



GELLER *and* GROSSMAN play MOZART *plus* SIBELIUS' FIFTH

Friday and Saturday, January 12-13, 2018 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 14, 2018 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*

NOAH GELLER, *violin*

CHRISTINE GROSSMAN, *viola*

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN *LA Variations*

W. A. MOZART

Sinfonia concertante in E-flat Major for Violin,
Viola, and Orchestra, K. 364 (K. 320D)

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Andante

III. Presto

NOAH GELLER, *violin*

CHRISTINE GROSSMAN, *viola*

INTERMISSION

SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 5 in E-Flat Major, op. 82

I. Tempo molto moderato - Allegro
moderato - Presto

II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

III. Allegro molto - Misterioso

The 2017/18 season is generously sponsored by
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Esa-Pekka Salonen composed his *LA Variations* for the musicians of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the ensemble for which he served as music director from 1992 to 2009. The work is a brilliant orchestral tour de force, an expression of the composer's pride in the "virtuosity and power" of the orchestra.

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN (b. 1958)

***LA Variations* (1996)**

19 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, alto flute, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, vibraphone, mark tree, tuned gongs, log drums, bongos, marimba, tubular bells, tom-toms, tam-tams, crotales, glockenspiel, sizzle cymbal, roto-toms, congas, celesta, synthesizer and strings.

In the tradition of such predecessors as Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss and Leonard Bernstein, the Finnish musician Esa-Pekka Salonen has long been celebrated as both a conductor and composer of the highest stature. Salonen completed his orchestral work, *LA Variations*, in 1996, during his tenure as Los Angeles Philharmonic music director (1992-2009). Commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, *LA Variations* premiered on January 16, 1997, with the composer conducting. Following the triumphant premiere, Salonen and the Philharmonic frequently performed *LA Variations*, both in Los Angeles and on tour. They recorded the piece in 2000 for the Sony Classical label.

LA Variations comprises a series of 17 brief episodes, played without pause. The music is based upon a pair of chords introduced at the outset that encompass

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Salonen: *LA Variations*

Los Angeles Philharmonic / Esa-Pekka Salonen, *conductor*

Label: Sony Catalog # 89158

the 12 notes of a chromatic scale. The composer noted that he wrote this piece “specifically for the players of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. I’m very proud of the virtuosity and power of my orchestra.” A thrilling orchestral showpiece, Salonen described *LA Variations* as “very clear in its form and direct in its expression.”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Sinfonia concertante in E-flat Major for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, K. 364 (K. 320d) (1779) 30 minutes

Solo violin and viola, 2 oboes, 2 horns and strings.

Mozart composed his Sinfonia concertante in 1779 during his final years in Salzburg. It was a difficult time in Mozart’s life. He had just returned from a two-year tour of Mannheim and Paris. The composer’s mother, Anna Maria, accompanied Mozart on the trip. On July 3, 1778, while in Paris, Anna Maria Mozart died at age 57. During his travels, Mozart attempted, unsuccessfully, to secure a new position that would allow him to fulfill his long-held desire to leave his native city.

A sinfonia concertante juxtaposes a group of solo instruments with the accompanying orchestra. Here, the solo instruments are a violin and viola. Mozart’s orchestration comprises pairs of oboes and horns, along with strings. No documentation exists as to the specific circumstances that prompted Mozart to write his Sinfonia concertante. Mozart, who rarely composed music of this ambitious scope without some specific concert in mind, was an accomplished violin and viola player. But whether the composer himself ever



In addition to his prowess as a keyboard virtuoso, Mozart was a first-rate violinist and violist. The Sinfonia concertante juxtaposes a solo violin and viola with the orchestral ensemble. The writing for the two soloists often features them in rapt dialogue.

gave concert performances of either solo part in this sublime work remains a matter of tantalizing speculation.

The work is in three movements. The first opens with a grand orchestral introduction. The soloists intone an extended E-flat, followed by a lovely descending phrase. A wealth of thematic material follows — sometimes introduced by one of the soloists, more often in dialogue. Episodes of melancholy frequently appear in the development section. Following the recapitulation of the central themes, the soloists play Mozart's fully transcribed cadenza. The ensemble's vigorous coda concludes the opening movement. Some commentators have argued that the slow-tempo second movement — one of Mozart's most beautiful and tragic — is a musical expression of the composer's grief over his mother's death. The violins sing the somber, principal theme. Soon, the solo violin and viola present their own versions of the melody. The remainder of the movement is in the spirit of an operatic duet, with the soloists often engaging in hushed dialogue. The first violins immediately present the vivacious central theme of the rondo finale. The melody returns throughout, alternating with episodes related to the principal theme. The vibrant mood continues to the closing fanfare, capped by a trio of forte chords.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mozart: Sinfonia concertante

Isaac Stern, *violin*; Pinchas Zukerman, *viola*

New York Philharmonic / Zubin Mehta, *conductor*

Label: CBS Masterworks Catalog # 36692

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY **FUN FACT**

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Jean Sibelius' Fifth Symphony was his most important large-scale composition during World War I. Although the work has moments of gloom and conflict, like its counterpart in Beethoven's symphonic canon, the struggle ends in triumph.

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, op. 82
(1915, rev. 1916, 1919) 31 minutes

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns,
3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

In July 1914, the outbreak of World War I threw the lives of millions of Europeans into chaos. Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was no exception. Finland, long a Grand Duchy of the Russian Tsarist regime, found itself allied with Britain, France and Russia against Germany. As a result, Sibelius' relationship with his Leipzig publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, was severed. Sibelius soon found himself in severe debt. In order to remove his family from dire circumstances, Sibelius composed numerous smaller pieces for various Finnish publishers.

The Fifth Symphony was Sibelius' most important large-scale work from those wartime years. The start of composition was in close proximity to the outbreak of the conflict (although Sibelius may have been thinking about the work as early as 1912). He completed the first version in time for

its premiere in Helsinki on December 8, 1915. The composer led the concert, given in honor of his 50th birthday. The following year, Sibelius revised the score; however, it was not until 1919 that he penned the familiar third and final version of the symphony.

As one might imagine, the period during which Sibelius composed his Fifth Symphony often found him in a reflective, somber mood. A few months after the outbreak of war, he wrote, "My heart sings, full of sadness — the shadows lengthen." Without question, Sibelius' Fifth Symphony has moments of gloom and

conflict. However, in a manner similar to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the struggle ends in triumph.

The opening movement is based on a quartet of principal themes. Rather than immediately proceeding to the traditional development section, Sibelius offers a varied second exposition of the central themes, followed by a mysterious development. A quicksilver episode in triple meter serves the dual function of the opening movement's rather free recapitulation and the work's scherzo. The coda gathers impressive momentum, bringing the opening movement to a rousing close. The slow-tempo second movement is a theme and set of variations, some of which offer hints of the ensuing finale. The final movement opens with a flurry of activity in the strings. This ultimately gives way to a majestic theme, introduced by the horns. The two themes return during the course of a movement notable for its energy and inexorable momentum. In the closing measures, the second theme reigns supreme until the work's stunning conclusion — six “hammer-blow” chords.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Sibelius: Symphony No. 5

London Symphony Orchestra / Colin Davis, *conductor*

Label: LSO Live Catalog # 537

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VIOLINIST NOAH GELLER HAS PERFORMED EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT

the United States and abroad. At the invitation of Music Director Michael Stern, Geller became the Kansas City Symphony concertmaster in 2012. He has since appeared frequently as soloist with the Symphony. He made his solo recording

debut on the Kansas City Symphony's recent release with Reference Recordings featuring music by Saint-Saëns. In addition to his activities at the Symphony, Geller is an enthusiastic music educator. Upon his arrival in Kansas City, he was appointed adjunct associate professor of violin at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.



Geller began his professional career in the first violin section of the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2007 while still pursuing his master's degree. He served as acting assistant concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra

for the 2010 and 2011 seasons. Geller also has performed as guest concertmaster with the orchestras of Pittsburgh, Houston and Beijing (China National Symphony). In addition to his orchestral activities, Geller appears regularly with the dynamic, spirited and conductorless East Coast Chamber Orchestra.

An active chamber musician, Geller has performed at the Marlboro, Kingston, Saratoga, Heartland and Skaneateles festivals, and he has appeared on the Lyon and Healy (Chicago), Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Lyric Chamber Music Society (New York) series, among others. He is an original member of Shir Ami, an ensemble dedicated to the music of composers whose lives were adversely affected by the Holocaust. Geller has organized and presented concerts by Shir Ami for the Kansas City community, garnering remarkable support and enthusiasm.

Geller grew up in the Chicago area, studying privately with Jennifer Cappelli. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School where he studied with Hyo Kang, Donald Weilerstein and Cho-Liang Lin. Geller currently lives in Kansas City with his wife, percussionist Mari Yoshinaga, and their dog Monkey. He performs on a violin made by Andreas Postacchini c. 1840. ■

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY FUN FACT

122

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PAGE**

About CHRISTINE GROSSMAN, viola

BORN IN NEW YORK CITY TO A MUSICAL FAMILY, CHRISTINE GROSSMAN

began playing the violin at the age of 5, piano at 10 and viola at 16. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees in viola performance from The Juilliard School where she studied with Heidi Castleman, Misha Amory and Hsin-Yun Huang. As a young professional, Grossman also studied with Roberto Diaz.



Before moving to Kansas City, Grossman previously held positions with the New World, Pacific and Delaware symphonies. An avid chamber player, Grossman was previously a member of the California Quartet and has performed in numerous summer festivals including Tanglewood Music Center, Taos Chamber

Music, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival (Germany), Great Lakes Music Festival, Portland Chamber Music Festival and Colorado Music Festival. Grossman has been the principal violist of the Kansas City Symphony since 2008. ■

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PAGE