

Johannes Debus conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Friday, February 8, 2019 at 8:00pm

Prelude Recital at 6:45pm

Pre-concert Talk at 7:15pm

This is the 911th concert in Koerner Hall

Emily Phernambucq, flute

Johannes Debus, conductor

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Overture to *The Magic Flute*, K. 620

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Flute Concerto No. 1 in G Major, K. 313

- I. Allegro maestoso
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Rondo: Tempo di menuetto

INTERMISSION

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, op. 64

- I. Andante – Allegro con anima
- II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
- III. Valse – Allegro moderato
- IV. Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace – Moderato assai e molto maestoso

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; died in Vienna, Austria, December 5, 1791

Overture to *The Magic Flute*, K. 620 (1791)

At one level, Emanuel Schikaneder's libretto for *The Magic Flute* appears as an unlikely mixture of disparate elements. An Oriental fairy tale rubs shoulders with scenes and symbols from Masonic ritual. An individual's solemn spiritual quest is juxtaposed with broad Viennese comedy. Lofty drama and lowly pantomime appear side-by-side. The miracle is that Mozart not only characterised each of these elements with its own musical language, but that the force of his genius fused them into a unique and enduring masterpiece. The miracle begins with the overture. It opens with three solemn chords which provide an allusion to the Masonic-like initiation scene in Sarastro's temple. They also symbolise the many triangles to come – three ladies, three boys, three priests, and even the opera's central theme of E flat (three flats). Both Mozart and Schikaneder were freemasons, then an underground fraternal organisation that counted many distinguished citizens and intellectuals among its ranks. The more enlightened humanitarian ideals of freemasonry clearly ring through *The Magic Flute*. A mysterious Adagio introduction follows the three chords, conjuring up the atmosphere of a fairy tale. Then, eventually, we hear the only real theme in the overture, the subject of a sprightly fughetta.

Flute Concerto No. 1 in G Major, K. 313 (1778)

In Mannheim for close to five months, away from his stern father, away from the claustrophobic city of Salzburg which he disliked, and away from its Archbishop for whom he had no time, the 21-year-old Mozart began to live the life he wished to live. His letters tell of frequent late nights, a love affair and a roving eye for the Emperor's former mistress, Augusta Wendling, daughter of the orchestra's flute player. Although he took pleasure in flaunting his new-found independence, it was not a wholly unproductive creative time for Mozart – though nothing was to come from his pen for the city's renowned orchestra, that 'army of generals' who could have done much to promote his cause. Three arias included a particularly beautiful setting (K. 294) for Aloysia Weber, with whom he was in love, but who was destined to become his sister-in-law. Mozart also wrote two piano sonatas and several accompanied sonatas, which soon became part of a set of six he completed and published in Paris. On December 10, 1777 Mozart knew he was appealing to his father's work ethic when he wrote that he had a commission for "three short, easy concertos and a several quartets for flute" within two months, for a fee of 200 gulden.

Mozart's patron was Ferdinand Dejean, an amateur flutist of independent means and a retired surgeon with the Dutch East India Company. Mozart treated Dejean casually, even shabbily, delivering two concertos, one of which (K. 313) is believed to be by Mozart, though authentic sources are lacking, and the other is an arrangement, possibly by Mozart, of his Oboe Concerto. There is also the single-movement Andante in C, K. 315. Mozart appears to have delivered only two flute quartets by early 1778, of which K. 285 is complete and K. 285a has just two movements.

The concerto K. 313 alone, however, is worth the 90 gulden Mozart eventually received for the commission. Its opening movement balances stateliness with sprightliness in a youthful manner, with a striking richness to the orchestral writing, when compared with the violin concertos Mozart had recently completed before leaving Salzburg. The flute writing is idiomatic, making memorable use of the flute's upper register, with writing that goes well beyond the 'short, easy' specifications of the commission. The slow movement is a movement of exceptional beauty and elegance, with the flute weaving an intricate web with the orchestra. Its demands may have led to Mozart writing the Andante, K. 315 to better accommodate Dejean's limited technique. The finale is a carefully worked-out rondo in minuet tempo, in which the flute finds myriad ways to vary the recurring theme.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, April 25/May 7, 1840; died in St. Petersburg, Russia, October 25/November 6, 1893

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, op. 64 (1888)

"I am exceedingly anxious to prove to myself, as to others, that I am not played out as a composer," Tchaikovsky wrote to his long-time patron Nadezhda von Meck, acknowledging fear of failure as one of the strongest of all motivators for a creative artist. "Have I told you that I intend to write a symphony? The beginning was difficult, but now inspiration seems to have come. We shall see ..." Tchaikovsky had expressed a similar fear to his brother Modest a month earlier, in May 1888. But work was progressing well in the pleasant surroundings of a new dacha he had built in the woods at Frolovskoe, just outside Moscow. He had even noted down an outline for the first movement. The cryptic note was to provide the only indicator of any underlying program in the Fifth: "Introduction. Complete resignation to Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Allegro. (I) Murmurs, doubts, plains, reproaches against XXX . . . (II) Shall I throw myself in the embrace of faith?"

This program sketch, found in one of Tchaikovsky's notebooks, certainly promises *something*. But read what you will into 'XXX.' A decade earlier, Tchaikovsky had provided von Meck with a detailed programmatic outline of his Fourth Symphony. It had been his main work for her during the 13 years of their relationship. "This is Fate," he wrote of the urgent figure that he hurls forward in the first bars of the Fourth Symphony. "One can only resign oneself and lament in vain." Fate is again mentioned in Tchaikovsky's outline for the Fifth, but not the struggle. Tchaikovsky now

appears resigned to his lot in life and willing to trust in Providence and faith. He said little about the piece, though he did once write to his patron about adopting faith: “The intelligent man who believes in God has armour against which the blows of fate are absolutely in vain.”

Fate makes a low-key entrance at the very beginning in a darkly coloured, two-bar clarinet theme that is melancholy and muted. Its rhythm, however, is distinctive and forms a motto theme that will reappear throughout the symphony – initially as a subdued march-like main theme, soon to be whipped into a state of great agitation. The slow movement introduces one of the most celebrated of Tchaikovsky’s romantic tunes, an expansive, supplicatory melody given to the horn. This and two additional themes add a humane, compassionate dimension into the symphonic argument. But comfort gives way to conflict with two brusque and quite unexpected intrusions of the Fate motif. By the end of a movement of great drama, resolution remains a distant objective. The appearance of the motto theme punctuates the smooth contours of the third-movement waltz, which, otherwise, suspends the emotional trajectory of the symphony. In the finale, however, it is transformed into a triumphant march of victory as a grand military procession brings out the heavy guns and Tchaikovsky completely resigns himself to Fate. “If Beethoven’s Fifth is Fate knocking at the door,” wrote a critic not long after the premiere, “Tchaikovsky’s Fifth is Fate trying to get out.”

- Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner

Johannes Debus

Conductor

250-word bio – this is 306 – his manager said to edit to what we need ourselves

Johannes Debus has been Music Director of the Canadian Opera Company (COC) since 2009, having been appointed immediately following his debut.

The 2018-19 season includes Debus’s debuts with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, and Milwaukee Symphony, and return engagements with the Frankfurt Radio, Toronto, and San Diego symphonies. In the summer of 2019, he makes his Opera Santa Fe debut conducting *Jenůfa*.

Debus conducts regularly at the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Staatsoper unter den Linden Berlin, and Frankfurt Opera, and has appeared in new productions at English National Opera and Opéra National de Lyon. He made his debut at the BBC Proms with Britten’s *Sinfonia* in 2014, and conducted a new production of *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the 2015 Bregenz Festival.

As guest conductor, he has appeared at several international festivals such as the Biennale di Venezia and Schwetzingen Festivals, Festival d’Automne in Paris, Lincoln Center Festival, Ruhrtriennale, Suntory Summer Festival, and Spoleto Festival. He has appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Philharmonia in London.

Debus graduated from the Hamburg Conservatoire before being engaged as répétiteur and, subsequently, Kapellmeister by Frankfurt Opera where he acquired an extensive repertoire from Mozart to Thomas Adès. At home in both contemporary music and the core repertoire, he has conducted a wide range of world premieres and works of the 20th and 21st centuries. He has collaborated with internationally acclaimed ensembles such as Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, and Musikfabrik. He enjoys an ongoing relationship with The Royal Conservatory of Music.

Emily Phernambucq

Flute

Award-winning Canadian flutist Emily Phernambucq is a promising young soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player. She performs in halls across Canada, such as The Chan Centre, the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, Koerner Hall, the Winspear Centre, and the National Arts Centre.

As an orchestral musician, she has performed with numerous ensembles, including the Royal Conservatory Orchestra, Against the Grain Theatre, and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, and has worked under the baton of esteemed conductors Gábor Takács-Nagy, Bramwell Tovey, Tania Miller, Johannes Debus, Nathan Brock, and Leon Fleisher, among others.

A three-time participant at the Banff Centre for the Performing Arts, Ms. Phernambucq was part of the final year of the Masterclasses for Strings and Winds in 2016. In 2018, she was a participant in the Opera in the 21st Century program at Banff, where she performed in productions of *Chamberwerk*, *Orphee+*, and *Candide* with Against the Grain Theatre.

Ms. Phernambucq recently performed in masterclasses for Denis Bouriakov, Emmanuel Pahud, James Galway, Lorna McGhee, and Carol Wincenc, among others. She completed The Glenn Gould School's Performance Diploma Program under the tutelage of Susan Hoepfner and is currently enrolled in her final year of the Artist Diploma Program, studying with Nora Shulman. Ms. Phernambucq is the recipient of a full-tuition Ihnatowycz Emerging Artist Scholarship.

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Through the RBC Guest Conductor Program, four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing GGS students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and performance conditions. The week culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Johannes Debus, András Keller, Gábor Takács-Nagy, and Bramwell Tovey, who lead the RCO this season. Past guest conductors have included Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, Sir Roger Norrington, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tania Miller, Tito Muñoz, Peter Oundjian, Ivars Taurins, and Lior Shambadal. The RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of The Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, Tafelmusik, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. The RCO has been heard repeatedly on the national broadcasts of the CBC Radio, has been invited to perform at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston, and toured China during the 2004-05 season.