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2007-2008



Russian National Orchestra
Carlo Ponti Jr., conductor
Claudio Bohórquez, cello soloist

Penn State's Center for the Performing Arts

presents

**RUSSIAN NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA**

*Carlo Ponti Jr., conductor
Claudio Bohórquez, cello soloist*

**7:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 26, 2008
Eisenhower Auditorium**

There will be one intermission during this performance.

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The 2007–2008 season of the Center for the Performing Arts is supported, in part, by grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Program

Concerto in B minor for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 104 Antonín Dvořák
Allegro (1841–1904)
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale (Allegro moderato)

—INTERMISSION—

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Andante sostenuto-Moderato con anima (1849–1893)
Andantino in modo di canzona
Scherzo, Pizzicato ostinato-Allegro
Finale, Allegro con fuoco

The Russian National Orchestra thanks the major patrons who helped make its 2008 United States tour possible, including Athena Troxel Blackburn, John K. Castle, the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Hock, New York Council of the Russian National Orchestra, the Mikhail Prokhorov Foundation, Barbara Roach, Gary Ross, Russian Arts Foundation, *Russian Life* magazine, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Shea Jr., and the Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences; and its generous sponsors of the Russian National Orchestra at Lincoln Center, including Jennifer C. Acker, Mr. and Mrs. John Avellino, Patricia Cloherty, Rita Z. Mehos, and Marianne and John Wyman.

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Program Notes

Concerto in B minor for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 104
Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale (Allegro moderato)

In 1892, the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák arrived in New York, where, for the next three years, he would serve as director of the National Conservatory of Music of America. Hoping to foster the development of a distinctively American concert-music style, Dvořák set an example for American composers by embedding traits of African American and Native American music into a new work: his Ninth Symphony (Op. 95), subtitled *From the New World*. This score, completed in early 1893, enjoyed a trium-

Program Notes

phant premiere that December, performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Anton Seidel.

One of the first musicians to see the Ninth was Seidel's assistant—an immigrant cello virtuoso who hoped to make his mark as a composer and conductor. This was none other than Victor Herbert of future operetta fame. Herbert, seeking his own philharmonic success, now wrote a cello concerto (his second) to play with the orchestra. Significantly, Herbert set the concerto in E minor, the same key as the *New World* symphony, and some dramatic gestures in Herbert's score recall Dvořák's idiom.

Dvořák, as it happens, also now became involved with cello music concertos—a genre he had long rejected. In his youth, he essayed a cello concerto but did not think the results worth orchestrating. More recently, he had declined to provide a concerto for a Czech cellist, deeming the cello unsuitable for concerto stardom. Historians conjecture, however, that the acclaimed premiere of Herbert's Second Cello Concerto in March 1894 changed Dvořák's mind; for on November 8 of that year, Dvořák began composing his Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104, in which some ultrahigh-register lyric episodes in B major were perhaps suggested by similar Herbert passages in the same key.

Elsewhere in the cello concerto, Dvořák found no room for Americanisms of the kind he had employed in the *New World* symphony, but instead vented intimate personal concerns. The result was a dramatic score tinged by tragedy and continually informed by heartrending melodic beauty—a work that towers above all other cello concertos in the Romantic repertory.

While working on the slow movement, Dvořák received news that his beloved sister-in-law (whom he had courted passionately in his youth) was seriously ill. In response, he incorporated a theme from a song of which she was fond: his "Leave me alone," Op. 82, No. 1. Dvořák completed the concerto on February 9, 1895. It was the last music he would write in New York except for preliminary jottings toward a string quartet. On April 16, he left America, never to return.

That June, Dvořák's sister-in-law succumbed to her illness. This tragedy inspired the composer to revise the last movement of the cello concerto. He inserted a radiant, elegiac coda in which the "Leave me alone" theme intertwines with echoes of the first movement. At the concerto's premiere, which took place in England on March 19, 1896, Dvořák himself conducted the London Philharmonic with the British cellist Leo Stern.

Although we do not know if Herbert's Second actually convinced Dvořák that the cello could be a persuasive concerto instrument, there is no doubt that Dvořák's score had precisely that effect on Brahms. Reading it with mounting enthusiasm, Brahms confessed that, had he known such a cello concerto was possible, "I'd have written one long ago."

Dvořák immediately establishes the symphonic scope of the cello concerto by providing a full-scale orchestral ritornello in the classic manner. The principal theme quickly turns from brooding to rage, while the heart-on-sleeve lyric affection of what Sir Don-

Program Notes

ald Tovey termed “one of the most beautiful passages ever written for horn” launches the second subject. In a compelling solo entrance, the cello transforms the main theme into a larger-than-life oration (Dvořák risks the red-hot color of trombones in the accompaniment). Later, when the cello descends from the stratosphere to take up the second subject, the horn theme seems tailor made for it. Dvořák’s development section results in a singularly effective formal twist. After mysterious orchestral first-theme discussions, the music reaches a distant minor key. Here the cello re-enters to keen a slow, doleful version of the main theme, which lamenting woodwinds then further transform into an entirely new melody. After these evolutions, it would be psychologically false to return to the theme in its original form for the reprise; accordingly, Dvořák begins the recapitulation with the exultant orchestra chanting the second subject. The main theme is thus fresh and welcome when it reappears in a coda that ends in jubilation.

A bucolic idyll sets the tone for the slow movement, and Dvořák recaptures its calm after tragic outbursts in the central portion. A highlight is an eloquent accompanied cadenza that spills over into a peaceful coda. The finale’s opening melody suggests heroic derring-do, but after a militant climax the cello allows the hero’s emotional vulnerability to peep through his bravado. Further contrasts are provided by a rocking interplay between clarinet and cello, and later, by a fervent, folk-like melody. As in the first movement, Dvořák ingeniously abbreviates traditional form, for the latter melody, appearing in solo violin, suddenly reveals that we are in the home stretch of the story. In the luminous coda, Dvořák meditates upon his youthful passions with wisdom and tenderness, before heroism finally reasserts itself.

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky completed his Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36, in the wake of a severely traumatic experience—his doomed attempt to adopt a heterosexual lifestyle by marrying a young woman who idolized him and kept insisting she was predestined to be his wife. The wedding took place in July 1877, and he soon became so desperately unhappy that he attempted suicide. Leaving his unfortunate bride, he also fled Russia, spending much of the next year in Italy and Switzerland.

Once Tchaikovsky was on his own again, he resumed work on the Fourth Symphony, which he began sketching the previous winter. The result was a work that towered above his three previous symphonies and retains enormous popularity to this day. He completed the piece in early 1878 and sent it to Russia, where it was promptly premiered in his absence, the performance taking place in Moscow on February 10 with Nicholas Rubinstein conducting. Tchaikovsky dedicated the symphony to his patron Mme. Nadezhda von Meck, whom he regarded as his “best friend,” and provided her with an explanation of the score’s subject matter: “Our symphony has a program. That is to say it is possible to express its content in words. ... Naturally I can only do so as regards its general features. The introduction is the germ of the entire symphony, without question its central idea.”

Program Notes

The main body of Tchaikovsky's first movement, marked *Andante sostenuto-Moderato con anima* and described by the composer as waltz-like in movement, begins with a first subject theme that makes breast-beating gestures: "The unconsolable hopeless feeling grows stronger and more consuming." But the second subject becomes lilting with melancholy tenderness, sometimes oddly verging on the mischievous: "Oh joy! At last a sweet, tender dream has appeared. ... Dreams have completely enveloped the soul. All that was gloomy and joyless is forgotten. ... But no! They were only dreams and fate awakes us from them."

Of the *Andantino in modo di canzona*, a lyric movement in A-B-A form initiated by a plaintive oboe melody, Tchaikovsky says: "The second movement expresses another phase of loneliness—the melancholy feeling that comes over you towards evening when you are sitting alone weary from work. ... Many things flit through your memory. ... It is both sad and somehow sweet to lose oneself in the past."

In some respects, the bubbly A-B-A form *Scherzo* belongs to the realm of light, balletic music. Quite remarkably, Tchaikovsky confines himself to pizzicato strings for the entire initial A section: "The third movement expresses no definite sensations. It consists of capricious arabesques, fleeting images that pass through the imagination when ... you give free rein to your imagination."

Winds enter with sprightly folk material in the B-section: "You suddenly remember a scene of some peasants on a spree, and a street-song. Then somewhere in the distance a military procession passes by. These are confused images with no relation to reality."

In the restatement of A, woodwinds eventually take up its main theme in antiphony with the pizzicato strings, and a subsequent discussion of the central material waxes jubilant.

Tchaikovsky aimed at the utmost exuberance in the swirling, almost military first subject of his finale, providing a Slavic melody par excellence as a second theme: "If you cannot find reasons for happiness in yourself, look at others. Get out among the people ... A picture of popular holiday merriment ... Fate appears once more and reminds you of its presence. But to the others you are of no concern. ... Oh, how merry they are! How fortunate that their emotions are direct and simple. Would you still say that the world is immersed in sorrow? Happiness does exist. ... Rejoice in the joys of others. Life is bearable after all."

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Russian National Orchestra

The Russian National Orchestra has been in demand throughout the music world since its 1990 Moscow premiere. Recently, it was described as “a living symbol of the best in Russian art” (*Miami Herald*) and “as close to perfect as one could hope for” (*Trinity Mirror*, London).

The first Russian orchestra to perform at the Vatican and in Israel, the Russian National Orchestra maintains an active international touring schedule, appearing in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Popular with radio audiences worldwide, Russian National Orchestra concerts are regularly aired by National Public Radio in the United States and by the European Broadcasting Union.



Gramophone magazine called the first Russian National Orchestra CD in 1991 “an awe-inspiring experience; should human beings be able to play like this?” and listed it as the best recording of Tchaikovsky’s *Pathétique* in history. Since then, the orchestra has made more than fifty recordings for Deutsche Grammophon and PentaTone Classics, with conductors that include Russian National Orchestra founder and Artistic Director Mikhail Pletnev, Principal Guest Conductor Vladimir Jurowski, plus Carlo Ponti Jr., Kent Nagano, Alexander Vedernikov, and Paavo Berglund.

The orchestra’s recording of Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* and Beintus’s *Wolf Tracks*, conducted by Kent Nagano and narrated by Sophia Loren, Bill Clinton, and Mikhail Gorbachev, was the winner of a 2004 Grammy Award, making the orchestra the first Russian orchestra to win the recording industry’s highest honor. A Spanish-language version narrated by Antonio Banderas was released in 2007, following a Russian version narrated by actors Oleg Tabakov and Sergei Bezrukov, with Mandarin and other editions to follow.

Unique among the principal Russian ensembles, the orchestra is independent of the government and has developed its own path-breaking structure. Artistic policy is shaped and guided by the Russian National Orchestra Conductor Collegium, a group of internationally renowned conductors led by Pletnev. Another orchestra innovation is Cultural Allies, an ongoing program encompassing exchanges between artists in Russia and the West, and the commissioning of new works.

A frequent guest at major festivals, the orchestra is the founding orchestra of the Festival del Sole in the Napa Valley, Festival of the Arts BOCA in Florida, and the Singapore Sun Festival, and is resident orchestra of the Tuscan Sun Festival in Cortona, Italy.

Who's who

Mikhail Pletnev

Music Director and Principal Conductor

Carlo Ponti Jr.

Associate Conductor

First violins

Alexei Bruni, concertmaster

Tatiana Porshneva, assistant concertmaster

Yana Gerasimova

Natalia Anurova

Fyodor Shevrekuko

Edvard Yatsun

Maxim Khokholkov

Anatoly Fedorenko

Igor Akimov

Vassily Vyrenkov

Vadim Teifikov

Olga Chepiznaya

Alexei Sobolev

Natalia Fokina

Alexei Tolpygo

Lev Iomdin

Second violins

Sergei Starcheus, principal

Yevgeny Feofanov, assistant principal

Pavel Gorbenko

Irina Simonenko

Yevgeny Durnovo

Ekaterina Tsaryova

Andrei Provatorov

Svetlana Dzutseva

Sergei Korolev

Alexei Pritulenko

Sergei Shakin

Dmitri Avramenko

Vladimir Teslya

Violas

Sergei Doubov, principal

Alexander Akimov, assistant principal

Sergei Bogdanov

Olga Suslova

Maria Goryunova

Alexander Zhulyov

Sofia Lebed

Ksenia Zhuleva

Andrei Serdukovsky

Anton Yaroshenko

Grigory Chekmarev

Artem Kukaev

Cellos

Alexander Gottgelf, principal

Alexander Goryunov, second principal

Kirill Varyash

Valery Verstyuk

Svetlana Vladimirova

Olesya Gavrikova

Alexander Grashenkov

Sergei Kazantsev

Anton Pavlovsky

Maxim Tarnorutsky

Dmitry Shameev

Double basses

Rustem Gabdullin, principal

Gennady Krutikov, assistant principal

Sergei Kornienko

Miroslav Maksimyuk

Grigori Krotenko

Leonid Bakulin

Alexei Vorobiev

Vassily Beschastnov

Flutes

Maxim Rubtsov, principal

Konstantin Efimov

Sergei Igrunov

Nikolai Lotakov

Oboes

Olga Tomilova, principal

Andrey Rubtsov

Vitaly Nazarov

Maxim Orekhov

Clarinets

Nikolai Mozgoenko, principal

Alexei Bogorad

Dmitri Belik

Who's who

Bassoons

Alexei Sizov, principal
Andrei Shamidanov
Aleksei Markin
Elizabetha Vilkovskaya

French horns

Igor Makarov, principal
Alexey Serov
Victor Bushuyev
Vladimir Slabtchouk
Dennis Volodichev
Askar Bissembin

Trumpets

Vladislav Lavrik, principal
Leonid Korkin
Andrei Kolokolov
Gennady Komarov

Trombones and tuba

Ivan Irkhin, principal
Vyacheslav Pachkaev
Anatoly Fedotov
Dmitry Zheleznov
Dmitry Anakovsky

Harp

Svetlana Paramonova

Percussion

Dmitry Lukianov, principal
Alexander Suvorov
Vladimir Kalabanov
Leonid Lysenko

Ilya Melikhov
Kirill Lukyanenko

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Leonid Ogrintchuk
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Carlo Ponti Jr., conductor

Carlo Ponti Jr. began his musical studies in Paris as a pianist and won prizes in several competitions. In 1994, he attended the Conductor's Institute in Hartford, Connecticut, under the direction of Harold Farberman, and subsequently received a master's degree in conducting from the University of California at Los Angeles. He has also studied with maestros Zubin and Mehta, maestro Andrey Boreyko, and at the Vienna Musikhochschule under Leopold Hager and Karel Ancerl.

Ponti's debut with the Russian National Orchestra in Moscow met with critical praise and led to his appointment in 2000 as the orchestra's associate conductor. In 2001, he was named music director and principal conductor of the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra, a position recently extended through the 2009–2010 season. In this post, he has attracted much attention for his innovative programming, raising the artistic level of the orchestra, and broadening its audience.

As a guest conductor, Ponti has appeared with, among others, the Orquesta Sinfonica de Galicia, Orquesta de Valencia, Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra, Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, Pro Arte Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Ural Philharmonic, and Moscow Chamber Orchestra. He has conducted at several international music festivals, including the Festival d' Echternach, Festival Vancouver, Taichung Music Festival, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Bratislava Spring Music Festival, St. Petersburg Palaces Music Festival, Festival Internacional de Musica de Villena, Festival del Sole, and the Köln Musik Triennale.

Following his critically acclaimed debut with the Orchestra Del Maggio Musicale in Florence, Ponti was awarded Italy's prestigious Premio Galileo Award in 2006 for exceptional musical achievement.

Committed to encouraging and educating young talent, Ponti holds regular master classes in orchestral conducting and has led the American Youth Symphony and the Young Musicians Foundation Orchestra.

Claudio Bohórquez, cello soloist

Claudio Bohórquez is receiving attention from conductors, musicians, audiences, concert presenters, and critics as one of the most exciting and fascinating young artists of his generation. He divides his attention between concerto appearances with an array of international orchestras and conductors, solo recitals, chamber music projects, festivals, and collaborating with a wide spectrum of visual and performing artists in special projects.



He studied with the late Boris Pergamenschikow. While winning a number of international competitions at an early age, he was further brought to the music world's attention in 2000 by receiving the top prize in the first International Casals Competition in Germany.

He also received a special award for chamber music in this competition and, as part of the award, was allowed to perform on Maestro Casals' famed Gofriller cello for several years. He won first prize at the Geneva International Music Competition. From 2003 to 2006, he was guest professor at the Hochschule für Musik München.

Bohórquez has performed with the Orchestre de Paris, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt, the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, the Münchner Symphoniker, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, the Wiener Symphoniker, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. In Japan, he has appeared both with the NHK Symphony (including two nationally televised concerts) and the Tokyo Philharmonic. In the United States, he has appeared with the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony, and The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Conductors with whom he has worked include Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Thomas Dausgaard, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Christoph Eschenbach, Hans Graf, Yakov Kreizberg, Sir Neville Marriner, and Krzysztof Penderecki, among others.

Festival appearances include the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico, City of London Festival, and Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival, and in the United States at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aspen festivals, as well as at the Hollywood Bowl. He participated in the Chamber Music Festival Lockenhaus in Austria and in Gidon Kremer's Les Museiques festival in Basel.

Recent highlights include concerts with the Orchestra of the Saarländischer Rundfunk under new chief conductor Christoph Poppen and a world premiere of a work by Søren Eichberg in September 2006. At the 2006 New Year's concert in Dresden, he performed with his younger brother, violinist Oscar Bohórquez, with the MDR Sinfonieorchester. In spring 2007, he performed a work by Tan Dun at the opening of the new hall of the Theater und Philharmonie Duisburg with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin.

Claudio Bohórquez, cello soloist

In 2006, the Berlin Classics label released Bohórquez's first recital CD, which includes sonatas by Debussy, Britten, and Prokofiev. In summer 2004, his first CD with the label was launched, where he performed with the Dresden Philharmonic under Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos. EMI Classics released his recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio A minor in 2005. That same year, Bohórquez participated in a benefit CD titled *Doha* for the Stupa of the Shambhala Mountain Center in Rocky Mountains, Colorado.

Bohórquez performed the music of Paul Englishby on the soundtrack to the critically acclaimed film *Ten Minutes Older—The Cello*, which was released internationally in 2002.

He has developed, along with the German sculptor Klaus-Peter Kirchner, a performance art presentation titled *Room for Casals*. The performance, most recently staged at the City of London Festival in 2004, pays homage to Casals.

Bohórquez plays a violoncello of G. B. Rogeri, which was given to him by the Landesbank Baden-Württemberg. He is of Peruvian and Uruguayan parentage, but was born and raised in Germany. He lives in Berlin. Visit www.claudiobohorquez.com and www.myspace.com/claudiobohorquez to learn more.

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