



National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine
Volodymyr Sirenko, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor

Volodymyr Vynnytsky, Piano



Wednesday, February 19
Schar Center
7:30 p.m.

*Program length approximately 90 minutes plus intermission
(subject to change)*

Columbia Artists
5 Columbus Circle @1790 Broadway, New York, NY 10019
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PROGRAM

Symphony in C Major

Maksym Berezovsky

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito
Andantino semplice – Prestissimo
Allegro con fuoco

Volodymyr Vynnytsky, Piano

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90

Johannes Brahms

Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco allegretto
Allegro

Notes on the Program by Aaron Grad

Symphony in C Major [c. 1770-73]

MAKSYM BEREZOVSKY

Born October 16, 1745 in Hlukhiv, Ukraine

Died March 24, 1777 in Saint Petersburg, Russia

After training as a singer during his childhood in Ukraine, Maksym Berezovsky became a leading vocal soloist at the imperial court in Saint Petersburg while still a teenager. He was able to study composition there with two Venetian composers who had been lured to Russia by the opera-loving Catherine the Great, and he was later sent to continue his education in Italy, where he became the first known student of East Slavic origins to receive formal music training in Western Europe after he enrolled at the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna.

While in Italy, Berezovsky became the first composer from his part of the world to write an Italian opera seria, using a warhorse of a libretto by Metastasio (more than 70 other composers wrote operas using the same text, including Vivaldi and Gluck). Berezovsky's Symphony in C Major, also the first from a Ukrainian or Russian, might have originated as the overture to that opera, since it conforms perfectly to the three-part formula for an Italian sinfonia (their term for overture), a forerunner of the Classical symphony in three or four longer movements. Berezovsky was regarded highly enough in Italy that his opera was staged at least twice before he left in 1773, and presumably it was at this time that a copy of the C-major symphony/overture ended up in the Vatican archives, where it was only rediscovered in 2002.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23 [1874-75]

PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born May 7, 1840 in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia

Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

The piano concerto that Tchaikovsky composed during the winter of 1874-75 was his first work for soloist and orchestra. He was not a virtuoso pianist himself, so he arranged to show the score to Nikolai Rubinstein, the leading conductor and pianist in Moscow and a fellow faculty member at the Moscow Conservatory. Years later, Tchaikovsky summarized Rubinstein's blunt feedback in a letter: "My concerto, it turned out, was worthless and unplayable."

Tchaikovsky wasn't always the most self-confident composer, but this time he stood his ground, vowing to "publish the work exactly as it stands." To secure a first performance, Tchaikovsky went outside Rubinstein's circle and solicited the famous German conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, who loved the work and asked for a set of parts that he could take with him on tour. Thus it came to pass that this landmark Russian concerto first reached the public in Boston, in October of 1875.

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto begins with an audacious introduction, heralded by a four-note horn theme. The piano soloist enters with a majestic series of chords, but that grand gesture actually turns out to be a form of accompaniment to support a soaring melody from the violins. The notable (and sometimes baffling) aspect of this work is that this priceless introductory material never returns. Instead, the fast body of the movement strikes up a melody that Tchaikovsky once heard sung by a blind Ukrainian beggar.

The middle movement continues the charming incongruities. It begins with a graceful flute solo over pizzicato accompaniment, flowing at a relaxed tempo marked *Andantino semplice*. Flecks of off-key harmonies prepare the antics of the manic contrasting section, speeding by at a breakneck *Prestissimo* pace and quoting a popular French song. The finale also references outside music, with the bouncy main theme adapted from a Ukrainian folksong.

Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90 [1883]

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897 in Vienna, Austria

"I shall never write a symphony," Brahms lamented in 1870. "You can't have any idea what it's like always to hear such a giant marching behind you!" The giant in question was Beethoven, and his legacy haunted Brahms, especially in the genres of symphonies and string quartets. Brahms was 40 by the time he released a quartet, and 43 before his First Symphony reached the public. After that tipping point, orchestral music poured out of Brahms' pen, with three more symphonies, three concertos and two overtures coming in the decade that followed.

Brahms composed most of the Third Symphony during summer vacation in a German spa town in 1883. Within this example of abstract or "pure" music, there are two outside influences that have fascinated musicologists for generations. One is the suggestion that Brahms derived his wide-leaping main theme from alpine yodeling, drawing on his happy memories of other vacations in the Austrian Alps. Even before that theme begins, three initial chords present the other coded reference, embedded in the top notes that rise from F to A-flat to F again, an octave higher.

Brahms left no definitive comment, but the supposition is that these notes stand in for the initial letters of the German phrase “Frei aber froh” (free but happy), a riff by Brahms-the-bachelor on the old tagline of his friend Joseph Joachim, the violinist who declared himself “Frei aber einsam” (free but lonely). In the home key of F major, the A-flat is out of place, shifting the harmony to F minor instead—perhaps adding a question mark to the claim of “free but happy”? This conflict of major and minor runs throughout the opening movement, as does that three-note motive, which crops up in a variety of contexts and transpositions.

The Andante leaves behind the mixed messages of the opening movement, clearing the air with sweet woodwind chorales and warm echoes from the lower strings. Still the “free but happy” motive lingers, as in the last rising answer from the violas before the oboes introduce a new theme.

Rather than a lively scherzo, the symphony’s third movement takes the form of a pensive intermezzo marked Poco allegretto. The rising and falling themes, phrased like questions and answers, continue this symphony’s sense of internal debate. The contrasting trio section once again toys with the thin margin that separates the minor and major expressions of a chord.

Defying the usual conventions, this F-major symphony begins its finale in the stark landscape of F-minor. The F – A-flat – F motive returns to settle the matter, with the horns leading the way toward humble woodwind chorales (recalling the second movement) and a drawn-out cadence that traces the “free but happy” intervals one last time.

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The National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine

Formed by the Council of Ministers of Ukraine in November of 1918, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine is considered to be one of the finest symphony orchestras in Eastern Europe. Its first conductor was Oleksander Horilyj. Natan Rachlin was the Artistic Director of the Orchestra from 1937 until 1962. Stefan Turchak, Volodymyr Kozhuchar, Fedir Hlushchenko, Igor Blazhkov and Theodore Kuchar consequently conducted the Orchestra as its Principal Conductors. Other conductors who worked with the NSOU include Leopold Stokowski, Igor Markevitch, Kurt Sanderling, Evgeny Mravinsky, Kiril Kondrashin, Evgeny Svetlanov, and Gennady Rozhdestvensky. Soloists who performed with the NSOU include Artur Rubinstejn, Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, David Oistrakh, Sviatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovich, Emil Gilels, Leonid Kogan, Gidon Kremer, Oleh Krysa, Monserrat Caballe, Jose Carreras, and Juan Diego Flores.

The NSOU was entrusted with the premier performances of the works of the following composers: Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, Boris Lyatoshynsky, Valentyn Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, and Evgen Stankovych.

The Orchestra has gained international recognition over a remarkably short period of time. After an appearance in Moscow, Dmitri Shostakovich commented: "This orchestra has as distinguished a group of performers as one would be likely to find anywhere. The ensemble of the orchestra is of the highest level. In addition, the various soloists and instrumental groups within the Orchestra play exceptionally and complement each other beautifully – as would the greatest of the world's symphony orchestras."

Since 1993, the NSOU has released more than 100 sound recordings which include both Ukrainian and international repertoires. Most of these recordings have received the highest international acclaim. In 1994, the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC) rated NSOU's recording of Boris Lyatoshynsky's Symphonies No. 2 and No. 3 as "The Best Recording of the Year." The CD of Silvestrov's "Requiem for Larissa" was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2005. The CD of Bloch and Lees' Violin Concertos was nominated for a Grammy Award four years later.

The NSOU has performed in successful concert tours throughout Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, England, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates.

"... A program rich with energy and unusually adventurous placed the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine in a highly favourable light when it gave its only Sydney concert during its Australian tour on Friday. This is an orchestra with many virtues. Its strings can conjure up a vibrant songfulness; the woodwinds have a fruity, penetrating ripeness; the brass could endanger the walls of Jericho; the percussion might wake the dead..." ~The Sydney Morning Herald

Since April of 1999, Volodymyr Sirenko has been the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the NSOU. Since June of 2006, Alexander Hornostai has been its Managing Director and Producer.

VOLODYMYR SIRENKO
Artistic Director & Chief Conductor



Born in the Poltava region of Ukraine, Volodymyr Sirenko has been compared by the international press to other brilliant conductors such as Esa-Pekka Salonen and Simon Rattle.

His conducting debut took place at the Kyiv Philharmonic Hall in 1983 with works by Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Boulez. In 1989 Sirenko graduated from the Kyiv Conservatoire where he studied conducting under Prof. Allin Vlasenko. In 1990, he was a finalist at the International Conducting Competition in Prague. A year later, he was appointed as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Ukrainian Radio Symphony Orchestra, a position which he held until 1999. During this period he made over 300 recordings that are kept in the funds of the Ukrainian Radio and include Mozart Symphonies Nos. 38 and 41, Beethoven Symphony No. 9, Brahms A German Requiem, Rachmaninov Bells, Dvorak Symphonies Nos. 7 and 9.

Since 1999 he has served as Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine. Highlights among hundreds of programs that he has performed with the orchestra since then were cycles Gustav Mahler Complete Symphonies, all four Passions and Mass in B Minor (Bach) and Lyatoshynsky's Complete Symphonies.

He recorded over 50 compact discs and the CD of Silvestrov's Requiem for Larissa was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2005. He premiered many works by Ukrainian composers including Silvestrov's Symphonies No. 7 and 8, Stankovych's Symphony No. 6.

Sirenko has toured Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. He has worked with many international orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Sinfonia Warsawia, NOSPR (Katowice), the Svetlanov Symphony Orchestra, the Bratislava Radio Symphony, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the National Philharmonic of Russia, the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

Sirenko has appeared in numerous concert halls around the world, including Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Brucknerhaus (Linz), Barbican Hall and Cadogan Hall (London), Theatre des Champs-Elysees and Opera Comique (Paris), Seoul Art Center, Palau de la Musica in Valencia and Centro Manuel de Falla in Granada, Filharmonia Narodowa (Warsaw), the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory and the Great Hall of St. Petersburg Philharmonia, the Roy Thomson Hall (Toronto), the Tokyo City Opera and the Osaka Symphony Hall.

Volodymyr Sirenko is a People's Artist of Ukraine and laureate of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize, Ukraine's most prestigious award. He is Professor of the opera and symphonic conducting at the National Music Academy of Ukraine.

VOLODYMYR VYNNYTSKY

Pianist

Internationally renowned pianist Volodymyr Vynnytsky is laureate of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud International Piano Competition in Paris. Vynnytsky has performed with leading orchestras and appeared in solo recitals in many prestigious concert halls, including Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Steinway Hall, the Phillips Gallery in Washington D.C., the Great (Bolshoi) Hall at the Moscow Conservatory, the Theatre Champs d'Elysees, Amphitheatre Richelieu de la Sorbonne, Salons de Boffrand de la Presidence du Senat in Paris, St. John's Smith Square in London, Philharmonic Big Hall of Columns (Kyiv), Odessa Philharmonic Theatre in Ukraine, Tsai Performance Center (Boston), Teatro de Santa Isabel in Recife, Brazil, Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg and Baxter Theatre Centre Concert Hall in Cape Town, South Africa among many others.

A popular television and radio guest he has also been featured on NHK-TV (Japan) and in the United States on WQXR-FM in New York, and nationally on NPR.

Recital and chamber music appearances have included guest invitations in numerous International Festivals in Ukraine (Kyiv Music Fest, "Virtuosi", "Contrasts", "Bridge of Alexandre III"), France (Masters de Pontlevoy, "Les MusiCimes", "DSCH"), Brazil ("Virtuosi"), Curacao (Art in Avila), Canada (Niagara International Chamber Music Festival), Czech Republic ("American Spring" Festival) and USA (Artosphere Arts Festival, Chamber Players International, LWMF, Mohonk Festival of the Arts, Windham Chamber Music Festival, Southampton Festival of the Arts, Lake San Marcos Chamber Music Society, Music Mountain in Connecticut, Piccolo Spoleto in Charleston, Rachmaninoff International Festival in Los Angeles, "Music at the Institute" in New York and Art Center of Greene County, where he has served as artistic advisor and resident pianist since 1996.

Described by critics as possessing "incredible technique and deep musical understanding," "The pianist is simply superb!" (American Record Guide), Volodymyr's recent performance in Charleston, South Carolina earned him a glowing review in The Post and Courier, titled, "Ukrainian pianist delivers excellence," in which his playing is hailed as "a grand display of skill and precision that was breathtaking."

Born in Lviv, Ukraine, Volodymyr Vynnytsky studied at the Lviv Music School for Gifted Children and later at the Moscow Conservatory. After earning his doctorate from the Moscow Conservatory under the direction of Yevgeny Malinin, he taught at the Kyiv Conservatory and concertized extensively throughout Ukraine, the other republics of the former Soviet Union, Europe, the USA, Canada, Central and South America and South Africa.

Volodymyr Vynnytsky has been a visiting member of the piano faculty in SUNY at Purchase, NY and at the University of Connecticut. In 2003 he was appointed Music Director of the Music and Art Center of Greene County, New York.

Volodymyr Vynnytsky is an Honorary Professor of Lviv State Academy of Music, Odesa State Music Academy and Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine (Kyiv Conservatory).

In October 2012 and 2015 Volodymyr served as a Chairman of the Jury of the Emil Gilels International Piano Competition in Odesa, Ukraine.

Volodymyr Vynnytsky is a Director of Chamber Music at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

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Thank you for attending tonight's performance. Upcoming programs at Elon University include:

Saturday, February 22

Elon Jazz Festival Concert

featuring **Andy Page, guitar; Phillip Wack, saxophone; and the Brubeck Brothers Quartet**

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11

Broadway's Next Hit Musical

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 26

Fry Street Quartet

Whitley Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 9

Dash Duo, trumpet, with Polina Khatsko, piano

Whitley Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 15

Elon University Percussion Ensemble

Yeager Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 21

Elon Orchestra Concert

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 24

Spring Combined Choirs Concert, "A Night at the Opera"

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 28

élan, "A Tribute to Simon and Garfunkel"

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 3

Elon Music Ambassadors, "Selections from the Great American Songbook"

Yeager Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 6

Elon Electric Ensemble, "A Trip to Abbey Road"

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 12

Phoenix Winds Spring Concert, "A Study Abroad"

McCrary Theatre, 7:30 p.m.



For information about additional cultural and special programs, visit

www.elon.edu/culturalcalendar