

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2023 7:30 PM
LUBBOCK, THE BUDDY HOLLY HALL OF PERFORMING ARTS AND SCIENCES

Filharmonie Brno
Dennis Russell Davies, Chief Conductor & Artistic Director

PROGRAM

Thunderbolt P-47, scherzo for orchestra H 309

Bohuslav Martinů

Sinfonietta for orchestra

Leoš Janáček

1. Allegretto
2. Andante
3. Moderato
4. Allegretto
5. Andante

Brass band for the Fanfares

Intermission

Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88

Antonín Dvořák

1. Allegro con brio
2. Adagio
3. Allegretto grazioso
4. Allegro, ma non troppo

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Thunderbolt P-47, scherzo for orchestra H 309

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

Born December 8, 1890 in Polička, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic)

Died August 28, 1959 in Liestal, Switzerland

In 1923, Bohuslav Martinů received a grant from the Czechoslovak minister for education to study composition with Albert Roussel in Paris. He left his homeland, which he would visit occasionally but never returned to permanently. During World War II, Martinů fled occupied France at the last moment and spent several years in the United States. After 1948, when communists took power in Czechoslovakia, Martinů lived in France, Italy and then in Switzerland, where he died. In 1979, his remains were returned to his native Polička.

In the United States, Martinů was received as an established composer. He regularly won commissions for new works, was kept busy composing and in summer taught at prestigious courses of composition. Despite these successes, he watched the developments in Europe, and particularly in his homeland, with a heavy heart. Most of his works written during the war years testify to his dark feelings. He welcomed the end of the war, therefore, with all the more satisfaction, and doubtless with a longing to return home...

The brief piece *Thunderbolt P-47* can be seen as a quirky celebration of the end of the war. "For a long time I had intended to write a short piece for orchestra", said Martinů, "but I was always preoccupied with my symphonies—I have written four during my stay in America, that is to say, one each year. That is why I welcomed the suggestion of my friend Hans Kindler with pleasure for composing a short work. I had thought of writing some dances or scherzo and I chose the latter form. At the time we were with my wife [Charlotte] at South Orleans on Cape Cod where I had just finished my Fourth Symphony which was just recently premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy on November 30 [1945]. I preserved the usual scherzo form with the trio and *da capo* and in September 1945 between swimming, fishing, and composing, I completed this work which I call *Thunderbolt—P-47*. The title was added after the completion of the music, for there is nothing descriptive in it, except for the animated movement which recalls the speed of the fighter planes which were continually flying over our heads at South Orleans and my private tribute to this type of plane which was of such assistance in ending this terrible war. The composition is dedicated to Hans Kindler".

Kindler premiered *Thunderbolt P-47* with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington on 19 December 1945, but Martinů was not able to attend, as he was sick with flu.

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Sinfonietta for orchestra

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

Born July 3, 1854 in Hukvaldy, Austrian Empire (now Czech Republic)

Died August 12, 1928 in Moravská Ostrava, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic)

Leoš Janáček is the world's most frequently performed Czech opera composer and belongs to most frequently performed opera composers at all. Although in terms of age Leoš Janáček is more part of Antonín Dvořák's generation, his music is some of the most expressive to be found in the 20th century, placing this composer among musicians two generations his junior. Janáček's life and work are closely connected with the city of Brno, where he lived from childhood and where his tireless work as a composer and organizer contributed greatly to the development of Brno's cultural life.

Well-known to Czech and also foreign audiences, the five-movement *Sinfonietta*, Janáček's last completed symphonic work, is a musical celebration of Brno to which it is dedicated (as well as the no-less-famous *Glagolitic Mass*). However, it is primarily an

expression of the incredibly vitality of the seventy-two-year-old composer: a tragic shadow or even the idea of death, so frequent in Janáček's works, does not appear here at all, and the focus of its dramatic line is—in the central third part—the most impressive portrayal of a love experience imaginable, and this time without the fateful subtext which accompanies the erotic element in the rest of Janáček's works.

A characteristic tension emerges early on, in the rough unrest of the opening brass and tympani fanfare, brought to a stunning take off, growing in a kaleidoscope of the second movement with a stunning nocturne image juxtaposing melodic Moravian dance themes and unexpected dive gradations—and discharging into the final climax of the third movement. The laconic scherzo is a cabinet example of a mono-thematic composition, more than illustrative in its economy. Tension escalated by unexpected expressive contrasts in the conclusion is then accompanied by nature images in the finale, and again increases in its anxiety twists and turns (with Janáček's typical E-flat clarinet sound) to an escalated moment when the liberating intro fanfare returns. However, this time it triumphantly carries over the sound of the rest of the orchestra, whose counterpoint of the jubilant four-tone motif pushes the effect of the familiar melodies to dazzling new positions.

The first performance was in Prague on 26 June 1926, together with the *Glagolitic Mass*, under Václav Talich.

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Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8 1841 in Nelahozeves, Austrian Empire (now Czech Republic)

Died May 5, 1904 in Prague, Austrian Empire (now Czech Republic)

Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88 (1889) is one of the most original and extraordinary symphonies by Antonín Dvořák, who intended, in his own words, “to present his thoughts in a different way from deep-rooted forms.” He enlivened the traditional four-movement form with a number of unusual moments resulting primarily from his thematic material. For instance, in the opening movement, the sonata form features—at the beginning of the exposition, the development and the recapitulation—a hymn-like theme that is not elaborated but rather is heard each time virtually unchanged. The second movement is a loose rondo expressing a varied spectrum of contrasting moods. The third movement, a scherzo, starts with a melancholy waltz melody, which is then replaced by thematic material derived from Dvořák's one-act comic opera *The Stubborn Lovers*, Op. 17. The finale is built up from a refined combination of sonata and variation forms.

Given the variety and changeability of the flow of the music, bringing together noble and impassioned melodies with popular and naïve tunes, Dvořák's *Eighth Symphony* is considered a herald of Gustav Mahler's late symphonies. It was first heard in February 1890 at Prague's Rudolfinum in a concert of the Umělecká beseda artists' association, with the National Theatre Orchestra conducted by the composer, who also wielded the baton at subsequent performances in London and Frankfurt am Main. It was issued not by Simrock, Dvořák's principal publisher to date, with whom the composer clashed over royalties and ambitions, but in the care of the London firm Novello—hence it is sometimes subtitled “English”, although there is nothing English about its content.

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