

## **Andrei Feher conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

**Friday, November 22, 2019 at 8:00pm**

**Prelude Recital at 6:15pm**

**Pre-concert Talk at 7:15pm**

This is the 994<sup>th</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

**Andrei Feher**, conductor

**Mansur Kadirov**, cello

**Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

### **PROGRAM**

Dmitri Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat Major, op. 107

- I. Allegretto
- II. Moderato –
- III. Cadenza –
- IV. Allegro con moto

### **INTERMISSION**

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 1 in D Major ("Titan")

1. Langsam. Schleppend [Slow. Dragging]  
Immer sehr gemächlich [Always at a very leisurely pace]
2. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell [With strong movement, but not too fast]  
Trio: Recht gemächlich [Quite leisurely]  
Tempo primo
3. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen [Solemn and measured, without dragging]
4. Stürmisch bewegt [Stormy]

## **Dmitri Shostakovich**

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, September 12/25, 1906; died in Moscow, Russia, August 9, 1975

### **Dmitri Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat Major, op. 107**

"I took a simple little theme and tried to develop it," Shostakovich is reported as saying after Rostropovich first played through the concerto for him at his dacha outside Leningrad. That 'simple little theme' evolved into one of the landmark works of the repertoire, custom made for the soul, personality, and technique of a soloist who was to virtually 'own' the work for half a century. The spiky four-note theme determinedly dominates the opening movement, animates an extended cadenza and crowns the driven finale. Both composer and soloist have acknowledged the importance of Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto (1952) as inspiration for the new work. "Whole sections of the piece (admittedly much transformed) found their way into Shostakovich's work," Rostropovich said. Both scores have a prominent role for timpani. But Shostakovich scores his concerto very sparingly, writing not for full orchestra, but for a smaller combination of strings plus two each of the woodwinds (with doubling piccolo and contrabassoon parts), timpani, celesta, and a brass section of just one horn. His score is lean, compact, and economical. The celesta is heard just once, while the horn at times functions as a shadow soloist.

The four-note G – E – B – B flat motif is introduced right away by the solo cello. Shostakovich described the music that follows as 'in the style of a jocular march.' But the development of this music is hard-driven and unremitting, with chattering woodwinds that bite rather than smile. At times the theme is squeezed into C – B – E flat – D, which is a variant of Shostakovich's four-note signature (D-S-C-H) that regularly appears in his late music. The prominent rhythm of two short notes and one long that underlies both the main theme and the chant-like second

theme is to be echoed in the finale in a sardonic passage that quotes Stalin's favourite song, "Suliko." Stalin, dead six years when the concerto first saw light of day, left behind a malign legacy that fuelled Shostakovich's wry humour and feeling for the ironic for the rest of his life.

The ensuing three movements are played without break. First comes the slow movement, by far the longest in the concerto. Its noble, somewhat melancholy opening, in a Sarabande-like rhythm that Shostakovich favoured, recurs to bind together the three sections of the movement. Then the cello ruminates on a poignant, folk-like melody. In one of the most memorable moments of the concerto, it reappears towards the end of the Moderato as a ghostly echo of itself, high and otherworldly on cello harmonics, answered by celesta. The cadenza then meditates on the musical material we have just heard, increasing in intensity and complexity as fragments of the concerto's opening theme reappear. This leads directly into the finale whose angry cries and relentless drive is combined with the opening theme, resounding on the horn. The cello pushes on to even more frenzied territory until the timpani bring the proceedings to a decisive conclusion.

## Gustav Mahler

Born in Kalischt, nr. Iglau [now Kaliště, Jihlava], Czech Republic, July 7, 1860; died in Vienna, Austria, May 18, 1911

### **Symphony No. 1 in D Major ("Titan") (1884–88, rev 1893–96)**

Mahler's First Symphony, uncharacteristically long in its gestation, was written when its composer was renowned as an opera conductor. An earlier version was titled *Titan, a Tone Poem in Symphonic Form*, referring to the driven, idealist hero of Jean Paul Richter's novel, with whom Mahler eagerly identified. Mahler subsequently rejected this title and others for the four-movement symphony he premiered in 1896. The opening of the symphony at once establishes a canvas for titanic struggle. Marked 'like a sound of nature,' a pianissimo A, seven octaves deep, evokes the deep stillness of the Moravian forests of Mahler's childhood. It is an awe-inspiring and utterly original opening to a symphony, with its slowly shifting patterns of light and the rustle of wind, broken by distant bird calls and bugle fanfares from nearby barracks. As the scene comes into focus (Beethoven's Ninth was the obvious precedent here), a cuckoo call on the interval of a fourth leads straight to the main musical material of the movement. This is drawn from the second of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*), a song describing the joy in spring that a young man finds after the breakup of a love affair. The 24-year-old Mahler wrote the song in the wake of an affair with the singer Johanna Richter. Four years later, another love affair, now with the wife of the grandson of the composer Weber, generated the momentum to bring the symphony to completion in just six weeks. "It came gushing out like a mountain torrent!" Mahler wrote to a friend. The transitions within the movement are painstakingly structured and the music builds to one magnificent climax, resonant with brass, then an exuberant, teasing close.

The interweaving of symphonic writing with melody drawn from song continues in the second movement. This is an intensely Austrian ländler, based on Mahler's early song "Hans und Grete" from 1880. The music is, for the most part, all innocence and happiness, save for a touch of sarcasm from the high woodwinds in the trio. If the movement was calculated to please its early audiences, the sardonic funeral march that follows only unsettled them. Taking its cue in part from a woodcut engraving titled *The Huntsman's Funeral*, in which forest animals accompany a dead hunter's coffin to its grave, the macabre music builds a round on the nursery tune we know as "Frère Jacques" but which begins, for German audiences, with the words 'Brother Martin, are you sleeping?' Fragments of village band klezmer music add to the macabre scene. But hidden within the procession, at the heart of Mahler's First Symphony, lies an exquisitely scored excerpt from the last of the *Wayfarer* songs, a farewell to the world from a lovelorn young man.

The longest movement of the symphony, the monumental finale, still lies ahead and, with it, the transformation of musical material from earlier in the symphony. The music drama begins spectacularly with 'the sudden despairing cry of a heart wounded to its depths.' It now begins a progression from uncertainty and despair to eventual triumph, moving through one of Mahler's broadest, most inspired melodies to reminiscences of the opening 'dawn' music and still more struggle. All the while, Mahler is working towards re-establishing the home key of the symphony, D major, not heard since the end of the first movement. A sudden upward jolt of tonality, triple-forte, begins the process. But uncertainty prevails as Mahler again works his way through the opening material and still more struggle until victory is within sight. Now, at the peak of the jubilation, the seven horns are asked to stand and let their chorale resound. Mahler's Titan has finally fought through to arrive in Paradise.

- Program notes © 2019 Keith Horner

## **Andrei Feher**

### **Conductor**

Having gained early experience as assistant to Fabien Gabel at the Orchestre symphonique de Québec, at the age of 22, Feher joined the Orchestre de Paris as Assistant Conductor to its Music Director, Paavo Järvi. During this time, he collaborated with conductors including Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, Christoph von Dohnányi, Thomas Hengelbrock, and Jaap van Zweden. He also regularly conducted the orchestra in their popular Young Public concerts at the Philharmonie de Paris.

In addition to his commitments with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, where he serves as Music Director, recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Orchestre symphonique de Québec, Les Violons du Roy, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Orchestre National d'Ile de France, Orchestre Métropolitain, and Romanian Radio National Orchestra.

A strong advocate of contemporary music, Feher has recently performed works by Eric Champagne, Pierre Mercure, George Dimitrov, Ciprian Pop, and Abigail Richardson, as well as the world premiere of Thierry Besancon's opera for children, *Les Zoocrates*, with Opéra de Lausanne. In November 2015, Feher conducted the world premiere of *Soleil noir* by Pierre Jodlowski with the Orchestre de Pau-Béarn, which resulted in an immediate invitation to conduct the work in Toulouse in November 2016.

Born in Romania into a family of musicians, Feher began his musical education as a violinist in his hometown Satu-Mare before continuing his studies at the Montreal Conservatory when his parents relocated to Canada.

## **Mansur Kadirov**

### **Cello**

Uzbek cellist Mansur Kadirov was born in 1989 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan into a musical family. He began singing at the age of four, and later began cello studies at the age of eight under Novikova Margarita Konstanstinovna at the Reingold M. Glier Music School. In 2003, Kadirov won his first cello competition, a competition for young performers in Tashkent.

Mansur Kadirov has performed around the world, including appearances with the National Symphony of Uzbekistan, Gunma Junior Orchestra, Kinnor Philharmonic, Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, and Royal Conservatory Orchestra. He has performed at the Folly Theater, Kauffmann Center for Performing Arts, Koerner Hall, Flagey, and Alice Tully Hall. Many of his concerts were broadcast on radios in Europe, Japan, and North America. He was also often invited to perform at government functions.

Mansur completed his bachelors and master's degrees on full scholarship at the Park University ICM, studying under Daniel Veis. He is the recipient of a full-tuition Michael & Sonja Koerner Scholarship, supporting his Artist Diploma Program studies at The Glenn Gould School in the studios of Hans Jørgen Jensen and Andrés Díaz.

Mansur is a prizewinner of several competitions and awards, including 1st prize in the National Competition of Uzbekistan, Grand Prix at Naftzger Young Artists in Wichita Kansas, USA, and The Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition. Also, he has actively participated at a number of prestigious international competitions, including the Carlos Prieto Cello Competition, Dr. Luis Sigall Cello Competition, George Enescu Competition, and the First Queen Elisabeth International Cello Competition.

## **Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

### **Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor**

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Through the RBC Guest Conductor

Program, four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing GGS students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and performance conditions. The week culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Tania Miller, Andrei Feher, Johannes Debus, and Gábor Takács-Nagy, who lead the RCO this season. Past guest conductors have included Sir Roger Norrington, Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, Bramwell Tovey, Peter Oundjian, Ivars Taurins, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tito Muñoz, András Keller, and Lior Shambadal. The RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of the Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Tafelmusik, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. The RCO has been heard repeatedly on the national broadcasts of the *CBC Radio*, has been invited to perform at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston, and toured China during the 2004-05 season.