Concerts of Thursday, May 31, and Saturday, June 2, at 8:00p, and Sunday, June 3, 2018, at 3:00p

Cristian Macelaru, Conductor

Nikolaj Znaider, violin

George Enescu (1881-1955)

*Rumanian Rhapsody* No. 1 in A Major, Opus 11 (1901)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Opus 10 (1925)

I. Allegretto; Allegro non troppo

II. Allegro

III. Lento

IV. Allegro molto

Intermission

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Opus 35 (1878)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Canzonetta. Andante

III. Finale. Allegro vivacissimo

Nikolaj Znaider, violin
Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

*Rumanian Rhapsody* No. 1 in A Major, Opus 11 (1901)

George Enescu was born in Liveni Vîrnav (now George Enescu), Romania, on August 19, 1881, and died in Paris, France on May 3/4, 1955. The first performance of the *Rumanian Rhapsody* No. 1 took place at the Salle Gaveau in Paris in on February 7, 1908, with the composer conducting. The *Rumanian Rhapsody* No. 1 is scored for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, triangle, side drum, cymbals, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirteen minutes.

First Classical Subscription Performance: October 22, 1949, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: May 6-8, 1993, Yoel Levi, Conductor.

George Enescu remains the most prominent Romanian musician. He was born in the province of Moldavia. However, at an early age, Enescu pursued music studies at the Vienna Conservatory (1888-94). He then traveled to Paris and studied at the National Conservatory (1895-9), where his teachers included the distinguished French composers, Jules Massenet and Gabriel Fauré. In addition to studies in music theory and composition, Enescu learned to play the violin, and soon established himself as a virtuoso of the first order. He also became a respected conductor.

Most of Enescu’s artistic life was centered in Paris, where he was influential as a composer, teacher, and performer. Among his pupils were several eminent violinists, including Arthur Grumiaux and Yehudi Menuhin. Enescu also made several visits to the United States, the earliest in 1923. Despite his busy international schedule, Enescu found time to return to his native country, where he contributed much to Romanian musical life.

George Enescu was a versatile composer, whose works include chamber pieces, shorter orchestral works, five symphonies, and the lyric tragedy, *Oedipe*. However, Enescu remains best known for his two *Rumanian Rhapsodies*, Opus 11. Enescu conducted the premieres of the *Rhapsodies* at a February 7, 1908 concert, organized by the legendary Spanish cellist, Pablo Casals.

The *Rhapsody* opens with a playful tune—introduced by the winds, and said to be inspired by the song “I have a Coin and I Want a Drink.” A series of charming melodies follows, each demonstrating Enescu’s considerable talents for orchestral color. Eventually, the pace quickens, as the music assumes the
character a vigorous folk-dance. The furious activity comes to a brief pause before the Rhapsody finally speeds to a stirring finish.

**Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Opus 10 (1925)**

Dmitri Shostakovich was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on September 25, 1906, and died in Moscow, Russia, on August 9, 1975. The first performance of the Symphony No. 1 took place in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) on May 12, 1926, with Nikolai Malko conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic. The Symphony No. 1 is scored for two piccolos, three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, alto trumpet in F, three trombones, tuba, timpani, orchestra bells, triangle, snare drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, bass drum, tam-tam, piano, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-five minutes.

**First Classical Subscription Performance: January 15, 1952, Henry Sopkin, Conductor**

**Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: November 12, 13, and 14, 2009, Hannu Lintu, Conductor.**

“A new page in the history of music”

Dmitri Shostakovich was eighteen years old when, in July of 1925, he completed his First Symphony. At the time, Shostakovich was studying composition with Maximilian Steinberg at the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Conservatory of Music. The Conservatory’s Director, Alexander Glazunov, wrote in his examination references: “Shostakovich, Dmitry. Professor Steinberg’s class of the theory of composition. Much fantasy and inventiveness. Currently in a period of quests.”

The First Symphony was Shostakovich’s graduation piece from the Conservatory. The work received its premiere on May 12, 1926, with Nikolai Malko conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic. Alexander Glazunov was in the audience, smiling and applauding the success of his pupil. In a letter to a friend, Shostakovich’s mother, Sonya, provided this glowing account of the premiere:

At half past eight in the evening we dressed and went to the Philharmonic. By nine o’clock the concert hall was filled. What I felt when Malko came out on the stage and picked up his baton would be hard to describe to you, my dear…I can only say that even a great happiness is sometimes hard to live through…

All went more than brilliantly—a splendid orchestra and magnificent execution! But the greatest success went to Mitya (Shostakovich). The audience listened with enthusiasm and the scherzo had to be played twice. At the end Mitya was called to the stage over and over again. When our handsome young composer appeared, looking almost like a little boy, the enthusiasm turned into one long
thunderous ovation. He came to take his bows, sometimes with Malko, sometimes alone.

After the concert, Nikolai Malko wrote: “I have the feeling that I have learned a new page in the history of music and met a new great composer.” And it was not long before audiences throughout the world became familiar with this brilliant young talent. In November of 1927, Bruno Walter led the Berlin Philharmonic in a performance of the Shostakovich First. Leopold Stokowski conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra in the work’s US premiere in 1928.

In the audience for the Philadelphia performance was the composer’s aunt, Nadezhda Galli-Shohat. She provided an interesting footnote to the history of the Shostakovich First by observing that much of the music in the Symphony had originally appeared in previous works by the young composer, including pieces based upon the fable of the grasshopper and the aunt, and Hans Christian Andersen’s The Little Mermaid.

The Shostakovich First has remained one of the composer’s most popular Symphonies. It is a remarkably mature and accomplished work that demonstrates a mastery of orchestral sonorities, dramatic contrast, and the creation and manipulation of compelling thematic material. Also evident is the composer’s wry and often biting sense of humor. All of these qualities make the Shostakovich First a worthy and representative introduction to the unique and remarkable achievements of perhaps the 20th century’s greatest symphonist.

Musical Analysis

I. Allegretto; Allegro non troppo—The Symphony opens with a dialogue between the (muted) trumpet and bassoon, foreshadowing much of the central thematic material for the entire Symphony. The rather macabre introduction proceeds in fits and starts, until resolving to the principal Allegro non troppo, and the solo clarinet’s presentation of an angular, jaunty march tune. The theme is soon taken up by the violins and later, the winds. Pizzicato strings accompany the second principal theme, a beautiful, flowing melody, initially played by the solo flute. Once again, the theme journeys throughout the orchestra. A solo violin quietly launches the development section, which soon builds to an imposing proclamation, with the opening march theme predominating. A recapitulation of the principal themes also culminates in a powerful statement, but the mood of the opening introduction returns to bring the movement to a pianissimo close.

II. Allegro—The second-movement scherzo was the portion of the Symphony encored at the work’s premiere. The brief movement opens with a lumbering introduction by the cellos and basses, a prelude to the introduction of the principal scherzo theme by the solo clarinet. The scherzo proceeds with tremendous momentum and energy before yielding to a serene central episode (Meno mosso), whose chorale-like principal theme is first played by the flutes. The opening scherzo returns, with the piano taking on an even more prominent
role than in the initial presentation. The scherzo and Meno mosso themes combine for a stunning fff outburst, capped by three harsh piano chords. By contrast, the closing measures are hushed and mysterious, resolving to a pizzicato resolution.

III. Lento—The Symphony’s slow-tempo movement begins with a solo oboe playing a flowing, espressivo melody, related to the march theme introduced by the clarinet in the opening movement. The music builds to a powerful orchestral statement, punctuated by brass fanfares. The oboe introduces another theme (Largo), notable for its dotted rhythms and evocation of a funeral march. This theme, too, assumes a fearsome guise. The two themes return (along with the fanfare motif), as the movement appears to be leading to a peaceful resolution. But a roll of the snare drum heralds the finale, which follows without pause.

IV. Allegro molto—The finale’s slow-tempo introduction (Lento) recalls thematic material from previous movements that will be further developed in the finale. The solo clarinet introduces the finale’s first principal theme (Allegro molto), an agitated, chromatic melody. The music hurtles forward, leading to a blazing presentation by the winds and strings of the second principal theme, in turn related to the funeral march of the preceding Lento. A solo violin inaugurates an extended, serene treatment of the second theme (Meno mosso). An agitated development of the two themes (Allegro molto) shatters the momentary repose. A fff explosion is capped by the timpani’s threefold invocation of the Lento’s trumpet fanfares. A final slow-tempo episode (Largo) opens with the solo muted cello’s poignant restatement of the finale’s second theme. The music builds inexorably to the Symphony’s triumphant final bars (Presto), based upon the timpani-fanfare motif.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Opus 35 (1878)

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg, Russia, on November 6, 1893. The first performance of the Violin Concerto took place in Vienna, Austria, on December 4, 1881, with Adolf Brodsky as soloist and Hans Richter conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. In addition to the solo violin, the D-Major Concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-six minutes.


Tchaikovsky composed his only Violin Concerto during the spring of 1878. As Tchaikovsky reported to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck:
From the first moment that the right frame of mind came to me it has never left me. With one’s inner life in this condition composing ceases altogether to be work: it becomes unalloyed pleasure. While you are writing you do not notice how time passes and if no one came to interrupt you, you would sit there and never leave your work all day.

Still, there were refinements. Tchaikovsky solicited the opinions of his friend, violinist Iosif Kotek, and the composer’s brother, Modest. Both were dissatisfied with the Concerto’s original slow-tempo movement. Tchaikovsky replaced it with the beautiful Canzonetta (the original slow-tempo movement ultimately became the opening Méditation of Tchaikovsky’s 1878 Souvenir d’un lieu cher, Opus 42, for violin and piano). By the middle of April, Tchaikovsky had fully orchestrated his Violin Concerto.

Tchaikovsky dedicated his Concerto to Leopold Auer, the great Hungarian-born violinist, who was living and teaching in St. Petersburg. Auer, for whom Tchaikovsky also composed his Sérénade mélancolique, Opus 26 (1875), declined to play the Concerto. As Tchaikovsky recalled some years later:

I do not know whether Auer was flattered by my dedication—only that, despite his sincere friendship towards me, he never wanted to master the difficulties of this concerto, deemed it awkward to play—and that a verdict such as this from the authoritative St. Petersburg virtuoso cast my poor child for many years into the abyss, it seemed, of eternal oblivion.

It was violinist Adolf Brodsky who took up the cause for Tchaikovsky’s Concerto, serving as soloist for the first performance, which took place in Vienna on December 4, 1881. Hans Richter conducted the Vienna Philharmonic. Tchaikovsky greatly appreciated the courage displayed by Brodsky in premiering the work:

He has not yet fully established his position in Vienna and I know very well that it was difficult and nerve-wracking for him to appear before a Viennese audience with a concerto by an unknown composer, and a Russian one to boot. For that reason I am doubly grateful to him for the service he has rendered me.

“A brutal and wretched jollity of a Russian holiday”

The extent of Brodsky’s courage becomes even clearer when the circumstances of the premiere are examined. The reaction by the audience and critics was unfavorable, to say the least. The performance inspired the prominent critic, Eduard Hanslick, to write one of the most (in)famous reviews in music history. For several months after the concert, Tchaikovsky carried with him a copy of the review and, to the end of his days, could recite verbatim Hanslick’s caustic prose:
The Russian composer Tchaikovsky is surely not an ordinary talent, but rather an inflated one, with a genius-like obsession without discrimination or taste. Such is also his latest, long and pretentious Violin Concerto. For a while it moves soberly, musically, and not without spirit. But soon vulgarity gains the upper hand, and asserts itself to the end of the first movement. The violin is no longer played; it is pulled, torn, drubbed. The Adagio is again on its best behavior, to pacify and win us. But it soon breaks off to make way for a finale that transfers us to a brutal and wretched jollity of a Russian holiday. We see plainly the savage vulgar faces, we hear curses, we smell vodka. Friedrich Visser once observed, speaking of obscene pictures, that they stink to the eye. Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto gives us for the first time the hideous notion that there can be music that stinks to the ear.

Brodsky persevered in his advocacy of the Concerto, playing it throughout Europe. In time, the merits of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto became clear. Even Leopold Auer finally performed the work, as did such protégés as Mischa Elman and Jascha Heifetz. But it was Adolf Brodsky to whom Tchaikovsky dedicated this beloved masterpiece.

Musical Analysis

I. Allegro moderato—The Concerto begins with an orchestral introduction, during which the violins foreshadow the movement’s principal theme. The soloist enters and, after a brief opening passage, presents the flowing, principal melody. There are some playful flights for the soloist, followed by the presentation of another expressive, lyrical theme. A stunning virtuoso passage by the soloist leads to a grand orchestral proclamation of the principal melody, soon incorporated once again by the solo violin. After another orchestral statement of the theme, there is a fiery development section and a grand cadenza for the soloist. Over the soloist’s trills, the flute ushers in the recapitulation of the principal themes. The brilliant coda again features the soloist in breathtaking display.

II. Canzonetta. Andante—The brief and extraordinarily beautiful Canzonetta begins with a passage for winds. The muted solo violin soon enters with the soulful principal melody, echoed by the clarinet and flute. There is a contrasting, more wide-ranging theme for the soloist, followed by a reprise of the opening melody. A variant of the movement’s introductory measures serves as a bridge to the Finale, which follows without pause.

III. Finale. Allegro vivacissimo—A boisterous orchestral statement and brief cadenza serve as prelude to the soloist’s introduction of the energetic principal theme. The soloist—over emphatic accompaniment by the cellos, and bassoon counterpoint—plays the rustic second theme. A lyrical interlude twice serves as contrast to the repetition of the principal melodies. The writing for the soloist
throughout the *Finale* is brilliant, perhaps nowhere more so than in the thrilling closing pages.