



## AN AMERICAN ANTHEM | PROGRAM NOTES

March 1, 2014

### Dmitri Shostakovich

#### Symphony no. 1 in F major, op. 10 (1925)

The first symphony of Shostakovich provides a refreshing contrast for listeners accustomed to Stalin's seeming omnipresence in the composer's later works. This graduation piece from the Petrograd Conservatory in 1925, written when Shostakovich was nineteen, openly displays the brashness of youthful genius and reflects an early time of cautious Soviet openness to European influences. Abroad, the radical twelve-tone school of Schoenberg coexisted with a fairly tonal neoclassicism—which proved more congenial to a post-imperial Russia where the nationalistic spirit of "The Mighty Five" and Tchaikovsky still lingered.

Cynicism was then also in the air in Europe, notably in post-World War I Germany's Weimar Republic, where it was exemplified in satirical works by Hindemith, a favorite composer of Shostakovich. Accordingly, the opening movement of our first symphony features rather overblown military march rhythms contrasting with a somewhat tipsy cabaret waltz. To whatever extent Tchaikovsky's balletic sense may yet lie in this work, it has been given a grotesque twist that also reflects Shostakovich's experience as a cinema pianist. Though Schoenberg's influence may initially seem incongruous to consider, thematic passages in this symphony in F major can be found showing twelve-tone serial tendencies. Reminders of early Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, with its mechanical puppets come to life, may also be discerned in this symphony.

The second movement, a scherzo and trio movement with an ambiguous opening, appears to continue the satirical vein with a boisterous *galop* featuring the piano, but it surprisingly veers into a deeper and more affecting realm; indeed, at the première of the symphony in Leningrad on May 12, 1926, led by Nicolai Malko, this movement was enthusiastically encored.

The third movement, a Lento-Largo in ABA form, opens with an expansive theme, first stated by the oboe, suggesting some acquaintance with Schoenberg's serialism and clearly showing the influence of Mahler's symphonies as well. As this movement grows in intensity, a quotation from Wagner's *Siegfried* can be heard. It has also been noticed that a pianissimo passage in the strings anticipates, by many years, the passacaglia from Shostakovich's own Eighth Symphony (1943).

The Finale, Allegro molto-Lento-Allegro molto, joined to the previous movement by a drum roll, features rather extreme contrasts of mood, ranging from the somber to the mockingly frenetic, and eventually brings us to a rousing coda featuring brass fanfares.

Shostakovich kept the date of the première of this symphony as a personal holiday, and he later quoted material from its first movement in his own Quartet no. 8, op. 110 (1960).

This symphony enjoyed immediate success in Russia, and, soon after Bruno Walter led a performance in Berlin in 1928, the world over. Looking back upon this work, we quote some later words by Lev Lebedinsky, a musicologist and friend of Shostakovich in the 1950s: “[In] his First Symphony, [Shostakovich] already challenges the forces of evil. I was the first to note that the timpani in the last movement sound like a depiction of an execution on a scaffold. When I remarked to [him], ‘You were the first to declare war against Stalin,’ he did not deny it. Already, in his early years, Shostakovich understood what was going on in our country and what was to come.”

—Raymond H. Rosenstock

### **Bernard Hoffer**

#### **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (2012)**

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra was written in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., in March and April of 2012, at the suggestion of Danielle Maddon and the New England Philharmonic. I needed to work very quickly and intensely as I was preparing to relocate to New York City. The concerto is in a neo-romantic concept: a three-movement piece fast-slow-fast. In the first movement, “Dialogues,” the thematic material is introduced in the first measure by the solo violin and then is passed back and forth between the violin and members of the orchestra. This material is developed and expanded throughout. There is also a strong influence of jazz. There are sections where the soloist plays to a moving pizzicato bass line with jazzy interpolations by the orchestra. The movement ends with a full statement of the original material.

The second movement, “Aria,” is a simple song introduced by the violin with harp accompaniment. It then is restated by the orchestra with violin obligatos. At the apex of this movement the first movement materials are revisited. The movement ends with the “song” strongly reprised leading to a harp and violin ending.

The finale is a Rondo-Scherzo with a lighthearted, humorous theme played first by the violin and then by the orchestra. There are various interludes always returning to the main theme. Toward the end the violin plays a quasi-cadenza over steadily growing brass chords similar to many of the great arrangements of the Stan Kenton Orchestra in the fifties and sixties. The music of the Kenton Orchestra was one of the most important musical discoveries during my high-school years and has remained a powerful influence on my music to this day.

The concerto is scored for solo violin; 2 flutes, second doubling piccolo; 2 oboes; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 2 tenor trombones; bass trombone; tuba; timpani; percussion: snare drum, 4 tom-toms, bass drum, hand cymbals, suspended cymbal, xylophone, glockenspiel; harp, and strings.

—Bernard Hoffer

### **Michael Gandolfi (b. 1956)**

#### ***Chesapeake: Summer of 1814* (2013)**

Historical narrative by Dana Bonstrom

September 14, 2014, marks the bicentennial of the drafting of a poem, in the early morning aftermath of the Battle of Baltimore, by a young lawyer held captive on a British frigate in the outer precincts of Baltimore Harbor.

*Chesapeake: Summer of 1814* is a meditation on the importance of music in the lives and endeavors of our forebears (and their British cousins) in the early years of the nineteenth century. The work is predicated almost exclusively on contemporary accounts of the music that was sung and played in the course of the prosecution of the War of 1812.

### **Prologue: Origins of a Melody**

The work begins with a statement of *To Anacreon in Heaven*, the original song upon whose melody Francis Scott Key draped his poem. The song, written to honor a London gentlemen's club, was well-known in America. In fact, Key had earlier borrowed the melody to set his poem celebrating the American naval hero, Stephen Decatur.

### **American Pastoral**

This movement is built upon *Durang's Hornpipe*, a dance written by William Hoffmaster for John Durang, America's first professional dancer, and reputedly George Washington's favorite performer. It underscores the maritime origins of the war, as well as the bumptious vigor of the citizens of the new republic. As Alexis de Toqueville wrote in 1831, "the American has no time to tie himself to anything . . . instability, instead of occurring to him in the form of disasters, seems to give birth to nothing around him but wonders."

Coincidentally, *The Star-Spangled Banner* is believed to have been first sung in public by John Durang's son, Ferdinand, at a Baltimore tavern in early October 1814.

### **The Battle of Bladensburg: August 24, 1814**

On August 19, 1814, British troops came ashore in Maryland. Until that time, the war had been waged principally in the Atlantic, and on the Canadian border. The British arrival in the Chesapeake signaled a determination to conclude the war quickly and decisively.

At Bladensburg a British expedition easily defeated a much larger but utterly disorganized American force, sending them into a panicked retreat. The British are here represented by the triumphant *Rule Britannia!* and the Americans by *Hail, Columbia!*—begun proudly, but trailing off into quiet despair.

### **The British March on Washington: August 25, 1814**

Washington D.C. in 1814 was little more than a village of 7,000 residents with no strategic value to Britain's war aims. The town had symbolic value, however: the Americans had earlier invaded the Canadian city of York (now Toronto) and burned the parliament building to the ground. The British were determined to return the insult.

We first hear *Mrs. Madison's Minuet* (composed for Dolley Madison by Alexander Reinagle in 1809) implying a state of normality in the White House, even as the British advance. Drums announce the approach of the British army, who sing Handel's chorus *See, the Conquering Hero Comes!* before setting torch to the White House and Capitol.

### **Onward, to Baltimore!**

The British now moved on their true objective: Baltimore, center of American maritime activity, and home to the privateers who had harassed the British merchant and naval fleets for years.

The Battle of Baltimore was fought on land and water. At North Point, seven miles to the east of the city, a perhaps over-confident British force (*God Save the King*) encountered a defiant and

determined American militia (*Yankee Doodle*, with lyrics written for recruitment of volunteers); the Americans handed the British a decisive and costly defeat.

### **Calm Before the Storm: Baltimore Harbor, September 13, 1814**

The second front in the Battle of Baltimore was at the entrance to Baltimore Harbor on the Patapsco River, where the British navy planned an assault first on Fort McHenry, and then on the city itself. A contemplative calm descends before the battle erupts into a terrifying night-long bombardment of the fort by British cannon and rockets.

### **The Guns Fall Silent: September 14, 1814**

In the quiet first moments of dawn, Francis Scott Key approaches a British officer aboard HM Frigate *Surprise* and asks his questions:

*"I beg your pardon: may I ask if you know what has happened? Has Baltimore fallen? Has Fort McHenry been seized? All of yesterday I saw our flag flying over the fort. And last night, at the height of battle, the sky made bright as day by the light of your rockets and flares, the flag was still there. But what of it now? The guns have fallen silent. Who is the victor? Who has won? Wait! the sun has found it. The Stars and Stripes still fly!"*

### **Key's Question Becomes a Song**

As Francis Scott Key speaks, his words are taken up by the chorus and transformed into the first verse of what we recognize as our national anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*:

O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;  
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen, through the mists of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream;  
'Tis the star-spangled banner, oh, long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,  
A home and a country, should leave us no more?  
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,

And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand,  
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation;  
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land  
Praise the Power that has made and preserved us as a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust";  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

## ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

### Bernard Hoffer

Bernard Hoffer was born October 14, 1934, in Zurich, Switzerland. He received early musical training at the Dalcroze School in New York and attended the Eastman School of Music (B.M., M.M.) in Rochester, New York, where he studied composition with Bernard Rogers and Wayne Barlow and conducting with Paul White and Herman Genhart. After serving as arranger for the U.S. Army Field Band in Washington, D.C., he came to New York as a freelance musician/pianist, composer, conductor, and arranger.

He has written extensively for films, commercials, and television, for which he has won several Emmy nominations (including for the music for the *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour* on PBS). His commercials have won six Clio Awards. He scored the hit children's cartoon series *Thundercats* and *Silverhawks* and orchestrated the Emmy Award-winning theme to PBS's *American Experience*. He has received grants from Meet the Composer and the Margaret Fairbank Jory Copying Assistance Program.

Concert works have been performed by the New York Philharmonic, the Spokane Symphony, the Greenwich (Conn.) Symphony Orchestra, the Amherst Saxophone Quartet, Boston Musica Viva, the New England Philharmonic, and the Composers String Quartet. *Divertimento for Octet* (1988) was awarded second prize in the 1994 New Music Delaware Competition. Concerto for Viola and Orchestra received its premiere at the International Viola Congress in Chicago on June 26, 1993. *Capriccio "Settembre Musica"* (1994) for solo violin and jazz ensemble, written for Boston Musica Viva, was awarded a prize at the 1997 New Music Delaware. Recently, Boston Musica Viva gave the world premiere of *A Boston Cinderella*. Other recent works include *Dark, Blue, Light* for bass clarinet and piano, *Dark Music* for bass trombone and 5 basses, a violin sonata, and *Alaska Antiphonies* for large brass ensemble.