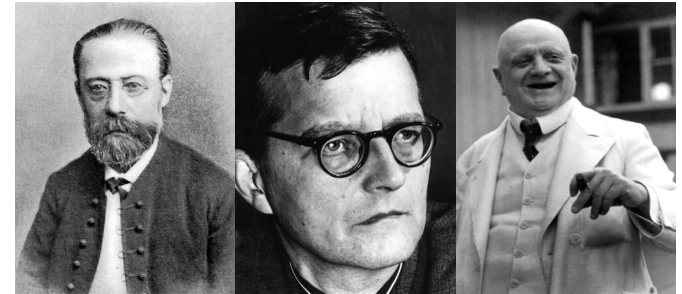




UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE



SMETANA

SHOSTAKOVICH

SIBELIUS

**THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

David Jacobs, conductor
Nicholas Sharma, assistant conductor
Liz Gergel, cello

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Season 117, Program 70

Beall Concert Hall
Sunday, May 6, 2018 | 2:30 p.m.



Vltava (The Moldau) from Má Vlast (1874) Bedřich Smetana
(1824-1884)
[12 min]

Nicholas Sharma, conductor

Cello Concerto no. 1, op. 107 (1959) Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
[28 min]
Allegretto
Moderato
Cadenza
Allegro con moto

Liz Gergel, cello
Nicholas Sharma, conductor

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2, Op. 43 (1902) Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)
[45 min]
Allegretto
Tempo andante, ma rubato
Vivacissimo
Finale: Allegro moderato

HORN

Andrea Kennard
Amrit Gupta
Laura Eason
Jasmine Kim
Andrés Rodriguez

TRUMPET

Luke Harju
Jessica Farmer
Joseph Vranas

TROMBONE

Otmar Borchard
Seven Converse
Cory Francis

TUBA

Juan Valdez
Noe Aguilar Lopez

PERCUSSION

Daniel Surprenant
Crystal Chu
Luke DeDedominces

CELESTE

Alessandro Andrade da Fonseca

**UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

David M. Jacobs, director
Nicholas Sharma, conductor

VIOLIN I

Miya Saito-Beckman, *concertmaster*
Simeon Brown
Jonathan DeBruyn
Ben Gardner
Emma Thormodsen
Cilka Daniels
Della Davies

VIOLIN II

Tina Glausi, *principal*
Megan Letky
Nolan Bjorn
Kaydee Willis
Ellie Van Hattem
Melissa Henriquez
Gillian Frederick

VIOLA

Hannah Breyer, *principal*
Lauren Culver
Kailie DeBolt
Forrest Walker
Lily Coker
Rubi Yan
Ricky Waterman
Julia Richards

CELLO

Joseph Eggleston, *principal*
Clair Dietz
Nora Willauer
Hendrik Mobley
Elizabeth Donovan
Erica Pledger
Nicole Long
Titus Young

BASS

Josef Ward, *principal*
Mario Rodriguez
Andrew Mell
Cam Whitehead

FLUTE

Annabel McDonald
Tori Calderone
Brynna Paros

OBOE

Noah Sylwester
Ryan Strong

CLARINET

Darlene Mueller
Esther Kwak

BASSOON

Bronson York
Daniel Yim
Dylan Myers

Vltava (The Moldau)

Smetana celebrated the history and legends of his people in his orchestral cycle *Má vlast*, taking natural features of the land itself as points of departure. Each of the first four parts was introduced separately, as it was completed, and the last two—*Tábor* and *Blaník*, which were designed to be performed without pause—were also presented on their own before the entire cycle was finally heard in its integral form. The second of the six individual tone poems, the most widely beloved of all Smetana's orchestral works, is a sequence of scenes related to the river Vltava, generally known outside the Czech lands by its German name, Moldau.

The idea for this piece had been forming in Smetana's mind for at least seven years before he got around to composing it, and that surely accounts for his being able to complete the score in only three weeks. The inspiration first came to him during a country holiday in 1867, when he visited the spot where the Vydra and Otava flow together in the Sumava Valley. Three years later he noted a further impetus: "an excursion to the St. John Rapids, where I sailed in a boat through the huge waves at high water; the view of the landscape on either side was both beautiful and grand." The published score includes his own description of the scenes he intended to evoke:

Two springs gush forth in the shade of the Bohemian forest, the one warm and spouting, the other cool and tranquil. Their waves joyously rushing down over their rocky beds unite and glisten in the rays of the morning sun. The forest brook fast hurrying on becomes the river Vltava, which flowing ever on through Bohemia's valleys grows to be a mighty stream: it flows through thick woods in which the joyous noise of the hunter's horn are heard ever nearer and nearer; it flows through grass-grown pastures and lowlands, where a wedding feast is celebrated with song and dancing. At night the wood and water nymphs revel in its shining waves, in which many fortresses and castles are reflected as witnesses of the past glory of knighthood and the vanished warlike fame of bygone ages. At the St. John Rapids the stream rushes on, weaving through the

cataracts, and with its foamy waves beats a path for itself through the rocky chasm into the broad river into which it vanishes in the far distance from the poet's gaze.

The "Vyšehrad" motif heard at the end of the piece is so called because of its prominent use in the opening segment of *Má vlast* which bears that name as its title. Vyšehrad was the "high castle" overlooking the River Vltava, the site of the court of Queen Libuše (on whom Smetana composed a festive opera) and other legendary rulers. This motif, which is heard yet again at the end of the cycle's final section, *Blaník*, is based on Smetana's own initials. As Shostakovich was to do in the last century, Smetana indicated his personal involvement in his musical chronicles in this manner, in his case by the notes B-flat and E-flat, which are known in German usage as B and Es, respectively.

There is a resemblance between the principal theme of Vltava and that of Hatikvah, the national anthem of Israel, leading to the assumption that both were derived from the same source. This, however, is not the case, nor is it true that the theme came from a Czech folk song—thought it more or less became one in consequence of Smetana's use of it in this work. The theme of this cornerstone of Czech national music happens to be a Swedish folk song, which was used in F.A. Dahlgren's 1846 play *The Vermland People*. Smetana knew the playwright during his own years in Sweden; Dahlgren's sister-in-law, in fact, was Smetana's pupil in Gothenburg. He may not have been acquainted with the collection of folk music in which Dahlgren found the tune, but surely he knew the play and its most song in it, "*Ack, Vårmeland du sköna.*"

Cello Concerto No. 1

Dmitri Shostakovich and Mstislav Rostropovich enjoyed a special friendship and artistic partnership for many years. The cellist (1927-2007) was a teenager when he first met the composer, who was his senior by 21 years, in 1943. Enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory as a student of both cello and composition, Rostropovich took Shostakovich's orchestration class. His admiration for his teacher

melody. The rest of the theme is eminently melodic, with a graceful tag added by the two clarinets. After a recapitulation of the scherzo proper, the trio is heard another time, followed by a masterly transition that leads directly into the triumphant Finale.

The first theme of the Finale is simple and pithy; it is played by the strings, with *forte* (loud) dynamics, to a weighty accompaniment by low brass and timpani. The haunting second theme has a four-line structure found in many folksongs, and is played by the woodwinds much softer than the first theme, though eventually rising in volume. After a short development section, the triumphant first and the folksong-like second themes both return. Repeated several times with the participation of ever greater orchestral forces, the second theme builds up to a powerful climax. The first theme is then restated by the full orchestra as a concluding gesture.

In the first movement Sibelius “teases” the listener by introducing his musical material by bits and pieces and taking an unusually long time to establish connections among the various short motifs introduced. The gaps are filled in only gradually. Eventually, however, the outlines of a symphonic form become evident and by the end of the movement everything falls into place. In his 1935 book on Sibelius’s symphonies, Cecil Gray observed:

“Whereas in the symphony of Sibelius’s predecessors the thematic material is generally introduced in an exposition, taken to pieces, dissected, and analysed in a development section, and put together again in a recapitulation, Sibelius in the first movement of the Second Symphony inverts the process, introducing thematic fragments in the exposition, building them up into an organic whole in the development section, then dispersing and dissolving the material back into its primary constituents in a brief recapitulation.”

The second movement (“Tempo Andante, ma rubato”) opens in a quite exceptional way: a timpani roll followed by an extended, unaccompanied *pizzicato* (plucked) passage played in turn by the double basses and the cellos. This gives rise to the first melody, marked *lugubre* (mournful) and played by the bassoons (note the exclusive use of low-pitched instruments). Slowly and hesitatingly, the higher woodwinds and strings enter. Little by little, both the pitch and the volume rise, and the tempo increases to “Poco Allegro,” with a climactic point marked by *fortissimo* chords in the brass. As a total contrast, a gentle violin melody, played in triple *pianissimo* and in a new key, starts a new section. The *lugubre* theme, its impassioned offshoots, and the new violin melody, dominate the rest of the movement. The movement ends with a closing motif derived from this last melody, made more resolute by a fuller orchestration.

The third movement (“Vivacissimo”) is a dashing scherzo with a short and languid trio section. The singularity of the trio theme, played by the first oboe, is that it begins with a single note repeated no less than nine times, yet it is immediately perceived as a

knew no bounds, and after Shostakovich had heard the young man play, the admiration became mutual. During the 1950s, the two played Shostakovich’s Cello Sonata (1934) in concert tours all over Russia, and their friendship deepened. Throughout those years, Rostropovich was dreaming of a concerto Shostakovich might one day write for him. But the composer’s wife told him, “Slava, if you want Dmitri Dmitriyevich to write something for you, the only recipe I can give you is this – never ask him or talk to him about it.” Rostropovich followed this advice, however reluctantly. And then one day in 1959, the concerto suddenly materialized. The ecstatic cellist committed the entire piece to memory in just four days, astounding the composer when the two got together at Shostakovich’s summer home on August 6, 1959. In her invaluable book of recollections about Shostakovich*, Elizabeth Wilson reports the following conversation between them:

“Now just hang on a minute while I find a music stand,” Shostakovich said.

The cellist answered: “Dmitri Dmitriyevich, but I don’t need a stand.”

“What do you mean, you don’t need a stand, you don’t need one?”

“You know, I’ll play from memory.”

“Impossible, impossible...”

Rostropovich proceeded to play through the work from memory with the pianist he had brought with him, to the utter delight of the composer and a small number of friends who had gathered in the music room. Afterwards, they celebrated with a festive dinner. Everyone knew they had witnessed a historic moment.

The first public performance, two months later, was enthusiastically received, and was soon followed by an international triumph, establishing the work as the most significant addition to the cello concerto literature in a long time. Shostakovich, inspired by an exceptional instrumentalist with whom he had bonded deeply, had written a work that combined immediacy of expression with

formal perfection, and Romantic passion with Classical balance – something not often found in the music of the 1950s. Nor had music ever communicated more directly or more sincerely.

Once you have heard the concerto's opening motif, played by the cello, you are unlikely ever to forget this four-note theme. It is immediately recognizable when quoted in Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet of 1960. Varied, developed, and taken into successively higher registers of the solo instrument, this little motif dominates the entire movement - and more. An insistent second theme appears a little later, and the music gradually gains in excitement and technical virtuosity. The solo cello plays almost without intermission, though it is joined by the clarinet and especially by the horn, as "assistant" soloists. The end of the movement returns to the opening theme in its original low register. The remaining three movements are played without pause. First we hear a slow movement (actually, the tempo is *Moderato*), featuring - after a dreamy introduction - a very simple, folk-like melody. The introductory material is heard again, followed by a more passionate new idea, leading to a climax and a return of the folk-like theme in high-pitched cello harmonics.

The third movement is a lengthy, unaccompanied cadenza, beginning slowly and becoming faster and faster. Russian critic Lev Ginzburg aptly called it a "monologue-recitative." The movement, although exceedingly hard to perform, is not a mere display of technical difficulties but, in Ginzburg's words, a piece of "deep meditation, reaching philosophical heights." It leads directly into the exuberant finale, which opens with a dance tune - not an ordinary dance tune, though, but one spiced with many chromatic half-steps that give it a striking, sarcastic overtone. The theme is introduced by the oboe and the clarinet, allowing the soloist to catch his breath after the exhausting cadenza. He soon takes over, however, repeating the dance-tune. This theme (in duple meter) is followed by a second dance (in triple). The latter unexpectedly morphs into the memorable opening theme from the first movement, providing the material for the energetic conclusion of

the concerto. As a kind of private joke, Shostakovich concealed in this movement some distorted fragments of a folksong from Georgia in the Caucasus, Stalin's birthplace; the song, "Suliko," had reportedly been the late dictator's personal favorite. But even Rostropovich confessed: "I doubt if I would have detected this quote if Dmitri Dmitriyevich hadn't pointed it out to me."

Symphony No. 2

Jean Sibelius was more than Finland's greatest composer of international reputation. For the Finns, he was, and still is, a national hero, who expressed what was widely regarded as the essence of the Finnish character in music. In his symphonic poems, Sibelius drew on the rich tradition of the ancient Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*. And in his seven symphonies he developed a style that has come to be seen as profoundly Finnish and Nordic. It was a logical continuation of the late Romantic tradition inherited from Brahms, Grieg, and Tchaikovsky, and at the same time a highly personal idiom to which he clung steadfastly in the midst of a musical world filled with an increasing multiplicity of new styles.

Each of Sibelius's symphonies has its own personality. The Second is distinguished by a predilection for melodies that sound like folksong-although Sibelius insisted that he had not used any original folk melodies in the symphony. We know, however, that he was interested in the folk music of his country, and in 1892 visited Karelia, the Eastern province of Finland known for the archaic style of its songs. It was perhaps this avowed interest in folksong that prompted commentators to suggest a patriotic, political program for the symphony. None other than the conductor Georg Schnéevoigt, a close friend of Sibelius and one of the most prominent early performers of his music, claimed that the first movement depicted the quiet pastoral life of the Finnish people and in subsequent movements, in turn, the Russian oppressors, the awakening of national resistance, and finally the triumph over the foreign rule. These ideas were certainly timely at the turn of the century, when Finland was in fact ruled by the Czar, though Sibelius himself never made any statements on the program.