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2024-25



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Symphony Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor

Nelio Zamorano, conductor

7:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 29, 2025

Macky Auditorium

PROGRAM

D'un matin de printemps ("On a Spring Morning")

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

The Moldau from *Má Vlast*

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

Intermission

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- I. Andante - Allegro con anima
- II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
- III. Valse
- IV. Finale

PROGRAM NOTES

D'un matin de printemps (“On a Spring Morning”)

Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

Born into a musical family, French composer and pianist Lili Boulanger showed tremendous musical potential at a young age. During her childhood, health problems prevented her from attending a traditional conservatory education. She did, however, attend classes at the Conservatoire de Paris with her older sister Nadia, also a composer and pianist. In 1912, Lili officially joined the Conservatoire and prepared to compete in the world famous Prix de Rome for Music Composition. After withdrawing for health reasons in 1912, Lili would go on to become the first woman to win the Prix de Rome in 1913 with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*. Lili would return to Rome in 1916, where her health would continue to decline due to intestinal tuberculosis. In the spring of 1918, she died tragically young at the age of just 24.

D'un matin de printemps was one of the last works written in the composer's own hand. The piece was started in the spring of 1917, and was not finished until January 1918, only two months before her death. The piece shows tremendous control and subtle complexity. The dialogue of woodwinds and strings create a bright and shimmering mood that encapsulates the vivid colors of spring. The piece sparkles with interjections of full ensemble, solo string playing and chamber style doubling of voices. The splashes of bright color progressively build, ending with one final surge of effervescent orchestral sound.

The Moldau from *Má Vlast*

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

Smetana's *The Moldau* is one of classical music's most vivid and picturesque works—a musical journey down the Vltava River, the lifeblood of Bohemia (modern-day Czech Republic). Written in 1874 as part of his six-movement cycle *Má vlast* (“My Homeland”), it's both a tone poem and a love letter to the Czech landscape. The music follows the river from its mountain springs (suggested by delicate woodwinds), past forests, farmlands, a

village wedding, moonlit waters with dancing water nymphs and finally through the heart of Prague, where it joins the Elbe River.

What makes *The Moldau* especially remarkable is that Smetana composed it while completely deaf, relying on his inner ear to craft its lush textures and memorable themes. The flowing main melody has become a symbol of Czech identity, but its universal beauty resonates far beyond national borders. With its rich orchestration and natural storytelling, *The Moldau* invites listeners to not just hear the river—but to see, feel and travel with it.

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Composed in the summer of 1888, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 is a sweeping, emotionally charged work that reflects the composer's internal struggles with fate, identity and hope. In a letter to his patron Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky expressed doubts about his creative powers at the time, yet the symphony's compelling journey from darkness to triumph suggests a deeply personal confrontation with destiny. The recurring "fate" motif—first heard in the low clarinets—serves as a unifying thread, weaving its way through each movement with varying emotional shades. From the somber march of the opening, through the lush, romantic horn solo in the second movement, to the fiery, dramatic finale, the symphony transforms existential unease into a powerful, cathartic affirmation.

At the time he was writing the Fifth Symphony, Tchaikovsky was also working on his *Hamlet Overture-Fantasy* and revising *The Maid of Orleans*, his opera based on the story of Joan of Arc. These projects show his ongoing fascination with heroic tragedy and psychological depth, themes that resonate in the symphony as well. Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 offers a rich, emotional arc that balances rigorous symphonic structure with the dramatic flair that made him one of the most beloved composers of the Romantic era.

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