Concerts of Thursday, April 16, and Saturday, April 18, 2020, at 8:00p

Nicholas Carter, Conductor

Midori, violin

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Symphony No. 44 in E minor, Hob. I:44 ("Trauersinfonie") (ca. 1771)

I. Allegro con brio

II. Menuetto. Allegretto (Canone in Diapason)

III. Adagio

IV. Finale. Presto

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Violin Concerto No. 2, Sz. 112 (1938)

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante tranquillo

III. Allegro molto

Midori, violin

Intermission

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Opus 100 (1944)

I. Andante

II. Allegro marcato

III. Adagio

IV. Allegro giocoso
Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

**Symphony No. 44 in E minor, Hob. I:44 ("Trauersinfonie") (ca. 1771)**

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Austria, on March 31, 1732, and died in Vienna, Austria, on May 31, 1809. The "Trauersinfonie" is scored for two oboes, bassoon, two horns, and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-three minutes.

**First Classical Subscription Performances:** January 15, 16, and 17, 1976, Robert Shaw, Conductor.

**Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances:** October 29 and 30, 2009, Donald Runnicles, Conductor.

**Haydn’s “Sturm und Drang” Years**

In 1761, Franz Joseph Haydn began his years of service to the court of the Hungarian Esterházy family. At the time, the Kappellmeister of the Esterházy court was the Austrian composer, Gregor Joseph Werner. Haydn was Vice-Kappellmeister of the Esterházy court until Werner’s death in 1766. From then until 1790, Haydn served as Kappellmeister to the ruling Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. Haydn’s contemporary biographer, G. A. Griesinger, described Prince Nikolaus as “an educated connoisseur and a passionate lover of music, and also a good violin player.” Haydn’s duties included serving as director of the Esterházy orchestra and providing various compositions upon the request of the Prince.

The years 1766-73 were among the most prolific and creative of Haydn’s Esterházy tenure. These years are often characterized to as Haydn’s *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) period—a reference to the relatively contemporaneous German literary movement of the same name. During those *Sturm und Drang* years, Haydn composed several symphonies that feature minor keys, pervasive, restless energy, stunning dynamic contrasts, and frequent dramatic pauses. All of these elements serve to create an atmosphere of supercharged drama. No doubt, Haydn’s revolutionary *Sturm und Drang* symphonies surprised, and even shocked the audiences of his time.

Haydn’s Symphony No. 44 belongs to that *Sturm und Drang* period. The nickname “Trauersinfonie” (“Mourning Symphony”) is based upon a comment, attributed to Haydn, that the composer wanted the work’s slow-tempo third movement to be played at his funeral. It is not certain whether Haydn ever actually made that statement. But there is no question that the “Trauersinfonie” is a work of considerable emotional impact, and one of the composer’s finest creations from a milestone period in his career.

**Musical Analysis**
I. Allegro con brio—The Symphony opens with an arresting exchange between the ensemble’s bold proclamation and the strings’ subdued response. The opening four notes of this dialogue form the basis for the wealth of thematic material that follows. The four-note motif also serves to herald the vibrant development and recapitulation of the central themes. After a brief pause, the coda opens in hushed fashion (again with the four-note motif), but soon takes on a relentless energy that continues to the closing bars.

II. Menuetto. Allegretto (Canone in Diapason)—The violins launch the second-movement Minuet, notable for its restless mood and canonic treatment of the thematic material. The central E-Major Trio provides contrasting repose. A reprise of the principal Minuet brings the second movement to its conclusion.

III. Adagio—The Adagio is the movement that Haydn may have wanted played at his funeral. Muted violins sing the flowing, principal melody. While there is an occasional tinge of pathos, lyrical grace and serenity pervade the Adagio, which achieves a hushed resolution.

IV. Finale. Presto—The strings immediately present the central theme of the Finale. As in the case of the opening movement, the nucleus of the theme (here, seven notes) provides the basis for all that follows. The relentless energy of the opening bars continues throughout, as the “Trauersinfonie” reaches an abrupt and forceful conclusion.

Violin Concerto No. 2, Sz. 112 (1938)

Béla Bartók was born in Sinnicolau Mare, Hungary, on March 25, 1881, and died in New York on September 26, 1945. The first performance of the Violin Concerto No. 2 took place at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on March 23, 1939, with Zoltán Székely as violin soloist, and Willem Mengelberg conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra. In addition to the solo violin, the Concerto No. 2 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, two percussion (percussion I: snare drum, cymbals a2, suspended cymbal, tam-tam; percussion II: two snare drums, triangle, bass drum, suspended cymbal), harp, celesta, and strings. Approximate performance time is forty minutes.


Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: November 14, 15, and 16, 2013, Gil Shaham, Violin, Robert Spano, Conductor.

Hungarian composer Béla Bartók wrote the Second Violin Concerto in response to a commission from his friend, Zoltán Székely. Bartók suggested that the entire work be a grand set of variations on a theme. Székely wanted a more traditional
concerto, and so Bartók composed a work in three movements. As it turned out, Bartók managed both to satisfy Székely’s desires and his own.

Bartók worked on the Violin Concerto during 1937-1938, a period of incredible personal and world turmoil. In March of 1938, the Nazis invaded Austria. The following month, Bartók wrote from his Budapest villa to a friend in Zurich:

Your friendly letter did me a great deal of good. Yes, those were horrible days for us too. Those days when Austria was attacked. I feel that it is useless to expiate on this catastrophe - all the more so since you have exactly summed up what we felt ourselves. I should like however to add something - the most frightful thing for us at the moment is that we face the threat of Hungary also given over to this régime of bandits and murderers. It is now merely a question of when and how. I cannot imagine how I could live in such a country - or work in such a country, which means the same thing. Strictly speaking, it would be my duty to exile myself if that is still possible. But even under the most favorable auspices it would cause me an enormous amount of trouble and moral anguish to earn my daily bread in a foreign country (now, at the age of 58, to be forced to take up some hateful task, such as teaching – it is impossible to think of it! In fact with such a task, I would achieve nothing, for I should not be able to do my really important work). All this adds up to the same old problem, whether to go or to stay. And then there is my mother – can I leave her here forever during the last years of her life? – no, it is impossible.

In October, 1940, Bartók and his wife left Hungary for New York, where he died five years later.

The world premiere of the Bartók Violin Concerto No. 2 took place at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam on April 23, 1939. Székely was the soloist, and Willem Mengelberg conducted the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Bartók was unable to attend the performance, and did not hear his Concerto in concert until 1944. Bartók then commented:

I was most happy that there is nothing wrong with the scoring; nothing needs to be changed, even though orchestral ‘accompaniment’ of the violin is a very delicate business. The critics, of course—they ran true to form, although they wrote a bit more favorably than usual. I wouldn’t even mention them but for this brutishness of one of them: he doesn’t believe that this work will ever displace the (Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms) concerti. How is it possible to write such an idiotic thing: what fool fit for the madhouse would want to displace those works with his own? Had the critic written that he does not believe the work compares with these, or something like that, then it would have been all right…
While the Bartók Violin Concerto does not “displace” its great predecessors, it stands proudly alongside them. The Bartók No. 2 is one of the finest Violin Concertos of the 20th century, a work of remarkable beauty, emotional depth, and spirit. That Bartók wrote such music in the face of impending disaster makes the Concerto all the more of a testament to his spirit and genius.

**Musical Analysis**

I. *Allegro non troppo*—The opening movement is in traditional sonata form, with the introduction, development, and recapitulation of central thematic material. The harp, joined by horns and pizzicato strings, introduce the soloist, who presents the opening melody, strongly rooted in folksong. An extended, dramatic treatment of the melody leads to the second principal theme, again introduced by the soloist. This lyrical, wide-ranging melody comprises the twelve tones of the chromatic scale. The opening theme is the central focus of the ensuing development section, notable for its range of moods and orchestral colors. The soloist launches the varied recapitulation of the central themes (*Tempo 1. ma tranquillo*). An extended, virtuoso solo cadenza leads to the vigorous final bars.

II. *Andante tranquillo*—The central slow-tempo movement is cast in theme and variations form. The soloist, accompanied by the strings, harp, and timpani, introduces the haunting central melody. A series of six variations on the melody follows. Variations 1-4 present the soloist in a series of intimate dialogues with a wide range of instrumental combinations. Variations 5 and 6 offer a more lighthearted take on the principal melody. In the concluding measures, the soloist recalls the introduction of the melody, played an octave higher, as the *Andante* fades to silence.

III. *Allegro molto*—The finale’s sonata form structure and its principal thematic material mirror the opening movement. In fact, the finale constitutes a variation on the first movement, thus fulfilling Bartók’s concept of a “theme and variations” concerto. After a brief, agitated introduction by the horns and strings, the soloist presents the vigorous *con spirito* take on the opening movement’s first theme. The triangle, cymbals, and harp accompany the soloist, who sings the second theme. The finale, cast in ¾ time (4/4 in the opening movement), invokes the spirit of an insistent *danse macabre*, with a compelling energy that continues to the finish.

**Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Opus 100 (1944)**

Sergei Prokofiev was born in Sontsovka, Ukraine, Russian Empire, on April 23, 1891, and died in Moscow, Russia, on March 5, 1953. The first performance of the Symphony No. 5 took place at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on January 13, 1945, with the composer conducting the State Symphonic Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. The Symphony No. 5 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, five percussion (percussion I:
snare drum; percussion II: triangle, tambourine; percussion III: wood block, tam-tam; percussion IV: cymbals a2, suspended cymbal; percussion V: bass drum), harp, piano, and strings. Approximate performance time is forty-four minutes.

First Classical Subscription Performances: March 8 and 9, 1962, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: October 22 and 24, 2015, Olli Mustonen, Conductor.

Recording: Telarc CD-80289, Yoel Levi, Conductor

“A symphony of the greatness of the human spirit”

Sergei Prokofiev offered the following comments on the work that is generally regarded as his symphonic masterpiece:

In the summer of 1944 I wrote my Fifth Symphony, to which I attach great importance—firstly because with this work I returned to the genre of the symphony after a break of 16 years. The Fifth, which I conceived as a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit, a song of praise of free and happy mankind, may be said to conclude an entire creative period.

Prokofiev spent that summer of 1944 in the town of Ivanovo, located outside of Moscow. There, the Soviet Composers’ Union had established a House of Creative Work. The rural atmosphere of Ivanovo provided Soviet composers with a haven from the miseries of wartime Russia, allowing them the opportunity to focus upon their music. During that summer in Ivanovo, Prokofiev was joined by such eminent composers as his former teacher, Reinhold Glière, as well as Dmitri Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, and Dmitri Kabalevsky.

Prokofiev relaxed at Ivanovo by taking long walks in the woods, playing chess, and sometimes even joining his younger colleagues in a game of volleyball. Prokofiev could often be a dour, acerbic individual. But that summer, Kabalevsky witnessed a more tender and playful side:

On the edge of the village was a nursery school, where the children of the workers from one of the Ivanovo factories lived in the summertime. As we were on our way to the village, they would usually be walking with their teacher through the birch grove that lay on our route. Sergei Sergeevich was the first to establish friendly relations with them. He won over their hearts first with some bright cigarette packages (the children were fascinated with the bright shiny paper), then with lollipops, but most of all with his warm and affectionate manner.
Prokofiev certainly found the serene atmosphere at Ivanovo a favorable creative venue. In addition to composing the Fifth Symphony during that summer of 1944, Prokofiev completed his magnificent Piano Sonata No. 8, Opus 84.

“Like a monument on a pedestal”

The premiere of Prokofiev’s Fifth Symphony took place on January 13, 1945, at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. Prokofiev conducted the State Symphonic Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. in a program that also included his First (“Classical”) Symphony and Peter and the Wolf.

It was a time of great hope in Soviet Russia—the end of the long and horrific world conflict was finally in view. When Prokofiev mounted the podium to conduct his Fifth Symphony, artillery fire from Soviet cannons sounded from outside the concert hall. The cannon fire was a tribute to the Red Army’s crossing of the Vistula on their way into Germany.

The legendary Russian pianist Sviatoslav Richter attended the concert. The events surrounding the premiere made a profound impression upon the young artist:

The Great Hall was illuminated, no doubt, the same way it always was, but when Prokofiev stood up, the light seemed to pour straight down on him from somewhere up above. He stood like a monument on a pedestal. And then, when Prokofiev had taken his place on the podium and silence reigned in the hall, artillery salvos suddenly thundered forth. His baton was raised. He waited, and began only after the cannons had stopped. There was something very significant in this, something symbolic. It was as if all of us—including Prokofiev—had reached some kind of shared turning point.

The premiere of the Fifth Symphony was a magnificent triumph for Prokofiev. However, it proved to be his final appearance as a conductor. A few days after the concert, Prokofiev became dizzy, the result of hypertension. Prokofiev fell and suffered a brain concussion. Although he would live another eight years, Prokofiev’s health was never be the same. With those tragic events in mind, the optimism expressed in the Prokofiev Fifth—“a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit, a song of praise of free and happy mankind”—perhaps becomes all the more poignant.

Musical Analysis

I. Andante—The Symphony opens with immediate presentation by the flutes and bassoon of the wide-ranging opening theme. The violins soon repeat the melody, which is then incorporated throughout the orchestra. A flowing string figure leads to the movement’s second principal theme (Poco più mosso), played by the flute and oboe. The exposition closes with a vibrant, sixteenth-note motif.
The cellos and double-basses inaugurate the development section with a *pianissimo* restatement of the opening theme. The music becomes increasingly agitated, finally resolving to a *fortissimo* recapitulation of the opening theme by the brass. The remaining themes return in sequence. The stirring coda features a majestic version of the opening theme.

II. *Allegro marcato*—This playful scherzo offers a sharp contrast to the gravity of the opening movement. Over a repeated figure in the first violins, the clarinet offers a sprightly melody that is traded throughout the orchestra. A central trio section (*Meno mosso*), launched by the oboes and clarinets, begins in more sedate fashion, but soon gathers its own momentum. A varied reprise of the opening section leads to the whirlwind finish.

III. *Adagio*—The slow-tempo movement’s brief introduction features the strings and tuba. Soon, the winds present the flowing, central theme. The music proceeds to an ardent climax. A central episode finally resolves to a sustained, violent outburst. Finally, the mood calms, and the first violins reprise the opening melody. The tranquil, closing measures feature a plaintive, ascending clarinet figure.

IV. *Allegro giocoso*—The final movement begins with a subdued, introductory passage in which the cello section, divided into four groups, offers an *espressivo* reprise of the first movement’s opening theme. The violas inaugurate the energetic, chief portion of the finale, whose main theme is first played by a solo clarinet. A flute and clarinet offer a contrasting, *dolce* theme. The development section features a wide variety of moods. The clarinet inaugurates the recapitulation, which finally resolves to a conclusion of irrepressible animation and vigor.