

Program Page

HOUGH FAMILY FOUNDATION MASTERWORKS

Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 4

Thomas Wilkins, *Conductor*
Vadim Gluzman, *Violin*

Saturday, Jan 6, 2024, Mahaffey Theater at 8:00 pm

Sunday, Jan 7, 2024, Ruth Eckerd Hall at 7:30 pm

Missy Mazzoli
(b. 1980)

Wolfgang A. Mozart
(1759-1791)

Ottorino Respighi
(1879-1936)

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

Sinfonia (For Orbiting Spheres) ♪

Concerto for Violin No. 4 in D major, K.218

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio cantabile
- III. Rondeau: Andante grazioso – Allegro ma non troppo
Vadim Gluzman, *violin*

Intermission

Fontane di Roma (Fountains of Rome)

- I. La fontana di Valle Giulia all'alba
- II. La Fontana del Tritone al mattino
- III. La Fontana de Trevi al meriggio
- IV. La fontana di Villa Medici al tramonto

On the Waterfront Symphonic Suite ♪

- 1. Andante (with dignity)—Presto barbaro
- 2. Adagio—Allegro molto agitato—Alla breve
- 3. Andante largamente—More flowing—Lento
- 4. Moving forward—Largamente—Andante come prima
- 5. Allegro non troppo, molto marcato—Poco più sostenuto
- 6. A tempo (Poco più sostenuto)

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Missy Mazzoli (1980-)

Sinfonia (For Orbiting Spheres), 2013/2021

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

She has been called a gate crusher of new classical music in America (NPR), a composer of apocalyptic imagination (*New Yorker*), and Brooklyn's post-millennial Mozart (*Time Out*).

Missy Mazzoli may not be a household name just yet, but she is among progressive orchestras, chamber groups and opera companies. The *Chicago Tribune* called her *Orpheus Undone* one of the best symphonic performances of 2022, and her recent recording *Dark with Excessive Bright* unfolds as “music that refuses to be pinned down,” noted the *Financial Times*.

Many eagerly await The Florida Orchestra premiere of *Sinfonia (For Orbiting Spheres)*, another example of the group's commitment to contemporary music. Along with works by Mozart and Respighi, the latest Hough Family Foundation Masterworks program opens with Mazzoli and ends with Leonard Bernstein, the two serving as “masterful bookends of American music,” says Music Director Michael Francis.

Commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the nine-minute piece reflects a kind of celestial energy, with ideas constantly in motion. It opens as if from a primordial mist, strings and woodwinds ascending in the arc of a crescendo, the sounds of the orchestra always elusive and unsettled. Mazzoli, a faculty member at Manns College of Music in New York, describes her thought process:

“It's music in the shape of a solar system, a collection of rococo loops that twist around each other within a larger orbit,” she explains on her website. “The word ‘sinfonia’ refers to Baroque works for chamber orchestra but also to the old Italian term for a hurdy-gurdy, a medieval stringed instrument with constant, wheezing drones that are cranked out under melodies played on an attached keyboard.

“It's a piece that churns and roils, that inches close to the listener only to leap away at breakneck speed, in the process transforming the ensemble into a makeshift hurdy-gurdy, flung recklessly into space.”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major, Op. 218

Duration: ca. 30 minutes

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the violin concerto grew muscular. After Beethoven introduced his iconic masterpiece in 1806, composers probed deep into the form, expanding both artistic possibilities and performer virtuosity. The concertos of Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruch, Prokofiev, Sibelius and others found new expression – and size – to accommodate bigger halls and audience expectations.

But what of the five concertos by Mozart, which seem quaint by comparison? All written within one year by a 19-year-old, they sound innocent, like polite chamber music, the orchestra always in gracious support of its soloist.

His quintet of concertos may stay safely within the classical-period mold, with its emphasis on restraint, but much can be felt underneath the veneer. If the first two are more perfume than profundity, the next three reveal something else: “Suddenly there is a new depth and richness to Mozart's whole language,” the critic and musicologist Alfred Einstein said of the *Third Concerto*, and called the *Fifth* “unsurpassed for brilliance, tenderness and wit.”

Last season, TFO Associate Concertmaster Nancy Chang shared some of these qualities in her performance of the *Third*. In an interview, she said while complicated sounding music can often be easy to play, simple sounding music – such as a Mozart violin concerto – can be deceptive. She added that “the more advanced a musician becomes, the less likely he or she is to dismiss Mozart as ‘simple.’”

This underscores the challenge of the *Violin Concerto No. 4*, which the orchestra performs in its latest Masterworks program, with guest soloist Vadim Gluzman. Cast in the bright key of D major, it borrows from the Italian models of Nardini and Vivaldi but is pure Mozart in how it projects a sunny, lyrical personality seemingly without effort, yet carried forward with a pulsating energy.

The *allegro* opens as a march-like fanfare, the orchestra playing in military stride as the violin echoes the theme in the highest register. Shades of an opera aria appear in the charming *andante cantabile*, and while Mozart introduces an idea and recaps it, he avoids the traditional development section in between.

The work ends with a lively jig in the form of a French rondeau with dueling melodies. Listeners might notice the “droning” of the soloist's lowest string, meant to evoke the sound of a hand-cranked hurdy-gurdy – similar to the piece that opens this program.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Fountains of Rome (1916)

Duration: ca. 15 minutes

Western music owes a great deal to Italy and the traditions set down more than 400 years ago by an innovative group of musicians known as the Florentine Camerata. This band of innovators laid the cornerstones for what would become the modern opera, and for generations any patriotic Italian composer evolved his art through its voice.

Respighi was no exception, attempting 10 unsuccessful projects such as *Semirama*, *Belfagor* and *La Fiamma*. These works, which contain many fine moments, aren't staged today, much less remembered; but Respighi's talents lay elsewhere, and his best and brightest works for orchestra are savored by anyone who relishes detail, refinement and shimmering instrumental color.

Unlike his forward-thinking contemporary, Puccini, Respighi sided with a group of composers who sought to preserve tradition through Renaissance and Baroque forms, an example being his delightful *Ancient Airs and Dances*. He even turned against his more progressive colleagues when, in 1932, he signed a petition condemning modernistic trends in Italian music.

As a composer, Respighi emphasized clarity in his orchestration, the interplay of light and shade, and melodic invention, and the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov is never far behind in most of his works. Respighi's trademark remains the famed triptych of Roman tone poems – *Fountains*, *Pines and Festivals* – which unfold like prisms of color in the late afternoon sun.

With *Fountains*, Respighi enjoyed his first artistic and financial success, and the music's inherent light quality – a certain freshness not assigned to his earlier works – shows an affinity for all facets of the orchestra.

Completed in 1916, *Fountains* depicts four of the city's more than 280 landmark fountains, each at different times of the day. It opens with a pastoral *Valle Giulia Fountain at Dawn*; then a chorus of horns and bells introduces *Triton Fountain at Morning*; followed by the grandiose *Trevi Fountain at Noon*. It ends with the subtle *Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset*, a highlight being the clarinet and flute mimicking birds as night gives way to a quiet peace.

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Symphonic Suite from On the Waterfront (1955)

Duration: ca. 19 minutes

No American did more to popularize classical music than Leonard Bernstein, and no one was more successful at explaining its relevance to the modern audience. He taught, he motivated, he dazzled, he made converts of the skeptical. He was the first American-born musician to lead a major orchestra in the United States, and during his tenure with the New York Philharmonic he recorded more than 400 pieces, garnered 10 Emmys and a half-dozen Grammy Awards.

As an interpreter, he championed young American composers, and almost single-handedly created the Mahler revival in the 1960s. His personality was huge, his intellect immense, his curiosity insatiable. As a result, he dabbled and experimented in all realms of music, often stretching himself too thin: "I'm over-committed on all fronts," he once said. Consequently, his music as a whole remains uneven, but the works that shine through have become part of America's cultural fabric.

Certainly, *West Side Story* is his best-known score, but his *Symphonic Suite* from the movie *On the Waterfront* deserves equal time in concert halls. Directed by Elia Kazan and starring Marlon Brando, *On the Waterfront* won eight Academy Awards in 1954, with a nomination for Bernstein's score.

The next year, Bernstein arranged it into a six-movement (played without breaks) symphonic suite, "to salvage some of the music that would otherwise have been left on the floor of the dubbing room." He said the suite's main materials "undergo numerous metamorphoses, following as much as possible the chronological flow of the film score itself." The music, however, is less a formal suite than a tone poem – an orchestral form with a narrative idea – rich with pulsating tensions and Bernstein's remarkable ear for melody.

The opening section, marked *presto barbaro*, underscores the conflict between Brando's character, Terry Malloy, and the corrupt union leaders who control the harbor where he works. A lyrical adagio follows, suggesting the love between Malloy and Edie Doyle, portrayed by Eva Marie Saint in the film. The music then captures the rift between Malloy and union boss Johnny Friendly, and concludes with a theme suggesting Malloy's courageous return to work.

Alexander Bernstein, the composer's son who was born the year his father arranged the suite, has called the music "sweet, furious, witty, wild, sexy, brazen, passionate, eclectic, and unashamedly hopeful – just like our Dad."

Program notes by Kurt Loft, a freelance writer and former music critic for The Tampa Tribune.