

Concert Program for October 8, 9, and 10, 2010

Gilbert Varga, conductor
André Watts, piano

STEVEN MACKEY *Turn the Key* (2006)
(b. 1956)

GRIEG **Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 16** (1868)
(1843-1907) Allegro molto moderato
Adagio—
Allegro moderato molto e marcato

Intermission

DVOŘÁK **Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88** (1889)
(1841-1904) Allegro con brio
Adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Allegro ma non troppo

Gilbert Varga is the Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist.

André Watts is brought to you through the generosity of the Whitaker Foundation as part of the Whitaker Guest Artist Series.

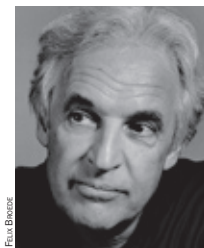
The concert of Friday, October 8, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Dr. Virginia V. Weldon.

The concert of Saturday, October 9, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Jan K. Ver Hagen.

The concert of Sunday, October 10, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from the Edison Family Foundation.

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors Orchestral Series.

Large print program notes are available through the generosity of Lutheran Senior Services and are located at the Customer Service table in the foyer.



Gilbert Varga Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist

Gilbert Varga, son of the celebrated Hungarian violinist Tibor Varga, studied under three very different and distinctive maestros: Franco Ferrara, Sergiu Celibidache and Charles Bruck. Renowned for his commanding and elegant baton technique, Varga has held positions with and guest conducted many of the major orchestras throughout the world.

In Europe, Varga's recent and upcoming engagements include Berlin Radio Symphony, DSO Berlin, Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra, Frankfurt Museums-gesellschaft, MDR Leipzig, Gürzenich Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Spanish National Orchestra, and Orchestre National de Belgique. In the U.K. he returned to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 2009-10, and in 2010-11 he makes his debut with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

In North America, Varga made his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2002 and has since developed a flourishing and long-standing relationship with the orchestra, to which he returns every season. In 2005 he made a highly successful debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and he works regularly with orchestras such as Atlanta, Dallas, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis; in 2009-10 he made his debut with the Seattle Symphony and in October 2010 he makes his debut with the Baltimore Symphony.

Further afield, Varga has recently made his debuts with the Taipei Symphony, Malaysian Philharmonic, and NCPA Orchestra (Beijing), and in 2011 conducts the Adelaide Symphony, Australia.

In the earlier part of his conducting career Varga concentrated on work with chamber orchestras, particularly the Tibor Varga Chamber Orchestra, before rapidly developing a reputation as a symphonic conductor. He was Chief Conductor of the Hofer Symphoniker between 1980-85 and from 1985-90 he was Chief Conductor of the Philharmonia Hungarica in Marl, conducting their debut tour to Hungary with Yehudi Menuhin. In 1991 Varga took up the position of Permanent Guest Conductor of the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra until 1995, and from 1997-2000 was Principal Guest of the Malmö Symphony. From 1997-2008, Varga was Music Director of the Basque National Symphony Orchestra, leading them through 10 seasons, including tours across the U.K., Germany, Spain, and South America.

Varga's discography includes recordings with ASV, Discover Records, Tring (the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's Collection), Koch International (Munich Chamber Orchestra and Bamberg Symphony) and Claves Recordings (the Basque National Orchestra). Varga's most recent recording is with DSO Berlin and pianist Anna Vinnitskaya for Naive Records and will be released during the 2010-11 season.

Gilbert Varga is represented by Intermusica. He most recently conducted the St. Louis Symphony in April 2008.



André Watts Whitaker Guest Artist

André Watts burst upon the music world at the age of 16 when Leonard Bernstein chose him to make his debut with the New York Philharmonic in their Young People's Concerts, broadcast nationwide on CBS-TV. Only two weeks later, Bernstein asked him to substitute at the last minute for the ailing Glenn Gould in performances of Liszt's E-flat Concerto with the New York Philharmonic,

thus launching his career in storybook fashion. More than 45 years later, Watts remains one of today's most celebrated and beloved superstars.

A perennial favorite with orchestras throughout the U.S., Watts is also a regular guest at the major summer music festivals including Ravinia, the Hollywood Bowl, Saratoga, Tanglewood, and the Mann Music Center. Recent and upcoming engagements include appearances with the Philadelphia and Minnesota orchestras, New York and Los Angeles philharmonics, and the Atlanta, Detroit, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Seattle, and National symphonies among others. During the 2010-11 season Watts plays all-Liszt recitals throughout the U.S. while recent international engagements include concerto and recital appearances in Japan, Germany, and Spain.

Watts has had a long and frequent association with television, having appeared on numerous programs produced by PBS, the BBC, and the Arts and Entertainment Network. His 1976 New York recital, aired on the program *Live from Lincoln Center*, was the first full-length recital broadcast in the history of television. Watts's most recent television appearances are with the Philadelphia Orchestra on the occasion of the orchestra's 100th Anniversary Gala and a performance of the Brahms Concerto No. 2 with the Seattle Symphony, Gerard Schwarz conducting, for PBS.

A much-honored artist who has played before royalty in Europe and heads of government in nations all over the world, Watts was selected to receive the Avery Fisher Prize in 1988. At age 26 he was the youngest person ever to receive an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University and he has since received numerous honors from highly respected schools including the University of Pennsylvania, Brandeis University, the Juilliard School of Music, and his alma mater, the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. Previously Artist-in-Residence at the University of Maryland, Watts was appointed to the newly created Jack I. and Dora B. Hamlin Endowed Chair in Music at Indiana University in May 2004.

André Watts most recently performed with the STL Symphony in December 2006.

National Color

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

Ideas at Play

During the second half of the 19th century, nationalist currents strongly shaped European music, especially in countries on the continent's periphery. The most conspicuous manifestations of nationalist sentiment came in the form of overtly patriotic compositions or as glosses on folk music. Smetana's tone poem *Má Vlast (My Fatherland)* exemplifies the former, Liszt's popular *Hungarian Rhapsodies* the latter.

But so strong was the nationalist impulse that some composers impressed geographical and cultural identity even on their symphonies and concertos, musical genres that would seem least suited to that purpose. These are traditionally the most "abstract" kind of orchestral music, ones that, in their classical forms, convey purely musical matters—the play of melody, harmony, and other compositional elements—rather than alluding to anything concrete in the world beyond music.

Not surprisingly, national coloring is more subtle in symphonic and concerto composition than in tone poems and other sorts of music, even when written by composers of strongly patriotic bent. Still, it can be a palpable influence, as we hear in the Piano Concerto of Edvard Grieg and in the Symphony No. 8 of Antonín Dvořák. Our opening piece, by the American composer Steven Mackey, does not reference folk music specifically, as Grieg and Dvořák do. Still, its rhythmic verve and bold sonic colors say "Made in America" as surely as if it had quoted "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Steven Mackey *Turn the Key*

Born: Frankfurt, Germany, February 14, 1956 **Now resides:** Princeton, New Jersey
First performance: October 6, 2006, in Miami; Michael Tilson Thomas conducted the New World Symphony **STL Symphony premiere:** This week **Scoring:** Three flutes, piccolo, and alto flute; three oboes and English horn; three clarinets, E-flat clarinet, and bass clarinet; two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and a large contingent of percussion, harp, piano, celesta, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 11 minutes



Steven Mackey

In Context 2006 *Israeli troops invade Lebanon; 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth celebrated throughout the world; Italy wins the World Cup*

Steven Mackey is one of the most accomplished American composers of his generation, and perhaps the most intriguing. This last quality stems not only from his music, which constitutes a fascinating and exhilarating aural landscape, but from the composer himself. Mackey's background is hardly typical of a classically trained musician. His first musical passion was playing

electric guitar in rock bands in northern California, where he grew up. He discovered classical music only as a university undergraduate, when a teacher played a recording of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony in a music-history class. The effect was immediate and profound. Mackey declared a major in music and began composing. He went on to graduate study, eventually completing a doctoral degree at Brandeis University.

It is indicative of broad appeal and unconventional nature of his music that Mackey has composed pieces on commission not only from the Chicago, San Francisco, and New World Symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, soprano Dawn Upshaw, and violinist Leila Josefowicz but also jazz guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Joey Baron. In recent years Mackey has returned to the electric guitar, writing and performing concertos as well as solo and chamber works featuring the instrument.

The Music: *Turn the Key* was composed for the inaugural concert of the Knight Concert Hall in Miami, home of the New World Symphony Orchestra, and its character is suitably festive. In a note written for the premiere, Mackey explained that the piece "grew from a simple rhythm that I found myself employing to knock on doors and absent mindedly tap on all available surfaces—long, long, short, short, in a 7/8 meter.... This rhythm suggested melodic cells and complimentary counter-rhythms that in turn suggested other melodic cells. These lean and unadorned elements develop and combine to form fanciful sonic images."

Fanciful indeed, and extremely vibrant and varied. The composer notes that "*Turn the Key* has a variety of densities: small moments for solo harp and solo violin, big arrivals for the whole orchestra, clangorous percussion, silky passages for string orchestra, plucky staccato passages, brassy wind

band music, intricate rhythmic interplay, dense counterpoint, and various combinations of the above.” This is, in other words, a real orchestral showpiece. But the work provides not just a display of instrumental color and capabilities. “More and more,” Mackey observes, “I find that I want my music to contain catharsis and transformation, and for this occasion I wanted to fully embrace a sense of triumph and accomplishment. The stinginess of the musical material at the beginning, by the end unlocks a generous, joyous spirit and culminates in an unabashed celebration.”

As for the composition’s title, the composer notes that “key” is translated into Spanish as *clave*, a word also used to indicate the basic rhythm of dances of Afro-Cuban origin, (i.e. the “key” rhythm). “This seems appropriate,” Mackey proposes, “since *Turn the Key* does spring from a fundamental rhythm and develops by turning this rhythm around to mean different things.” He states that the rhythm underlying the piece is not an actual *clave* from an existing Afro-Cuban dance, and he admits that its seven-beat pattern produces “a marked limp.” Still, he concludes, “if you divide music into its most primal motivations—singing, dancing, and praying—*Turn the Key* is a dance.”

Edvard Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor, op. 16

Born: Bergen, Norway, June 15, 1843 **Died:** Bergen, September 4, 1907 **First performance:** April 3, 1869, in Copenhagen; Edmund Neupert, the pianist to whom Grieg dedicated the score, played the solo part **STL Symphony premiere:** January 30, 1908, Katharine Goodson was soloist, with Max Zach conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** February 19, 2000, Lars Vogt was soloist, with Hans Vonk conducting **Scoring:** Solo piano and an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 30 minutes



Grieg in 1876

In Context 1868 *President Andrew Johnson impeached*; *Dostoyevsky writes The Idiot*; *Brahms's Ein deutsches Requiem premieres*

Edvard Grieg was, and remains, Norway’s pre-eminent composer and the musical voice of Scandinavia during the last third of the 19th century. Yet Grieg’s most frequently heard piece, his Piano Concerto in A minor, reveals only traces of the Nordic character that eventually would mark his music. Grieg wrote the concerto in the summer of 1868, during a quiet rural vacation. The

composer had recently returned to Scandinavia from Germany, where he had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. In Leipzig Grieg had encountered the music of Mendelssohn and Schumann. (The former had founded the school, the latter had taught there.) The work of these composers had made a strong impression on Grieg’s musical thinking, and his early compositions show him emulating the style and forms of the German Romantics.

Once back in his homeland, however, Grieg began to discover the beauties of Norway's folk music. By incorporating inflections of this music into his writing, Grieg moved steadily toward a distinctly Nordic idiom. But in 1868, the 25-year-old composer had only begun his exploration of native Norwegian songs, and he was still very much under the Teutonic influence of the Conservatory. His Piano Concerto, therefore, exhibits a certain Norwegian flavor in some of its themes but otherwise lies firmly within the tradition of Romantic concerto composition. Grieg even intimated that he modeled his work on Schumann's Piano Concerto in the same key.

The Music: The concerto opens in striking fashion. Heralded by a dramatic timpani roll, the piano unleashes a cascade of sonorous A-minor chords. This motif, important though it is, is only a prelude to the initial theme of the first movement, a melody announced by the orchestral winds, who then pass it to the soloist. The orchestra—more specifically, the cello section—also introduces the warmly romantic second theme, and again the piano promptly takes up the idea. Elaboration of both themes leads, in time, to a cadenza solo for the pianist, and the movement concludes by recalling the motif of cascading chords with which it began.

In contrast to the bravura character of the first movement, the central Adagio is based on a melody sung with hushed reverence by the muted strings. A brief transition leads without pause to the finale. Here the influence of Nordic folk music, which would become so important to Grieg's later work, is evident. The principal theme gives the impression of a Norwegian dance, the movement's central section takes us out of doors, and a melody introduced as a striking flute solo seems the song of a peasant girl. This tune reappears, after a return to the dance-like opening material, as the source of the tremendous peroration that brings the concerto to a close.

Antonín Dvořák Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88

Born: Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841 **Died:** Prague, May 1, 1904 **First performance:** February 2, 1890, in Prague; the composer conducted the Czech National Orchestra **STL Symphony premiere:** December 18, 1964, Edouard Van Remoortel conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** March 19, 2005, Yan Pascal Tortelier conducting **Scoring:** Two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 34 minutes

In Context 1889 *Eiffel Tower completed*; in Germany, Bayer introduces aspirin in powder form; Mahler's *Symphony No. 1, "Titan,"* premieres

Dvořák wrote his *Symphony No. 8* during a particularly happy period in his life. After years of living and working in poverty and obscurity, the composer had achieved international fame and an unexpected degree of



Dvořák

material comfort. One of the first fruits of his new-found prosperity was the purchase of a country house in the village of Vyoská. This became Dvořák's sanctuary and workshop, and it was there, in the autumn of 1889, that he composed the Symphony No. 8.

The music mirrors both Dvořák's contented frame of mind and the Czech countryside in which it was created. It is one of its author's happiest works, and it is imbued with unmistakable local color. Dvořák had by this time achieved an effective blend of sophisticated compositional technique and melodic writing based on the inflections of Czech folk music. Among the fruits of that union were some of his finest orchestral works, including the Symphony No. 8, a composition in which Dvořák's synthesis of folkloric and symphonic elements found perhaps its most fruitful expression.

The Music: Dvořák casts the symphony's first movement in the bright key of G major, but he begins in the minor mode, with a melody that exploits the rich timbre of the cellos. This passage serves as a prelude to the movement's principal theme (announced by the flute), but without being a distinctly separate section, as in the typical classical symphony. A long, energetic transition leads to the second subject, which emerges from the dying tone of a brief horn solo. Here we find two distinct melodic ideas, both of which display a common characteristic of Czech folk music: the initial phrase which is begun three times, as if to gather momentum. A heroic final theme then leads seamlessly into a central development section. The reappearance of the opening cello melody is a false recapitulation, for there is more shaping of the movement's material yet in store. When the principal subject does make its definitive return, it is transformed to a blazing trumpet call.

The ensuing Adagio is exceptionally rich in moods and ideas. Moving fluidly between minor and major harmonies, as well as between intimate and grandiose expression, it is by turns grave and playful.

An arresting trumpet fanfare heralds the finale. Once again Dvořák enlists the cellos, who present a broad theme related not only to the preceding trumpet call but also to the flute melody of the first movement. Several variations of this melody follow. Suddenly, however, we find ourselves in a minor key as the oboes lead what seems, paradoxically, a cheerful little funeral march. This, in turn, dissolves into a frenzied development episode. The wildly inventive central section emerges at last as a restatement of the trumpet fanfare and, shortly, the cello theme. The variations on the latter subject now resume in a tranquil vein. But Dvořák has no intention of ending the symphony quietly, and a rousing coda passage bursts upon us without warning.