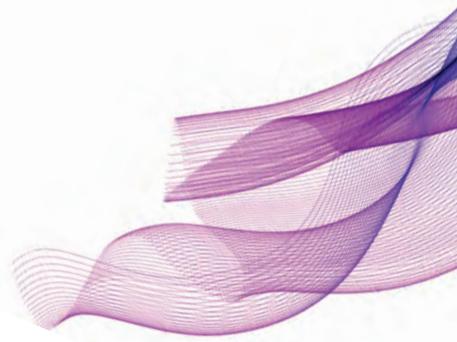


OPENING WEEKEND:

DAZZLING DEBUT

Ken Lam, *Music Director* & Ran Dank, *Piano*



RAN DANK, *Piano*



DAZZLING DEBUT

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 **Fri, October 27, 2017 at 7:30 pm**
Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, Bloomington
Concert Comments at 6:30 pm (in concert hall)

 **Sat, October 28, 2017 at 7:30 pm**
Sangamon Auditorium, Springfield
Concert Comments at 6:30 pm

ILLINOIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK RHEAUME Entrance Fanfare
World Premiere

BEDŘICH SMETANA The Bartered Bride: Overture

BÉLA BARTÓK Piano Concerto No. 3
I. Allegretto
II. Adagio religioso
III. Allegro vivace

Ran Dank, Piano
Intermission

PIOTR ILIYCH TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No.5, Op.64 in E minor
I. Andante – Allegro con anima
II. Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
III. Valse. Allegro moderato
IV. Finale. Andante maestoso
– Allegro vivace

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DAZZLING DEBUT

PROGRAM NOTES

Ken Lam, Music Director
Ran Dank, Piano

Entrance Fanfare

MARK RHEAUME

b. United States, 4 July 1990

World Premiere October 27, 2017 at the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts and October 28, 2017 at Sangamon Auditorium.

This quick gesture for orchestra celebrates new horizons and a treasured past. Entrance Fanfare brims with quotes and references to various pieces that the Illinois Symphony Orchestra performed with conductor Ken Lam during his time as a Music Director Candidate. The listener might detect hints of composers like Telemann, Beethoven, Sibelius, and Hindemith, molded around a new melody first heard in the oboe. The ISO begins its 25th season with promises of reverence towards the past and a bright future to come.

The Bartered Bride: Overture

BEDŘICH SMETANA

b. Litomyšl, modern-day Czech Republic, 2 March 1824

d. Prague, modern-day Czech Republic, 12 May 1884

Premiered May 30, 1866 at the Provisional Theater in Prague under the direction of the composer.

The Bohemian world in which Bedřich Smetana came of age was a far cry from the modern country to which we now tie his heritage. Part of the vast Austro-Hungarian empire, the area then known as Bohemia, included most of the western part of modern-day Czech Republic. In Smetana's time, an independent Czech country was only a dream, and though a Czech revolutionary spirit pervaded, the area remained under control of the Habsburgs until the end of the first world war a generation after Smetana's death.

In his time, however, all over Europe a nationalistic spirit was rising – and finding a voice through its composers. In Finland, Sibelius had a huge following, especially thanks to his work *Finlandia*. In Norway, Grieg exercised similar influence by incorporating nationalistic dances and folk music into his works. In Eastern Europe, Chopin became the preeminent Polish composer, and Smetana took his place as the founding father of Czech music, followed later by Dvořák and Janáček.

The Bartered Bride was Smetana's second contribution to what was a brand new popular art form in Prague: Czech opera. The same year as *The Bartered Bride* was premiered, Smetana became the principal conductor for the Provisional Theater in Prague, a somewhat controversial position that led him to resign after only 8 years. Nevertheless, his remaining years were spent contributing much music to his Czech homeland, earning him local recognition to this day as the true father of Czech music. Internationally, Antonín Dvořák has certainly overshadowed him in wider popularity, but it is Smetana that is considered by the Czech people as the father of their native music.

The opera *The Bartered Bride* is set in a homely village in Bohemia and tells the story of Mařenka, the daughter of peasants, who is being set up by her parents to marry a landowner's son Vašek. She is not interested, having fallen deeply in love with another man, Jeník. Everything is being arranged (for a nice fee!) by a local marriage broker, and Mařenka and Jeník end up having to do some creative maneuvering behind the scenes to expose Vašek as a rather bumbling character unfit for marriage, and earn the blessing of the landowner for their own marriage. It is a humorous and witty opera, full of Czech-inspired music and celebrating the lives of local, common people.

The overture begins with a virtuosic orchestral splash, setting the stage for the high-energy drama that would follow. The folkish influence of the music does nothing to diminish the orchestral brilliance with which it is written, and the thrilling syncopated dance that takes it to the overture's close. The music was uncharacteristically written much before most of the music of the opera was written, but does appear later in the drama, during the scene in which Jeník signs the deed supposedly relinquishing his right to marry Mařenka, only to re-enter the plot on an unforeseen hereditary technicality at the end of the opera.

Piano Concerto No. 3

BÉLA BARTÓK

b. Nagyszentmiklós, Transylvania (now part of Romania), 25 March 1881

d. New York City, 26 September 1945

Premiered February 8, 1946 by György Sándor, piano, and the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy.

Like Smetana was an icon to Czech national spirit, Bartók came to both champion and embody Hungarian nationalistic music. With his colleague, Zoltán Kodály, Bartók spent considerable time making field recordings of native Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, and Bulgarian folk music, and then incorporated that music into his own compositions: sometimes literally setting folk songs, but more often allowing the style of those folks songs to permeate his own original music.

After spending the majority of his life in Hungary (though he traveled extensively to study other musical folk traditions), the outbreak of World War II drove him to emigrate from his homeland to New York, where at the very end of his life he became an American citizen. Unfortunately, his time in America was a very unhappy one for Bartók. Demand for his works was extremely low in the US, though he was better known as a pianist and musicologist. For the last five years of his life he hardly composed, and may have stopped all together were it not for a timely commission from Serge Koussevitsky that yielded Bartók's thrilling *Concerto for Orchestra*. Once the dry spell was over, it seemed that new works began to pour out of him. Unfortunately, his time was limited. A year before the Koussevitsky commission came, Bartók's health took a turn for the worse – eventually he would be diagnosed with leukemia not long before his death in 1945.

At the very end, Bartók was working on two major pieces at once: the *Viola Concerto*, left unfinished at his death, but close enough that it was able to be reconstructed posthumously, and the *Third Piano Concerto*, his final completed work. At the final measure of the *Piano Concerto*, Bartók had written the Hungarian word *vége*, 'the end.' His last night at home, Bartók's friend Tibor Serly had visited him, and found him feverishly trying to finish the orchestral score, surrounded by bottles of medicine and manuscript paper. His son had already written in all of the barlines, it remained only for Bartók to insert the music itself. He very nearly finished. The last seventeen measures of the work were filled in by his friend Serly from Bartók's clear shorthand notes. The day after the visit Bartók was taken to the West Side hospital where he died four days later.

Unlike the first two piano concertos, which Bartók wrote intending to perform them himself (which he did quite often), this concerto was intended for his wife Ditta as a birthday present. He wrote for her in a lyric, serene style, distinctive from his own incisive, energetic playing style. Of the three movements, the second merits special attention. It is based on a work of Beethoven's from late in his life: the "Heiliger Dankgesang" (Holy song of thanksgiving) from his *String Quartet, Op. 132*. Beethoven had written this song of thanksgiving after recovering from a serious illness. No doubt Bartók had hoped for the same for himself. Both pieces contain music of heart-wrenching beauty, a serenity achieved by masterfully sparing use of the orchestra. Bartók's music is interrupted by a flurry of what he called night music, a glittering evocation of the night Bartók used in several of his pieces. Here the winds and piano evoke bird calls before calm is restored and eventually we are brought into the rhythmic final movement.

Symphony No. 5, Op. 64 in E minor

PIOTR ILIYCH TCHAIKOVSKY

b. Votkinsk, Russia, 7 May 1840

d. Saint Petersburg, Russia, 6 November 1893

Premiered November 17, 1888 at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg under the direction of the composer.

The question of Russian nationalism was, for better or worse, at the forefront of Tchaikovsky's mind throughout his compositional career. As Russia's leading composer of his time and a conductor of international repute, Tchaikovsky himself wrestled with the national battle of Russian identity versus European influences. At home in Russia, European influences were viewed with sometimes hostile skepticism. There was a national debate between a group of nationalists known as the "Mighty Handful" and conservatives such as Anton and Nicholas Rubenstein, who thought that Russian music should reflect European compositional techniques and standards. In this case, Tchaikovsky struck a difficult middle ground, writing music clearly influenced by the rich Russian history of folk music and also well-steeped in his European training. After the premiere of his *Fifth Symphony* he wrote to his brother: "On Saturday I took part in a Russian Symphony concert. I am very glad that I could prove, in public, that I do not belong to any particular party."

Though he was such a prominent composer, and probably the first internationally successful Russian composer, his life was riddled with depression and personal crises. His own death just days after the premiere of his sixth symphony remains shadowed in mystery to this day. Yet his music has remained popular despite critical opinions to the contrary from both sides. For some Russian critics, his music was not Russian enough, for some Western critics he is sometimes derided for not following closely enough to Western principles. Yet his undeniable gift for magnificently lyric melodic writing continues to keep this music in an important place in the orchestral canon.

The *Fifth Symphony* has as a backdrop the unspoken theme of 'fate,' an idea taken from a note Tchaikovsky penned early on when working on the symphony, then later dropped as the idea for a programmatic work. This 'fate' motive pervades the brooding, opening movement, the ominous character of which is immediately discerned from the first measures of the piece. After the folk-inspired music of the first movement, the second is a lush, romantic slow movement, the melody of which was even later adapted into a popular love song. The third movement gives nod to the arena in which Tchaikovsky's music has never wavered in popularity, the ballet. The graceful waltz is a lovely pause in the drama before the arrival of the fourth movement and the return of the 'fate' theme. The emotional intensity reaches its greatest height before the 'fate' motive is transformed triumphantly to bring the work to a close.

Program Notes by Erik Rohde

Acting Principal Violin II, Illinois Symphony Orchestra

Director of String Activities and Orchestra, Indiana State University