

NOV. 30 – DEC. 2

classical series

SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL



presents

2017-18 HAL & JEANETTE SEGERSTROM FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES

Performance begins at 8 p.m.; Preview talk with Alan Chapman begins at 7 p.m.

ANU TALI • CONDUCTOR
XIAYIN WANG • PIANO

Gershwin's Concerto

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

The Moldau from *Má Vlast*

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra

Allegro

Adagio – Andante con moto

Allegro agitato

Xiayin Wang

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, Op. 70

Allegro maestoso

Poco adagio

Scherzo: Vivace

Finale: Allegro

The 2017-18 Season Piano Soloists are generously sponsored by
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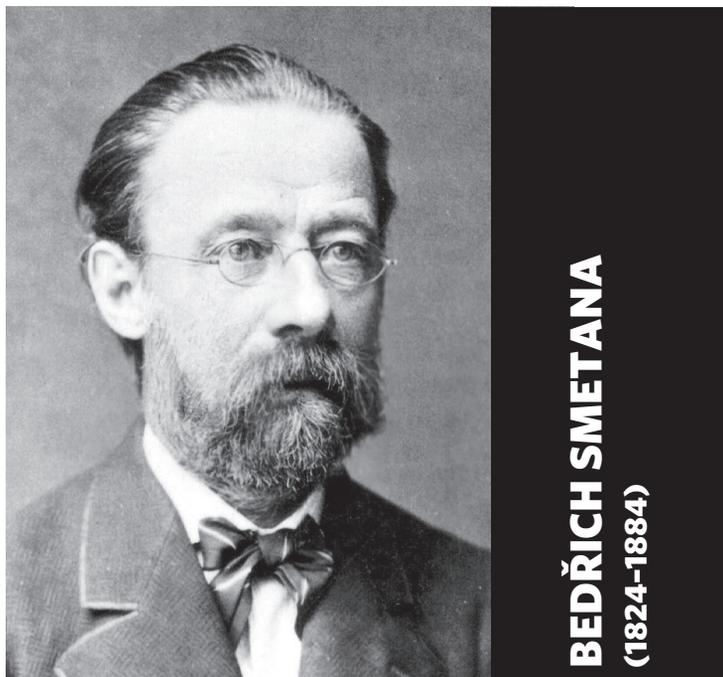
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The Saturday, December 2 concert is being recorded for broadcast on
Sunday, February 18, 2018, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.



BEDŘICH SMETANA
(1824-1884)

The Moldau from *Má Vlast*

BEDŘICH SMETANA (1824-1884)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba; percussion; harp; strings

Performance time: 12 minutes

Background

The Czech composer Bedřich Smetana is best represented in American concert halls by the beloved Moldau movement from *Má Vlast* ("My Homeland"), a six-movement suite presenting a heartfelt appreciation of his native Bohemia, and by the overture and dances from his opera *The Bartered Bride*. But these works, for all their charm and popularity, do not fully reflect the importance of Smetana in music history or the merit of his compositions, which are most often described as "charming" (yes, but far more than that) and are sometimes erroneously dismissed as "sentimental" (which underestimates their nationalistic power). We can hear the richness of Czech history in every bar of Smetana's music, most famously in *The Moldau*. Known in Germany as "die schöne Moldau," it became an expression of resistance for Czechoslovakia during the days of the Third Reich. When the Reich prohibited performance of *The Moldau*, Czech partisans defied the ban.

Smetana was a pioneer in identifying and codifying the roots of national identity as the wellspring of classical composition, and his compositions vividly evoke Bohemian landscape and culture. In America we are more familiar with Dvořák's role in this movement, but Smetana laid the groundwork for it. Harold C. Schonberg, the Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic who reigned for three decades from his desk at *The New York Times*, wrote that "Smetana was the one who founded Czech music, but Antonín Dvořák ... was the one who popularized it."

Smetana's father, a master brewer by trade, was also an avid amateur violinist and his son Bedřich's first music instructor. Bedřich showed all the signs of a major talent destined, or perhaps doomed, to a career in music: rapid strides under the tutelage of a major outside teacher (Jan Chmelik), early public performance (of a piano

arrangement of a French opera overture), and complete devotion to the art of music (at the expense of his academic studies). In his early teens, when Smetana sought instruction from the best Czech piano teachers available to him, his abilities quickly exceeded theirs. His worried father sent him to make up lost academic ground at the Gymnasium in modern-day Pilsen, where he successfully completed his studies. But he had been swept away by performances by Franz Liszt in 1840, and even when his studies kept him from composing or performing, his reading was dominated by music history, giving his eventual interest in musical nationalism a firm academic grounding.

Writing in *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, musicologist John Clapham calls *Má Vlast* "the most heroic instrumental work since Beethoven." Smetana worked on the suite of six symphonic poems from around 1872 until 1879, and its ardent expression of nationalistic feeling was influenced by his recently completed opera *Libuše*. Smetana is credited with founding a Czech national operatic tradition, and a climactic moment in the seminal *Libuše*—when Princess Libuše envisions her nation's future heroes—deeply affected him. As Smetana later explained, "The harps of the soothsayers lead into a prophetic song of the events at Vysehrad, of the glory, splendor, tournaments, battles, up to the final decline and ruin." Much of *Má Vlast* is suffused with this moody combination of heroism and lament for the sorrows of history. But the Moldau is different: it is a celebration of the glory of the Bohemian landscape and the historic ties of its inhabitants to the land. In its combination of history and place, it is not so far from Rogers and Hammerstein's 1943 musical *Oklahoma!*

What to Listen For

Smetana evokes the Moldau, a river, by invoking a flowing melody that has echoed through central Europe for generations; he alternates this melody with more rhythmic tunes that suggest the work of country living, bringing us back to the river cyclically as if we were coming home after being absorbed in life's preoccupations. This homecoming becomes more powerful in each iteration.

The river's melody is the most affecting and lyrical setting of a theme that has served many masters, and is the basis of the Israeli national anthem, "Hatikvah." Its first attribution is to the Italian renaissance tenor Giuseppe Cenci, and it was later recycled in a Czech folk song about a mischievous cat and in a Stan Getz tune, "Dear Old Stockholm." Smetana described his tone poem as follows:

The composition describes the course of the Vltava ["Moldau" is the German word for "Vltava"], starting from the two small springs, the Cold and Warm Vltava, to the unification of both streams into a single current, the course of the Vltava through woods and meadows, through landscapes where a farmer's wedding is celebrated, the round dance of the mermaids in the night's moonshine: on the nearby rocks loom proud castles, palaces and ruins aloft. The Vltava swirls into the St. John's Rapids; then it widens and flows toward Prague...and then majestically vanishes into the distance, ending at the [Elbe]....

Of course, Smetana understates his case. The experience of listening to this music is that of hiking through the place we cherish most deeply, finally mounting a bluff overlooking the river's conjunction with the Elbe. Here, without foreshadowing the dramatic effect, Smetana switches the Moldau's theme into a triumphant major, moving us to tears of pride for a place most of us have never seen.



GEORGE GERSHWIN
(1898-1937)

Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English Horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba; percussion; strings
Performance time: 31 minutes

Background

It's not always easy to draw the line between America's classical and popular music traditions. But in the case of George Gershwin, that line disappears. He possessed the ideal combination of talent and temperament to become a "crossover artist" before the term existed: with his brother Ira he was half of one of the greatest songwriting duos in history—a team whose success on Tin Pan Alley and Broadway made them synonymous with the sounds and style of the Jazz Age. Yet George is also acknowledged as one of the seminal talents in America's classical heritage.

He was born in 1898, just a few years after his parents, Russian Jews, arrived in New York from St. Petersburg. The Yiddish music he heard at home brought together stylistic elements from all over the world, awakening a voracious appetite for American pop culture and classical music alike. From the very beginning, it was music for George and verse for his brother Ira, who distinguished himself in writing light poetry as a student at City College. George was no student, but—to his family's astonishment—had secretly learned to play the piano, acquiring what could only be called mad skills today.

George left high school in 1914 to become a "plugger" in Tin Pan Alley, demonstrating songs to potential buyers at Remick's, a music publisher. He heard all kinds of music, and there was no style that failed to excite his ear: African American folk music, jazz, Yiddish songs and the Jewish cantorial tradition, European classical music. After three years in Tin Pan Alley he had published the first song of his own: "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em; When You Have 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em." It hardly caused a stir, but did pave the way for "Swanee," his first mega-hit, published when he was just 21.

George was fascinated by classical traditions and was one of

many American composers who made the pilgrimage to Nadia Boulanger, the venerated Parisian teacher of composition. His reported encounter with Maurice Ravel, though celebrated, remains unconfirmed: he supposedly sought lessons from Ravel, who—upon learning how much Gershwin earned from his songs—said that he should be taking lessons from Gershwin instead.

The Concerto in F is often called Gershwin's "most classical" composition, though opera enthusiasts point out that his opera *Porgy and Bess* is huge in scope and draws directly upon Wagner and Puccini. But the concerto, written in 1925 on commission for Walter Damrosch, hews closely to traditional concerto form. In this sense it is far more "classical" than, say, the popular *Rhapsody in Blue*. Gershwin scored the concerto himself (unlike the *Rhapsody*) and was piano soloist at the premiere.

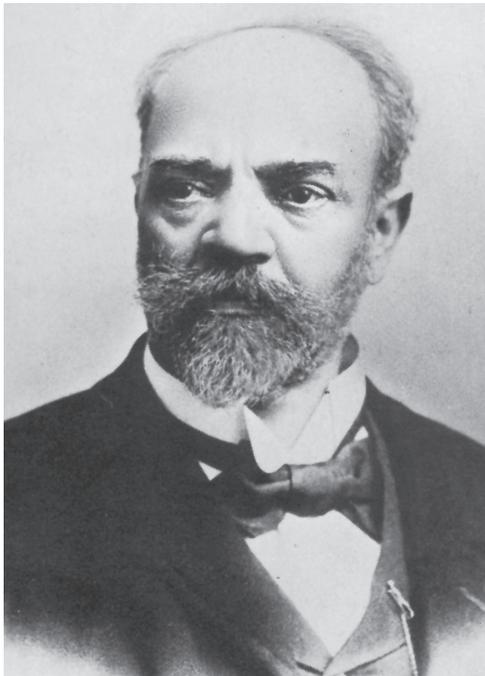
What to Listen For

The musical building blocks of the Concerto in F are American jazz and dance, synthesized in classical forms. It probably remains the most successful and frequently programmed such work in the American canon. Its "jazziness" is unmistakable from the opening moments, with explosive timpani strikes. The extended orchestral introduction that builds to a dramatic solo piano entrance is traditional in form, but with jazz flair.

Blues, of course, were never far from Gershwin's pen, and in the second movement we hear the flatted thirds of the blues in "blue notes" that glitter elegantly, rather than wailing. In the final movement, Gershwin invokes the spirit of Ragtime, where his songwriting success began.

Gershwin himself commented on the concerto's sound, eloquently describing its riot of rhythms. "The first movement employs the Charleston rhythm," he wrote. "It is quick and pulsating, representing the young enthusiastic spirit of American life. It begins with a rhythmic motif given out by the kettle drums.... The principal theme is announced by the bassoon. Later, a second theme is introduced by the piano. The second movement has a poetic, nocturnal atmosphere, which has come to be referred to as the American blues, but in a purer form than that in which they are usually treated. The final movement reverts to the style of the first. It is an orgy of rhythms, starting violently and keeping to the same pace throughout."

The concerto presents a finale of requisite flash, with exciting, rapid octave scales and pentatonic chord progressions juxtaposed against emphatic, vigorous percussion. The sound is as American as Broadway.



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
(1841–1904)

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones; timpani; strings
Performance time: 35 minutes

Background

Dvořák's advocate Johannes Brahms worked off and on for two decades before unveiling his first symphony when he was 43. By the time Dvořák was that age, he was working on his Symphony No. 7 in 1885. But those facts conceal a reticence on Dvořák's part that was apparently on a par with Brahms': He never published his first four symphonies during his lifetime, and they remained unknown until they surfaced in the 1950s. Until then, the numbering of Dvořák's symphonies remained muddled, and this one bore the number that Dvořák had inexplicably assigned it: six.

This insecurity—if that's what it was—did not result from a lack of critical and collegial support. Dvořák's known symphonies were widely admired. The commission for this one came from London's Royal Philharmonic Society, which honored the composer with an invitation in the spring of 1884. After he returned home in June, he was inducted into the Society and began work on the symphony six months later.

According to the esteemed writer Phillip Huscher, "In a sense, this symphony was born the day Dvořák first heard Brahms' new Third Symphony [which had premiered in December 1883], and that was the music that still filled his head when he sat down that December to begin sketching." Though Huscher hears Brahms' voice in Dvořák's music (and rarely the other way around), other listeners (including this one) believe that Brahms' main influence on Dvořák's symphonies was in demonstrating how symphonic form in the hands of a master could accommodate individuality of expression.

It's not clear why, during this period of eager productivity, Dvořák waited half a year to begin work on this symphony. But considering Huscher's assessment that source material for it "filled his head," it's

possible that he was also composing sketches in his head. Once he put pen to paper, he progressed with remarkable speed, completing a first draft within three months. He conducted the premiere for the Royal Philharmonic Society in April 1885.

What to Listen For

Buoyancy, swing and dance rhythms are characteristic of Dvořák's music. In this work he incorporates these elements in a piece that many listeners consider his finest symphony. It opens with a gathering of forces that seems to grow closer as we listen: rumbling strings combine with percussion to convey the mechanical energy of a steam engine or an approaching train. (Dvořák was a train fancier, and professed to find inspiration in them.) The second movement, by contrast, seems to withdraw into the serenity of a gentle adagio that is one of Dvořák's loveliest.

Much as Mozart's publisher wished he would churn out entertainments such as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, Dvořák's publisher, Fritz Simrock, thought they would both be better off if he'd stick to his crowd-pleasing Slavonic dances. We hear them in the third movement of this symphony; a scherzo rewards us with Dvořák's inimitable sense of swing. We often say that Dvořák's music makes us want to "get up and dance"—a description that certainly holds true here.

In the final movement, the gathering darkness of the symphony's opening movement combines with the brightness of its lyricism and its dance rhythms. In the end, the two are reconciled, and—as in so many symphonies, including Beethoven's—the composer has taken us on a journey from darkness to light.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.

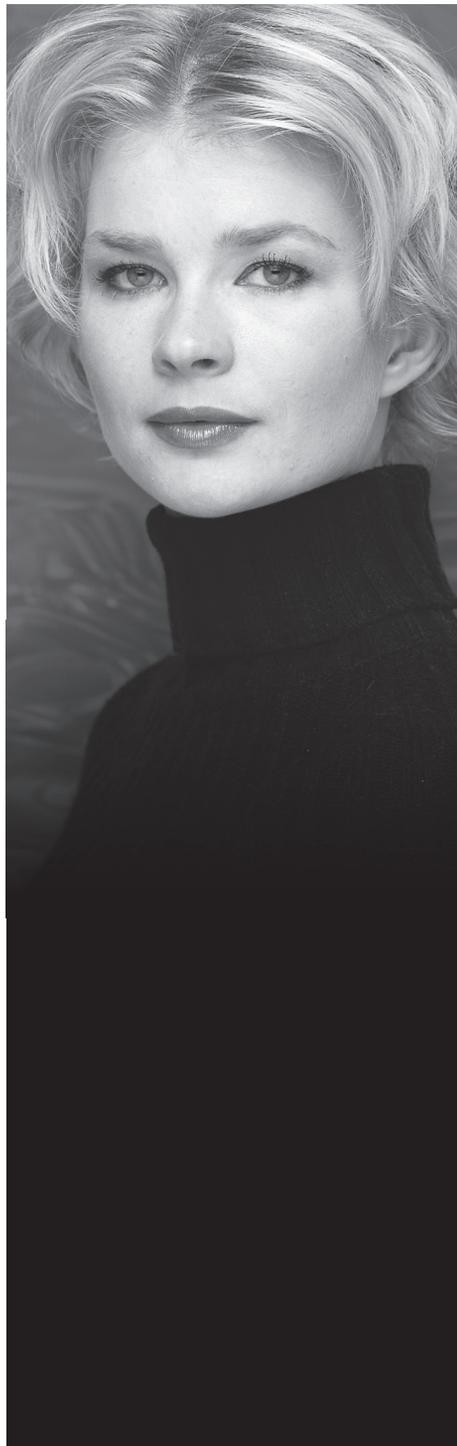
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SYMPHONY 100

Symphony 100 is an exclusive membership group that offers members adult music education opportunities, lunches with artists and several unique events or field trips annually. Membership is limited to 100 women, who support special projects of the Symphony through an annual contribution of \$1,000.

JOANN LEATHERBY AND GREG BATES

We are grateful to Joann Leatherby and her husband, Greg Bates, for sponsoring the Friday performance of the Gershwin's Concerto concert. Joann exemplifies boundless energy, inspiring leadership and generous giving to a variety of worthy Orange County organizations. The current chair of the Pacific Symphony Board of Directors, Joann has chaired two Symphony Galas, and Greg is chairing the Pacific Coast Wine Festival for the third consecutive year. Joann has also quietly provided complimentary tickets to hundreds of Chapman University students for many years, allowing them to experience the Pacific Symphony performances. Pacific Symphony is most honored to acknowledge Joann and Greg for their many contributions.



Described by the *Herald Tribune* as “charismatic, brilliant, energetic,” Anu Tali is one of the most intriguing young conductors on the international scene today, belonging to a new generation of artists who are constantly searching for fresh musical ideas.

In August 2013, Tali became music director of the Sarasota Orchestra in Florida. Alongside her duties in Sarasota, highlights of the current season include her debut with the Finnish National Opera and with the Manhattan School of Music Orchestra as well as re-engagements with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Bochumer and Duisburger Symphonikern.

She continues in her role as chief conductor of the Nordic Symphony Orchestra, which she founded in 1997 together with her twin sister Kadri Tali, to develop cultural contacts between Estonia and Finland and to unite musicians from around the world. Today the Nordic Symphony Orchestra has members from 15 countries, featuring musicians from some of the world’s leading orchestras.

Tali appears regularly with orchestras worldwide including the Japan and Tokyo Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre National de France, New Jersey, Gothenburg and Swedish Radio Symphony orchestras. In Germany she worked with Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Berliner Konzerthausorchester, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and Ensemble Modern.

Following a major success with a production of *Carmen* at Magdeburg State Opera, she was invited to conduct the Freiburger Barockorchester in a production of Gluck’s *Telemaco* at the Schwetzingen Festival and Theater Basel. She also recently conducted acclaimed semi-staged performances of Goebbels’ *Songs of Wars I Have Seen* with ensembles including the London Sinfonietta at New York’s Lincoln Center, London’s Southbank Centre and in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Seattle and Barcelona.

Tali’s debut recording, *Swan Flight* (Finlandia/Warner Classics), earned her the 2003 ECHO Klassik “Young Artist of the Year” Award. Other recordings include *Action Passion Illusion* for Warner Classics featuring works by Rachmaninov, Sibelius and Erkki-Sven Tüür. Her most recent CD, featuring Tüür’s *Strata* and *Noësis*, was released on ECM in January 2011 and met with significant critical acclaim.

Born in Estonia, Anu Tali began her musical career as a pianist, graduating from the Tallinn Conservatory in 1991. She then trained as a conductor at the Estonian Academy of Music with Kuno Areng, Toomas Kapten and Roman Matsow. From 1998 to 2000 she studied at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory with Ilya Musin and later with Leonid Kortchmar and Jorma Panula.

ANU TALI
CONDUCTOR





XIAYIN WANG
PIANO

Pianist Xiayin Wang, an artist of keen musicality and sweeping virtuosity, has brought audiences to their feet with playing in the grand Romantic tradition. Having made numerous celebrated recordings and performed throughout the world, from New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, to music centers in South America, Europe and Asia, she excites music lovers and critics alike with her impressive artistry.

In November 2016, Wang released her most recent recording of Alberto Ginastera's Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 with the BBC Philharmonic and their music director, Juanjo Mena, celebrating the centennial anniversary of the composer's birth. As a successful recording artist, her series of discs for Chandos Records has drawn critical international attention with *Gramophone* calling them "four out of four superb discs in succession." Her recordings of Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonatas (2014) were lauded for "flawless" (*BBC Music Magazine*) technique and "awesome clarity and poise" (*Gramophone*, Editor's Choice for both Rachmaninoff discs), and her disc of American Piano Concertos (2013) was crowned disc of the month by MusicWeb International.

Recent and upcoming highlights included orchestral debuts with Pacific Symphony and Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra, a solo recital at the Amijai Theater in Buenos Aires, and performances/recording of Tchaikovsky and Khachaturian Piano Concertos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Peter Oundjian. She joined the Fine Arts Quartet in Milwaukee for the Saint-Saëns Piano Quintet in A minor, Op. 14 and returned to New York City's celebrated International Keyboard Institute & Festival for a solo recital in Hunter College's Kaye Playhouse.

Wang has performed with the Baltimore, Houston and Pittsburgh symphonies, the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma. She has appeared in recital in New York at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall, Vienna at Mozartsaal, as well as in France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, Costa Rica and her native China.

She completed her studies at the Shanghai Conservatory and garnered an enviable record of first prize awards and special honors for her performances throughout China. Wang, who began piano studies at the age of five, came to New York in 1997. She holds bachelor's, master's, and professional studies degrees from the Manhattan School of Music.

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The Michelle F. Rohé Distinguished Pianist Fund

Michelle Rohé is one of the great patrons of the arts in Orange County. She has invested in Pacific Symphony's artistic excellence and has a particular love of great pianists. Her kind spirit and willingness to support the arts make much of what we do possible. We are grateful to The Michelle F. Rohé Distinguished Pianist Fund for sponsoring our piano soloists this concert season.

