

Season Opening Concert
featuring
Dvořák's Czech Suite

Nocturno, from Chapultepec

Manuel Ponce

Concerto for Clarinet & Viola, op.88, E minor

Max Bruch

Andante con moto

Allegro moderato

Allegro molto

Stephen Zielinski, clarinet

Paul Yarbrough, viola

INTERMISSION

Serenade op.7, E-flat major

Richard Strauss

Czech Suite, op.39, B.93, D major

Antonín Dvořák

I. *Praeludium (Pastorale)*

II. *Polka*

III. *Menuett (Sousedská)*

IV. *Romanze*

V. *Finale (Furiant)*

Our Deep Appreciation and Thanks to:

Coffee: Black Oak Roasters | **Cookies:** Schat's Bakery Café | **Flowers:** W/E Flowers

Musicians' Housing Partner: The Thatcher Hotel, Hopland

Musicians' Housing Hosts: Ruth Van Antwerp; Renee Vinyard; Ilene Weeks

Special thanks to our Front-of-House volunteers!

We invite you to enjoy refreshments in the lobby and on the patio during the 15-minute intermission.

PROGRAM NOTES

Nocturno, from Chapultepec - Manuel Ponce

Composer and pianist Manuel Ponce, with his wide range of compositions and his voluminous writings, is considered the father of Mexico's national musical language. He was an avid collector of popular and folk songs, incorporating their style into his compositions. Many of his songs have acquired the patina of folk songs, although the melodies were original. The most famous of his songs by far was *Estrellita*, which tells the story of a girl who confides in her little star about the hidden love she feels for an unnamed man, a love that may carry her to the grave.

Ponce made the first sketches for *Chapultepec* in 1917, premiered it in 1922, and extensively revised it in 1934. *Chapultepec* is the name of a castle located on a hill, on the western side of Mexico City, where it has commanding views out over the city. The hill itself had been a sacred site of the Aztecs. Built in the last decades of the 18th century, the castle has been military college, imperial and presidential residence, observatory, official guest-house and, since 1939, the location of the National Museum of History. After numerous changes and rearrangements, Ponce included in *Chapultepec* four movements, some of which previously existed independently. Given the independent sources and the extensive revisions, *Chapultepec* falls somewhere between a suite and a symphony, having attributes of both. Nor, except for the final movement, is there much Mexican folk music. Moreover, the titles of the movements suggest a programmatic element. Today the USO is performing the second movement: *Nocturno*. This movement contains a single motive – punctuated by birdsongs – wending its way through an increasingly passionate musical imagery. —*Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn*

Concerto for Clarinet & Viola, op.88, E minor - Max Bruch

Max Bruch's Concerto for clarinet and viola offers an intimate conversation between two alto instruments. This tunefully rich and opulently romantic composition quotes from Bruch's earlier melodies and folk structures drawn from his early suites. The composer was 73 when it was first performed in 1911 to an audience more sympathetic with the modernist experimentation; the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* exploded on the Parisian concert scene only two months after the Double Concerto's premiere. A review of the premiere described the work as "harmless, weak, unexciting, first and most of all too restrained, its effect is unoriginal and it shows no masterstrokes." For a self-described "traditionalist" composer and composition professor who championed the chamber music of Mendelssohn and the elegance of late German Romanticism, this critic had missed the point of the work.

Bruch hoped both of his late works featuring the clarinet would be heard as consistent with the style of his well known and much-played Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor from over fifty years before. Until the end of his career, Bruch uncompromisingly defended his Romantic appreciation of art, and this attitude led to controversial discussions with some of the most eminent composers of his time, including Wagner, Liszt, Reger, and especially Richard Strauss, who allowed Bruch's music to be banned in Germany during the early 1940s. Bruch's ingenious, but subtle orchestration progresses from fourteen to twenty-one accompanying voices through the three movements, finally boasting a full complement of woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, strings and percussion. The concerto's form is also unusual, as it begins with a relatively slow movement featuring cascading arpeggios, proceeds to a somewhat faster one, and ends with a vigorous triplet-powered Allegro molto. The most dramatic passages appear at the very beginning, as the viola and then the clarinet introduce themselves. —
Laura Stanfield Prichard

Serenade op.7, E-flat major - Richard Strauss

In 1882 Strauss had not yet emerged as Richard Strauss. I cannot imagine anyone guessing the composer of the E-flat major Serenade for Winds just by listening. Strauss was an extraordinarily accomplished and confident teenager, and this one-movement work is music of charm as well as skill. The Strauss most of us know best—the tone poems of the 1880s and 1890s, and the operas from the early years of the twentieth century—is full of Wagner, and in 1882 that particular magic had not yet

made its effect on his work. Strauss's father, Franz, was principal horn in the orchestra of the Bavarian Court Opera in Munich for forty-nine years. One reads that his playing of the solos in the Wagner operas was heartbreakingly beautiful. He loathed every note of them. He detested Wagner the man and he feared and hated the whole current of modernism that Wagner stood for. Young Richard, therefore, was brought up in a strictly classical orthodoxy.

At seventeen, having barely arrived at Brahms by way of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schumann, he secretly studied the score of Tristan against his father's orders. More than sixty years later he recalled how he had "positively wolfed it down as though in a trance," but he had not yet internalized it to the point that it influenced his own compositions. The honeyed classicism of the Serenade is a tribute to Franz Strauss's paternal influence, and having grown up in the house of the most admired brass player in Europe must have had some bearing on Richard's lifelong flair for wind music. The Serenade is short as well as sweet. A single movement, it takes perhaps ten minutes in performance. The tempo is andante. The sonority brings Mozart to mind. The thirteen winds are not exactly those of Mozart's so-called Thirteen-Wind Serenade (actually for twelve winds with string bass), but it is probably inevitable that we think of Mozart when we hear music for wind ensemble written with so beautiful a sense of euphony. The soft-edged lyricism of the music itself suggests Mendelssohn, especially in the opening phrases. Strauss's imagination for sound yields beguiling results throughout. —*Michael Steinberg*

Czech Suite, op.39, B.93, D major - Antonín Dvořák

After the success of the Serenades in E major and D minor, Dvorak had in mind to write another work of the same formal disposition, this time incorporating Czech folk dances. For this objective, however, the label "serenade" was not wholly appropriate, thus the initial idea gradually crystallised into the decision to write a suite which, for the premiere, was given the subtitle "Czech". The work was first performed in Prague on 16 May 1879 at a concert organised by the Association of Czech Journalists. A year later Dvorak conducted his Czech Suite himself in Prague, on 29 March 1880 at a benefit concert to raise money for the construction of the National Theatre.

The Czech Suite is written in five parts. The first, marked Praeludium (Pastorale), is indeed something of a lyrical introduction to the subsequent movements, with very little contrast and a melodic line in the upper voices flowing smoothly above an ostinato bass figure consisting merely of two alternating whole tones. The second movement is a poetic stylization of the Czech folk dance "polka"; the main theme in its principal setting of D minor is essentially melancholic in nature, but later shifts to F major and becomes more rhythmical and expressive. The movement is arranged in three parts, A-B-A. The third movement is inspired by another folk dance, the "sousedska", a slow dance in 3/4 time, and is typical for its colorful imitative treatment of the principal theme. The fourth movement, labelled Romanze, offers a wonderful lyrical nocturne in which, to a serene accompaniment in the strings, a broad melody opens up an arc in the flute and is later taken up by other instruments. The final Furiant rounds off the suite in dazzling style with its lively expression and more boisterous temperament: in the coda Dvorak reinforces the existing orchestral line-up with a trumpet and timpani. This movement has been compared to the Slavonic Dances with which it shares its stirring rhythms and sense of abandon. In its lyricism, vitality, rich melodic invention and formal clarity, the Czech Suite is one of Dvorak's most characteristic works.

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Orchestra Personnel

Violin 1

Margie Rice, Concertmaster
Jeremy Clay
Colyn Fischer
Kyle Craft
Katherine Wang
Zoe Berna
Emily Berna

Violin 2

Becky Kuntz, Principal
Margaret Arner
Nathan Crozier
Loraine Duff
Yvonne Kramer
Amy McHenry
Heidi Peterman

Viola

Jeff Ives, Principal
Alyssa Boge
Dan Kristianson

Cello

Clovice Lewis, Principal
Jean Craig
Becky Jimenez
Liz Rice-Oliver
Gail Sharpsteen
Kathy Vast

Bass

Larry Ames, Principal
Elaine Herrick
Richard Chang

Flutes

Mindy Rosenfeld, Principal
Leslie Lind

Oboes

Beth Aiken, Principal
Jeff Champion

English Horn

Coreen Levin

Clarinets

Carla Schoenthal, Principal
Kevin Munoz

Bassoons

Eva von Bahr, Principal
Juliana Matteucci

ContraBassoon

Maryann Sacksteder

Horns

John Lounsbery, Principal
Randy Masselink
Kelsey Wiley
Ruth Wilson

Trumpets

Gary Miller, Principal
Jason McDonald

Timpani

Randy Hood

Percussion

Joel Shura