

DAZZLING ENDINGS

Saturday | October 1, 2011 | 8 pm | Symphony Hall at the DECC
Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra | Dirk Meyer, conductor

Erin Aldridge, violin

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2011

Mozart

Overture to the Marriage of Figaro, K. 492 ca. 4'

Beethoven

Concerto for Violin, op. 61 in D major ca. 42'

Allegro ma non troppo

Larghetto

Rondo. Allegro

Erin Aldridge, Violin

I N T E R M I S S I O N ca. 20'

Prokofiev

Symphony No. 5, op. 100 in B-flat major ca. 46'

Andante

Allegro marcato

Adagio

Allegro giocoso

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7pm **Behind the Music** is hosted by Daniel Gilliam, Minnesota Public Radio. His profile appears on page 32.

Dirk Meyer's profile appears on page 32.
Erin Aldridge's profile appears on page 32.

Program subject to change

DAZZLING ENDINGS

An overture to a “crazy day” that closes with a brilliant crescendo...a lyrical, pastoral violin concerto announcing its composer’s decision to “seize Fate by the throat”...and a concerto written in the shadow of WWII that premiered on a night that marked its end.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) composed masterpieces in all genres, but opera was his favorite. The overture to *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), K.492, offers a sample of his ability to bring a cast of characters to life.

Although Mozart had been composing operas since he was twelve, *Figaro* was his first effort to establish himself as a leading composer of Italian opera in Vienna. To this end, he sought out the newly appointed court poet, Lorenzo da Ponte, to write the libretto. Access to Da Ponte was not easy. Mozart complained to his father, “These Italian gentlemen are very civil to your face. But enough—we know them! If Da Ponte is in league with Salieri [composer and director of Italian opera in Vienna], I shall never get anything out of him.”

Persistence paid off. By late 1785 the first Da Ponte-Mozart collaboration was underway. Mozart finished a first draft of *Figaro* in perhaps as little as six weeks. He put the final touches on it shortly before the premiere in Vienna on May 1, 1786. Mozart himself conducted from the keyboard.


Figaro was a success. The audience called for so many pieces to be repeated that the emperor soon issued an order restricting encores “to prevent the excessive duration of the opera.” Irish tenor Michael Kelly, who sang in the first production, recalled “Even at the first full band rehearsal, all present were roused to enthusiasm... Those in the orchestra I thought would never have ceased applauding, by beating the bows of their violins against the music desks.” The following year

Mozart witnessed the success of his opera in Prague: “Here they talk about nothing but ‘Figaro.’ Nothing is played, sung, or whistled but ‘Figaro’... Nothing, nothing but ‘Figaro.’ Certainly a great honor for me!”

Based on the play *La folle journée, ou Le mariage de Figaro* (*The Crazy Day, or The Marriage of Figaro*) by Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais, Mozart’s plot centers on a pair of servants who outwit their noble masters. The overture perfectly foreshadows the scurrying, swaggering, and swooning characters and the antics of the “crazy day.” It ends with a brilliant crescendo that rockets into the evening ahead.

INSTRUMENTATION: Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

HISTORY: This overture has been heard previously on seven DSSO concerts, beginning in 1935. Performances followed in 1946, 1955, 1961, 1972, and 1995 (with guest conductor George Hanson). This piece was last performed as part of the “Cracking the Code” family concert on April 9, 2006, with guest conductor Kenneth Freed.

...  ...
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) had considered giving up altogether in 1802, when his worsening deafness became unbearable. But instead he chose to “seize Fate by the throat” and dedicate his life to music. He composed some of his greatest works during the subsequent decade. Among these is the Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61, composed in 1806.

This work is the first truly substantial violin concerto in the repertoire, but we do not hear in it the urgent, powerful voice that Beethoven used in other works. Like the Fifth Symphony, the concerto begins with a distinct rhythmic motif, but the five soft taps in the timpani anchor and steady, rather than propel, the momentum. An aura of pastoral serenity pervades the concerto.

This lyrical, pastoral quality complemented the performance style of Franz Clement, the violinist for whom Beethoven wrote the concerto. Ten years younger than Beethoven, Clement had been well-known throughout Europe as a child prodigy. Beethoven had heard him perform in 1794 and sent him a warm note that concluded, “Be happy, my dear young friend, and come back soon, so that I may hear again your delightful, splendid playing.” A reviewer wrote that Clement’s playing was characterized by “an indescribable delicacy, neatness and elegance, an extremely charming tenderness and clarity of performance.”

Beethoven worked quickly to finish the concerto before the premiere in December 1806, making many changes right up to the last minute. An early anecdote relates that Clement did not get the solo part in time to rehearse and had to sight-read at the concert. Even if the concerto had not gone well, Clement had a trick up his sleeve to please the audience. Between movements of the concerto, he played variations with the violin held upside down. But the concerto did go well and shouts of “bravo” resounded.

Clement was also a composer and had already written a Violin Concerto in D major of his own. Beethoven had heard this concerto at its premiere in 1805. (In addition to Clement’s concerto, the program included Beethoven conducting his “Eroica” Symphony.) Musicologist Robin Stowell points to similarities between the concertos in themes, orchestration, keys, and structures. He concludes that although Beethoven did not need

Clement's concerto for inspiration, it may have served as a useful point of departure. And Beethoven may have taken pleasure in showing Clement what a master composer could do with similar ideas.

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INSTRUMENTATION: one flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

HISTORY: Tonight's performance is the Orchestra's ninth of this concerto. Last heard on September 18, 1999 with Stephanie Chase, other previous performances have featured Jascha Heifetz (1937), Josef Szigeti (1943), Devy Erlih (1947), Isaac Stern (1959 and 1982), Rafael Druian (1973), and Sergiu Luca (1989). This evening's soloist, Concertmaster Erin Aldridge, has been featured with the DSSO numerous times over the past several years in works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Bach.



After living abroad for nearly two decades, **Sergey Prokofiev** (1891-1953) returned to his native Russia in 1936. In what was now the Soviet Union, he faced the challenge of appealing to the masses without pandering to them. He successfully met that challenge in Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100.

Prokofiev worked on Symphony No. 5 during the summer of 1944. Although World War II was raging, Soviet composers were fortunate to have a quiet place to work at a country retreat near Ivanovo. (One of the composers called this retreat, located on a working farm,

"an institution for the production of masterpieces and pigs.") There Prokofiev kept to a work schedule that amazed his fellow composers, finishing the symphony in a few short weeks. He considered this, his

first symphony in sixteen years, to be a significant achievement, one that "completes, as it were, a long period of my works."

On the evening of the premiere in Moscow, January 13, 1945, news had just arrived of a Soviet victory over the Germans. Outside the concert hall, celebratory gunfire rang out as the performance began. An audience member recalled: "The Great Hall was illuminated, no doubt, the same way it always was, but when Prokofiev stood up, the light seemed to pour straight down on him from somewhere up above. He stood like a monument on a pedestal. And then, when Prokofiev had taken his place on the podium and silence reigned in the hall, artillery salvos suddenly thundered forth. His baton was raised. He waited and began only after the cannons had stopped. There was something very significant in this, something symbolic. It was as if all

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of us—including Prokofiev—had reached some kind of shared turning point."

True to Prokofiev's conception of "a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit," this work encompasses a full spectrum of expression—noble lyricism at the

opening (in a theme that returns in the fourth movement), farcical slapstick in the second movement, ghostly "Moonlight" shadows in the third, and driving frenzy in the finale. To perform this symphony requires orchestral virtuosity of the highest level.

Symphony No. 5 soon was established firmly in the repertoire in the Soviet Union as well as abroad. The first American performance, in November 1945, resulted in a cover story in *Time* magazine, which included this assessment: "Last week in Boston's Renaissance Symphony Hall..., Prokofiev's Fifth, had its U.S. premiere. It was large in scale, a great, brassy creation with some of the intricate efficiency and dynamic energy of a Soviet power plant and some of the pastoral lyricism of a Chekhov countryside." The conductor, Sergei Koussevitsky called it "the greatest musical event in many, many years. The greatest since Brahms and Tchaikovsky! It is magnificent! It is yesterday, it is today, it is tomorrow..."

INSTRUMENTATION: Two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, two bassoons, contra bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (snare drum, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum, triangle, tam tam, woodblock), harp, piano and strings.

HISTORY: This work has only been performed by the DSSO on three previous

concerts. The performances occurred on November 18, 1960 (Hermann Herz conducting), October 12, 1984 (with Taavo Virkhaus), and January 24, 1998 (Yong-yan Hu).

ERIN ALDRIDGE, VIOLIN



Erin Aldridge has won numerous awards as both soloist and chamber musician and has been featured throughout Europe, Asia, South America, and the United States. She is a well-sought after performer and pedagogue, and has been published in *Strings Magazine*.

Dr. Aldridge maintains an active performance schedule as a soloist and chamber musician. She has been a soloist with the Lake Superior Chamber Orchestra, the Long Prairie Chamber Orchestra, and the Itasca Symphony Orchestra and a guest artist at the Indiana University Summer Music Festival, Arizona State University, DePaul University Contemporary Concert Series, Madeline Island Music Camp, Ashland Chamber Music Series with Trillium Piano Trio, National String Workshop, "Live at the Chazen" Concert Series, and has been broadcast on National Public Radio, the BBC, Minnesota Public Radio, and Wisconsin Public Radio.

Dr. Aldridge attended the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music where she received her Bachelor's degree in Violin Performance. She received her Master's degree and Performer's Certificate in Chamber Music Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and was a member of the Leonard Sorkin Institute of Chamber Music under the direction of the Fine Arts Quartet. She continued her studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Violin Performance. Her primary teachers include Mimi Zweig, Josef Gingold, Nellie Shkolnikova, Rostislav Dubinsky, Efim Boico, and Vartan Manoogian.

Dr. Aldridge is on the music faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Superior where she serves as Associate Professor of Violin, Director of Orchestras, and is a member of the faculty piano trio Trillium. She is also the concertmaster for the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, and on the faculty for the Summer String Academy at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

DIRK MEYER, CONDUCTOR



Since moving to the United States in 2002, German conductor Dirk Meyer has established himself as a most sensible and versatile musician and his performances have been described as "outstanding" and "out of this world." Since 2007, Mr. Meyer has served

as Music Director to the Sarasota Youth Orchestras, a program that involves more than 250 students from Sarasota and the surrounding counties. Meyer has served as the Music Director of the Mason Symphony Orchestra and the Assistant Conductor of the Traverse Symphony in Michigan. Last season, Mr. Meyer conducted a wide variety of concerts with the Sarasota Orchestra and, after establishing a close relationship with the Orlando Philharmonic, he led this group in numerous performances during the 2010/2011 season.

Mr. Meyer holds Doctor of Musical Arts and Masters degrees in orchestral conducting from Michigan State University. He holds Bachelor's Degrees from the Folkwang Conservatory in Germany (music) as well as the University Duisburg-Essen (philosophy). Maestro Meyer is the author of *Chamber Orchestra and Ensemble Repertoire: A Catalog of Modern Music* published by Scarecrow Press in February of 2011.

With a special interest in contemporary music, Mr. Meyer founded the Art Nouveau Chamber Orchestra in 2003, to which he served as its Music Director and Principal Conductor. Originally created to promote the music of the 20th and 21st centuries, the orchestra has commissioned and premiered several new compositions. More recently Meyer established a new music series with the Sarasota Orchestra, leading world premiers by Miguel del Aguila, Silas Durocher and Eve Baglarian as well as the American premiers of works by Arvo Pärt, Joby Talbot, and Elliott Sharp.



Daniel Gilliam Behind the Music Host

Daniel Gilliam is Program director for Classical MPR. Gilliam is originally from Louisville, Kentucky where he previously led Classical 90.5 (WUOL) and hosted afternoon drive-time. Daniel received his music training as a singer and composer at the University of Kansas and Samford University (Alabama). His commissions and premieres have come from groups such as the Louisville Youth Choir, Turin Philharmonic (Italy), Christ Church

Cathedral (Louisville), Yakima Symphony Orchestra, and Finisterra Piano Trio. He and his wife Lacey have two children.