# 2021 BLOSSOM MUSIC FESTIVAL

Blossom Festival **Week Four**
The Cleveland Orchestra
CONCERT PRESENTATION
Blossom Music Center
1145 West Steels Corners Road
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44223

## FROM THE NEW WORLD
### DVOŘÁK'S NINTH SYMPHONY

Sunday, **July 25**, 2021, at 7 p.m.

**THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA**
**Rafael Payare**, *conductor*
**Stefan Jackiw**, *violin*

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**SERGEI PROKOFIEV** (1891-1953)
**Violin Concerto No. 2** in G minor, Opus 63

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante assai — Più animato — Tempo I — Allegretto
3. Allegro, ben marcato

*INTERMISSION*

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** (1841-1904)
**Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World")**
in E minor, Opus 95

1. Adagio — Allegro molto
2. Largo
3. Molto vivace
4. Allegro con fuoco

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# CONCERT OVERVIEW

**AMONG ITS MANY** astonishing qualities, music has an uncanny ability to transport us — to another time or place. Tonight's program led by rising conductor Rafael Payare brings us into the orbits of two composers who were both contemplating the thrills of opportunities abroad with the comforts of home. The first, Sergei Prokofiev's **Violin Concerto No. 2**, represents a homecoming for the composer. Written as he was returning to the Soviet Union after 15 years abroad, it proudly asserts its Russian influence. The second, the **New World Symphony**, was written by Antonín Dvořák as a kind of musical postcard to the Old World from the New during his three-year stint in New York City. Nostalgia, homesickness, wonder, joy, and grandeur are intermixed in both of these beloved masterpieces.

Violinist Stefan Jackiw, tonight's soloist, remembers discovering Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto while watching the 1999 Billy Crystal-Robert De Niro comedy *Analyze This*. He wryly observes, *"the most beautiful violin melody soars in the soundtrack. Yet this beauty and purity are short-lived; the ceremony is interrupted by a body falling from an overlooking balcony — an inconveniently timed mob hit."* Those musical sounds, however, sent him rifling through his parents' collection of recordings. Eventually he found that remarkable melody in the opening bars of the second movement of this piece.

The Second Violin Concerto indeed offers moments of haunting beauty, along with exhilarating virtuosic passages, nods to popular Russian music, and a healthy undercurrent of menace. Prokofiev wrote the piece as he was repatriating to the Soviet Union. It was his last western commission — written for French violinist Robert Soetens. Relieved to be returning home, Prokofiev balances his native love for country with his wariness of Joseph Stalin's growing power.

Dvořák's Ninth Symphony ("From the New World") is the work of a mature composer fully in command of his ideas and musical vocabulary. It was written in 1892-93 during the composer's brief three years in America as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. Interested in forging "American" music for this young nation, he adopted and adapted ideas from the new world around him. Native American and African American idioms mix together with American poetry and plans for an opera on Hiawatha. He molded these impeccably together with his own European classical music sensibilities to create a symphony filled with restless energy, melodic invention, soulful pleasure, and limitless promise.

*—Eric Sellen and Amanda Angel*

# ABOUT THE MUSIC: **VIOLIN CONCERTO**

**VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2** in G minor, Opus 63
by **Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953)

*Composed: 1935*

*Premiered: December 1, 1935, in Madrid, with Robert Soetens as soloist, and the Madrid Symphony Orchestra conducted by Enrique Arbós*

*Duration: about 25 minutes*

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**SERGEI PROKOFIEV** was born to relatively well-off middle-class Russian parents. His father helped manage a large estate, while his mother enjoyed the arts and encouraged her son's blooming interests and talent. Prokofiev made his way through conservatory, arriving young and learning enough, though he disagreed wholeheartedly with several of his teachers and tried to forge his own way.

Waves of unrest in Russia punctuated his youth, eventually culminating in the two revolutions of 1917. In the spring, the czar was overthrown and a fragile republic tried to establish rule. In October, however, the Bolsheviks leveraged continuing unrest and pushed through a communist takeover.

Prokofiev, sensing that the changes ahead were not likely to help his career, left Russia and spent the next decade and a half in the West, much of it in Paris and the United States. His virtuosity as a pianist got him noticed; his reputation as a "bad boy" composer, eager to push boundaries and dare new things, propelled him along, too.

Eventually, Prokofiev decided to return home. There, in 1935, he decided to write music that was more accessible. He wholeheartedly embraced the then-current Soviet aesthetic norms, apparently accepting the notion that music had to be understood by the masses, and that if it was, it could help build a better world. (This implies that he thought the Soviets were indeed building a better world; he later clearly saw the challenges, destruction, and censorship that Stalinist strong-man rule would bring, but, early on, his main interest was in pursuing his own artistic expression.)

It would be a mistake to see his choices in re-styling his music only as the acceptance of official ideology. These changes had been coming, from at least since the time of his First Violin Concerto and the Classical Symphony, both written in 1917 shortly before Prokofiev's departure from Russia.

It doesn't appear that Prokofiev compromised his personal inclinations to use an official idiom he didn't agree with. Musicologist Richard Taruskin has gone so far as to claim that Prokofiev's *"simple style represented the real Prokofiev. It was in these pieces, which he wrote for the sake of audience appeal, and not the ones he wrote for the sake of his reputation with the snobs, that his particular genius resided."* According to Taruskin, Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union because he realized that "his particular genius" would be better appreciated there than in the West,

where he was compared unfavorably to the more fashionable, more radically modern Stravinsky.

Yet for all his desire to be simple and accessible, Prokofiev took pains not to make too great concessions to popular taste. As he wrote in his 1937 article 'The Flowering of Art,' *"In our country music has come to belong to the masses of people. Their artistic taste, the demands they place upon art, are growing with incredible speed, and the Soviet composer must take this into account in each new work. This is something like shooting at a moving target. Only by aiming at the future, at tomorrow, will you not be left behind at the level of yesterday's demands. For this reason I consider it a mistake for a composer to strive for simplification. Any attempt to 'play down' to the listener represents a subconscious underestimation of his cultural maturity and developing tastes. Such an attempt always has an element of insincerity. And music that is insincere cannot endure."*

The works of Prokofiev's early Soviet period, including the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, the music for the film *Alexander Nevsky*, and the Violin Concerto No. 2, show Prokofiev's efforts to write music of great and immediate mass appeal that at the same time avoids "simplification." This is entirely consistent with his tendency to combine traditional composition with unorthodox elements, a tendency found in works starting in his youth.

**ABOUT THE CONCERTO**

The melodies of the Second Violin Concerto are based on triad-like classical tunes and often have the same periodic structure. Still, Prokofiev speaks the language of classical music with a strong 20th-century Russian accent, utilizing shifts of key or meter. Such abrupt changes had been a hallmark of Prokofiev's style since the 1910s. By the 1930s, however, they no longer represented mere iconoclasm and a desire to shock the audience (as they had in Prokofiev's "barbarian" period). Rather, they represent that extra ingredient which keeps the composition from becoming overly "simplified."

The concerto's first movement is in sonata form, built almost academically — and clearly showing that such a formal structure offers a winning progression of ideas, whether an audience member remembers or knows anything about the structure, or not.

The second movement, marked Andante assai, has a simple, long-drawn-out melody played by the solo violin, accompanied by string pizzicatos and delicate counterthemes in the woodwinds. The melody and its accompaniment become more and more excited, leading into a middle section in a faster tempo that, despite the presence of virtuosic passages, remains fundamentally lyrical in tone. The opening theme eventually returns, and the movement ends quietly, with an unusual duet between the principal clarinet and the principal double bass in the last measure.

The final movement is a traditional rondo in form, with returns of the main theme alternated against varying material or episodes. The theme's most striking feature is its rhythm. Some of the variant episodes, on the other hand, are of a primarily melodic nature, while others are characterized by an irregular meter. As with many minor-key works from the earlier Classical period, the end of the con-

certo modulates from G minor to G major, but with some telltale ambiguous notes hanging around. The last sonority in the work is neither major nor minor, adding dissonance and uncertainty. The composer's *enfant terrible* youth had retained some of its presence — and pungence — afterall.

*—Peter Laki © The Cleveland Orchestra*

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SCORING: *Prokofiev scored his Violin Concerto No. 2 for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, percussion (bass drum, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, castanets), and strings, plus the solo violin.*

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA TIMELINE: *The Cleveland Orchestra first played this concerto in January 1946 under the direction of music director Erich Leinsdorf, with Joseph Knitzer as the soloist. It has been programmed somewhat regularly since then. The most recent regular-season concerts were at Severance Hall in October 2019 with conductor Klaus Mäkelä and violinist Augustin Hadelich.*

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: **SYMPHONY**

**SYMPHONY NO. 9 ("FROM THE NEW WORLD")** in E minor, Opus 95
by **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904)

*Composed: 1892-93*

*Premiered: December 16, 1893 at Carnegie Hall,*
*by the New York Philharmonic led by Anton Seidl*

*Duration: about 45 minutes*

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**BY THE TIME** he was fifty years old, Antonín Dvořák was already a famous composer. With the help of his mentor, Johannes Brahms, his works had been published and widely performed. And his own mastery of composition had evolved to the point where, with the exception of Brahms himself, Dvořák was widely considered the greatest symphonic composer alive. Beyond writing music, Dvořák also had an active career as a teacher and was making a comfortable living as a professor at the Conservatory in Prague.

Fame has its price, however, and for Dvořák this came in the form of an irresistible offer from an American woman, Jeanette M. Thurber. Mrs. Thurber wanted him to leave his home and come to New York City. The National Conservatory of Music, which she had founded in 1885, needed a new director. And Thurber hoped that Dvořák's worldwide reputation would help increase the school's struggling enrollment (and budget).

At first Dvořák was reluctant to go. He was comfortable in his native land, among friends and many professional acquaintances, and had little interest in undertaking a long ocean voyage for an uncertain future in a strange new country. Mrs. Thurber's money, however, eventually won him over, and in the fall of 1892 Dvořák set sail for New York accompanied by his wife, two of six children, and a musician friend. His new salary would be more than twenty-five times what he had been making in Prague — and he wouldn't have to teach in the summer, giving him even more time to write music.

Dvořák took his new teaching responsibilities very seriously. Among other things, he was soon advocating Mrs. Thurber's dream of creating a "new American music," which would somehow be distinguished from Dvořák's own European tradition, with its unmistakable traces back to Beethoven and Mozart. He studied Native American music (transcribed second-hand into European musical notation) and listened to African American spirituals.

All of these factors — new surroundings, new acquaintances and colleagues, learning new musical idioms — stimulated Dvořák's own creativity, and he began sketching in his notebook. At first he thought he might write an opera about an American subject — Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha* was of particular interest. Soon enough, however, he found himself writing a new symphony instead.

Completed within eight months of his arrival in New York, the Ninth Symphony

reflects Dvořák's early impressions of America. As such, he added the subtitle "From the New World" to the score. Dvořák hoped that this nickname would help listeners understand that his new work was something like a postcard — written largely in his own musical language and style, but conveying to the European musical establishment some of the newness (and big-ness) that America had to offer.

Dvořák succeeded so well in capturing the spirit of the New World that many people mistakenly assumed that his "New World" Symphony actually quotes — rather than merely suggests — American melodies. (One of his tunes has, in fact, become an "American" song; see below.) The Ninth Symphony was a popular hit at its first performance in 1893 (at Carnegie Hall in New York) and remains one of Dvořák's most often played works.

**ABOUT THE SYMPHONY**

The first movement begins with a slow introduction hinting at the main theme, with the melody itself soon appearing softly in the horns. This syncopated fanfare will recur throughout the remainder of the symphony, bringing a sense of unity and grandeur to the work. Later in the movement, another melody (strikingly similar to the song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot") is introduced by solo flute.

The famous second movement includes the melody that many of us recognize as the spiritual "Goin' Home." The song, however, came after the symphony — one of Dvořák's students set words to the tune several years after the symphony was written.

Dvořák's image for the third movement was the Native American dance scene in Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*. The rhythm of the whirling opening section, however, feels clearly Czech in origin. The remaining melodic ideas are waltzes, alternatingly graceful and energetic.

The fourth and final movement is set in motion almost as if it were a car engine, catching slowly and then whirring to life. Melodies from the first three movements reappear along with new material, including a tune reminiscent of "Three Blind Mice" (or, more likely, the Czech folksong often translated as "Weeding Flaxfield Blue"). Then, the symphony is brought to a fitting and stirring conclusion.

*—program note by Eric Sellen* © 2021

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SCORING: *Dvořák scored his Symphony No. 9 for 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling english horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals and triangle), and strings.*

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA TIMELINE: *The Cleveland Orchestra first performed the "New World" Symphony in April 1920 under Nikolai Sokoloff, and it has been a regular part of the Orchestra's repertoire ever since. The most recent performance took place as part of the 2017 Blossom Music Festival, conducted by Jahja Ling.*

## CONDUCTOR: **RAFAEL PAYARE**

**BORN IN BARCELONA**, Venezuela, in 1980, Rafael Payare was 14 years old when he was first introduced to classical music through the El Sistema program by playing the French horn. After only three weeks, he started playing in the Symphony Orchestra of Anzoátegui, and six months later, he joined the National Children's Orchestra of Venezuela. In 1999, Giuseppe Sinopoli conducted the orchestra, completely transforming the orchestra's sound. This proved to be a life-changing experience for Mr. Payare.

From 2001 until 2012, Mr. Payare served as principal horn of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, touring and recording with conductors including Claudio Abbado, Lorin Maazel, Simon Rattle, and Sinopoli. Meanwhile Mr. Payare received conducting training from José Antonio Abreu, the founder of El Sistema. Between 2008 and 2012, he conducted all Venezuela's major orchestras.

In May 2012, he won first prize at Denmark's 2012 Malko International Conducting Competition. He has since debuted and forged longstanding relationships with many of the world's preeminent orchestras. His U.S. collaborations include engagements with the Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Chicago Symphony. He is making his Cleveland Orchestra debut with tonight's concert of the 2021 Blossom Music Festival.

In Europe, he has been engaged by the Glyndebourne Festival and Royal Swedish Opera, as well as the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, and Vienna Philharmonic, with which he has appeared at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Musikverein, on tour with Elīna Garanča, and at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

From 2014 to 2019 Mr. Payare was principal conductor and music director of Northern Ireland's Ulster Orchestra, where he is currently conductor laureate. He has also been principal conductor at Virginia's Castleton Festival since 2015, having been personally invited to conduct there by his mentor, Lorin Maazel.

This fall, Mr. Payare enters his third season as music director of the San Diego Symphony. He is also music director designate at the Montreal Symphony, where he will open the ensemble's season this coming September with three weeks of programs. His tenure as the orchestra's ninth music director will begin in autumn 2022.

## SOLOIST: **STEFAN JACKIW**

**HAILED FOR PLAYING** of "uncommon musical substance" that is "striking for its intelligence and sensitivity" (*Boston Globe*), violinist Stefan Jackiw has appeared as soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among others.

His 2020-21 season includes streamed performances with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, and virtual recitals alongside pianist Conrad Tao and cellist Jay Campbell as part of the Junction Trio, as well as the complete Ives Sonatas with pianist Jeremy Denk, with whom he has recorded the sonatas for future release on Nonesuch Records. In spring 2021, he performed live with the Fort Worth Symphony, Sinfónica de Tenerife in Spain, and KBS Symphony in South Korea. In July 2020, he launched *Stefan's Sessions*, a virtual masterclass series exploring major works with up-and-coming young violinists.

Highlights of recent seasons include his Blossom debut with The Cleveland Orchestra and Juraj Valcuha, with whom he also reunited for performances in Dallas, Detroit, and Luxembourg and performances of Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto at Carnegie Hall, as part of a multi-city tour with the Russian National Orchestra. He has also performed with the Baltimore, Boston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego, St. Louis, and Tokyo symphonies; the Minnesota Orchestra; and the Rotterdam and Seoul philharmonics. European highlights include performances with the Netherlands Radio Symphony and Ludovic Morlot at the Concertgebouw. Mr. Jackiw made his Cleveland Orchestra debut in May 2008 under the baton of Andrew Davis.

A talented chamber musician, he toured Korea with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica, and led performances of Mendelssohn with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He gave the world premiere of David Fulmer's Violin Concerto No. 2 "Jubilant Arcs," commissioned for him by the Heidelberg Festival with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie. He has recorded the complete Brahms violin sonatas, and the Beethoven Triple with Inon Barnatan, Alisa Weilerstein, Alan Gilbert, and Academy St. Martin in the Fields.

Mr. Jackiw has performed in numerous major festivals and concert series, including the Aspen Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Philharmonie de Paris, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Celebrity Series of Boston, Tanglewood, and the Washington Performing Arts Society.

Born to physicist parents of Korean and German descent, Mr. Jackiw began playing the violin at the age of four. His teachers have included Zinaida Gilels, Michèle Auclair, and Donald Weilerstein. He attended Harvard University and New England Conservatory, and is the recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. Mr. Jackiw plays a violin made in 1750 in Milan by G.B. Guadagnini, on generous loan from a private collection. He lives in New York City.

# THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

**ONE OF THE FEW** major American orchestras founded by a woman, The Cleveland Orchestra's inaugural concert took place in December 1918, at a time of renewed optimism and progressive community ideas. By the middle of the century, with its own concert hall, the decades of growth and sustained effort had turned the ensemble into one of the most-admired around the world. Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, The Cleveland Orchestra has extended its artistry and musical abilities and remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world — year after year setting standards of extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. In recent years, the *New York Times* has called it "the best in America" for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion, "virtually flawless," and "one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world)."

The partnership with Franz Welser-Möst, begun in 2002 and entering its 19th year with the 2020-21 season, has earned The Cleveland Orchestra unprecedented residencies in the U.S. and around the world, including one at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra. It also performs regularly at important European summer festivals. The Orchestra's 100th season in 2017-18 featured two international tours, concluding with the presentation on three continents of Welser-Möst's *Prometheus Project* featuring Beethoven Symphonies and overtures; these Beethoven concerts were presented in May and June 2018, at home in Cleveland, in Vienna's Musikverein, and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra has a long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. A series of DVDs (available through Clasart Classics) and CD recordings under the direction of Mr. Welser-Möst continues to add to an extensive and widely praised catalog of audio recordings made during the tenures of the ensemble's earlier music directors. In addition, Cleveland Orchestra concerts are heard in syndication each season on radio stations throughout North America and Europe.

From 2020 forward, a number of new digital media initiatives are being launched to share and extend the ensemble's artistry globally. These include debut releases on the Orchestra's own recording label, an ongoing series of podcasts titled "On A Personal Note," a new digital streaming platform named Adella (after the Orchestra's founder Adella Prentiss Hughes), and a series of premium concert broadcasts created from the 2020-21 season titled *In Focus*.

For more information, visit: *www.clevelandorchestra.com*.

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The Cleveland Orchestra is grateful to these organizations for their ongoing generous support of The Cleveland Orchestra:
National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Ohio and Ohio Arts Council, and to the residents of Cuyahoga County through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud of its long-term partnership with Kent State University, made possible in part through generous funding from the State of Ohio.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud to have its home, Severance Hall, located on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, with whom it has a long history of collaboration and partnership.