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SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2018 ■ 4:30 P.M.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND FINE ARTS CENTER CONCERT HALL

THE 30TH FINALE!

SPONSORED BY SAM AND LYNDIE ERSAN

MOZART Rondo in A Major for Piano and Orchestra, K. 386

PIANO: REIKO UCHIDA

CONDUCTOR: KENSHO WATANABE

BACH Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1043
("Double Violin Concerto")

Vivace

Largo, ma non tanto

Allegro

VIOLINS: HILARY HAHN AND JULIETTE KANG

CONDUCTOR: KENSHO WATANABE

BACH Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro assai

VIOLIN: HILARY HAHN

CONDUCTOR: KENSHO WATANABE

INTERMISSION

TCHAIKOVSKY Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo — Allegro moderato

Valse: Moderato — Tempo di valse

Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco

Finale (Tema russo): Andante — Allegro con spirito

CONDUCTOR: KENSHO WATANABE

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA ▶

VIOLINS: JULIETTE KANG, ZACH DEPUE, ARA GREGORIAN, HYE-JIN KIM,
STEPHEN KIM, AYANO NINOMIYA, GIGI TURGENEV AND EMILY CHEN

VIOLAS: CHE-HUNG CHEN, MELISSA REARDON AND SUSAN CULPO

CELLOS: CLANCY NEWMAN, RAMAN RAMAKRISHNAN,
JONATHAN KAROLY, THEODORE MOOK AND SYDNEY LEE

BASSES: ELIOT PORTER AND PETER WEITZNER

OBOES: JANE MURRAY AND DENISE PLAZA-MARTIN

FRENCH HORNS: CATHRYN CUMMINGS AND JAIME THORNE

HARPSICHORD: REIKO UCHIDA

Rondo in A Major, K. 386

WOLFGANG AMADÉ MOZART (1756–1791)

This single movement of Mozart's work survives only in an incomplete manuscript (though one written in Mozart's own hand), dated "19. Oct. 1782." At that time Mozart wrote three piano concertos which, as he explained in an advertising brochure, "can be played equally by a large orchestra, that is, with wind instruments, as well as by a quartet — that is, two violins, viola, and cello." In other words, he was offering a practical choice with the aim of increasing sales: the works could be considered concertos with full orchestral accompaniment or chamber works to be played at home with a piano and four string instruments. And to his father he described them like this: "The concertos are in a middle ground between too serious and too light — very brilliant — pleasant to the ears — natural without falling into vacuity — here and there — even connoisseurs can find satisfaction — yet in such a way — that the inexperienced must be satisfied, though without knowing why." (Every composer's wish!)

The question arises: Did this A-major Rondo originate in connection with the A-major concerto composed about the same time (and ending with a different rondo in that key)? Was this a first version that Mozart gave up on? Or is it a new movement intended to replace the one in the concerto which he somehow failed to complete?

There has been no firm agreement on this question. The manuscript was left in Mozart's estate after his death. In 1799 his widow Constanze sold it to the publisher J.A. Andre, in whose possession it was complete. Yet when it was auctioned in London, only about half of the original pages were still part of the manuscript. Before the auction, while the original manuscript was in one piece, the English musician Cipriani Potter (1792–1871) prepared a solo piano version of the work, which was published. Once pages were lost from Mozart's manuscript, Potter's arrangement was the only way to know how Mozart had ended the score.

In the last century scholars have hunted everywhere for missing music — not only Mozart's, but also that of many other composers old and new whose works were scattered in wars and other disasters, or simply misplaced. In 1980 the English scholar Alan Tyson located the ending again. Charles Mackerras and Paul Badura-Skoda reconstituted the full score, all but a minor percentage drawn from Mozart's own manuscript. The performance here will be based on this edition, bringing back to life a long-lost Mozart rondo.

Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1043 ("Double Violin Concerto")

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Saxony, on March 21, 1685, and died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750. He almost certainly composed the Double Violin Concerto in D minor during the years he spent in Cöthen, 1717–1722, probably for the leader of the orchestra, Joseph Spiess, perhaps to perform with him, though we have no information about performances in his time. In addition to the solo violins, the score calls for strings and continuo.

In 1717 Bach left his post at Weimar to move to Cöthen, though not without first spending some time in jail for having had the temerity to ask for leave to change jobs! The ruler at Cöthen, Prince Leopold, was a knowledgeable and passionate lover of music, and he gave Bach every kind of encouragement to write chamber music, orchestral scores, and cantatas to celebrate birthdays and other secular events. (Church cantatas were not included in his

duties, as they had been at Weimar and were to be in Leipzig later, since the court was Calvinist, and the liturgy called for little beyond straightforward hymn singing.) Thus the five years spent in Cöthen was the time when Bach wrote a great deal of his purely instrumental music, including the violin concertos and at least some of the Brandenburg concertos.

All three of the violin concertos — the two for solo violin and the double concerto to be heard here — reflect the Italian concerto tradition in general and especially the concerto technique of Vivaldi. Bach may have encountered Vivaldi's music as early as 1708, and he certainly made an extensive study of it, converting a number of Vivaldi's violin concertos into keyboard concertos for his own use, and learning from Vivaldi such matters of style and technique as "the direction of the ideas, their relationship to one another, the sequences of modulations, and many other particulars besides." (The quotation is from the biography by Forkel, who knew Bach.)

Despite his interest in Vivaldi's brilliant and energetic style, Bach never failed to endow his concertos with a richly detailed contrapuntal structure in the best German manner, and he pursues a consistent course of development, creating his episodes out of fresh treatments of the ritornello material, rather than introducing sharply contrasting ideas out of nowhere. Thus he took the best of what he found in Italian music and combined it with the best that he knew of German technique to create a concerto that superbly balances structure and expression, that allows the orchestra to participate to an unusual degree, yet still highlights the soloists as the prime movers in their story.

The influence of Vivaldi notwithstanding, Bach himself was an innovator in these concertos, too (and quite probably in other violin concertos which, unfortunately, have not come down to us). For one thing, Bach introduces into his ritornellos features that came from other musical genres. In the double concerto, for example, the opening ritornello is actually the opening section of a fugue. The slow movement is virtually a love-duet without words, with the two violins intertwining their captivating melodic lines over a simple accompaniment. In the finale Bach plays a striking rhythmic trick: The two soloists are playing in 3/4 time in a close canon (strict repetition) at the unison, while the ensemble part, though written in 3/4, is sounding in 2/4. This gives a restless, driven character to the last movement of the concerto.

Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

We know so little about Bach's daily life except that he was a busy working musician virtually all of his adult life, that the facts known about the composition of the E-major concerto are necessarily identical to those relating to the creation of the Double Concerto, described above. In every other position he held, most of Bach's attention was devoted to church music — the organ music that accompanied many parts of the Lutheran service (which, of course, he played in addition to composing) and especially the major composition performed on most Sundays of the church year, a cantata that, like the pastor's sermon, was based on the text of the Gospel reading for that Sunday. Composing a new cantata every week, as he did for some periods of his life, took so much time — choosing a text, setting it to music in a piece that might run 20 minutes or more, copying by hand the parts for the singers and orchestra (no photocopy machines!), rehearsing (probably just a quick run through, if that) before the Sunday morning service — and then it was time to start all over again.

But in the Calvinist court at Cöthen, Bach did not have to write a single church cantata, because the Calvinist tradition called only for congregational singing of hymns, with no participation by instruments in church. Yet the people loved music as a pure and chaste form of entertainment in their homes and courts. So, Bach was kept equally busy composing — but in different media: solo keyboard or unaccompanied stringed instrument, as well as a variety of chamber music combinations, and concertos for many different possible solo instruments.

Today we think of concertos as orchestral works, in which a lone soloist (like a David) confronts a large ensemble (like a Goliath) and wins by virtue of greater speed and virtuosity. In Bach's day, the concerto was much closer to other forms of chamber music and was usually performed in the private homes of wealthy or aristocratic patrons, because large public concerts for a paying audience had not yet developed.

Despite the conventionality of the form, Bach was an innovator in this concerto. The first movement draws its formal structure from the opera aria; it is laid out, in design and harmonic plan, precisely like a Da Capo aria, which begins with an A section, moves to a contrasting B section, at the end of which the composer writes *da capo* in the score to indicate literally “from the head” — i.e., play the first part again. The middle movement is ravishingly beautiful, with the soloist unfolding a graceful melody over the quasi-ostinato rhythmic regularity of the bass line. And the final rondo is “modern” in its dancelike symmetry.

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka province, Russia, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg on Nov. 6, 1893. He composed the Serenade for Strings between Sept. 21 and Nov. 4, 1880. Its first performance took place in St. Petersburg on Oct. 30, 1881. The composer noted on the score that he preferred to have as large an ensemble of orchestral strings as possible for performances of the work.

Tchaikovsky spent most of the year 1880 in the country, part of the time installed at Simaki, a small house on one of the estates of his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, where, as always, he carefully avoided personal contact with the woman whom he addressed as “Dearest Friend” in a long and intensely personal series of letters covering the years of her support. He was supposed to write a piece of music for the 25th anniversary of Tsar Alexander II's accession to the throne, since the government hoped to generate a little enthusiasm for the ruler, who had recently been the subject of some assassination attempts. The original plan was to have a series of staged tableaux accompanied by music, each scene to be set by a different composer, chosen by lot. Tchaikovsky, to his chagrin, drew the subject, “Montenegrin villagers receiving news of Russia's declaration of war on Turkey.”

It is not surprising that he felt unable to do anything with such a topic; his creative inertia took the form of a variety of activities to help him avoid composing: revising earlier works, proofreading scores, and renewing his study of English in the hopes of eventually being able to read his favorite English authors, Dickens, Thackeray, and Shakespeare.

Finally, though, while living at Kamenka, the home of his sister and her family (and long one of Tchaikovsky's favorite retreats), he began work on a composition for the Silver Jubilee Exposition. It was an overture dealing with Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and would call for actual cannons in performance. At the same time, purely for his own satisfaction, he wrote a serenade for string orchestra, a late-19th-century equivalent of the classical divertimento. He completed the serenade on Nov. 4, the overture two weeks later. Tchaikovsky summed up his own feelings about the autumn's musical harvest thus:

The Overture will be very loud, noisy, but I wrote it without any warm feelings of love and so it will probably be of no artistic worth. But the serenade, on the contrary, I wrote from inner compulsion. This is a piece from the heart and so, I venture to say, it does not lack artistic worth.

Both works have long been among the popular favorites of Tchaikovsky's output — the 1812 overture with all its glorious bombast, and the Serenade for Strings with its freshness and charm, its brilliant string writing, its graceful waltz of a character that Tchaikovsky made entirely his own, its richly expressive elegy, and its lively finale based on one of those Russian folk tunes that reiterates over and over a simple melodic gesture, allowing the composer to deploy his substantial skills as an arranger to ring the changes on the obstinate little fragment of tune that grows ever livelier.

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