Autumn Extravaganza
Dr. Robert G. Hasty, Music Director

The Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave), Opus 26
Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 35
Erich Wolfgang Korngold
Moderato nobile
Romance
Allegro assai vivace

Maya Anjali Buchanan, violin
First Prize Winner, Bonnie & Lee Malmed 2017 Young Artists Competition

INTERMISSION

Romanian Folk Dances for Orchestra, Sz. 68
Béla Bártok
Jocul cu bâtă
Brâul
Pe Loc
Buciumeana
Poarga românească
Măranțel

Czech Suite in D, Opus 39
Antonín Dvorák
Preludio (Pastorale). Allegro Moderato
Polka. Allegretto grazioso
Sousedská (Minuetto). Allegro giusto
Romanza. Andante con moto
Finale (Furiant). Presto

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Mendelssohn – The Hebrides Overture (Fingal’s Cave), Opus 26

Felix Mendelssohn was born into one of Germany’s most prominent Jewish families. His grandfather, the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, was an important cultural figure in both Jewish and Christian circles, and a wealthy textile merchant. His father was a profitable banker. As a result, Felix enjoyed a privileged upbringing. When it became apparent that the precocious youngster possessed immense musical ability, his father’s wealth and social standing helped to support and indulge his son’s prodigious gift. So it was, that as Felix approached his twentieth birthday, his father sponsored an extensive European tour, first to the British Isles then to Italy.

Upon arriving in London in 1829, the young musician conducted several of his own compositions with the London Philharmonic Society and performed extensively as a pianist. He then journeyed north to Scotland for a period of relaxation and sightseeing. A voyage through the Inner Hebrides to the uninhabited island of Staffa afforded Mendelssohn his first sight of Fingal’s Cave, an impressive sea cave. In a letter to his family describing this awe-inspiring sight, he enclosed 21 bars of music and wrote, “In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, I send you the following which came into my head there.” This fragment of melody was to become the first bars of the *Hebrides Overture*, though the rest of the work was not completed until he reached Italy the following year.

Mendelssohn’s *Hebrides Overture* is not programmatic, in the sense that it does not follow a narrative or tell a story; but it is thoroughly evocative of the sea and the scenery Mendelssohn experienced during his time in the islands and, particularly, at Fingal’s Cave. The opening motive, based on the notes that Mendelssohn sketched and sent to his family, is a mysterious, arpeggiated figure outlining a minor key. Beginning in the depths of the orchestra, the theme is repeated, each time rising higher. As the violins take over, the lower voices begin an undulating patter of sixteenth notes that is present throughout most of the work, representing the ebb and flow of the sea, while dramatic crescendos and accented notes allude to crashing waves.

The second theme is a more sprawling and soaring melody in the major mode. According to eminent musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey, it is “the greatest melody Mendelssohn ever wrote.” This second theme is again introduced by the lower voices, maintaining the mysterious nautical tone of the overture. The work ends with a repeated, haunting statement of the opening motive.

Korngold – Violin Concerto in D

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a child prodigy who began composing at the age of six. By the time he was nine he had written a cantata that earned the praise of Mahler, who declared the boy to be a genius. At fourteen he completed his first symphony and by nineteen had written three operas, the first of which proved to be a sensation when premiered at the Vienna Court Opera. Some of Europe’s foremost musicians, among them Strauss and Puccini, declared that his works displayed great talent and innovation. He was soon regarded as one of the most popular and respected composers in Austria-Germany and was rewarded with a professorship at the Vienna Academy of Music.
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In 1934 he arrived in California to arrange music for a film version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and soon found himself under contract to both Paramount and Warner Brothers studios. For a number of years he moved between two worlds: writing film scores for Hollywood while maintaining his concert and opera commissions in Europe. This dual career came to an abrupt end in 1938 when the Anschluss of Austria forced Korngold to move his family permanently to the United States. Over the next several years he worked steadily on a series of films, establishing himself as one of the most important and influential composers in the history of Hollywood. At the close of WWII, Korngold returned to Europe hoping to revive his earlier success as a concert musician. Sadly, the once-adoring audiences – now hardened by the ravages of war – were indifferent to his grandiose Romantic style, which they rejected as quaintly passé. Save for a small number of pieces, the works of Korngold’s post-war period are all but forgotten. A notable exception is the exquisite Violin Concerto, completed in 1945 and first performed in 1947.

Although the concerto is a return to Korngold’s pre-Hollywood Germanic roots, it borrows much of its musical material from film scores he had composed over the previous decade, and is the perfect synthesis of the composer’s two lives as a musician. It displays all the rigorous craftsmanship and masterful instrumental facility of his Viennese training but also the flair for emotional directness and audience appeal he learned while at Warner Brothers.

The work opens with a theme taken from Korngold’s score for the 1937 melodrama *Another Dawn*, which is here transformed into an expansively lyrical melody that soars above the lush orchestral accompaniment. A second theme, borrowed from the historical drama *Juarez*, moves the soloist into the violin’s expressive upper register. Almost the entirety of the second movement, subtitled “Romanze,” is based on a single motif, taken from Korngold’s Oscar winning score to the epic costume drama *Anthony Adverse*. Though never quoted verbatim, the melody is expanded into a rhapsodic reverie which calls for enormous skill as well as interpretive sophistication. The third movement is the virtuosic highpoint of the concerto, posing considerable technical challenges for the soloist. Taking the form of a set of theme and variations, the movement is based on the primary melody from the 1937 film *The Prince and the Pauper*. Again, the violin part often lies in the instrument’s highest range while the orchestra, largely relegated to the background, offers a rich accompaniment, with the vibraphone, xylophone, harp, and celesta lending magical support.

The concerto was dedicated to Alma Mahler, the widow of Korngold’s childhood champion, Gustav Mahler. It was premiered in 1947 by Jascha Heifetz and the St. Louis Symphony, where according to first-hand accounts, it received the most enthusiastic ovation in St. Louis concert history. A month later, Heifetz played the work in Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic. Korngold wrote about Heifetz’s playing: “In spite of the demand for virtuosity in the finale the work with its many melodic and lyric episodes was contemplated more for a Caruso than for a Paganini. It is needless to say how delighted I am to have my concerto performed by Caruso and Paganini in one person: Jascha Heifetz.”
PROGRAM NOTES CONT.

Bártok – Romanian Folk Dances

Born in Hungary, in part of the nation that was given to Romania at the end of World War I, Béla Bártok was always an ardent nationalist. Even as a young man he decided against attending the prestigious Vienna Conservatory in favor of the local Academy of Music in Budapest, where he studied composition and piano. Nonetheless, by the 1920s he had earned a reputation as a pianist and composer. As a Hungarian modernist and nationalist, he was an outspoken critic of the Nazis when they gained control of the Hungarian government, going so far as to cut ties with his German publisher and banning performances of his music in Germany and Italy. In 1940 he fled to the United States. Not until 1988 were his remains returned to Hungary.

Bártok is unique among composers in that he was as much interested in musical research as in composition. He was particularly interested in the study of Eastern European folk music. With fellow Hungarian composer, Zoltan Kodaly, he undertook a large-scale investigation of Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, and African folk music, writing several standard books in the field of ethnomusicology. He traveled from village to village with Edison’s new recording machine documenting large numbers of folk songs. In this way, his ear became saturated with the elements of these songs: driving rhythms, odd meters, and unusual scales. As a result of these studies, he published numerous folk song and dance arrangements, and most of his other compositions employ folk elements to a greater or lesser degree. He is usually considered to have succeeded better than any other nationalist in making something truly individual out of such elements. Had Bártok not written a note of music he would still be a major musical figure for his pioneering research.

In 1915 Bártok composed a setting of six Romanian folk tunes for piano solo. He was particularly drawn to Romanian folk traditions because he felt that these had been more isolated from outside influences and were therefore more authentic. Each of the dances in the collection makes use of actual folk melodies; Bártok preserved the pitch and rhythmic structure while introducing a rich harmonic language for the accompaniment. These piano pieces proved so popular that he subsequently made several arrangements for other instruments, including one for orchestra in 1917. In order the dances are: Jocul cu bâtă (Stick Dance), Brâul (Sash Dance), Pe loc (In One Spot), Buciumeana (Dance from Bucsum), Poarga Românească (Romanian Polka), and Mărunțel (Fast Dance).

Bártok originally heard the first dance played by two gypsy violinists. The dance itself was intended as a solo for an athletic young man and involves the use of a stick in the choreography. The second dance was derived from a spinning song in which the dancers hold each other’s waists and utilize a sash or waistband as a visual prop. It moves without pause directly into the third dance, the mood of which is more somber or dark and has a Balkan or even Middle Eastern character. The dancers apparently stamp rhythmically in one spot. Unlike the other dances in the set which are in duple meter, the fourth is in triple time. Bártok gave it a gentle, almost minuet-like quality and a slower tempo than the original violin folk tune which is brisk and energetic. The final two dances are fairly boisterous with rhythmically intense accompaniments to support the twists and turns of the gypsy violin heard in the originals.
Dvorák – Czech Suite, Op. 39

As a young composer Antonín Dvorák often created works evocative or representative of his native Czechoslovakia. For this reason, he was branded a Czech nationalist and, indeed, his early career was limited primarily to his home country wherein his native style was quite popular. The works of this youthful period are influenced heavily by folk song, dance rhythms, modal scales, and other elements of Bohemian music and culture. Not until later, when he turned to a more conservative, traditional European style influenced by the models of Beethoven and Brahms, did he begin to attract international attention. However, despite a growing popularity, particularly in England and the United States, Dvorák never strayed completely from his roots and continued to compose music with a Czech influence throughout his life. Such was the case with the Czech Suite.

Following the success of his Serenade for Strings and Serenade for Winds, Dvorák set out to create a similar work of distinctly Bohemian character. The resulting Czech Suite is a five-movement work scored for a smaller orchestra than was called for in his symphonies and other large-scale works. Though less well known today than the similarly nationalistic Slavonic Dances, the Czech Suite, written a year later in 1879, is equally filled with lovely melodies, sparkling rhythms, and deft instrumentation.

The first movement, marked “Preludium (Pastorale)” is something of a lyrical introduction to the subsequent movements. A melodic line in the upper voices flows smoothly above an ostinato bass figure which mimics the drone of a Bohemian bagpipe. The second movement Polka calls to mind the popular dance of Bohemian origin. The rustic tune, though folk-like in nature, is of Dvorák’s own creation. Nonetheless, the rhythms and feel of the national dance are readily apparent. The third movement is inspired by another folk dance, the Sousedská, a slow dance in triple time resembling the stately French minuet. Referring to the village bands of his homeland, Dvorák observed “the clarinets and bassoons make their entrance in this movement just as they do in Bohemia.” The fourth movement offers a wonderful lyrical nocturne featuring the flute and English horn. The Suite concludes with an invigorating Furiant, a rapid and fiery Czech dance form that Dvorák made his own. Trumpets and timpani are added to the existing orchestral forces to bring about a dazzling finish.

Program notes by Dr. Michael Vaughn

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Seventeen year old East Indian/American violinist Maya Anjali Buchanan has been awarded major prizes in three international competitions. In 2016, she captured the Silver Medal at the 4th Stradivarius International Violin Competition. Previously she was a medalist at the 2015 Cooper International Violin Competition and the only American violinist to be awarded a top prize at the 2015 Johansen International Competition for Young String Players. Daniel Hathaway of clevelandclassical.com described her performance of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto as “displaying verve, direction and an excellent sense of musical architecture” and “a haunting tone which contrasted beautifully with color changes”. “Beautifully played” and it “moved my soul,” wrote Glenn Dicterow, previous concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

Maya made her solo debut at age ten and has performed as a guest artist with numerous orchestras including the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Oistrach Symphony Orchestra, Ottawa Chamber Symphony, Kearney Symphony Orchestra, Black Hills Symphony Orchestra and the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. She has performed at diverse venues including the King’s Summer Palace in Lyon, France, Aspen’s Harris Hall, Ravinia’s Bennett Gordon Hall, Chicago Orchestra Hall’s Armour Stage, Harris Theater, Chicago Cultural Center, Paul Hall at The Juilliard School and others throughout the United States. This summer she made her debut in recital at Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, Iceland.

She has won first prize in many competitions including the Walgreen’s National Concerto Competition, Luminarts Cultural Foundation Classical Music Competition, DePaul Concerto Festival, Arthur D. Montzka Concerto Competition, Kearney Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition, and was the youngest Grand Prize winner in the history of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition, which culminated in three performances of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto at Washington Pavilion. This season, Maya appears as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) as the First Place Winner of the 2017 Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artist Competition and makes her China debut with the Sichuan Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to her solo work, Maya is an enthusiastic chamber musician and performs as violinist of Vieira String Quartet. Vieira is the First Prize Winner of the 2017 Rembrandt Chamber Music Competition, Grand Prize winner of the A.N. & Pearl G. Barnett Chamber Music Competition, Silver Medal and “Haydn Prize” winner of the 2017 St. Paul String Quartet Competition and Silver Medalist of the 2017 M-Prize International Chamber Music Competition.

Maya currently attends the Music Institute of Chicago Academy, an elite training program for advanced pre-college musicians, and studies with Almita Vamos. She receives an Academy full merit scholarship and the 2017 Farwell Trust Award from the Musicians Club of Women Scholarship Audition. This past summer, Maya studied with Sylvia Rosenberg and Donald Weilerstein at the Aspen Music Festival and participated in the Wu Han-Finckel Chamber Music Program in Aspen. In addition to her love of the violin, Maya is an outdoor enthusiast who enjoys life on her family ranch in the Black Hills National Forest, roughhousing with her three dogs and playing chess.
Dr. Robert G. Hasty is the Music Director of the Kenosha Symphony Orchestra, Principal Conductor of the Highland Park Strings, Music Director of the Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the conductor of the Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia at the Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University where he also serves as the Associate Director of Orchestras. He is also Artistic Director of the International Schools Choral Music Society.

Dr. Hasty began his career teaching music in the public schools in Southern California; this included tenure in administration as the District Music Coordinator of the Capistrano Unified School District where he supervised the K-12 music education program and its staff of 39 teachers. He also served an elected term as Vice President in charge of String Education for the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association.

A noted researcher in music cognition, Dr. Hasty has been an author for two publications delivered at the 7th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition in Sydney, Australia. A book on his research on conducting has recently been published: “Critical Listening While Conducting”. The European Society for Cognitive Sciences of Music invited him to speak at their conference in Portugal on these studies.

As a conductor, Dr. Hasty has appeared with the All-American College Orchestra at Walt Disney World, Beijing Youth Orchestra, Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Irvine Youth Symphony, La Primavera Orchestra, Merit Symphony Orchestra, Metropolis Youth Symphony, National High School Music Institute Orchestra, Northwestern University Symphony Orchestra, NU Opera Theater, NU Contemporary Music Ensemble, and the Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra. His performances have been broadcast on WFMT radio in Chicago and on the Big Ten Network. Dr. Hasty’s international engagements include two sold-out performances at the National Concert Hall of Taipei, Taiwan, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, China, the Shanghai Oriental Arts Center Concert Hall in Shanghai, China, and the Busan Cultural Center Main Theater in Busan, South Korea. He is sought-after as an honor orchestra conductor, conducting honor groups across the United States. He is a member of the conducting and music education faculties at the Bienen School of Music.

Dr. Hasty continues to perform as a freelance violinist and violist. The Aliso Viejo Symphony Orchestra, with whom he has served as concertmaster, the Capistrano Valley Symphony, and the Mozart Classical Orchestra are a few of the ensembles that have requested his violin services. Dr. Hasty was the violist on the world premiere of Kathy Henkel’s Moorland Sketches, which was broadcast on KUSC-FM Los Angeles. Currently, he is living out a long-held musical fantasy as a fiddler, performing and recording with the band for singer-songwriter Christina Trulio (ASCAP).
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