



Concerto Orchestra

A Side-by-Side performance with members
of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra

Martin West,
conductor

Matthew Park,
cello

Yvette Kraft,
violin

Friday, May 13, 2022, 7:30 PM
Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall

Program

Overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila*

Mikhail Glinka
(1804–1857)

Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)

I. Nicht zu schnell

II. Langsam

III. Sehr lebhaft

Matthew Park, *cello*

-Intermission-

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 6

Niccolò Paganini
(1782–1840)

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Adagio espressivo

III. Rondo. Allegro spiritoso

Yvette Kraft, *violin*

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Artist Profiles

Martin West is acknowledged as one of the foremost conductors of ballet. Born in Bolton, England, he studied math at Cambridge University before studying at the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music and London's Royal Academy of Music.

In 1997, West made his debut with English National Ballet and was immediately appointed resident conductor. In recent seasons, he has worked with many of the top companies in North America and Europe including New York City Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, and The Royal Ballet.

West joined SF Ballet in the fall of 2005, having been a frequent guest since his debut two years earlier. He has made a number of critically acclaimed recordings with the SF Ballet Orchestra, including the complete score of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and an album of suites from Delibes' *Sylvia* and *Coppélia*. In addition, he conducted on the award-winning DVD of Neumeier's *The Little Mermaid*, as well as SF Ballet's production of *Nutcracker* for PBS.

A native of Los Angeles, cellist **Matthew Park** began his studies at age 7 and has attended the Manhattan School of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He has studied under the tutelage of Andrew Cook, Alan Stepansky, and Jennifer Culp. Wanting to learn all aspects of cello and music, especially with the ever changing landscape, Park seeks out a diverse range of learning and collaboration opportunities.

As a chamber musician, Park has performed with the Kronos, American, and Telegraph Quartets, Owen Dalby of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Sam Weiser of the Del Sol Quartet, Jennifer Culp, Dimitri Murrath, Ian Swensen, Amy Schwartz-Moretti, Eunice Kim of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Cindy Wu, and Itamar Zorman. He has also worked with members of the Los Angeles Chamber and Philharmonic Orchestras, the San Francisco Symphony, and the San Francisco Ballet orchestra. He has studied chamber music under notable ensembles such as the American, Escher, Takacs, and Telegraph String Quartets. Additionally, he has worked extensively with musicians Clive Greensmith, Sylvia Rosenberg, Dimitri Murrath, Jean-Michel Fonteneau, and Jennifer Culp. He has also participated in masterclasses with the Takacs, Aizuri, and Miro String Quartets, Ida Kavafian, and Peter Salaff, among others.

As an orchestral musician, Park has played under the baton of notable conductors such as Kurt Masur, Leonard Slatkin, Peter Oundjian, Nicholas McGegan, and Larry Rachleff. He has had training from the American Youth Symphony, the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra, Orpheus Institute at the Manhattan

Artist Profiles

School of Music, and has held a tenured section cello position at the New West Symphony.

Park is a co-founder and cellist of Splntrd Wood (pronounced Splintered), a cello ensemble that performs daring original arrangements that bridges the gap between all genres of music. Recent repertoire includes Bernstein's *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*, Brazilian folk tunes, Medieval/Renaissance, and popular music. Splntrd Wood was featured in a performance at Sundays Live at LACMA and have released their first album *De lá pra cá*, which explores original arrangements of Brazilian and Latin American music.

Park is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma in Chamber Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music under Jennifer Culp, formerly of the Kronos Quartet. He was a member of Shattered Glass, a conductorless string ensemble, and has been a fellow at the Music Academy of the West, the ENCORE school for strings, the Marrowstone Music Festival, and the Gold Coast Chamber Music Festival where he was named an Emerging Artist and subsequently served as faculty.

A Pacific Northwest native, 19-year-old **Yvette Kraft** debuted with the Spokane Orchestra at the age of eleven, and since then she has won numerous local and national concerto competitions. In 2019, she was awarded a Seattle Young Artist Music Festival Gold Medal and in 2020 was an MTNA national finalist. On the international stage, she was a semi-finalist in the 2019 Louis Spohr International Violin Competition in Weimar, Germany, and she received 2nd place at the 2020 Grumiaux International Violin Competition in Brussels. She is currently a 2021 NPR "From The Top" Fellow and performer.

Yvette has soloed with numerous orchestras including the Seattle Symphony, Spokane Symphony, Interlochen Orchestra, the Washington/Idaho Symphony, Seattle's Philharmonia Northwest Orchestra, and the Bainbridge Symphony Orchestra. She has performed in multiple national and international festivals like Interlochen, Libereč International Violin Academy, and Center Stage Strings, and she will be attending the Aspen Music Festival as a fellow this summer. She has been honored to take master classes with many prominent musicians including Noah Bendix-Balgley, Vadim Gluzman, Augustin Hadelich, Stefan Jackiw, Ilya Kaler, Shlomo Mintz, and Josef Špaček. She is a student of Simon James at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In her free time, she enjoys running, reading, singing sacred choral music, and eating dark chocolate.

Program Notes

Overture to Ruslan and Lyudmila (1842)

Mikhail Glinka

Born: June 1, 1804; Novospasskoye, Russia.

Died: February 15, 1857; Berlin, Germany.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

Glinka's relationship with opera was full of extremes. His first opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, launched the lesser-known composer into national celebrity status. The opera earned him adoration from his peers, musical and otherwise, and the tsar declared it would open every season at his opera house. On the coattails of *A Life for the Tsar's* success, Glinka began his next operatic project, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, based on Pushkin's fairy tale poem. However, the composition and premiere of this work were anything but fairytale-like.

Glinka began composing bits and pieces of the opera in 1837, but the whole piece would not be completed until 1842 due to various personal issues and the decision to leave St. Petersburg in 1840. Rehearsals for the opera did not fare much better as many adjustments to the finished composition had to be made and Glinka was not pleased with many of the singers. These complications led to a less-than-successful initial premiere, with newspaper critics citing a boring libretto but a more successful musical interpretation. However, the opera had a much better reception with the public in its later performances and was moderately programmed in Russia throughout the 1840s.

While the opera was criticized for a dull plot, the overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is an action-packed bite-sized piece. The five-minute composition foreshadows the story of valiant knights, evil sorcerers, and a daring rescue with an extremely quick tempo. The flutes and woodwinds engage in quick scales leading into lyrical, ballet-like sections. After a brief pause, the energetic theme of the opening returns with the full orchestra's support as the curtain rises.

- Camryn Finn, M.M. '22

Program Notes

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in A Minor, Op. 129 (1850)

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810; Zwickau, Saxony (Germany).

Died: July 29, 1856; Endenich, near Bonn, Prussia (Germany).

Instrumentation: 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, and solo cello.

The year that Schumann composed his cello concerto is the same year that he made his debut as conductor of Düsseldorf's city orchestra. Unfortunately, an apparent lack of skill and focus limited his tenure as a conductor, relegating it to the sideline of his life as a composer. Composed in only two weeks, the work contributed to a concerto repertoire that was rather sparse in Schumann's time. He continued to refine it towards the end of his life, even as he descended into a madness that would ultimately bring about his demise. Towards the end of his life and even into his descent into madness Schumann continued to make revisions to the concerto which was published with piano reduction in 1854. Sadly, this work was never performed during his lifetime and did not achieve popularity until decades after his passing. Despite offering this concerto to multiple publishers (with the selling point being the lack of concertos in the repertoire of the time), no one took interest in publishing the work. He even went so far as to describe the concerto as "jolly" and "cheerful" to one publisher – a stretch of a claim for a work written in a minor key. The concerto was finally premiered in 1860, though it was not regularly performed until several decades later.

This concerto is in three movements, but since Schumann indicates that they should be performed without intervening pauses, it may be heard as one continuous work. The first movement, marked *Nicht zu schnell* (indicating in German that the first movement is not to be played too quickly) takes a more passionate approach to a first movement in comparison to a straightforward virtuosic sounding style. It is not to be misunderstood though – this concerto is in fact highly virtuosic, with its technical demands woven into the passionately agitated and at times luscious melodies.

The second movement, *Langsam* ("slowly") begins with the orchestral strings accompanying the soloist with *pizzicato* (plucking the strings). Throughout the movement, the solo cello sings beautifully, often playing double stops (sounding

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on two strings at once). As the second movement is ending, the music becomes more agitated and the soloist plunges into the lower ranges of the cello, rolling into the third movement without pause.

The third movement, *Sehr lebhaft* (“very lively”) is exactly that. For the first time in the concerto, the music picks up in tempo and could even exhibit some “jolly” moments. The virtuosic demands of the solo cello become more evident to the listener throughout the development as it works its way toward melting into the slower theme. Within this movement is a cadenza, but unlike traditional cadenzas where the soloist would perform entirely alone, the cello is accompanied by the orchestra throughout. The music rolls forward as the soloist quickly works their way up through the cello’s highest registers for an exciting finish to a soulful piece.

Because Schumann worried about the cello being covered by the orchestra due to its lower register, he composed the majority of the material on the two highest strings on the cello, allowing it to project much more clearly. When the cello is required to play in the lower register, Schumann scored the orchestra very lightly so as not to conceal the soloist at any point. It is clear that the solo cello was thoughtfully written for, aiding in the concerto’s popularity today and adding a significant gem to the cello repertoire.

- Chantel Charis, M.M. ‘23

Program Notes

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 in D Major, Op. 6 (c. 1818)

Niccolò Paganini

Born: October 27, 1782; Genoa.

Died: May 27, 1840; Nice.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones and bass trombone, timpani, percussion, strings, and solo violin.

Many who experienced Niccolò Paganini firsthand came to the conclusion that the supernature of his violin playing could only have been achieved through an arrangement with Old Nick himself. The poet and writer Heinrich Heine, who remarked on the “corpse-like” pallor of his face and that the composer—clad all in black—looked “as if he had risen from the underworld,” was clearly among them. Paganini, while not at all fond of this particular rumor, was also not above fueling the hype and enigma that enshrouded him. Consequently, what is known about Paganini, his unparalleled agility, intonation, and innovation as a violinist, is accompanied with many uncertainties.

His first concerto for violin and orchestra is an example of how he enhanced the narrative of his abilities. Accounts vary as to when Paganini composed it, but most place its conception between 1816 and 1818. The original version was written in E-flat Major, much to the bewilderment of the orchestral musicians who performed it with him; in this key the technical demand of the solo part would be nearly impossible to execute. It was later discovered that this was in fact true and that the virtuoso achieved his feat through the use of scordatura (mis-tuning). He would tune his violin up a semitone in secret and play the concerto as if written in D Major—his carefully guarded version of the manuscript matched this key. The dodge had an added effect in that it gave the solo violin a more brilliant tone in contrast with the orchestra. Perhaps this was another innovation, perhaps job security—or some combination of the two. He certainly had no need of the deception to be seen as an incomparable player.

In the opening movement of the concerto, *Allegro maestoso*, the principal theme is introduced by the orchestra, then bedecked with melodic skips and leaps, and cascading arpeggios upon the solo violin’s entrance. Throughout the course of the 20-minute movement Paganini makes liberal use of some of his acrobatic techniques—double and triple stops (two or three notes played together), natural and artificial harmonics (higher pitches achieved by lightly touching

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an open or stopped string, respectively), left-handed pizzicato—often with incredible speed and flawless accuracy. The second movement, Adagio, is in the key's relative B Minor and offers a completely different character to the first—Paganini's extended techniques are completely absent, as are the acrobatics of the other two movements. This dramatic lament is believed to have been inspired by Italian actor Guiseppe de Marini's performance in a prison scene, recounting his hardships and asking the heavens to relieve his suffering. The performance so moved Paganini that after a sleepless night, he took to his violin to extricate the feelings that had gripped his soul. The third and final movement, Rondo: Allegro spiritoso, breaks the somber spell of its predecessor. Here, the composer builds an entire movement around his so-called "ricochet" technique, bouncing the bow quickly across the strings. It is also the first time that Paganini is known to have employed double stops a tenth apart. However, the most spectacular effect in this movement is perhaps the second solo section, played almost entirely on the fourth (E) string in harmonics, which would have been completely novel to anyone at the time.

Paganini only allowed the publishing of five opuses before his death, thus his violin concertos were all published posthumously. Some biographers conclude this was due to his belief that no one else could play his solo parts. Perhaps that was true, however it seems fiscal motivations may have also been a factor; if one wanted to hear any of his concertos, his presence would be required. Undoubtedly a chance to witness the virtuoso—and his peculiar appearance—would have been preferred anyway. There were ample opportunities: he toured Europe extensively and likely would have more if it weren't for persistent health problems. This, combined with some legal troubles, led Paganini to Nice in 1838, where he would remain until his death in the spring of 1840. From his first performances in Livorno, organized by his father, to his last in Paris, the virtuoso-composer dazzled and confounded audiences with his agility, technique, and disheveled appearance. And now, almost 200 years later, he continues to do so.

- Samuel C. Nedel, B.M. '22

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