

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director

Friday, June 28, 2019 at 7:30pm

Saturday, June 29, 2019 at 7:30pm

Sunday, June 30, 2019 at 3:00pm

Gustavo Gimeno, conductor

Jonathan Crow, violin

Jean Sibelius

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47 (rev. 1905)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Adagio di molto

III. Allegro, ma non tanto

Intermission

Sergei Prokofiev

Symphony No. 1 in D Major, Op. 25 “Classical”

I. Allegro con brio

II. Larghetto

III. Gavotte: Non troppo allegro

IV. Finale: Molto vivace

Igor Stravinsky

Suite from *The Firebird* (rev. 1945)

Introduction

Prelude & Dance of the Firebird

Variations (Firebird)

Pantomime I

Pas de deux (Firebird & Ivan Tsarevitch)

Pantomime II

Scherzo (Dance of the Princesses)

Pantomime III

Rondo: Chorovod

Infernal Dance (King Kastchei)

Lullaby (Firebird)

Final Hymn

Stay in your seats after each performance of *The Firebird* for a special onstage conversation with incoming Music Director Gustavo Gimeno, Concertmaster Jonathan Crow, and TSO Chief Executive Officer Matthew Loden.

The performance on June 29 is generously supported by Bettie Moore in memory of Donald Moore.

As a courtesy to musicians, guest artists, and fellow concertgoers, please put your phone away and on silent during the performance.

ABOUT THE WORKS

Jean Sibelius

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47

31
min

Born: Hämeenlinna, Finland, December 8, 1865

Died: Järvenpää, Finland, September 20, 1957

Composed: 1903 (rev. 1905)

“Dreamt I was twelve years old and a virtuoso,” Sibelius confided to his diary, in 1915, at the age of 50; becoming a famous virtuoso violinist remained, even then, the great unfulfilled ambition of his life. No surprise, then, that his only concerto was for violin. Virtuoso solo writing was not his most natural milieu, but when it came to the violin, he made this exception. It is, in many ways, an unusual concerto. Though passionate and full of Romantic yearning, the music is often dark, gloomy, brooding (like a Sibelius symphony, indeed). Moreover, there is little interplay between orchestra and soloist; there are solo cadenzas and orchestral tuttis, but of true dialogue there is almost none. In the monumental first movement—as long as the other two movements combined—the drama lies in the sequencing of many diverse ideas, rather than the more typical intensive development of one or two. The main theme—long, meditative, hauntingly expressive—is introduced at once by the violin, against a trembling accompaniment in the high strings, then works up to a climax (with a mighty blast of brass). A solo cadenza serves as a bridge to a whole series of secondary themes, all distinct in character, sonority, key, and rhythm. Most are introduced by the orchestra, with the violin contributing an important lyrical theme (*Largamente, espressivo*) in double stops in the high register. The recapitulation begins with the main theme in the bassoon; the violin adds counterpoint, then takes over the theme midway. The secondary themes follow, all recognizable but significantly recast, with the violin now taking a leading role throughout.

The second movement is melancholy and elegiac in character, concise but dramatic in form. A short, bleak introduction in the woodwinds opens onto a noble, highly expressive main theme, played at length in the low register of the violin. The music of the introduction, developed in an anguished full-orchestra setting, forms a bridge to a second lyrical theme, also in the violin, now in double-stops and laced with cross-rhythms. When the first theme returns, it is in the orchestra, the violin contributing rich figuration as counterpoint. After an emotional orchestral climax is reached, the violin takes over, giving out the final phrase, and drawing the music to a hushed, moving close.

The finale is a bustling rondo, in a polonaise-like rhythm. The proud, strutting rondo theme is introduced by the violin, against an ostinato pattern in the strings and timpani. The second theme, featuring more Sibelian cross-rhythms, is introduced by the orchestra, then extended passionately by the violin in multiple-stops in the high register. A great build-up of intensity seems to promise a *fortissimo* reprise of the first theme; at the last minute, however, the violin takes over, offering a surprising new variation on the theme, with a rarefied, *pianissimo* accompaniment. The second theme returns, with new counterpoint in the violin. Sibelius then cleverly combines elements from both themes to make a transition into a short but powerful coda, in which the huge orchestral sonorities and sweeping violin figures seem to surge in great waves.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

Sergei Prokofiev

Symphony No. 1 in D Major, Op. 25 “Classical”

15
min

Born: Sontzovka, Russia, April 27, 1891

Died: Moscow, Russia, March 05, 1953

Composed: 1916–1917

As a teenager at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Prokofiev was set upon a career as a pianist and composer. However, the teacher with whom he studied score-reading and conducting, Nikolai Tcherepnin, was the one who both encouraged Prokofiev’s modernist leanings, and gave him, he said, “a taste for the Scores of Haydn and Mozart,” which bore fruit in his first and still most popular symphony.

The “Classical” symphony (the title is Prokofiev’s) was an early document of an impulse that began to sweep through European music around the First World War, as a reaction against the gigantism and pictorialism of Austro-German late Romanticism. Composers as different as Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith, Shostakovich, and Britten, caught the neo-Classical bug, looking back beyond Romanticism to 18th-century models like Bach and Mozart. The impulse would remain a part of Prokofiev’s compositional arsenal, but, as he insisted, “only in passing”: not like Stravinsky, whose neo-Classicism he dubbed “Bach with wrong notes.”

The “Classical” symphony is not an imitation of, but an homage to, the classical style. Prokofiev confined himself to an orchestra no larger than that of the later Haydn. The music is lean, transparent, clearly articulated, but at the same time ravishing. Just 15 minutes long, this is the shortest of Prokofiev’s seven symphonies, and it never wears out its welcome. Nothing is more deadly to a parody than belabouring the point, and this is a parody, albeit an affectionate one. Its target is not merely the sounds and profile but the precise forms and procedures of the classical style—in particular, of Haydn’s high

spirits, wit, imaginative scoring, and clever thematic manipulations.

The first movement offers a well-behaved sonata form with proper first and second themes—the latter a lovely rococo confection, violins played with the tips of the bows, *con eleganza*, supported by pokey staccato arpeggios from a bassoon. The second movement, lyrical and ornate, has a glamorous sound and an aristocratic bearing that suggests a very slow minuet. The third movement is not the expected minuet or scherzo in triple time, but a gavotte, a French Baroque dance with *four* moderate beats to a bar, and phrases that begin on a third rather than first beat, recalling those Haydn minuets that mimic country dances. For the finale, another playful sonata form which once more recalls Haydn, Prokofiev set himself a curious task: “writing it with no minor chords whatsoever.” The resulting unalloyed brightness of the music, coupled with its manic bustle, yields a high-octane parody of 18th-century classicism that sometimes sounds less like Haydn than like the overture to Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide*.

The year 1917 was, of course, a tumultuous one in Russia—a world war, two revolutions, civil war—but Prokofiev tried hard to ignore the turmoil around him: 1917 was in fact his most productive year as a composer. On April 21, 1918, he conducted the première of the “Classical” symphony with the former Court Orchestra in Petrograd, and a month later, he left Russia for the United States, for what he expected would be a few months. He would not live in Russia again for almost 20 years.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

ABOUT THE WORKS

Igor Stravinsky

Suite from *The Firebird* (rev. 1945)

31
min

Born: Oranienbaum, Russia, June 17, 1882

Died: New York, United States of America, April 6, 1971

Composed: 1911 (revised 1919; 1945)

The mythological subject-matter had long been a cliché in Russian literature and drama; the Firebird was just one of many magical birds in Russian and European folklore and in 19th-century art and music. In Russia, in fact, a veritable cult of the Firebird was at its peak around 1910, and a Russian ballet on the subject was all but inevitable. Stravinsky's full-length ballet, *The Firebird*, for Serges Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, premièred in Paris in 1910, and Stravinsky's career took off like a rocket. He first extracted a concert suite from *The Firebird* in 1911, and revised the suite twice, in 1919 and 1945, in light of his evolving aesthetic views, both times rescoring it (no less brilliantly) for an orchestra leaner than the massive late-Romantic band for which the ballet was conceived. The 1945 version comprises the same five main movements as the 1919 version, slightly revised: Introduction—"Prelude and Dance of the Firebird"—"Variations (Firebird)"; "Rondo: Chorovod"; "Infernal Dance (King Kastchei)"; "Lullaby (Firebird)"; and "Final Hymn". But it also includes five more short movements between the Introduction and Rondo: three pantomimes; "Pas de deux (Firebird & Ivan Tsarevitch)"; and "Scherzo (Dance of the Princesses)". As such it moves back towards its original balletic conception again; in fact, the subtitle for the 1945 version was "Ballet Suite", and it actually became the basis for a ballet, by Balanchine, in 1950.

The première of the 1945 suite was given in New York, on October 24, 1945, with Jascha

Horenstein conducting. Its centrepiece is the virile and virtuosic "Infernal Dance", with its brutal energy, powerful rhythmic drive, and scoring that is heavy with brass and percussion (including a piano). No less impressive or memorable are the moving and enchanting melodies in this score—in the "Lullaby," the "Final Hymn," above all the pastoral *Rondo*, with its beautiful snatches of song for woodwinds and horns set against a gentle backdrop of strings and harp.

But Stravinsky, in later life, was anxious to reject (at least in theory) most of the trappings of Romanticism, and was embarrassed by the "excesses" of his youth—which apparently included most of *The Firebird*, especially those passages loved best by the public. (His own favourite number was the *Dance of the Firebird*, an ingenious study in orchestral texture, gesture, and colour that is altogether devoid of melody.) He was annoyed that none of his later works would prove quite as enduringly popular as *The Firebird*, and to praise the work to his face was to risk an acerbic response. Once, at a reception in New Zealand, a well-meaning, elderly admirer said, "Frankly, Mr. Stravinsky, I like *Firebird* best of all your works." To which the composer replied, "And what a charming hat you have!"

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

THE ARTISTS



Gustavo Gimeno **conductor**

Gustavo Gimeno made his TSO début in February 2018.

Gustavo Gimeno is Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg (OPL) and incoming Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO). Gimeno made his Canadian début with the TSO—to public and critical acclaim—with a program featuring music by Beethoven, Ligeti, and Dvořák. Gimeno has signed a five-year contract with the TSO to begin in the 2020/21 season. He will be the TSO's 11th Music Director starting in the Orchestra's 99th season.

Since he became Music Director of the OPL in 2015 he has conducted the orchestra in a wide variety of concert formats, appearing with the orchestra in many of the most prestigious concert halls throughout Europe. In 2017 the OPL and Gustavo Gimeno extended their contract until the 2021/22 season inclusive. In the current season he builds on the successful tours of previous seasons with guest performances in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Turkey, and Greece. During past seasons, Gustavo Gimeno has shared the stage of the Philharmonie Luxembourg with soloists such as Daniel Barenboim, Krystian Zimerman, Khatia Buniatishvili, and Bryn Terfel. Guest artists during the 2018/19 season will include Leonidas Kavakos, Yuja Wang, and Katia and Marielle Labèque.

Gustavo Gimeno and the OPL will continue their series of recordings on the classical label PENTATONE, which launched in 2017. Since this collaboration began, releases have included the First Symphonies of Shostakovich and Bruckner; Ravel's complete ballet music to *Daphnis et Chloé*; Mahler's Fourth Symphony; Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, *Jeu de cartes*, *Agon*, and the re-discovered *Chant funèbre*; and, most recently, Rossini's *Petit messe solennelle*.

He is also a much sought-after guest conductor worldwide. In 2018/19, he returns to the Cleveland Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, the Mariinsky Orchestra, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. He made his débuts conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. He appeared at the Zürich Opera for the first time in January 2019 with Verdi's *Rigoletto*, in a production directed by Tatjana Gürbaca. He also conducted concert performances of this opera with the OPL in Luxembourg and Paris.

Born in Valencia, Gustavo Gimeno began his international conducting career in 2012 as assistant to Mariss Jansons, while he was a member of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

GUSTAVO GIMENO RETURNS NEXT SEASON

Gimeno Conducts Daphnis et Chloé
October 9, 10 & 12, 2019

Gimeno, Yuja Wang & Brahms
April 8, 9 & 11, 2020

Subscribe now!
TSO.CA
416.598.3375

THE ARTISTS



Jonathan Crow **violin**

TSO Concertmaster Jonathan Crow joined the TSO in September 2011.

A native of Prince George, British Columbia, Jonathan earned his Bachelor of Music in Honours Performance from McGill University in 1998, at which time he joined the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) as Associate Principal Second Violin. Between 2002 and 2006, Jonathan was the Concertmaster of the OSM; during this time, he was the youngest concertmaster of any major North American orchestra. Jonathan continues to perform as guest concertmaster with orchestras around the world. He has also performed as a soloist with most major Canadian orchestras, under the baton of such conductors as Charles Dutoit, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Sir Andrew Davis, Peter Oundjian, Kent Nagano, Mario Bernardi, and João Carlos Martins.

Jonathan joined the Schulich School of Music at McGill University as an Assistant Professor of Violin and was appointed Associate Professor of Violin in 2010. Current and former students of Mr. Crow have received prizes at competitions around the world, and work regularly with major orchestras in North America and Europe. Jonathan is currently Associate Professor of Violin at the University of Toronto.

In 2016, Jonathan was named Artistic Director of Toronto Summer Music, which recently announced record attendance in his first full season. An avid chamber musician, he has performed at chamber music festivals throughout North America, South America, and Europe. He is a founding member of the JUNO Award-winning New Orford String Quartet, a project-based ensemble dedicated to the promotion of standard and Canadian string quartet repertoire throughout North America. As an advocate of contemporary music, he has premiered works by Canadian composers Michael Conway Baker, Eldon Rathburn, Barrie Cabena, Gary Kulesha, Tim Brady, Francois Dompierre, Ana Sokolović, Marjan Mozetich, Christos Hatzis, Ernest MacMillan, and Healey Willan. He also includes in his repertoire major concerti by such modern composers as Ligeti, Schnittke, Bernstein, Brian Cherney, Rodney Sharman, Vivian Fung, and Cameron Wilson.

Jonathan has recorded for ATMA, Bridge, CBC, Oxingale, Skylark, and XXI-21 labels and is heard frequently on Chaîne Culturelle of Radio-Canada, CBC Radio Two, and National Public Radio, along with Radio France, Deutsche Welle, Hessischer Rundfunk, and the RAI in Europe.

COMING UP IN 2019/20: VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS

November 16, 17, 20 & 21, 2019

Concertmaster Jonathan Crow is the soloist, and leads his TSO colleagues, in Vivaldi's timeless work.

Subscribe today!
TSO.CA
416.598.3375