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Symphony Orchestra

Passions

Renee Gilliland, conductor

Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Macky Auditorium

PROGRAM

Fandangos

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953)

Viola Concerto

Gyula Dávid (1913-1977)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante molto tranquillo
- III. Vivace

Finn Cruit, viola

Intermission

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

- I. Allegro maestoso
- II. Poco adagio
- III. Scherzo: Vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

Fandangos

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953)

Antonio Soler's *Fandango* for keyboard has always fascinated me, for its strange and whimsical twists and turns. My *Fandangos* is a fantasy, or a "super-fandango," that takes as point of departure Soler's work and incorporates elements of Boccherini's *Fandango* and my own Baroque musings. Some of the oddities in the harmonic structure of the Soler piece provided a bridge for the incorporation of contemporary sonorities, opening windows to apparently alien sound worlds. In these parenthetical commentaries, the same materials heard before are transformed, as if one would look at the same objects through different types of lenses or prisms. The continuous variation form over an ostinato bass gave me the chance to use complex orchestration techniques as another element for variation.

—Program note by Roberto Sierra

Viola Concerto

Gyula Dávid (1913-1977)

The Viola Concerto by Gyula David, which dates from 1951, is almost classical in effect. The composer, born in Budapest in 1913, treats the solo part in a manner more essentially characteristic of the instrument than was the case in Bartok's Viola Concerto; this is probably a result of the fact that David was an orchestral viola player himself before taking up his appointment as professor at the Budapest conservatory.

Despite the vigorous echoes of folk music and its use of asymmetrical phrases, the influence of Beethoven is unmistakable in this work, most noticeably in the employment as motifs of

lengthy scale passages, and in the organic collaboration of soloist and orchestra. Thus the powerfully energetic first movement is constructed in the traditional sonata form. The tenderly flowing melody of the slow movement, which is in three sections, is freely decorated by the solo instrument, though the cantabile contours of the melody always shine through the ornamentation. The Rondo which follows—it is in the Lydian mode and may be regarded as an act of homage to Bartók—concludes the work. The dancelike principal theme is soon linked with a phrase constructed on fourths, then with a graceful melody reminiscent of a folk song. The brilliant line of the solo viola, here again based on the melody, takes the stage at the center of the movement.

David's Viola Concerto is dedicated to Pal Lukacz. This soloist, who was born in 1919, won the first prize for viola playing at the International Musical Competition held at Geneva in 1948, and since 1946 he has been a professor at the Academy of Music in Budapest.

—Program note by Viola Music Plus

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Although the *New World Symphony* (Symphony No. 9) is Dvořák's best-known symphonic score, the Seventh is often cited—by scholars, musicians, and the composer's Czech biographer—as his greatest. There were several motivating factors behind the work. London's Royal Philharmonic Society had elected Dvořák an honorary member in June 1884 and at once commissioned a new symphony. The composer had recently heard Brahms's latest symphony, the Third, which gave him a new benchmark to aim for.

Brahms had been a constant source of advice, support, and tough love and Dvořák told his publisher, Fritz Simrock, that he didn't want to let his mentor down.

For his part, Simrock was not particularly helpful in nurturing Dvořák's talent. The publisher was hoping for another set of *Slavonic Dances* that he could easily print and sell. But others in the Dvořák circle, including the critic Eduard Hanslick, pressured him to compose in a more cosmopolitan, less provincial manner—even if this meant denying the very Bohemian traits that brought him success in the first place. Simrock offered a paltry 3,000 marks for the Seventh Symphony and insisted on printing Dvořák's name using the German “Anton” rather than the Czech “Antonín,” deeply offending the composer. They eventually compromised on “Ant.”

Amid the fray, Dvořák fell back on a favorite hobby—trainspotting. He claimed that the main theme of the first movement came to him as he stood at the Prague railway station. He had gone there to see the arrival of a train bringing several hundred anti-Hapsburg Hungarians to a national theater festival. A graceful woodwind melody then provides contrast to the stormy atmosphere; both themes are tightly developed before the movement ends with the principal theme dying out over an unbroken low D.

After opening with a sumptuous clarinet melody, the second movement is rich in themes and counterpoint, spiced with some pungent dissonances. The *Scherzo* third movement suggests a Czech national dance called a furiant, and moves with zesty and vigorous cross-rhythms. The finale sums up the symphony's assortment of moods as several themes are explored, before building to an affirmative D major conclusion.

—Program note by Brian Wise

PERSONNEL

Finn Cruit, viola

Finn Cruit, originally from St. Paul, Minnesota, is an emerging violist based in Boston, where he is pursuing a Master of Music degree in viola performance at the New England Conservatory. Cruit began his music journey at age five with Irish dance lessons and playing the tin whistle. As a next step his mother encouraged him to begin violin studies. He switched at age 13 to viola after his teacher, a violist, told him to “stop bringing his violin to lessons” because it “gets in the way!”

Since then, Cruit has participated in many prestigious chamber and orchestra festivals, including the Castleman Quartet Program and the 2024 New York String Orchestra Seminar. As a chamber musician, Cruit has been coached by current and former members of the Borromeo String Quartet, the Takács Quartet and the Artaria String Quartet, among others. Cruits primary teachers for viola have included Matthew Dane (Opera Colorado, Boulder Piano Quartet), Erika Eckert (Associate Professor of Viola at CU Boulder), and Nicholas Cords (Brooklyn Rider, Silkroad Ensemble) with whom he currently studies.

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Ryannah Blackman
Sidney Lofthouse
Leo Matsuoka
Katharine Nelson
Laura Pérez Rangel
BB Seidenberg
Emilie Tupper
Kisa Uradomo
Co-concertmaster
Adam Weller
Daniel Yu

Violin 2

Alex Earle
Michael Han
Ellie Lim
Jaithan McEchron
Gregory Nyberg
Leah Pernick
Co-concertmaster and Principal
Eli Pouliot
Ginevra Strasser
Shai Wexler

Viola

Shelley Armer
Walt Conte
Devin Cowan
Principal
Julia Cowell
Aaron Lockhart
Ryan Nguyen
Taylor Sapanara
Finn Wootton
Jacie Zou

Cello

Julian Bennett
Thea Dardanis
Martinique Flickinger
Katharine Fornshell
Matthew Huff
Priscilla Kim
Heewon Lee
Principal
Sam Moore
Logan Moser
Caleb Seifert

Double Bass

Asher Dobrin
Carson Fast
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Flute

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*The Drowsy Chaperone (2023).
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