SATURDAY at 7:30pm | The Granada
Nir Kabaretti, conductor Gil Shaham, violin
TCHAIKOVSKY • DVOŘÁK

SUNDAY at 3:00pm | The Granada
Nir Kabaretti, conductor Gil Shaham, violin Adele Anthony, violin
BACH • AVNER DORMAN • DVOŘÁK

PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, BWV 1043 (ca. 1730) by Johann Sebastian Bach (Eisenach, 1685 - Leipzig, 1750)

I. Vivace
II. Largo ma non tanto
III. Allegro

From 1708 and 1717, when he was in his late twenties and early thirties, J. S. Bach was employed at the ducal court in Weimar, where he befriended the musically gifted young Prince Johann Ernst. The Prince, who had studied in the Netherlands, brought back with him a copy of L'Estro armonico, a collection of violin concertos by Antonio Vivaldi, recently published in Amsterdam. These concertos proved to be a major source of inspiration for Bach, who was seven years the Venetian composer's junior. During the Weimar years, Bach made numerous arrangements of Vivaldi concertos for organ or harpsichord, but he does not seem to have composed any solo concertos of his own until later in his career. According to our current state of knowledge, the violin concerto in E major dates from Bach's Köthen years (1717-23); its companion piece in A minor and the present Double Concerto were written even later, probably in Leipzig around 1730.

Vivaldi codified the basic three-movement (fast-slow-fast) layout of the concerto and standardized the so-called ritornello form in the fast movements, in which a principal theme, played by the orchestra, alternates with solo episodes. Bach enlarged upon this formula by using a fair amount of counterpoint, which was part of his German heritage and a technique seldom found in the works of Vivaldi.

The ritornello theme in the first movement of the Bach Double Concerto, first stated by one of the soloists, is repeated in imitation by the other soloist a fifth higher, and shortly afterwards by the bass an octave lower. The theme outlines a chromatic scale, descending in half-steps, which contributes significantly to the harmonic complexities. Melodies and countermelodies intertwine in exciting ways throughout the movement; the solo episodes add some virtuosic touches while the orchestra keeps repeating the first few notes of the ritornello theme.

(Continued)

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(Continued)

The slow movement is a single uninterrupted melody of surpassing beauty, spun out by the two solo violins. Each time a cadence, or resting point, is reached, the melody immediately starts in a new direction, so that the phrase never really ends before the whole movement is over. It is a veritable love duet between the two violins!

SEASON FINALE

GIL SHAHAM WEEKEND

THE SANTA BARBARA SYMPHONY
Nir Kabaretti, Music & Artistic Director

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PROGRAM NOTES

A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance (2025)
by Avner Dorman
(b. Tel Aviv, 1975)

I. Meditative
II. Upbeat
III. Lamentful
IV. Exuberant

Before Avner Dorman first came to the United States in 2003 to study with John Corigliano at the Juilliard School, he was already a star in his native Israel. He quickly made his mark as a composer and conductor in America. Today, he is the author of a large catalog of works in all genres, which are performed with great frequency by many of the world's most prominent musicians. Dorman composed Nigunim for Gil Shaham and his sister, pianist Orli Shaham, in 2011; Gil Shaham recently recorded the orchestral version of this work on CD.

A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance was co-commissioned for Gil Shaham and his wife and violinist, Adele Anthony, by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Andreas Delfs, Music Director, with support from the Voices of Today initiative; Sejong Soloists, Kyung Kang, Creative and Executive Director, with generous support from Jin Young Lee Kim; Aspen Music Festival and School, Robert Spano, Music Director; and the Santa Barbara Symphony, Nir Kabaretti, Music & Artistic Director. The world premiere was given by Ms. Anthony, Mr. Shaham, and the Sejong Soloists at Carnegie Hall, New York, on April 8, 2025.

The composer provided the following comments on his work:

"*I had been meaning to write a concerto for Gil and Adele for quite a while. The opportunity to do so came at a particularly challenging time in the world, especially for my country of origin, Israel, and the Jewish people. The attack of October 7th and the ensuing war have touched me personally and have cast a cloud over everything during the past year.*

(Continued)

PROGRAM NOTES

A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance (2025)
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(Continued)

In trying to cope with these events and challenges, I found myself looking for rituals that deal with loss and that would connect me to the collective experience. I have found that the Jewish tradition often combines practices of mourning with those of celebration– a combination that holds a deep meaning for me.

The piece is written in four movements. The first is a meditative lament that begins with a soft, distant drone. The solo violins introduce the main theme– an elegiac melody that incorporates Jewish prayer gestures and the 'sigh' motif – a descending half step. Through the movement, these elements and the theme travel between the soloists and the larger ensemble, ending with a simple, solemn prayer.

An upbeat dance in changing meters, the second movement employs the same scales and thematic materials of the first, but now they serve as the building blocks of an exciting drama. The movement is structured as a series of dance tunes and various textural explorations, reaching its culmination in a reprise of the harmonic sighs of the opening movement, now as a cathartic release.

Deeply sorrowful, the third movement opens with the return of persistent drones, and the sigh motif permeates almost every bar of the melody. The movement is structured like a large triple fugue, beginning with the individual solo players and slowly spreading throughout the ensemble. After an intense yet still lamentful climax, the movement continues to slow down as if time stands still– ritualistic, slowly, and softly.

An exuberant and exciting dance, the fourth movement is mostly in an asymmetrical 7/16 meter. Joy, almost forgotten in the lament, returns in full force, though the material includes both elements of happiness and grief. This joy acknowledges the pain and sorrow yet embraces the opportunity to dance again."

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PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88 (1889)
by Antonín Dvořák
(Nelahozeves, Bohemia, 1841 - Prague, 1904)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Adagio
III. Allegretto grazioso -- Molto Vivace
IV. Allegro ma non troppo

"Gentlemen, in Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle—they always call to the dance!"
(Czech conductor Rafael Kubelik during a rehearsal of the trumpet fanfare opening the last movement of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony.)

Something remarkable happened in the history of music during the 19th century: composers of symphonic music increasingly turned away from happy or cheerful feelings in favor of dramatic or even tragic ones. Instead of the light and unclouded tone found in many major works by Haydn or Mozart, Romantic composers predominantly used darker colors. Lightness was gradually pushed to the periphery of classical music and relegated to new popular genres, such as operetta, while large-scale symphonic works increasingly emphasized high passion and brooding melancholy.

There were two great exceptions to this general trend: Mendelssohn in the first half of the century, and Dvořák in the second half. Both had the unusual gift of writing radiantly happy music in an era where such an approach was often taken for either conservatism or naïveté. It was neither: it was merely a sign of a different artistic personality.

If we compare Dvořák's Eighth Symphony (1889) to some of the great symphonic works written around the same time, the difference will become readily apparent. Just the year before, in 1888, Tchaikovsky completed his Fifth (E minor), in which he was grappling with grave questions about Fate and human life. The same year, César Franck introduced his Symphony in D minor, whose complex emotional journey leads from self-doubt to eventual triumph. Johannes Brahms finished his fourth and last symphony (E minor) in 1885 with a magnificent passacaglia that infused that Baroque variation form with genuine Romantic passion. (Brahms's "sunny" Second Symphony from 1877 is the exception that confirms the rule.)

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(Continued)

Dvořák's cheerfully optimistic Eighth opens with an expressive melody in G minor that prepares the entrance of another theme, a playful idea in G major first given to the solo flute. A dynamic sonata exposition soon gets underway. Dvořák "overshoots the mark" as he bypasses the expected secondary key, D major, in favor of a more remote but even brighter-sounding B major. The development section works up quite a storm, but the storm subsides when the playful main theme returns, now played by the English horn instead of the flute (two octaves lower than before). The recapitulation ends with a short but very energetic coda.

The second movement ("Adagio") begins with a simple string melody in darker tonal regions (E-flat major/C minor) that soon reaches a bright C major where it remains. The main theme spawns various episodes, in turn lyrical and passionate. After a powerful climax, the movement ends in a tender pianissimo.

The third movement ("Allegretto grazioso") is neither a minuet nor a scherzo but an "intermezzo" like the third movements of Brahms's First and Second Symphonies. Its first tune is a sweet and languid waltz; its second, functioning as a "trio," sounds more like a Bohemian folk dance. After the return of the waltz, Dvořák surprises us with a very fast ("Molto vivace") Coda, in which commentators have recognized a theme from one of Dvořák's earlier operas. But this Coda consists of the same notes as the lilting "trio" melody, only in a faster tempo, with stronger accents, and in duple instead of triple meter. In the third movement of his Second Symphony, Brahms transformed his "trio" theme in the same way.

(Continued)

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(Continued)

A resounding trumpet fanfare announces the fourth movement ("Allegro ma non troppo"), a complex theme-and-variations with a central episode that sounds at first like contrasting material but is derived from the main theme. Dvořák's handling of form is indebted to Beethoven and Brahms, but he filled out the form with melodies of an unmistakably Czech flavor. The variations vary widely in character: some are slower and some are faster in tempo, some are soft (such as the virtuosic one for solo flute), and some are noisy; most are in the major mode, though the central one, reminiscent of a village band, is in the minor. The ending seems to be a long time coming, with an almost interminable series of closing figures. When the last chord finally arrives, it still sounds delightfully abrupt due to its unusual metric placement.

Notes by Peter Laki