo Credit: James Hall