

Andris Nelsons, Ray and Maria Stata Music Director  
Boston Symphony Orchestra  
141st season, 2021–2022

Thursday, November 4, 8pm  
Friday, November 5, 1:30pm  
Saturday, November 6, 8pm

**Dima Slobodeniouk** conducting

Tchaikovsky                      Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Opus 23  
   Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso—Allegro con spirito  
   Andantino semplice—Prestissimo—Tempo I  
   Allegro con fuoco  
**Beatrice Rana**

Intermission

Dvořák                              Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Opus 70  
   Allegro maestoso  
   Poco adagio  
   Scherzo: Vivace  
   Finale: Allegro

Bank of America is proud to sponsor the BSO's 2021-22 season.

The evening concerts will end about 9:30, and the afternoon concert about 3:00.

In consideration of the performers and those around you, please turn off all electronic equipment during the performance, including tablets, cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms, messaging devices of any kind, anything that emits an audible signal, and anything that glows. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices and taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs or videos—are prohibited during concerts.

#### THE PROGRAM IN BRIEF...

The Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, one of the most beloved works in the repertoire, was initially rejected by the composer's friend and compatriot, the pianist Nikolai Rubinstein, for whom Tchaikovsky originally intended it. It eventually found a champion in the German conductor-pianist Hans von Bülow, who was soloist for the first performance in October 1875 in Boston, where he was presenting his own series of concerts (see page 26). The work begins with one of the boldest and most familiar opening salvos in the repertoire, followed by a sweeping melody for the orchestral strings, against which the pianist plays a series of assertive, crashing chords. But the piano part also offers much opportunity for feather-light fingerwork of an entirely different kind, and one of the most compelling aspects of Tchaikovsky's concerto is the balance he achieves between music of great forcefulness on the one hand and music that is soft and gentle on the other.

Among the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's symphonies, the Seventh is closest to the German tradition. The influential musical essayist Donald Francis Tovey ranked it with Schubert's Great C major and the four Brahms symphonies as the purest examples of the genre since Beethoven. Dvořák wrote his Seventh Symphony at the request of the Royal Philharmonic Society in London, following the reverent response there to his Symphony No. 6. He was spurred on by the example of his mentor Johannes Brahms, who had just introduced his own Symphony No. 3. Dvořák himself conducted the first performance of his Seventh in London in April 1885.

—Marc Mandel/Robert Kirzinger

#### NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**  
**Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Opus 23**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born at Votkinsk, Vyatka Province, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893. He composed his Piano Concerto No. 1 between November 1874 and February 21, 1875. The first performance took place at the Music Hall in Boston on October 25, 1875, with Hans von Bülow as soloist and B.J. Lang conducting.

In addition to the solo piano, the score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, and strings (violins I and II, violas, cellos, and double basses). The concerto is about 37 minutes long.

Nikolai Grigorievich Rubinstein, who Tchaikovsky hoped would be the first to play his B-flat minor piano concerto and who did actually conduct the premiere of his first four symphonies, of *Eugene Onegin*, and of a whole run of shorter works including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Marche slave*, *Francesca da Rimini*, the Suite No. 1, *Capriccio italiani*, and the Variations on a Rococo Theme for cello and orchestra, was born in Moscow in 1835, trained in law as well as in music, and was director of the Moscow Conservatory from its founding in 1866 until his death in 1881. He was younger brother to Tchaikovsky's teacher, the famous Anton Rubinstein, and though generally not quite so highly esteemed as a pianist was considered the better conductor and teacher of the two. The list of Tchaikovsky premieres he led between 1866 and 1880 tells its own story of the closeness of the two men, but their encounter over the B-flat minor piano concerto was a disaster, Tchaikovsky having gone to Rubinstein for advice ("he was not only the best pianist in Moscow but also a first-rate all-round musician," wrote Tchaikovsky) only to be told that his work was "worthless and unplayable...beyond rescue...bad, vulgar..." leaving the composer astonished and outraged.

A few years later, Tchaikovsky had a similar collision with Leopold Auer over the Violin Concerto. The two stories, moreover, had parallel happy endings. As Auer and pupils of his like Heifetz, Elman, Milstein, and Zimbalist eventually became particularly associated with the Violin Concerto, so did Rubinstein become an ardent champion of the Piano Concerto, and his pupils Sergey Taneyev, Alexander Siloti, and Emil von Sauer constituted with Hans von Bülow, Vassily Sapelnikov, and Adele aus der Ohe the first generation of pianists who established it as indispensable.

The premiere took place far from home, in Boston's Music Hall, now the Orpheum Theatre on Washington Street. Hans Guido von Bülow, ten years older than Tchaikovsky, had a distinguished double career as pianist and conductor. He had been particularly associated with the Wagnerian movement, had led the premieres of *Tristan and Meistersinger*, and would later become an important interpreter of Brahms and give the young Richard Strauss his first lift up the career ladder. Von Bülow's young wife Cosima, daughter of Franz Liszt, had by degrees left him for Wagner during the second half of the 1860s, and, much embittered, he retired from the concert stage for some years. He resumed his career in 1872 and in March 1874 gave a recital at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. Tchaikovsky was stirred by the combination of intellect and passion in von Bülow's playing; von Bülow, in turn, liked Tchaikovsky's music. Soon after, he took the opportunity of smuggling a good word for Tchaikovsky into an article on Mikhail Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar*:

At the present moment we know but one other who, like Glinka, strives and aspires, and whose works—although they have not yet attained to full maturity—give complete assurance that such maturity will not fail to come. I refer to the young professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory—Tchaikovsky. A beautiful string quartet of his has won its way in several German cities. Many other works by him merit equal recognition—his piano compositions, two symphonies, and an uncommonly interesting *Romeo and Juliet* Overture, which commends itself by its originality and its luxuriant melodic flow. Thanks to his many-sidedness, this composer will not run the danger of being neglected abroad as Glinka was.

Von Bülow was happy to accept the dedication in Rubinstein's stead and made arrangements to introduce the "Grand Concerto (Op. 23) in B-flat," as the program had it, at the fifth of a series of concerts in Boston. The audience was informed

that the above grand composition of Tschaikowsky, the most eminent Russian maestro of the present day, completed last April and dedicated by its author to Hans von Bülow, has NEVER BEEN PERFORMED, the composer himself never having enjoyed an audition of his masterpiece. To Boston is reserved the honor of its initial representation and the opportunity to impress the first verdict on a work of surpassing musical interest.

Von Bülow sent the composer a telegram announcing the triumphant reception of the concerto, and Tchaikovsky spent most of his available cash, of which just then he had very little, on a return message. Von Bülow consolidated

his success by repeating the concerto at his matinee five days later and upon his return to Europe introduced it as speedily as possible in London and at other musical centers. The Boston concert was a strenuous one for von Bülow, who also played Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata and Liszt's version with orchestra of Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy. (There were also overtures by Spohr and Beethoven, and Mendelssohn's Wedding March to finish up with.) And one does wonder what it all sounded like with B.J. Lang's orchestra with its four first violins!

Listeners of sufficient antiquity will remember that the theme of the introduction flourished in the early '40s as a pop song; the title was "Tonight we love," and the meter was stretched on the rack from three beats in the measure to four. Tchaikovsky himself had borrowed two of the concerto's other melodies: the hopping theme that starts the Allegro is a song traditionally sung by blind beggars in the Ukraine, while the scherzo-like interlude in the middle of the second movement is a song, "*Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire*," from the repertoire of Désirée Artôt, a superb Belgian soprano whom Tchaikovsky courted briefly in the winter of 1868-69.

Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1976 to 1979, and after that of the San Francisco Symphony and New York Philharmonic. Oxford University Press has published three compilations of his program notes, devoted to symphonies, concertos, and the great works for chorus and orchestra.

The first Boston Symphony performance of music from this concerto was of just the first movement, on March 15, 1883, in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, with soloist B.J. Lang and Georg Henschel conducting. The BSO's first complete performance, also with Lang as soloist, took place on February 21, 1885, under Wilhelm Gericke. The most recent performances at Symphony Hall by the BSO were led by Andris Nelsons with soloist Evgeny Kissin in October 2015; the most recent Tanglewood performance by the BSO was Garrick Ohlsson's with conductor Juanjo Mena on July 23, 2016.

### **Antonín Dvořák**

#### **Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Opus 70**

Antonín Dvořák was born at Mühllausen (Nelahozeves), Bohemia, on September 8, 1841, and died in Prague on May 1, 1904. He began to sketch this symphony on December 13, 1884, and completed the score on March 17, 1885. Dvořák himself conducted the premiere on April 22, 1885, at Saint James's Hall, London, at a concert of the Royal Philharmonic Society. The score as we now know it incorporates a few revisions made in June 1885. The score of Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 calls for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

When Volume II of Donald Francis Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis* appeared in 1935, many of his readers must have been startled to come across this sentence: "I have no hesitation in setting Dvořák's [Seventh] Symphony along with the C major Symphony of Schubert and the four symphonies of Brahms, as among the greatest and purest examples of this art-form since Beethoven."\* (Footnote follows this paragraph.) For one thing, hardly any of Tovey's readers were likely ever to have heard the D minor symphony. Performances of any of Dvořák's symphonies other than the *New World* were extremely rare, at least outside Czechoslovakia. Václav Talich's wonderful recording of No. 7 with the Czech Philharmonic came out in 1938, but record buyers in those days were also relatively few and had smaller collections, to say nothing of the fact that during the Second World War, with the ingredients of shellac needed for a more urgent cause, there was a huge and frustrating discrepancy between what manufacturers listed in their catalogues and what one could actually find in stores. In sum, for most people the "other" Dvořák symphonies were a discovery of the years after the war.

(\* Actually what Tovey wrote was "Second Symphony." Only five of Dvořák's nine symphonies were published during the composer's lifetime, and only after 1955, as the complete critical edition of his works began to come out of Prague, did people adopt the present numbering that takes all nine symphonies into account and places them in their correct chronological order. The old numbering reflects the order of publication.)

If a reader half a century ago found Tovey's assessment of the D minor symphony surprising, that was also because neither professional musicians nor listeners were inclined to take Dvořák terribly seriously. He was the composer of the Symphony *From the New World*, the *Carnival* Overture, and the Slavonic Dances—a composer for popular concerts, a genre- and landscape-artist, friendly, colorful, but not a plausible person to have written one of the "greatest and purest" symphonies since Beethoven and hardly to be mentioned in the same breath as so secure a tenant in the pantheon as Johannes Brahms. The first to disagree with that judgment would have been the redoubtable Dr. Brahms himself, he who had used his prestige to set his younger colleague up with an important publisher, helped him to get a series of government grants, and was ever available to him with kindness and advice.

Dvořák's problematic estate fifty, sixty, seventy years ago was a drastic change from the enormous esteem in which he was held from the 1880s on. His fame at home had begun with the performance in 1873 of a patriotic cantata called *The Heirs of the White Mountain*. In 1878, at the urging of Brahms, the Berlin firm of Simrock added Dvořák to its list. Simrock began by issuing the Moravian Duets (for soprano and mezzo-soprano) that had so impressed Brahms in the first place, following this with the first set of Slavonic Dances for piano four-hands. The success of the latter work was enough in itself to make an international reputation for Dvořák. The first performance of the *Stabat Mater* in Prague in 1880 made an immense impression; meanwhile, the Joachim Quartet took on his chamber music, and his work was also coming to be known in America, especially in New York as well as in Cincinnati and Saint Louis, with their big settlements of music-loving Germans.

The success of the *Stabat Mater* was nothing less than sensational when Joseph Barnby introduced it in London in 1883, and in that peculiarly English world of choir festivals Dvořák became beloved and revered like no composer since Mendelssohn. The Royal Philharmonic Society invited him to conduct concerts in London in 1884. It was in response to the success of the Symphony No. 6 in D major, then known as "No. 1," that he was immediately invited to write a new symphony for performance the following year. That would be the present work.

The invitation set him afire with ambition. "Just now," he wrote to his friend Judge Antonín Rus on December 22, 1884, "a new symphony (for London) occupies me, and wherever I go I think of nothing but my work, which must be capable of stirring the world, and God grant me that it will!" He had been excited by Brahms's newest symphony, the Third, which he had gone to Berlin to hear in January 1884 and which gave him a new standard to shoot for. Moreover, as a letter to Simrock in February 1885 tells us, he was spurred by Brahms's verbal exhortations as well as by his direct musical example. "I have been engaged on a new symphony for a long, long time; after all it must be something really worthwhile, for I don't want Brahms's words to me, 'I imagine your symphony quite different from this one [No. 6 in D],' to remain unfulfilled."

A scan of the Brahms correspondence has failed to uncover any comment on the Seventh Symphony, but it is impossible to believe that Brahms was disappointed. The new work could hardly have been more different from its sunshine-and-blue-skies predecessor. For in the early 1880s, Dvořák was at a point of crisis. His mother, to whom he was close, had died in December 1882, and he was in distress over the steady deterioration of the mental health of Bedřich Smetana, the founding father of modern Czech music. (Smetana was released by death in May 1884.) Not least, Dvořák was perplexed about his own life. Being swept along on waves of success also meant being under growing pressure, internal and external, to consolidate his position and turn from a provincial composer into an international one. But "international" really meant Austro-German, and the idea was for him to move to Vienna, to write operas on German texts, and to quit pestering Simrock about having his first name appear as "Ant.," if not actually "Antonín," rather than the German "Anton." It was hard for him to say "no" to the well-intended advice of people like Brahms and the critic Eduard Hanslick; on the other hand, to deny his own ethnic and linguistic heritage was impossible for someone who identified himself so closely as did Dvořák with the rising tide of Bohemian nationalism. It added up to a troubled time for him. It was during this period and in this mood that he wrote his two masterpieces in tragedy, the F minor piano trio, Opus 65, and the D minor symphony.

Dvořák makes his way into the music with a theme as dark and under cover as it is determined. And before the violas and cellos even articulate that idea, a low D pedal (horns, drums, and basses) has already done its work in defining the atmosphere. Dvořák's biographer John Clapham has published a fascinating account of the sketches of the D minor symphony in which he points out that it took Dvořák several attempts before he arrived at the details that contribute so powerfully to the oppressive atmosphere, sharpening the rhythm of the upbeats, for example, and adding the shuddering halt on the diminished-seventh chord in the theme's sixth measure.

The clarinets continue the thought plaintively. The harmony is as unyielding as in the first phrase, but the tough tonic pedal has given way to the question mark of the ever-ambiguous diminished seventh. Characteristically, Dvořák includes a wealth of thematic ideas. Quickly he builds to a climax, withdraws for a moment into a pastoral conversation of horn and oboe, then works up to an even more intense crisis (always with the new, sharper version of the upbeat as motor) before settling into a new key, B-flat major, and delighting us with a wonderfully spacious melody. It is one from the house of Brahms: specifically, it reminds us of the cello solo in the Piano Concerto No. 2, first performed in 1881 and published in 1882, and of the song "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer," yet to come.

This is expanded magnificently until the rich exposition comes to a close poised on the dominant of D minor, just as though there were going to be a formal repeat. Instead, the music plunges—*pianissimo* but with great intensity—into the development. This moves swiftly and masterfully, covering much territory. The recapitulation is tautly condensed—it even begins in mid-paragraph—and only in the dying-away coda does the music draw more leisurely breaths. D minor is a key that has a special sound, partly because all the string instruments have open strings tuned to D and A. It also has a special set of sonorous and expressive associations, defined by a whole series of works including Mozart's D minor piano concerto and *Don Giovanni*, Beethoven's and Bruckner's Ninth

symphonies, and Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 and *Tragic Overture*. This first movement is very much and very consciously part of this D minor tradition.

The Adagio is, with those in his F minor trio and G major string quartet, Opus 106, one of Dvořák's most searching. Here, too, there is astonishing richness and variety of material, presented lucidly, with a profoundly original sense of order, and gloriously scored. The most personal paragraph is one in which a reiterated phrase with a melancholy falling seventh in *pianissimo* strings is punctuated by pairs of soft chords for woodwinds and pizzicato strings. This I take to be an obeisance to a similar moment in the Brahms Third Symphony, a piece that, as mentioned earlier, was a significant inspiration to Dvořák.

The scherzo moves in flavorful cross-rhythms, the swinging theme in violins and violas falling into three broad beats per measure, while the cello-and-bassoon tune is in two. It is all force and energy, after which the Trio brings contrast in every aspect, by being in a major key, by its gentleness, and by the skillful and evocative blurring of outlines and textures. The Trios in Dvořák's scherzos are usually picturesque in a folksy sort of way; this one is out of the ordinary not merely for its cunningly clouded sound but also in being so richly developed and extended. In most ways this scherzo is a moment of relaxation after the densely composed, attention-demanding two movements that precede it, but the coda reminds us that the context is one of tragedy.

The finale also presents a wealth of themes, from the first impassioned gesture, through the dark that follows immediately, to the confidently striding A major tune for the cellos. The development is ample and rises to a tempestuous climax. The taut recapitulation leads to a solemn peroration in D major, the remarkable harmonies at the end suggesting that Dvořák was invoking the close of Schubert's great F minor Fantasy for piano four-hands.

Michael Steinberg

The first American performance of Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 was given by Theodore Thomas with the New York Philharmonic on January 8, 1886.

The first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 were given by Wilhelm Gericke on October 22 and 23, 1886. The most recent BSO subscription series performances were led by Juanjo Mena in November 2012. Leonidas Kavakos led the most recent BSO performance in the Shed at Tanglewood on August 9, 2019.

## GUEST ARTISTS

### **Dima Slobodeniouk**

Dima Slobodeniouk has been principal conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and artistic director of the orchestra's international Sibelius Festival since the 2016-17 season. In addition, he has been music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia since 2013. Linking his native Russian roots with his musical studies in Finland, he draws on the powerful musical heritage of both countries. He works with such ensembles as the Berlin Philharmonic, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Radio Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Vienna's ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester, the London Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and the Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, and Sydney symphony orchestras. Mr. Slobodeniouk opened the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia's 2021-22 season in October with works by Alma and Gustav Mahler, featuring soprano Helena Juntunen, followed later in the month by a program of Shostakovich concertos and Weinberg's Chamber Symphony No. 4. Among his guest conducting engagements this season, he leads the Minnesota Orchestra with mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, and Dresden Philharmonic with pianist Bertrand Chamayou, and makes a German tour with Junge Deutsche Philharmonie and cellist Nicolas Altstaedt. Other soloists he works with include Leif Ove Andsnes, Khatia Buniatishvili, Vilde Frang, Vadim Gluzman, Johannes Moser, Baiba Skride, Simon Trpčeski, Yuja Wang, and Frank Peter Zimmermann. In 2020, BIS released two albums by Mr. Slobodeniouk and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, including suites by Prokofiev and Kalevi Aho's percussion concerto *Sieidi* and Symphony No. 5. Other recent additions to his discography include works by Stravinsky with Ilya Gringolts and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia and bassoon concertos by Aho and Sebastian Fagerlund with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, the latter receiving the *BBC Music Magazine* award in April 2018. Born in Moscow, Dima Slobodeniouk studied violin at the Central Music School under Zinaida Gilels and J. Chugajev, at the Middle Finland Conservatory, and at the Sibelius Academy under Olga Parhomenko. He continued his Sibelius Academy studies with Atso Almila with guidance from Leif Segerstam and Jorma Panula, and has also studied under Ilya Musin and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Dima Slobodeniouk has appeared with the Boston Symphony

Orchestra twice at Tanglewood, including his BSO debut in August 2018 and a return in August 2019, and once at Symphony Hall, in his October 2019 subscription series debut, conducting Sibelius's *Pohjola's Daughter*, Elgar's Cello Concerto in E minor with soloist Truls Mørk, and Nielsen's Symphony No. 5. Mr. Slobodeniouk had been scheduled to return in 2020-21 to lead the BSO in full performances of Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, an engagement canceled due to the pandemic emergency.

### **Beatrice Rana**

Making her Boston Symphony Orchestra debut in these concerts, the acclaimed Rome-based pianist Beatrice Rana has performed at the world's most esteemed concert halls and festivals, including Vienna's Konzerthaus and Musikverein, Berlin's Philharmonie, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, New York's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, Zurich's Tonhalle, London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, and Royal Festival Hall, Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Munich's Philharmonie, Prinzregententheater, and Herkulessaal, Frankfurt's Alte Oper, Disney Concert Hall and the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center. She collaborates with such esteemed conductors as Riccardo Chailly, Antonio Pappano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Fabio Luisi, Yuri Temirkanov, Gianandrea Noseda, and Zubin Mehta. Orchestral appearances include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Filarmonica della Scala, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic. Ms. Rana, an exclusive Warner Classics recording artist, released her first album in 2015, featuring Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Antonio Pappano and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. The disc received unanimous international acclaim including *Gramophone's* "Editor's Choice" and *BBC Magazine's* 2017 "Newcomer of the Year" award. In 2017 she embarked on a 30-city tour performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in conjunction with her Warner Classics release of her recording of the piece. Debuting at No. 1 on the UK classical charts, the recording was praised by reviewers worldwide and was crowned by *Gramophone's* "Young Artist of the Year" and Edison Klassiek's "Discovery of the Year" awards. She was nominated as 2018 Female Artist of the Year at the Classic BRIT Awards and performed during the nationally televised program from Royal Albert Hall. Her solo album of works by Stravinsky and Ravel was released in October 2019 to enthusiastic reviews. Beatrice Rana came to public attention in 2011 after winning the Montreal International Competition, followed two years later by the Silver Medal and the Audience Award at the 14th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In 2015 she was named a BBC New Generation Artist and in 2016 was awarded a fellowship from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. Born in 1993 to a family of musicians, Beatrice Rana began her piano studies at age 4; she made her orchestral debut at age 9, performing Bach's F minor keyboard concerto. She obtained her degree in piano performance under the guidance of Benedetto Lupo, her lifetime mentor, at the Nino Rota Conservatory in Monopoli, where she also studied composition with Marco della Sciucca. She later studied with Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik in Hanover.