



2023 - 2024

38TH SEASON

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JOAN BLACKMAN

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SERENADES & DIVERTIMENTI

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Jae-Won Bang, Joan Blackman, Yiyi Hsu, Samantha Kung,
Rebecca Ruthven, Alicia Venables - *violins*

Justin Almazan, Emilie Grimes - *violas*

Hannah Addario-Berry, Shang Jung (Kitty) Chan - *cellos*

Meaghan Williams - *bass*

FRIDAY, DEC. 1, 2023 | 2:00PM
West Point Grey United Church

SUNDAY, DEC. 3, 2023 | 2:00PM
Pyatt Hall

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SATURDAY, DEC. 2, 2023 | 7:30PM
Grosvenor Theatre,
Kay Meek Arts Centre

MONDAY, DEC. 4, 2023 |
2:30PM ArtSpring

PROGRAM

W.A. Mozart (1756 - 1791)
Divertimento in D major, K 136

- I. Allegro
- II.
Andante
- III. Presto

Béla Bartók (1881 - 1945)
Divertimento for String Orchestra

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Molto adagio
- III. Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
Serenade for Strings in E major Opus 22

- I. Moderato
- II. Tempo di valse
- III. Scherzo: Vivace
- IV. Larghetto
- V. Finale: Allegro vivace

PROGRAM NOTES

W.A. Mozart

***Divertimento in D major, K 136* (1772)**

Mozart composed a set of three Divertimenti in Salzburg after his first Italian tour. The 16-year-old Wolfgang had created a sensation in Italy, and it is not surprising that the sunny Italian temperament would make its way into his compositions. We don't know much about these divertimenti, but it has been suggested that Mozart wrote them with several uses in mind; as party pieces, to be played as a quartet or small string ensemble, or to be converted into fully fledged symphonies by adding wind parts should he be invited for another tour to Italy...

This Divertimento is in three movements, fast-slow-fast, after the manner of the Italian Sinfonia. The writing is orchestral, with a simple, clear texture. The first violin part carries most of the virtuosic weight, with the second violin occasionally doubling in thirds or imitating.

The joyous Allegro is based on a charming descending scale theme, accompanied by bouncing eighth notes. The development section traverses into minor mode, where the second violins take off with an agitated burbling passage over pizzicato while the firsts call for a return to the happy melody with gracious whole notes and coaxing trills. Of course, the D major theme wins out, but without this middle section, the joy would feel static and empty.

Simple yet poignant, the slow movement

features

both firsts and second violins who introduce an elegant phrase in thirds, then climb up ascending scales together, each reaching higher in the sequence. This whole section repeats. The second section presents a new conversation, the firsts soaring over a rolling accompaniment that brings us back to the soothing opening theme and consequent sequence.

The finale, a Presto, opens with an ending! When the true presto begins in the fifth measure, the

descending scale idea from the first movement has returned, this time, to make merry. Mozart brings out his skill in imitation and counterpoint, giving all sections a chance to scamper. At one point there is a play on the scales, going up, going down, which is it? Once again, the second violins get a chance to show off their speediness in a couple of passages while the firsts keep the elegance intact. If ever there was a contest for most humorous music, this movement would be my pick!

Béla Bartók

***Divertimento for String Orchestra* (1939)**

It might seem strange that the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók would write a Divertimento (a form typically referring to a piece of light music) at the dawn of World War II. The work was commissioned by Bartók's friend, conductor, and philanthropist Paul Sacher, who arranged for Bartók and his wife to stay in his Swiss chalet in the summer of 1939. He finished the work in 15 days, the last piece he would write before leaving fascist Europe for the life of an exile in New York City. Indeed, the Divertimento has a more congenial feel than his quartets, with a neo-classical nod to the Concerto Grosso form, where solo lines are contrasted by and imitated by the whole group. Bartók employs his trademark rhythmic drive, using elements of folk dance, which he so often incorporated into his compositions. Perhaps the Divertimento is Bartók's acknowledgment that music can sometimes lighten our burdens?

The Allegro non troppo has a gypsy waltz character based on a light folk melody but with constantly shifting metres, irregular accents, and untraditional scales that give it an earthy and exotic flavour. Add to this recipe sharp contrasts in dynamics and texture resulting from the concerto grosso style (the solos and tutti)

and unison outcries of unpredictable rhythms demanding to be heard and we have a quixotic juxtaposition between a sense of urgency and restlessness and a nod to the pastoral past, to a simpler time.

We descend into darkness in the Adagio. The opening refrain is quiet, hesitant, and afraid with its muted, sotto voce strings creeping chromatically upwards. Then we hear stabbing outcries, with a long-short figure, the stab on the short note imitating the accents in the Hungarian language (i.e., BAR-tok). We also hear teeth chattering trills that climb in pitch and intensity, stretching tonality to its limits, and dramatic contrasts between tutti fortissimos and hesitant, whimpering solo lines.

All disturbance is instantly transformed into an energetic folk dance in the rondo finale. We are back to simple harmonies and a cornucopia of call and response episodes between soli and tutti. Part way through, Bartók can't resist demonstrating his compositional prowess with a three-voice fugue that culminates in a gypsy violin solo. At another point the dance becomes a graceful waltz in pizzicato. In the final pages, Bartók heats up the speed into an exhilarating and dramatic conclusion, almost as if to wipe out any foreboding feeling or anxiousness generated in the other movements.

Antonín Dvořák ***Serenade for Strings in E major*** ***Opus 22*** (1875)

In 1875, at the age of thirty-three, Antonín Dvořák was enjoying his life despite being too poor to afford a piano on which to compose. He had a beloved wife and young son, and thanks to the influence of Brahms, he was beginning to be recognised beyond his native Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) which promised new opportunities and inspired him to write more. Composed in just two weeks, the Serenade is a charming and joyful work infused with the profound happiness and optimism pervading his life at the time. The five movements each possess

a unique character replete with generous melodies. Dvořák ties it all together with several cross-references and thematic similarities throughout the work.

The moderato sets a dreamy tone right from the beginning with an elegant theme introduced by the second violins. The second theme is bouncier, a catchy dotted rhythm dance which is just a foil for the return to dreamland. Three E major chords mark the end.

The second movement is a fast waltz, almost a dervish at times, with more dotted rhythms adding spice. The trio section brings back

longing

with a sweeping melody in a remote key, but it soon climbs into a declamatory marcatisissimo tutti, perhaps saying enough! Time to dance again!

A bright and joyous Scherzo brings further delight. Dvořák can't help but include yet another soaring, beautiful melody which keeps reappearing before the two elements are combined and the orchestra races to the finish.

The Larghetto opens a fragrant window of tranquility. Falling intervals of the first theme sound like languid sighs. Flowing melodies and tender phrases weave in and out. A further weaving in of the third theme of the second movement brings back memories of the waltz. The movement ends leaving the listener in an exquisite state of repose.

Finally Dvorak leans into his Bohemian roots and unleashes himself from courtly refinement. This exciting folk dance contains at least three main ideas. A trumpet call announcement at the beginning, a skittish and flirtatious answer, and a child's chant of triumph. Dotted rhythms pervade as well, propelling the movement to a gallop, and there is constant activity, trading of lines and play between sections. Suddenly the music skids almost to a crawl and we hear the opening theme from the first movement as a distant memory. The movement ends with the same three E major chords, bringing the work full circle.

— programme notes by joan blackman

THE ARTISTS

Hannah Addario-Berry^{cello}

Canadian cellist Hannah Addario-Berry has been delighting music lovers around the world for over a decade. Specializing in chamber music and solo repertoire, Hannah is passionately committed to performing music by living composers. Along with her exquisite cello playing, Hannah's warmth and unique presentation style enable listeners to forge a deeper connection with music. Hannah lives with her partner and their two children in North Vancouver, Canada, where she enjoys cooking, gardening, hiking, and her other career as a full spectrum doula.

Justin Almazan^{viola}

Winner of the Sylva Gelber Foundation Award and the Eleanor Stublely Recording Prize, Justin Almazan is a Canadian-American violist and researcher based in Montréal. As a chamber musician, Justin has performed with Kim Kashkashian, Joseph Silverstein, James Buswell, and Philip Setzer of the Emerson String Quartet. He was selected to compete in several international quartet competitions, and toured Italy with the Milton String Quartet as part of Fischhoff Competition's Grand Prize. Currently a doctoral candidate at McGill University's Schulich School of Music, Justin studies with André Roy and Victor Fournelle-Blain.

Jae-Won Bang^{violin}

Violinist Jae-Won Bang received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Violin Performance from the Colburn School and Yale School of Music respectively, and Master of Music in Historical Performance from the Juilliard School. Jae-Won has appeared as a Young Artist with Da Camera Houston for the 2015/2016 season. Her teachers include Gerald and Toni Stanick, Robert Lipsett, Ani Kavafian, Laurie Smukler, and Cho-Liang Lin on violin and Robert Mealy, Cynthia Roberts and Monica Huggett on baroque violin. Since the 2016/2017 season, she has been a member of the first violin section in the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Joan Blackman^{violin}

Former associate concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony and member for over 25 years, Joan

Blackman now devotes her time to curating, leading and performing on the Vetta series. Joan has appeared on numerous chamber music series including Music in the Morning, Music Fest Vancouver, the Jeffrey Concerts in London, Ontario, and the American String Project. She has also performed at summer festivals including the Hornby Island Festival, the Pender Harbour Chamber Music Festival, Kaimerata, and the Victoria Summer Music Festival. She plays on a Landolfi violin, dated 1761.

Shang Jung Chan^{cello}

Shang Jung (Kitty) Chan, recipient of the 2018 British Columbia Arts Council Scholarship, also holds Performer's Associate Diplomas (ARCT) for both cello and piano, two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree in Biology and Music Performance. She has appeared at various summer programs including the NYOC, Scotia Festival of Music and Le Domaine Forget Strings Academy. Kitty attended the Institute of Orchestral Studies with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in partnership with University of Ottawa, and was a student mentee in the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra. She has participated in masterclasses with world-class cellists Mischa Maisky, Paul Watkins, Laurence Lesser of New England Conservatory of Music, Marc Coppey of Conservatoire de Paris, Steven Doane, and Philippe Muller.

Emilie Grimes^{viola}

Emilie Grimes holds a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Michael Tree and Steven Tenenbom. She completed her undergraduate degree under the tutelage of Neal Gripp.

Emilie has toured with the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra in Germany, appeared on Hong Kong's Radio 4 with the Vancouver based Koerner Quartet, and on WQXR in New York. In Vancouver, she has appeared with the VSO Chamber Players, UBC's Wednesdays at Noon, Classics at the Gordon Smith Gallery of Canadian Art, the Vancouver Chamber Music Society, and with the NU:BC new music ensemble. She was appointed Adjunct Professor of Viola at the University of British Columbia from 2017 to 2019. Emilie joined the

viola section of the Vancouver Symphony in 2012, and recently won the position of Assistant Principal Viola.

Yiyi Hsu ^{violin}

Yiyi Hsu holds a Bachelor's degree and Artist Diploma in Violin Performance from UBC.

She has served as concertmaster of the UBC

Symphony, most notably for the 2023 UBC

Symphony Orchestra tour in Germany. She is also a member of the Somerset Quartet, the quartet in residency at UBC School of Music. She has performed at the Vancouver Westcoast Music Society and Music on Main. Yiyi was a participant at The Domaine Forget Music Festival and Academy in Charlevoix, Quebec, the Hammelburg Violin Academy in Germany, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Institute and the UBC Orchestra Festival. This will be her second appearance with Vetta Chamber Music.

Samantha Kung ^{violin}

Samantha Kung obtained both her Bachelor of Music and Master's degree in violin performance at the University of British Columbia. Winner of many scholarships, she was a member of the quartet in residence at the School of Music at UBC in 2021. During her studies at UBC, her performance highlights include as the concertmaster of the UBC Symphony Orchestra and in masterclasses with Mariam Fried, Corey Cerovsek, and Vadim Gluzman. Samantha regularly plays in the Vancouver Island Symphony Orchestra and the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra, and is also the concertmistress of Symphony 21, a non-profit orchestra led by Maestro Jaelem Bhate. While working as a performer, she also teaches violin at the Mastery School of Music in Vancouver and the Ebenezer Fine Arts School in Abbotsford.

Rebecca Ruthven ^{violin}

Rebecca Ruthven is Principal Second Violin with the Vancouver Opera Orchestra. An avid chamber musician, she performed with the Borealis String Quartet and toured BC in The Young Beethoven. On

baroque violin she is a member of the Gallo Chamber Players and Vancouver Baroque Trio and has performed with Pacific Baroque Orchestra. Rebecca studied Violin Performance at McGill University and attended workshops at soundSCAPE Festival in Switzerland, the Banff Centre for the Arts and Tafelmusik Baroque Institute. A three-time alumnus of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, she is a recipient of the Stephen Sitarski Leadership Award.

Alicia Venables ^{violin}

Alicia Venables was raised in Armstrong, B.C and is currently on a one-year contract with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Previously she was a member of the first violin section in the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. She participated in programs such as Music Academy of the West, the Young Artist Program at the National Arts Centre, Morningside Music Bridge, and the New York String Orchestra Seminar. She received her Master of Music Degree from Carnegie Mellon University while studying with Andres Cardenes, her Bachelor of Music Degree from San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Ian Swensen, and a Diploma in Music Performance from Mount Royal University with William van der Sloot.

Meaghan Williams ^{bass}

Raised in Newfoundland, Meaghan studied in Toronto and at the Universität der Künste in Berlin with renowned bassists Joel Quarrington, Gary Karr, and Janne Saksala. Meaghan was founding member of the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra in Japan. She performs regularly with the VSO, the Victoria Symphony, and is Principal Bass of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra and a member of the Vancouver Opera Orchestra. An advocate of Canadian design, Meaghan performs on a bass made by Peter Mach (QC), a bow made by Reid Hudson (BC), and a double bass of Italian origin.

She teaches privately and at Capilano University.

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Pyatt Hall

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SUN. APR. 28, 2024 | 2:00 PM
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