



DVOŘÁK'S EIGHTH with SHOSTAKOVICH

Friday and Saturday, October 27-28, 2017 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, October 29, 2017 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, conductor

MAYU KISHIMA, violin

SUK

Scherzo fantastique, op. 25

SHOSTAKOVICH

Concerto No. 1 in A Minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 99

I. Nocturne: Moderato

II. Scherzo: Allegro

III. Passacaglia: Andante — Cadenza

IV. Burlesque: Allegro con brio

MAYU KISHIMA, violin

INTERMISSION

DVOŘÁK

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, op. 88

I. Allegro con brio

II. Adagio

III. Allegretto grazioso

IV. Allegro, ma non troppo

The 2017/18 season is generously sponsored by
SHIRLEY and BARNETT C. HELZBERG, JR.

The Classical Series is sponsored by

MURIEL McBRIDEN
KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

Additional support provided by





Josef Suk, pupil and son-in-law of Antonín Dvořák, emerged in his own right as an important voice in Czech concert music.

Suk's *Scherzo fantastique* is a captivating work that juxtaposes playful, lyrical and pastoral elements all couched in magical orchestration.

JOSEF SUK (1874-1935)

Scherzo fantastique, op. 25 (1903) 15 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, tambourine, cymbals, harp and strings.

Josef Suk studied at the Prague Conservatory from 1885-1892. During that time, he studied composition with Antonín Dvořák, who counted Suk among his favorite pupils. In 1898, Suk married Dvořák's daughter, Otilie. During his long and distinguished career, Suk carried on the great tradition of Czech concert music as exemplified by Dvořák and his predecessor, Bedřich Smetana. An accomplished and successful composer, Suk was also a talented violinist. In 1892, at the invitation of cellist Hanuš Wihan (the dedicatee of Dvořák's Cello Concerto, op. 104), Suk joined the Bohemian (later, the Czech) String Quartet as second violinist. He remained with the ensemble for more than four decades, performing in more than 4,000 concerts. In 1922, Suk was appointed to the composition faculty at Prague Conservatory, where his students included Bohuslav Martinů.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Suk: *Scherzo fantastique*

Czech Philharmonic / Sir Charles Mackerras, conductor

Label: Decca

Catalog # 4757061

Scherzo fantastique opens with the oboes and bassoons chirping a playful motif that emerges as the work's principal theme. The cellos sing the contrasting theme, a lovely expressive melody. A more pastoral central episode spotlights the winds. A brief, hushed sequence for muted cellos and timpani serves as a bridge to a varied reprise of the opening section. From there, *Scherzo fantastique* sprints to a rousing conclusion.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 99 (1948, rev. 1955)

39 minutes

Solo violin, piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, tuba, timpani, tam-tam, tambourine, xylophone, 2 harps, celesta and strings.

In January 1948, Communist leader Andrei Zhdanov summoned members of the Union of Soviet Composers to a conference. There, Zhdanov censured such prominent Russian composers as Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Aram Khachaturian and Nikolai Miaskovsky for writing music that displayed “formalist deviations, subjectivism, and the rejection of Socialist Realism.” At the Zhdanov conference, Shostakovich’s compositions were characterized as favored listening “of nobody except foreign bandits and imperialists.” A month later, Zhdanov issued an official decree that included a condemnation of Shostakovich’s music.

Shostakovich completed his First Violin Concerto on March 24, 1948, the month after the Zhdanov decree. He dedicated the work to his dear friend, the brilliant Russian violinist, David Oistrakh (1908-1974). Shostakovich well understood that, given Russia’s



Shostakovich dedicated his First Violin Concerto to his dear friend, the great Russian virtuoso David Oistrakh, who was the soloist in the 1955 world premiere.

existing political climate, a performance of this complex and emotionally searching piece was out of the question. In fact, it was not until after Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953 that even a modicum of freedom of artistic expression became possible in Soviet Russia. The premiere of the Shostakovich First Violin Concerto took place seven years after its original composition. Oistrakh was the soloist, and Evgeny Mravinsky conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic at the October 29, 1955 concert.

David Oistrakh, an immensely popular Soviet artist, immediately championed the work in an article that appeared at the time of the premiere. Oistrakh's defense of the Shostakovich First Violin Concerto was not only eloquent, but courageous as well, given the fact that his assessment came in advance of any "official" verdict by the Union of Soviet Composers:

We have prepared this premiere with the very greatest care — we have insisted on about ten rehearsals in the presence of the composer ... The concerto poses exceedingly interesting problems for the performer, who plays, as it were, a pithy "Shakespearean" role, which demands from him complete emotional and intellectual involvement, and gives him ample opportunities not only to demonstrate his virtuosity but above all to reveal his deepest feelings, thoughts and moods.

The premiere of the First Violin Concerto was a great success, with the audience offering an enthusiastic reception. Oistrakh's continued sterling advocacy of this magnificent work helped to

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1

David Oistrakh, violin

Leningrad Philharmonic / Yevgeny Mravinsky, *conductor*

Label: Orfeo D'or

Catalog # 736081

assure its status as one of the finest of 20th-century violin concertos.

The concerto is in four movements. The first is an extended, mysterious Nocturne. The second movement Scherzo is a danse macabre. The slow-tempo third movement is a Passacaglia, a series of variations over a repeated figure (here, introduced by the cellos, basses and timpani). A lengthy solo cadenza leads without pause to the closing movement in the spirit of a trepak, a vigorous Russian dance in 2/4.



Around the time Dvořák composed his Symphony No. 8, he confessed to a friend, “melodies simply pour out of me.”

The Symphony, in four movements, indeed displays Dvořák’s unique melodic genius — music brimming with unbridled optimism and energy.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, op. 88 (1889)

34 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings.

While working on his Piano Quartet, op. 87, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák told his friend, Alois Göbl, “It’s going unexpectedly easily and the melodies simply pour out of me.” On August 26, 1889, one week after finishing the Piano Quartet, Dvořák began work on his Symphony in G Major. It appears a similar level of inspiration attended the new orchestral work. Dvořák began to note ideas for the Symphony, and he started the composition sketch on September 6. Dvořák completed the sketches for all four movements by September 23 and finished the orchestration on November 8.

On February 2, 1890, Dvořák conducted the Prague National Theater Orchestra in the premiere of the Eighth Symphony. A few months later, the composer again presented the symphony in honor of his election as Member of the Franz Josef Academy

for Science, Literature and Art in Prague. On June 16, 1891, the University of Cambridge bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Music upon Dvořák, who again offered the symphony in commemoration of the event.

As with most of his musical creations, the G-Major Symphony reflects the influence of Czech folk melodies and rhythms. It is

also in many ways highly innovative, suggesting new possibilities for traditional symphonic forms. According to Dvořák biographer Otakar Šourek, the composer (by his own admission) consciously strove to create “a work different from his other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way.” Dvořák achieved this in the context of energetic and optimistic music, brimming with unforgettable melodies.

The Symphony is in four movements. The first movement opens with a somber introduction. This episode returns throughout the opening movement, serving as a unifying force. The flute playfully introduces the first of several principal themes. The slow-tempo second movement, in rather free form, presents a series of episodes essentially based on upon the opening four-note motif, consisting of rising sixteenth-note triplets and a quarter note. The third movement is in the character of a melancholy waltz, framing a lilting, major-key episode. A trumpet call heralds the opening of the finale. The cellos introduce a theme that serves as the basis for a series of diverse and often thrilling variations. In the midst of the variations, the trumpet call motif returns. A series of lyrical variations finally yields to a jubilant coda and the symphony’s rousing conclusion. ■

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Dvořák: Symphony No. 8

Czech Philharmonic / George Szell, *conductor*

Label: Audite

Catalog # 95625

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY **FUN FACT**

In the 2016/17 season, there were ticket buyers from

987 & **8**

COMMUNITIES

FOREIGN COUNTRIES

FIRST PRIZE-WINNER OF THE INAUGURAL SHANGHAI ISAAC STERN

International Violin Competition in 2016, Mayu Kishima was born in Kobe, Japan, and began playing the violin at age 3.

Kishima has won numerous competition prizes. In 2000, she caused a stir in the music world when she became the youngest-ever Japanese top prize-winner in the Junior Division of the 8th Wieniawski International Competition for Young Violinists.



Since then, she has toured as a soloist with many distinguished orchestras and conductors, including the Russian National Philharmonic Orchestra with Vladimir Spivakov, Orchestra di Santa Cecilia, National Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony and the London Symphony with Mstislav Rostropovich. She has recorded with Tokyo's NHK Symphony Orchestra and Vladimir Ashkenazy, and performed with the

Moscow Soloists and Yuri Bashmet, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic and the Prague Symphony.

A passionate chamber musician, Kishima regularly takes part in the Martha Argerich Project in Lugano, Switzerland, where she performs with Argerich and others. In 2016 she recorded "Argerich and Friends," which was released by Warner Music.

Kishima has studied with Izumi Hayashi, Kazuyo Togami, Toshiya Eto, Dorothy DeLay, Masao Kawasaki, Machi Oguri, and Chihiro Kudo, among others. She participated in Isaac Stern's master class at the Miyazaki Music Festival for an exceptional three years in a row (1997-1999). She also participated in the Seiji Ozawa Academy in Switzerland in 2008 and 2009. In 2012, she graduated with a top grade from the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, where she studied under Zakhar Bron. In 2015, she graduated at the top of her class from the Hochschule's graduate school, with all professors awarding her highest grades. She also received Germany's national qualification for musicians (Konzertexamen certificate).

Kishima plays the 1700 Antonio Stradivari *ex Petri* violin, kindly loaned by Ryuji Ueno. ■