Thursday, October 12, 8pm
Friday, October 13, 1:30pm
Saturday, October 14, 8pm
GUSTAVO GIMENO conducting

LIGETI

“CONCERT ROMÂNESC” (“ROMANIAN CONCERTO”)
I. Andantino
II. Allegro vivace
III. Adagio ma non troppo
IV. Molto vivace

DVOŘÁK

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN A MINOR, OPUS 53
Allegro ma non troppo
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo
HILARY HAHN

{INTERMISSION}

SCHUMANN

SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN B-FLAT, OPUS 38, “SPRING”
Andante un poco maestoso—Allegro molto vivace
Larghetto
Scherzo: Molto vivace—Molto più vivace—Tempo I
Allegro animato e grazioso

THURSDAY EVENING’S PERFORMANCE OF DVOŘÁK’S VIOLIN CONCERTO IS SUPPORTED BY A GIFT FROM TOM KUO AND ALEXANDRA DELAITE, BANK OF AMERICA AND TAKEDA PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY LIMITED ARE PROUD TO SPONSOR THE BSO’S 2017-18 SEASON.
The evening concerts will end about 9:55, the afternoon concert about 3:25.
Concertmaster Malcolm Lowe performs on a Stradivarius violin, known as the “Lafont,” generously donated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra by the O’Block Family.
Two members of the violin section perform on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the “ex-Zazofsky,” and on a 1778 Nicolò Gagliano violin, both generously donated to the orchestra by Michael L. Nieland, M.D., in loving memory of Mischa Nieland, a member of the cello section from 1943 to 1988.
Steinway & Sons Pianos, selected exclusively for Symphony Hall. The BSO’s Steinway & Sons pianos were purchased through a generous gift from Gabriella and Leo Beranek. The program books for the Friday series are given in loving memory of Mrs. Hugh Bancroft by her daughters, the late Mrs. A. Werk Cook and the late Mrs. William C. Cox.
Special thanks to Fairmont Copley Plaza, Delta Air Lines, and Commonwealth Worldwide Executive Limousine.
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In consideration of the performers and those around you, please turn off all electronic equipment during the performance, including tablets, cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms, messaging devices of any kind, anything that emits an audible signal, and anything that glows. Thank you for your cooperation.
Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices, or taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs or videos—is prohibited during concerts.

The Program in Brief...
Among the greatest and most original artistic voices of the 20th century, the Hungarian composer György Ligeti came to be regarded as outside the mainstream currents of his time, but his early musical interests grew out of the same atmosphere in which his Hungarian predecessors Bartók and Kodály worked. The works by Ligeti still extant from those early years show that influence clearly. The deliberately conservative Concert Românesc (“Romanian Concerto”), which the composer thought was lost after his flight from Soviet-dominated Hungary in 1957, dates from 1951 and reveals the young composer as a brilliant orchestral colorist and musical wit. The four short movements, paired as slow-fast, slow-fast in the manner of some traditional Central European folk dances, is steeped in
the melodic and rhythmic language of Romanian folk music—but with details foreshadowing the innovative master who burst upon the Western European music scene ten years later.

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák wrote his Violin Concerto in 1879 for the great Austro-Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, who had recently played the first performance of the Violin Concerto by Dvořák’s mentor, Johannes Brahms. It was only in 1882, however, that Dvořák’s concerto reached final form, with Joachim himself taking a substantial role in the revisions. The music displays an engaging range of thematic and melodic content, orchestral colorations, and moods suggestive of the composer’s native Bohemia. Unlike Dvořák’s popular Cello Concerto, however, the Violin Concerto has not found a comparable place in the repertoire. One reason would surely be the fiendish difficulty of the solo part. Another is likely the expressive and structural novelties of the work, whose first movement exhibits a more rhetorical and rhapsodic interplay between soloist and orchestra than would normally be expected, then moves without pause into the expansive, major-mode slow movement. The lively finale is a major-mode romp based in Czech dance rhythms and filled with colorful episodes that contrast ingeniously with the movement’s rhythmically energized main theme.

Robert Schumann was a fine pianist in his youth, and apart from some experiments most of his early music, some of it quite ambitious and most of it intensely personal, is for his own instrument. In the 1830s he fell in love with his piano teacher’s daughter, Clara Wieck, herself a piano virtuoso. In 1840, overcoming her father’s objections, they finally married. Schumann celebrated by composing more than a hundred songs. Clara’s support, as well as Schumann’s discovery of Franz Schubert’s *Great C* major symphony, soon fired Robert’s ambitions for what he considered the more elevated genres, orchestral and theater works. In 1841 he composed the first two of his four symphonies—No. 1 in B-flat, nicknamed *Spring*, and the D minor symphony now known in its later, revised form as No. 4. Schumann himself described the sunny, optimistic music of his First Symphony as “vernial.” He sketched and completed the work in under a month in January and February 1841, and the premiere was given by the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, led by Felix Mendelssohn, that March.

Robert Kirmzinger (Ligeti, Schumann)/Marc Mandel (Dvořák)

Legendary violinist and humanist Yehudi Menuhin once referred to violinists as “half tiger, half poet”—a carnal and sensual image of the musician clutching his instrument, from which will emerge forceful and delicate sonorities. For many, the violin concerto embodies this image with its confrontation, imagined or real, between soloist and orchestra. But where, exactly, does “concerto” come from? Disagreement over the origin of the word itself is mirrored in the two almost diametrically opposed conceptions of this genre: for some composers, the concerto is an exercise of opposition between soloist and orchestra, following from the understanding that the word derives from “-endo,” a Latin word meaning “to skirmish, contend, dispute.” By contrast, others see in the concerto mainly a symphonic work with an added predominant voice, in accordance with the view that the word is a variant of the 16th-century form “-endo,” supposedly derived from Latin “-endo,” meaning “to join, bind together.” The controversy remains to this day.

It will come as no surprise that the solo concerto, whose sources are the opera and the concerto grosso, blossomed during the late Baroque era in Italy, where instrumental virtuosity and expressivity were especially valued. In the second decade of the 18th century, Antonio Vivaldi’s violin concertos provided the model for the genre that would stand for the next 150 years: three-movement form, brilliant or impassioned solo parts, poignant character of the slow movement, memorability of themes, dialogue or competition character between soloist and ensemble... Mozart’s five violin concertos, all written during his late teens, are the pinnacle of that genre in the Classical era. Ludwig van Beethoven, as he did with nearly everything else, brought the violin concerto to a whole new level at the beginning of the 19th century, expanding it toward a grander scale in which the soloist becomes part of an integrated symphonic concept while remaining a heroic and dominant voice.

In the next hundred years, many composers would adopt Beethoven’s model, attempting to produce works of comparable substance: Felix Mendelssohn, Jean Sibelius, and Edward Elgar come to mind. In 1878, shortly after completing his Second Symphony, JOHANNES BRAHMS composed his version of that model, his Violin Concerto in D, Opus 77. Written during a summer stay in the countryside where, he wrote, “melodies seemed to be simply flying about,” Brahms composed the most lyrical of all his orchestral works for his longtime friend and musical advisor, the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim. This highly expressive and extremely demanding work avoids the pitfalls of mere virtuosity by concentrating on the instrument’s singing lyricism. It was initially conceived as a four-movement symphonic work with violin obbligato, a “-endo” spirit that remains in the first two movements. Clara Schumann, after a private performance, wrote that “it is a concerto in which the orchestra blends completely and utterly with the [solo] player.” In the finale, however, a rondo with strong Hungarian or Gypsy elements, included as a tribute to Joachim’s homeland, the piece returns to the spirit of a true concerto, calling upon the soloist to let his or her hair down and pull out all the stops.
While still more or less aligning themselves with Beethoven’s “symphonic” model, several concertos from the second half of the 19th century became the vehicle for burgeoning nationalist sentiment in music via their use of specific melodies, rhythms, or timbral effects found in local folk music. Following the example of his Bohemian countryman Bedřich Smetana, ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK drew extensively from Czech, Moravian, and other Slavic traditional music, including folk-dance forms, in his works. With its compelling folkloric melodies and overall positive expression, his Violin Concerto in A minor, Opus 53 (1882) rapidly became one of his most popular works. As he had done shortly before with Brahms, Joseph Joachim shared his technical knowhow with Dvořák, extensively revising the original version of the concerto by making several passages more suitable for the violin. The concerto does not directly quote tunes from folk sources, but Dvořák has nevertheless wrapped it in an inimitable Slavic atmosphere. In the dazzling rondo-like finale, one of the composer’s most accomplished stylizations of folk dances, we return to the energy found in his immensely popular Slavonic Dances, Opus 46, with a robust Bohemian, contrasted in its middle part by a melancholic Ukrainian.

At the same time in Russia, PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY combined lyricism and unabashed virtuosity in his Violin Concerto in D, Opus 35 (1878). It should be noted that while unmistakably Russian, Tchaikovsky’s musical style seems to be caught between two worlds: he often used Russian musical material, but submitted it to a stylized treatment his nationally oriented colleagues such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov considered academic and, worst of all, about his relationship with Russian folk music, Tchaikovsky commented: “so far as the Russian element in general is concerned in my music, i.e., the melodic and harmonic devices akin to folk song, this occurs because I grew up in the wilds and was steeped from my earliest childhood in the indescribable beauty of Russian folk music.” With the concerto’s rousing finale, qualified as “odorously Russian” by a critic after the premiere, Tchaikovsky conclusively demonstrated his love for Russia and its music.

In the first decades of the 20th century, a new generation of composers experimented with fresh ideas that would bring radical changes to musical language. The dominance of German style waned, while the virtuoso concerto Paganini gave way to more individually conceived works that echoed the multiplicity of musical movements and trends of that period, such as the use of modality, the exploration of non-Western scales, the development of atonality, and the use of complex time signatures. The concertos of Karol Szymanowski, Igor Stravinsky, Alban Berg, and Béla Bartók, to name a few, are examples of these new approaches. The popularity of SERGEI PROKOFIEV grew rapidly during the 1910s thanks to his modernistic ideas, his taste for grotesque effects, and his incisive rhythmic sense. His Violin Concerto No. 1, composed during that period, while lyrical in places, displays a characteristic acerbic character. After leaving Russia at the time of the 1917 revolution, he wandered around the world for almost twenty years until increasingly tempting invitations from the Soviet Union led him to move permanently back to Russia in 1936. It was around that time that he had started to feel an urge to compose simpler music, which coincided with the new “social realist” demands of the Soviet musical authorities. From then on, he adopted a lyrical quality in his music, mostly avoiding the harsh dissonances for which he was famous, giving more importance to melody while attempting to emulate the ideals of Russianness represented, in particular, by Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky. Composed successively in Paris, Voronezh (Russia), and Baku (Azerbaijan), Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Opus 63 (1935), employs typical Russian effects, especially in the finale with its rhythms and unusual time signatures characteristic of Russian folk music. Though not resolutely modern compared to Prokofiev’s earlier works, his Violin Concerto No. 2 managed to remain “Prokofievian” in tone, at the same time displaying some of the most beautiful and more lyrical melodies of his entire output.

In the second half of the 20th century, the concerto concept has progressively been represented by a variety of forms which, while still maintaining the dynamic of the contrasted musical forces, have sometimes abandoned its traditional connotations. Two recent works being performed this season demonstrate the continuing range of approaches to works for solo violin with orchestra. JOHN ADAMS, who wrote a “true,” more traditionally conceived violin concerto in the early 1990s, more recently composed (2014), a large-scale romantic work for violin and orchestra which he calls a “dramatic symphony,” alluding to the similarly named Rimsky-Korsakov symphonic poem. Inspired by an exhibition Adams saw at the Institut du monde arabe in Paris on the history of the “Arabian Nights,” the character of Scheherazade, and the evolution of the story over centuries, Adams had the idea of a symphonic work in which the principal character role, Scheherazade, would be taken by a solo violin, which has a similar role in Rimsky-Korsakov’s work. One thinks of such works as Berlioz’s with its solo viola, or Strauss’s with cello, in which the soloist, to a point, represents an individual making his way through a series of adventures. While the writing for the violin is extremely virtuosic as in many a traditional concerto, overall the piece is also unmistakably symphonic, with its four movements that seem to follow the model of the classical form. Following the famous examples of composers writing under the guidance of a violin virtuoso, John Adams composed the piece specifically for Leila Josefowicz and adds that “it was a true collaboration and reflects a creative dialogue.”
Other composers seem to enjoy the term “concerto” and its implied sense of continuity with the past. Directly engaging with the traditional concerto genre is GYÖRGY LIGETI’s Violin Concerto (1993), which embraces virtually the entirety of music history. In his preparatory phase, Ligeti studied the virtuoso works of Paganini, Wieniawski, and Szymanowski, and in his catholic, all-embracing fervor furthermore incorporates microtonality, African music, Hungarian folk melodies, Bulgarian dance rhythms, and medieval and Renaissance compositional techniques, plus elements of his own early work (including, for example, a tune from his 1953 solo piano). Also offering many opportunities for old-fashioned Paganini-like brilliance for the soloist, Ligeti’s concerto is a great testimony to the potency and the continued relevance of this more than 300-year-old musical genre.

JEAN-PASCAL VACHON

György Ligeti

GYÖRGY SÁNDOR LIGETI was born in Dicsoszentmárton (now Tîrnăveni), Transylvania, Romania, on May 28, 1923, and died in Vienna on June 12, 2006. He wrote “Concert Românesc” (“Romanian Concerto”) in 1951 on a commission from the Soldiers’ Orchestra. According to research (published 2007) by Rachel Beckles Willson, it was premiered by that orchestra on April 1, 1952, and continued in their repertoire for some time. It may have been published by the Hungarian state publisher Zenem˝ukiadó in 1954, but this is not certain. Prior to Willson’s research, the composer had recalled a very different history for the piece (see below). Ligeti revised “Concert Românesc” in the mid-1990s; the current version was published in 1996.

THE SCORE OF LIGETI’S “CONCERT ROMÂNESC calls for two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes (second doubling English horn), two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns (the third being seated apart from the other two and serving an “echo” function), two trumpets, percussion (two players suggested: suspended cymbal, crash cymbals, snare drum, bass drum), and strings. The piece is about twelve minutes long.

Ligeti’s family was musical, but his violin-playing father, a banker and economist by trade, strongly discouraged music as a career. By the time György Ligeti finished school, in 1940, war had broken out, Hitler’s Reich controlled Hungary, and Jews were virtually prohibited from attending the university. Ligeti was able, however, to enroll at the conservatory in Cluj, where he studied with the noted Hungarian composer Ferenc Farkas while unofficially attending university science courses. Perhaps in tandem with psychological stress due to the war, Ligeti’s difficult schedule led to nervous exhaustion. He traveled to Budapest for treatment and remained there for further musical study with the pianist and composer Pál Kádora.

In 1944, Ligeti, along with many other Jews, was pressed into forced labor for the German army in a variety of dangerous settings, including working in a munitions dump behind the front lines of the Russian advance. In October 1944 he escaped, was briefly detained by the Russians, and finally made his way on foot back to Transylvania as the war came to a close. His father and brother had died in concentration camps; his mother, a doctor, survived Auschwitz in part because her medical training was valuable. (She lived many more years.)

When “normal” life resumed in war-ravaged Budapest, Ligeti returned there to enroll at the Franz Liszt Academy, where he worked with Sándor Veress and came into contact with Zoltán Kodály, who arranged for him a position as a theory instructor. (Bartók died in New York in 1945 before he could fulfill Hungary’s hopes for his return.) He also met the composer and pianist György Kurtág, who became a lifelong friend. As the 1940s continued, the increasing political and military presence of the Soviets became as oppressive in its way as the war had been. Ligeti himself was initially sympathetic to communism, which (in theory) represented a utopian ideal hostile to fascism and anti-Semitism. As Soviet control became more pervasive, however, the differences between the previous occupation and the present one became less clear. Ligeti has commented that many of the details of genuine folk styles—unusual scales, microtonality, rhythmic irregularity, and so forth—were unpalatable for the conservative natures of those in control of musical performances; only a watered-down, stylized folk music was acceptable. Even Bartók’s music was suppressed. Ligeti’s style changed from willing compliance with social realist strictures to a more abstract, progressive approach, virtually guaranteeing that his music would not be performed.

The (1951) is one of a few pieces extant from the period before Ligeti left Hungary in 1956; much better known are his Cello Sonata, String Quartet No. 1, and Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet. The Bagatelles are re-scoreings of six of ten pieces from for solo piano, which also sees frequent performances. While the effects of Ligeti’s immersion in the music of his environs on the border of Romania and Hungary are present virtually throughout his career, they are naturally most readily audible in his music of this time, which explicitly reflects an acknowledgement of, but also clearly a questing beyond, the influence of Kodály and Bartók.

According to his biographer Richard Steinitz, Ligeti wrote the while living in the environs of Rákóczy Castle in northeast Hungary, where there were residences available for artists who needed a break from the difficulties of their usual situations. Ligeti discovered some of the piece’s themes while transcribing Romanian folk music from wax cylinders in Bucharest, but much of it is original music written in the style of his Romanian models, much as Stra-
vinsky and Bartók borrowed elements of authentic folk music to achieve a kind of universal vernacular. Steinetz also reports that the score was evidently lost, but was reconstructed from parts in the 1960s, and according to the composer was premiered publicly in Evanston, Illinois. Ligeti’s current publisher, Schott International, shows a public premiere date of August 21, 1971, in the Gibraltar School Auditorium as part of the Peninsula Music Festival in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, with Thor Johnson conducting the Festival Orchestra. But Rachel Beckles Willson, researching her 2007 book, located a works list from the early 1950s by Ligeti himself indicating public performances in Hungary between 1951 and 1953. Also rediscovered by Beckles Willson are minutes from meetings of the Musicians’ Union showing that the piece was considered for the prestigious First Hungarian Music Week, but rejected.

The piece is in four movements, which can be heard as pairs of slow-fast episodes, like the form of the Hungarian or. The first two are orchestrations of two pieces for two violins, Ballad and Dance, written in 1950 in a style more conservative even than Kodály’s. The melancholy first movement is scored for strings, woodwinds, and horns. Trumpet and percussion join for the romping second movement. The second pair of movements features an element that Ligeti would explore to a much greater extent in later years, that of the natural harmonic series (as opposed to the tempered harmonic series of the Western chromatic tuning system). The third movement, tied to the second via a sustained G in the clarinets, gets underway with a solo horn call. The horns here are to be played in “natural” fashion, that is, without using the valves or hand-stopping needed to make their harmonic series comply with the tuning of the rest of the orchestra. The third horn, seated separately from the solo, plays the role of echo, as though answering the soloist from across a mountain ridge or plain. English horn offers responsorial commentary, accompanied freely by the violas. Finally the whole string body joins in the series of exchanges. The finale begins with insistent muted trumpets and a snare drum shot, rushing strings leading to blistering solo passages for various instruments, a violin in the lead. The solo passages and accompanying orchestral textures evoke the free and fiery music of the Gypsy taraf bands of Central Europe.

The was one of many of Ligeti’s works whose fate as a concert piece suffered because of the political instability of Hungary under the control of the Soviet Union, and because of the composer’s precipitous flight from his home country to Vienna in 1956. This and other works of Ligeti’s early years, such as the frequently performed Bagatelles for woodwind quintet and the String Quartet No. 1, not only reveal where the composer’s roots lay, but also, as one surveys his music over the fifty years from that time to his death, many of the aspects of his aesthetic that were considered so unique and new. It’s of interest, for example, that his late-period Violin Concerto (1993) quotes a melody from his for solo piano (1953); also that many of the distinctive textures that shocked audiences and brought fame to the composer in the 1960s, among them, (used in the film), and the Requiem, were derived from his study of Renaissance counterpoint. Although Ligeti attributed the intricate interlocking rhythmic patterns of the Horn Trio, Piano Etudes, and other late works in part to his discovery of Conlon Nancarrow and African rhythmic polyphony in the late 1970s, such patterns are already nascent in, the 1960s organ works and, the clockwork music in the Chamber Concerto, and elsewhere. The conclusion to draw here is that György Ligeti—by most lights one of the greatest and most individual geniuses of 20th-century arts—was true to his own musical voice from beginning to end.

Robert Kirzinger

Antonín Dvořák

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK was born in Nelahozeves (Mühlhausen), Bohemia, near Prague, on September 8, 1841, and died in Prague on May 1, 1904. He composed his Violin Concerto between July 5 and mid-September 1879, revising it in 1880 and then again two years later. The violinist Joseph Joachim gave a read-through of the work with Dvořák conducting the orchestra of the Berlin Hochschule in November 1882. František Ondříček was soloist for the premiere on October 14, 1883, in Prague, as well as for the Vienna premiere under Hans Richter on December 2, 1883 (in the same concert at which the Brahms Third Symphony was played for the first time).

IN ADDITION TO THE SOLO VIOLIN, the score of Dvořák’s Violin Concerto calls for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

On January 1, 1879, Joseph Joachim gave the first performance of the Brahms Violin Concerto. Brahms was one of the most important influences on the career of Antonín Dvořák, and it was for Joachim that Dvořák wrote his own Violin Concerto six months later. The Austro-Hungarian Joachim (1831-1907) was a composer, conductor, and teacher, as well as one of the most important violinists of his day. He made his debut at eight, was sent to study in Vienna several months after that, and in 1843 went to Leipzig to learn from Mendelssohn at the new conservatory there, making his Gewandhaus debut that August. On May 27, 1844, Mendelssohn conducted the Beethoven Violin Concerto in London with the thirteen-year-old Joachim as soloist; the enthusiastic audience was so taken with the blond youngster’s performance that the first movement was several times interrupted by applause. Six years later, Joachim was concertmaster under Franz Liszt at Weimar for the first production of Wagner’s Lohengrin. He became
an intimate of Robert and Clara Schumann, and in 1853 he met Brahms, who benefited from Joachim’s advice on orchestration (Tovey reports that the latter’s skill in this area was considered “as on a level with his mastery of the violin”) and from hearing Joachim’s quartet perform his early chamber music. It soon became typical for Brahms to seek Joachim’s suggestions regarding works-in-progress, and in 1877 Joachim conducted the first English performance, at Cambridge, of Brahms’s First Symphony.* It was Brahms who introduced Dvořák to Joachim, and Joachim got to know Dvořák’s A major string sextet, Opus 48, and E-flat string quartet, Opus 51, both of which were performed at Joachim’s house in Berlin on July 29, 1879, with the composer present.

By this time, and with encouragement from Joachim, who had recently given the first performance of Brahms’s Violin Concerto, Dvořák was at work on a violin concerto of his own. In January 1880 he reported that Joachim had promised to play the concerto as soon as it was published, and on May 9, 1880, after Joachim had suggested a thorough revision, the composer wrote to his publisher Simrock that he had reworked the entire score, “without missing a single bar.” Dvořák again gave the score to Joachim, who now took two years to respond, finally making alterations to the solo part in the summer of 1882 and suggesting that the composer lighten the instrumentation. In November the composer and Joachim read through the concerto with the orchestra of the Berlin Hochschule. The next month Dvořák held fast against criticism from Simrock’s adviser Robert Keller regarding the lack of a break before the Adagio: “...the first two movements can—or must—remain as they are.” Simrock published the score in 1883, but for the first performance the soloist was not Joachim but the twenty-three-year-old, Prague-born František Ondříček, who was already famous enough by this time to be receiving invitations to play throughout Europe, in the United States, and in eastern Russia. Joachim himself never performed Dvořák’s concerto—though he almost did so in London during the composer’s first visit there in 1884*—and it has been suggested that the violinist-composer may not have been able to reconcile his own conservatism vis-à-vis musical form with respect to Dvořák’s bold experimentation in the first movement. Even today, this neglected masterpiece has had comparatively few advocates, but probably for yet another reason: it is fiendishly difficult.

Dvořák wastes no time in alerting us to the fact that he will adhere to no prescribed formal scheme in his first movement, by dispensing entirely with an orchestral exposition. Instead, a bold, unison forte with a suggestion of triple-time furiant rhythm serves to introduce the soloist before even five measures have gone by, the warmly melodic theme giving way to cadenza-like figuration (already!) before the orchestra reenters. The next important idea, a woodwind cantilena to be developed in short order by the soloist, grows naturally from the contours of the preceding orchestral material. What might be identified as the movement’s “real” second theme by virtue of its placement in C, the relative major of A minor, will appear in the solo violin only much later, and very briefly at that, against a sort of free echo in the solo oboe. But note that the idea here is not so much to identify individual themes as to observe that Dvořák has created material so constantly ripe for elaboration that applying the terms “exposition” and “development” to this movement is almost meaningless. Ultimately, since so much has already happened, the “big” return to the main theme—the “recapitulation” if you must—really has nowhere to go, and Dvořák accordingly cuts things short with the suggestion of a brief cadenza (over forceful horn calls which appear in varying guises throughout the concerto) and then a contemplative bridge passage for winds and low strings—the soloist giving out one of many variants of the main theme heard during the movement—leading directly to the wonderfully expansive and beautiful F major Adagio.

The length of the second movement is supported not only by Dvořák’s ability to create long-breathed arcs of melody, but also by his skill in juxtaposing areas of contrasting key and character as the movement proceeds. The concerto’s rondo finale is unflaggingly energetic, tuneful, and, to quote Michael Steinberg, “unabashedly Czech,” exploiting the folk-dance rhythms of the furiant in its A major main theme and the duple-time dumka in the D minor central episode. Dvořák is particularly inventive in his presentations of the main theme: it is heard first over high strings, with the second violins sustaining a tonic A; it returns against a crashing open fifth in the timpani and the simulation of Czech bagpipes in the open fifth of violins and cellos; and for its third appearance it sounds against a rush of upper-string activity with off-beat accents in the cellos and basses. For the dumka episode, Dvořák asks the timpanist to retune his E to D (other brief instances of retuning occur occasionally in this score); this episode also stresses two-against-three cross-rhythms, particularly via the triplets of the horns heard against the steady 2/4 of the dumka theme. Near the end, there is a striking change of color when the solo flute brings back the main theme beginning on A-flat, and then a brief reference to the dumka prepares the exuberant final pages, a sudden accelerando and four brilliantly boisterous chords bringing this marvelous movement to a close.

Marc Mandel

MARC MANDEL is Director of Program Publications of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

THE FIRST AMERICAN PERFORMANCE of Dvořák’s Violin Concerto took place in Chicago on October 30, 1891, with soloist Max Bendix and the Chicago Orchestra under the direction of Theodore Thomas.

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCE of the concerto was on November 17, 1900,
Robert Schumann

*Symphony No. 1 in B-flat, Opus 38, “Spring”*

ROBERT SCHUMANN was born in Zwickau, Saxony, on June 8, 1810, and died in an asylum at Endenich, near Bonn, on July 29, 1856. He sketched his “Spring” Symphony in just four days, January 23-26, 1841, and completed the score less than a month later, on February 20. Felix Mendelssohn led the first performance on March 31 that same year, in a pension fund concert of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig. The dedication of the symphony is to Friedrich August, King of Saxony.

THE SCORE OF SCHUMANN'S SYMPHONY NO. 1 calls for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, and strings.

Robert Schumann’s First Symphony was completed in 1841, a year of fertile and diverse activity in European music. A brief scan of this year reveals Chopin composing his F minor Ballade, Liszt his second version of the, Mendelssohn his Symphony, and Wagner and Verdi launching their careers with and . All these men were born within four years of each other and constitute, along with the somewhat older Berlioz, a tremendous new gathering of forces. They form the first musical generation to identify consciously with the Romantic movement long since fully acknowledged in other arts.

Together with the influence of other arts, especially literature, these men were stimulated by the achievements of the Italian operatic melodists of the 1820s, by the works of Schubert’s last years, and by a new interest in late Baroque music. But the liberating effect of Beethoven’s music must be especially emphasized, since it has been misunderstood. We still read about the necessity to evade Beethoven, to go on in spite of him, and other negative tasks assigned to this first Romantic generation. But he was above all an energizing force, expanding and making available to a greater variety of musical talents the musical vocabulary of the early 1800s.

It is particularly Beethoven’s last piano sonatas, more than the quartets and symphonies, that reverberate in the music of the first generation of Romantics—most of whom thought through the piano. These sonatas of Beethoven suggested a new kind of narrative style, free of the necessity to define in sonata-allegro terms each moment in the form. The Schumann piano miniature, the crucial expressive vehicle of his early years, is seeded in the Beethoven piano sonatas. Even as Schumann worked himself away from his natural arena—songs and short piano pieces—toward the symphonic, choral, and sonata composition which he considered a higher calling, the piano remained an underlying sonority.

It is in this context that we must consider his controversial orchestration. Schumann’s First Symphony shares with his other symphonies an orchestral sonority that strives to retain the piano’s dense tone weight and the mystery of its pedal. All the symphonies have been considered over-scored, and there is some legitimacy to this claim; but it is worth consideration that Schumann’s orchestration—doubled, middle-register-dominated, and anti-solo—is partly the sound of this era: much of Mendelssohn and Wagner from this period is thick, and the thickness conveys intensity. Later eras have been uncomfortable with this sound, but this is partly a turn against the entire aesthetic of early Romanticism.*

Schumann intended the opening of his Symphony to be heard as a call to awakening, composing it in “the vernal passion that sways men until they are very old, and which surprises them again with each year.” Unfortunately the initial bloom of this phrase was somewhat dampened when Schumann discovered at the first rehearsal that his natural horns and trumpets sounded muddy and indistinct on the lower notes of his motive. He decided to begin the phrase a third higher, on D, thus giving the first two phrases the same melody, and weakening the staged approach to the thrilling D minor chord that begins the third phrase; this chord is rich both in fervent drama and in key-area implications for the rest of the piece. (Schumann’s original intention, aided by the use of modern brass, is occasionally reinstated, a practice that hardly qualifies as a reorchestration of the kind so often practiced upon these symphonies.)

This opening motto is a setting of a line from a poem by Adolf Böttger: the line runs """" (“In the valley spring is blossoming!”), its rhythm unmistakable in Schumann’s version. This opening makes explicit a secret condition of
much of Schumann’s instrumental music—hidden words behind the notes. It is with the help of such extramusical associations that Schumann achieves the unique atmospheric world inhabited by each of his symphonies. The Symphony is based on two poems by Böttger; Schumann originally had titles for the movements paralleling moments in the poems—“Spring’s Awakening,” “Evening,” “Joyful Playing,” and “Full Spring” (or “Spring’s Farewell”). Like many composers, he was less interested in these verbal guideposts as he gained distance from the piece. Very often a composer will seize on poetic or narrative images to free an abstract musical thought-line already brewing in his subconscious, and in the calm that follows remains interested only in those musical urges that were primary to him.

The first motto notes of the Symphony become the dominating motive in the ensuing movement. In adapting his Lied-style forms to larger spans, motivic reiteration and expansion is Schumann’s primary resource. Not a writer of free-wheeling melodies like Chopin or Berlioz, he joins motives together into melody, or creates driving development passages out of close motivic repetition. In the Symphony the motivic working is a spontaneous mode of thought. (Later in his career it seems to be thought of more in formal terms, with some loss in naturalness, compensated by a touching simplicity of harmony and gesture.)

The first movement has the first of the independent, poetic codas that are special to this symphony, inspirations that close each of the first three movements with something seemingly new, but revealed as foreshadowing of what is to come. The one in the first movement is in Schumann’s warmest hymn-like manner, expressing the inward (Eusebian) side of his nature.*

Often in Schumann’s orchestral music, the spirit seems more important than the detail, but the second movement produces some memorable details as well. The lavish afterbeat wind chords behind the cellos’ statement of the main theme in B-flat, and the rich combination of octave violin descant and viola triplets at the next statement, are just a few of the many subtle settings in which the rondo theme is shown.

In the third movement Schumann uses the minor key without menace or foreboding, instead reflecting the romantic stirrings of the first D minor in the prelude. The harmonic scheme is unusual, with other keys seeming equally balanced with tonic in the opening strain.

The finale has an operatic exuberance, with even a brief outdoor cadenza, and a very attractive main subject. The development and coda become serious, especially in the gliding sequences that recall Schubert’s big C major symphony, so revered by Schumann. But the overall impression is one of Schumann’s most unified affects, Florestan and Eusebius joined in positive feelings.

One of Schumann’s special qualities is his ability to establish a one-to-one relationship with his listener, to sort that listener out from the crowd and speak only to him or her. This is an essential Romantic ambition, and Schumann’s achievement of it brings him close as a personality in a way not available to a less open temperament. Like other Romantic artists who ended in madness, he paid for his intense way of living, and his dualized nature, divided between action and withdrawal, was both substance for poetic fantasy and a dangerous problem. If a rebirth of the spirit of early Romanticism is possible (or even desirable), the artist would once again have to risk being as revealed and present to his listener as is Schumann.

John Harbison

To Read and Hear More...

The most comprehensive English-language biography of Ligeti is Richard Steinitz’s György Ligeti—Music of the Imagination (Northeastern University Press, 2003), winner of the 2004 ASCAP Deems Taylor Award. A newer biography, György Ligeti: Beyond Avant-garde and Postmodernism by musicologist Constantin Floros, was published in English translation in 2014 (Peter Lang GmbH). György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds is a collection of essays from writers including Steinitz, Paul Griffiths, the composer Manfred Stahnke, the specialist on African music Simha Arom, and others, edited by Louise Duchesneau and Wolfgang Marx (Boydell Press, 2011). Also worth seeking is Richard Toop’s informative, enthusiastic volume György Ligeti in the well-illustrated “20th-Century Composers” series (Phaidon paperback, 1999). Paul Griffiths’s György Ligeti, originally published in 1983 but revised and updated extensively for a second edition in 1997, features Griffiths’s usual perceptive and readable commentary on the major works as well as a brief interview with the composer (Robson paperback). Griffiths also wrote the article on Ligeti for the 2001 edition of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. The article in the 1980 edition of Grove is by Ove Nordall, the author of two earlier German-language books on the composer. Richard Dufallo’s Trackings features an interview with Ligeti as well as reminiscences by Dufallo himself and interviews with many important composers of Ligeti’s generation, including Boulez, Stockhausen, Kagel, Xenakis, Cage, and others (Oxford University Press, 1989). Rachel Beckles Willson’s Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music During the Cold War tackles the geographical and political context in which those two great composers worked in Hungary (Cambridge University Press). The primary publisher of Ligeti’s music is Schott.
A performance of Concert Românesc by the Berlin Philharmonic, Jonathan Nott conducting, is on Volume II of “The Ligeti Project” (Teldec), an endeavor to record all of Ligeti’s works with the composer’s personal guidance. This disc also contains his Atmosphères, Lontano, Apparitions, and San Francisco Polyphony. Teldec more recently packaged its Ligeti series in a five-disc box set at budget price. The series began on the Sony Classical label, which released seven volumes including the opera Le Grand Macabre. Other recordings of Concert Românesc include conductor Lawrence Foster’s with the Gulbenkian Foundation Symphony Orchestra Lisbon (Pentatone), Esa-Pekka Salonen’s with the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon, volume 4 of the “DG Concerts” series), and a performance by the Mahler Chamber Orchestra led by Barbara Hannigan, on a DVD called “Barbara Hannigan Concert Documentary” (Accentus).

Robert Kirzinger


Noteworthy recordings of Dvořák’s Violin Concerto (listed alphabetically by soloist) feature Isabelle Faust with Jifi B’elohlávek and the Prague Philharmonia (Harmonia Mundi), Julia Fischer with David Zinman and the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich (Decca), Pamela Frank with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Czech Philharmonic (Decca), Anne-Sophie Mutter with Manfred Honeck and the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Itzhak Perlman with Daniel Barenboim and the London Philharmonic (Warner Classics), former BSO concertmaster Joseph Silverstein as soloist and conductor with the Utah Symphony Orchestra (Pro Arte), Josef Suk with Václav Neumann and the Czech Philharmonic (Supraphon), Christian Tetzlaff with John Storgårds and the Helsinki Philharmonic (Ondine), and Maxim Vengerov with Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic (Teldec).


Noteworthy recorded cycles of the four Schumann symphonies—listed alphabetically by conductor, and including the final version of No. 4 unless otherwise noted—include Daniel Barenboim’s with the Staatskapelle Berlin (Warner Classics); Leonard Bernstein’s with either the New York Philharmonic (Sony) or Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon); Thomas Dausgaard’s with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra (Bis, with both the original and final versions of No. 4); Rafael Kubelik’s with either the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon) or the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (Sony; this has the first and second violins seated antiphonally); James Levine’s with the Philadelphia Orchestra (RCA) or Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon); Kurt Masur’s with the London Philharmonic (Teldec); Sir Simon Rattle’s live with the Berlin Philharmonic, with the original 1841 version of No. 4 (Deutsche Grammophon); Yannick Nézet-Séguin’s with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (Deutsche Grammophon); Paul Paray’s with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (Mercury Living Presence); Wolfgang Sawallisch’s with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (Warner Classics); George Szell’s with the Cleveland Orchestra (Sony), and Christian Thielemann’s with the Philharmonia Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon). Three period-instrument cycles are worth seeking: John Eliot Gardiner’s with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, with both versions of the Symphony No. 4 (Deutsche Grammophon); Roy Goodman’s with the period-instrument Hanover Band, with the original version of No. 4 (originally RCA, and for a while on Nimbus), and Philippe
Herreweghe’s with the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, with the final version of No. 4 (Harmonia Mundi). Riccardo Chailly and the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig recorded the four Schumann symphonies with Mahler’s alterations to Schumann’s original instrumentation (Decca).

Marc Mandel
Guest Artists
Gustavo Gimeno

Gustavo Gimeno has been music director of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg (OPL) since 2015. During the past season he and the OPL extended their contract for three more years, until 2022. Mr. Gimeno conducts the OPL in various concert formats and plans to expand the orchestra’s touring and recording activities. In the current season he shares the Philharmonie stage with such artists as Daniel Barenboim, Krystian Zimerman, Khatia Buniatishvili, Sir Bryn Terfel, and Frank Peter Zimmermann, and again presents an opera production in Luxembourg, Mozart’s. In great demand worldwide as a guest conductor, in 2017-18 he returns to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France, the Vienna Symphony, and the Philharmonia Zurich. He makes debuts with the Mariinsky Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale RAI, and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic. In addition, he returns to the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, which specializes in historically informed performance practice. Highlights of recent seasons have included his debuts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C., the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, and the Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia. He has twice led the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood and this week makes his subscription series debut. Gustavo Gimeno made his opera debut in 2015 with Bellini’s at the Valencia Opera House; during the past season he led Verdi’s with the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg at the Grand Théâtre in Luxembourg. In 2017 the classical label Pentatone, the OPL, and Gustavo Gimeno announced a multiple-release collaboration that thus far has included the first symphonies of Shostakovich and Bruckner and Ravel’s complete. Born in Valencia, Gustavo Gimeno began his international conducting career in 2012, when he was a member of Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, as an assistant to Mariss Jansons. Other mentors who provided Mr. Gimeno with significant experience include Bernard Haitink and Claudio Abbado. Visit gustavogimeno.com for further information. In his previous Boston Symphony appearances, both of them at Tanglewood, he led music of Prokofiev, Ravel, and Gershwin in July 2016, and music of Bernstein and Tchaikovsky in July 2017.

Hilary Hahn

Three-time Grammy Award-winning violinist Hilary Hahn has, in recent recital tours across the United States, Europe, and Japan, premiered six new partitas for solo violin by Antón García Abril. The works are her first commissioning project for solo violin and her first for a set of works from a single composer. “In 27 Pieces: the Hilary Hahn Encores” is her multi-year commissioning project, started in 2011, to revitalize the duo encore genre. Ms. Hahn’s album of those encores won a 2015 Grammy, and the print edition of the sheet music will be released by Boosey & Hawkes. Hilary Hahn’s 2015-16 artist residency at Vienna’s Konzerthaus featured her performing Mozart with the Camerata Salzburg, Dvořák with the Vienna Symphony, and Vieuxtemps with the Vienna Philharmonic, plus a solo recital. She also offered free—and sometimes surprise—concerts for parents with infants, a knitting circle, and a community dance workshop. The 2016-17 season brought residencies with both the Seattle Symphony and the Orchestre National de Lyon, which included, in addition to performances, outreach activities customized to each city; European concerto tours with the Czech Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, and the Orchestre National de Lyon; appearances with the Cincinnati, Detroit, Indianapolis, and National symphony orchestras, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Frankfurt Radio and Swedish Radio symphony orchestras, and the Spanish National Orchestra; and recital tours with pianist Robert Levin throughout North America and Europe. Hilary Hahn began violin lessons at age three in the Suzuki program of the Peabody Institute in her hometown of Baltimore and at five began lessons with St. Petersburg native Klara Berkovich. Admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia at age ten, she studied with Jascha Brodsky, a former pupil of Eugène Ysaÿe and Efrem Zimbalist. Ms. Hahn completed her university requirements at sixteen, having already made solo debuts with numerous orchestras, and received her bachelor’s degree at nineteen. She spent four summers at the Marlboro Music Festival and another four in the total-immersion German, French, and Japanese programs at Middlebury College. She holds honorary doctorates from Ball State University and Middlebury College. Ms. Hahn has released sixteen albums on Deutsche Grammophon and Sony, in addition to three DVDs, an Oscar-nominated movie soundtrack, an award-winning recording for children, and various compilations. Her recordings have received every critical prize in the international press and have met with equal popular success. She earned Grammy awards for her Brahms and Stravinsky concerto album, a pairing of the Schoenberg and Sibelius concertos, and her recording of the Tchaikov-
sky concerto and Jennifer Higdon’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Violin Concerto, which was written for her. In 2012 she launched “Silfra” with experimental prepared-pianist Hauschka. The album was produced by Valgeir Sigurðsson and was entirely improvised by Hahn and Hauschka following an intensive period of development. Her latest album is “Mozart 5, Vieuxtemps 4—Violin Concertos.” An avid writer, Hilary Hahn regularly posts on hilaryhahn.com and has published articles in mainstream media. On her YouTube channel, youtube.com/hilaryhahnvideos, she interviews colleagues about their experiences in music. Her violin case comments on life as a traveling companion, on Twitter and Instagram at @violincase. Ms. Hahn made her BSO debut in February 2003 performing Edgar Meyer’s Violin Concerto. With the orchestra since then she has performed Dvořák’s Violin Concerto (in August 2006 for her Tanglewood debut), Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 1 (March 2010), and Sibelius’s Violin Concerto (at Tanglewood in August 2010).