

Nicola Benedetti with Alexei Grynyuk

Friday, January 25, 2019 at 8:00pm

This is the 907th concert in Koerner Hall

Nicola Benedetti, violin

Alexei Grynyuk, piano

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach: Chaconne from Partita No. 2 for Solo Violin in D Minor, BWV 1004

Sergei Prokofiev: Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, op. 94bis

- I. Moderato
- II. Scherzo : Presto
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegro con brio

INTERMISSION

Wynton Marsalis: *Fiddle Dance Suite for Solo Violin* (Canadian premiere)

- 1. Sidestep Reel
- 2. As the Wind Goes
- 3. Jones' Jig
- 4. Nicola's Strathspey
- 5. Bye Bye Breakdown

Richard Strauss: Violin Sonata in E flat Major, op.18, TrV 151

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Improvisation: Andante cantabile
- III. Finale: Andante - Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born in Eisenach, Germany, March 21, 1685; died in Leipzig, Germany, July 28, 1750

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 for Solo Violin in D Minor, BWV 1004 (1720)

"Peace might be visited upon the Earth if I could only play the Bach Chaconne well-enough in the Sistine Chapel," believed a young, intensely idealistic Yehudi Menuhin. The spiritual quality of Bach's magnificent, stately Chaconne has inspired violinists since it was first published early in the 19th century. Bach wrote it a century earlier as the crowning movement of his D Minor Partita for solo violin, the second of a collection of six Partitas and Sonatas, representing the culmination of Baroque polyphonic writing for a string instrument. The Chaconne, one of only two surviving chaconnes by Bach, presents a formidable array of technically challenging melodic and harmonic variations over a four-bar ground, juxtaposing the Italian and French styles of the day. - *Program note © 2018 Keith Horner*

Sergei Prokofiev

Born in Sontzovka, Russia, April 11/23, 1891; died in Moscow, Russia, March 5, 1953

Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, op. 94bis (1942-4)

In the summer of 1942, Sergei Prokofiev was one of more than 26,000 citizens evacuated from the European part of the Soviet Union to the central Asian city of Alma-Ata, capital of the Kazakh SSR. Prokofiev's 'day job' in the Soviet government's mass-migration of cultural and industrial resources was to work with Sergei Eisenstein on the epic film, *Ivan the Terrible*. He also found time to sketch out a long-pondered sonata "in a gentle, flowing classical style," for which he had personally sought out a government commission. He scored it, initially, for flute – an instrument he viewed as "insufficiently represented in literature." He completed the sonata, his op. 94, the following summer while staying in Perm (or Molotov as it was then known), then the temporary home of the evacuated Kirov company with whom he was collaborating on the ballet, *Cinderella*. In the audience for the December 7, 1943 premiere of the sonata was the violinist and Prokofiev's great chess rival, David Oistrakh, who immediately made a move to have the sonata re-scored for violin.

Oistrakh's move won the day and while Prokofiev's bright, lyrical, sometimes playful op. 94 remains prominent in the flute repertoire, the combined efforts of composer and violinist brought even more attention to the violin score, titled op. 94bis, after its premiere on June 17, 1944. The piano part remains unchanged, but Prokofiev adds double-stopping, harmonics, pizzicatos, and many violinistic touches and flourishes throughout, transforming the impact of the piece in its violin transcription. The lyrical, soaring character of the violin is heard from the outset and will be a prominent feature throughout. The opening movement is contained within a textbook classical sonata form structure, down to the repeated opening section (the exposition). Prokofiev frequently referred to the classical nature of the sonata, saying that he wished to craft the work "with notes that are brilliant, transparent, and classical." Elsewhere he stated that the sonata represents a cross-section of his musical style: "the classical, modernistic, lyrical, and motoric." The second movement is an exuberant scherzo, ratcheted up a notch from the flute's Allegretto tempo marking to Presto for the violin. The third movement is the shortest of the four, a moment of reflection before the high spirits of the finale. This includes passages parodying mechanistic piano exercises which, it has been plausibly suggested (by writer Daniel Jaffé), presents Prokofiev's reaction to an overheard Soviet critic's suggestion that music should become "more and more mechanized" to reflect the State's growing industrialization.

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Wynton Marsalis

Born in New Orleans, October 18, 1961

Fiddle Dance Suite for Solo Violin

1. Sidestep Reel – In 19th century America, the Afro-Celtic fiddle style was the centerpiece of many a dance. Reels and hornpipes were very popular forms. Their repetitive, even-metered rhythms were easy and fun to dance to, and their infectious singable melodies stayed in the mind and on the tongue. More adventurous fiddlers were given to syncopating on these forms by accenting off beats and by embellishing melodies with odd-metered note groupings. Syncopation is a fundamental rhythmic attitude of jazz and this movement is a celebration of that art. The melodic language is a home-grown concoction of commonality between traditional reels and hornpipes and the Baroque, ragtime, and the quartal concepts of modern jazz.

2. As the Wind Goes – the wistful late night song of a lullaby, a campfire song, a ballad ... a spiritual. It is sung as if on the wind, yearning to experience once again that which will only ever again live as memory.

3. Jones' Jig – the Irish Jig, the African 6/8 bell pattern, the shuffle rhythm of jazz, and the drum style of Elvin Jones all play around with the relationship of 3 in the time-space of 2. The juxtaposition, negotiation, and reconciliation of these opposing rhythmic perspectives create interesting musical relationships all over the globe.

4. Nicola's Strathspey – In the traditional strathspey improvised embellishments, syncopated dotted rhythms, and the use of space between notes create expectation, momentum, and surprise. These same elements and their effect on the listener are the same in the blues. It seems like a natural marriage.

5. Bye Bye Breakdown – This is good ol', Saturday night barn dance, hoe-down fiddling. It revels in the whining cry of open double stops, in all types of musical onomatopoeia from train sounds to animal calls to country whistling, and in the steady 2/4 rhythm that is as basic as walking. The harmonic framework of several popular fiddle and folk tunes provide a practical grid for the cutting of challenging melodic and rhythmic figures. It is designed to tire fiddler and dancers out. Then we stomp our way home in varying states of delight and disrepair. - Wynton Marsalis

Richard Strauss

Born in Munich, Germany, June 11, 1864; died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, September 8, 1949

Violin Sonata in E flat Major, op.18, TrV 151 (1887)

It took Richard Strauss some time to throw off the conservative ways of thinking that his father encouraged in his musically gifted son. Wagner's music, with its progressive use of harmony, was banned in the Strauss household until the young Richard was in his teens. Even then, Strauss wrote later in his life: "It was not until, against my father's orders, I studied the score of *Tristan* that I entered into that magic world. I can well remember how, at the age of 17, I positively wolfed down the score of *Tristan* as if in a trance."

The result of his formal training was that Strauss became well-grounded in traditional sonata writing. In the 1880s, he composed the only instrumental sonatas of a long career, including sonatas for piano, for cello, and for violin, together with a string quartet. The Violin Sonata was the last of the group. It was Strauss's swansong to chamber music at the ripe old age of 23. Thereafter he was to draw inspiration from literary and other extra-musical forms, beginning one year later with the first of the great tone poems, *Don Juan*.

The sonata opens with a thoroughly Straussian gesture: a bold, fanfare-like theme in the heroic key of E flat, as compact in delivery as it is ripe for thematic development. The movement develops three main ideas before culminating in a coda of operatic proportion. The slow movement was the last to be written. Titled Improvisation, perhaps as a reflection of its free middle section, the movement is a heartfelt song-without-words. The opening phrase echoes the slow movement of Beethoven's "Pathétique" sonata, a connection that is made clear in the coda. This slow movement has long existed as a separate recital piece, independent from the sonata. The finale continues the dense chromaticism and near-orchestral textures of the opening movement.

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Nicola Benedetti

Violin

Nicola Benedetti is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences with her innate musicianship and dynamic presence, coupled with her wide appeal as a high-profile advocate for classical music, has made her one of the most influential classical artists of today.

Ms. Benedetti enjoys working with the highest level of orchestras, including collaborations with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival.

During the 2018-19 season, she makes her debut with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and collaborates with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Orchestre de Bretagne, Seattle Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Frankfurter Museumsorchester, Toscanini Orchestra, and Philharmonia Orchestra with Pablo Heras-

Casado. She also undertakes tours with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra performing Mozart Violin Concertos and with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain performing Bruch Violin Concerto.

Winner of Best Female Artist at both 2012 and 2013 Classical BRIT Awards, Ms. Benedetti records exclusively for Decca (Universal Music). Her most recent recording of Shostakovich and Glazunov Violin Concertos has been met with critical acclaim. Her recording, *Homecoming; A Scottish Fantasy*, made her the first solo British violinist since the 1990s to enter the Top 20 of the Official U.K. Albums Chart.

Ms. Benedetti was appointed as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2013 New Year Honours, in recognition of her international music career and work with musical charities throughout the United Kingdom.

She plays the Gariel Stradivarius (1717), courtesy of Jonathan Moulds.

Alexei Grynyuk

Piano

Kiev-born pianist Alexei Grynyuk displayed tremendous interest in music from an early childhood and started giving his first public concerts at the age of six. He went on to win first prizes at the Vladimir Horowitz International Piano Competition in Kiev and the Shanghai International Piano Competition in China.

Mr. Grynyuk performs throughout the world and has been invited to give recitals at the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatoire, Kremlin, Wigmore Hall in London, Palau de la Música Catalana, Salle Cortot and Salle Gaveau in Paris, Musica Sacra Festival in the Netherlands, Duszniki Chopin Festival in Poland, Otono International Music Festival in Madrid, Newport Music Festival in the United States, and other prestigious festivals and venues. He has performed concertos with the Mexico State Symphony Orchestra, Krakow Philharmonic, Odessa Philharmonic, Brighton Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and the Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra, under Enrique Bátiz, Natalia Ponomarchuk, Oksana Lyniv, Hobart Earle, Stephen Bell, Adam Clocek, Barry Wordsworth, Vladimir Sirenko, and Kirill Karabits.

In 2017, Alexei Grynyuk embarked on an immensely successful 27-concert tour of the United States performing Prokofiev 3rd and Schumann Piano Concertos with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, and made his New York trio debut at the 92St Y with his regular partners Nicola Benedetti and Leonard Elschenbroich.

Nicola Benedetti made her Royal Conservatory debut on March 3, 2017, and Alexei Grynyuk is making his Conservatory debut tonight.