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GARRETT KEAST
CONDUCTOR

NANCY ZHOU
VIOLIN



OCTOBER 7-8, 2022 | 7:30 PM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO



PROGRAM

Dances in the Canebreaks

Florence Price, orch. Still

Nimble Feet

(1887-1953)

Tropical Noon

Silk Hat and Walking Cane

Concerto No. 1 in G Minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 26

Max Bruch

Prelude: Allegro moderato

(1838-1920)

Adagio

Finale: Allegro energico

Nancy Zhou, *violin*

– INTERMISSION –

Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88

Antonin Dvořák

Allegro con brio

(1841-1904)

Adagio

Allegretto grazioso

Allegro ma non troppo

Nancy Zhou is generously sponsored by Dr. Ian Thompson III



GARRETT KEAST , CONDUCTOR

“He goes beyond just music; he strives to create an atmosphere and evoke feelings in the listener.” - Opernnetz, Oper Bonn

Garrett Keast has received worldwide attention for his ability to create galvanizing and soul-stirring experiences in concert halls and opera houses. Praised for *“leaving audiences hungry for more”* (*Basler Zeitung*), the Berlin-based conductor is recognized for his broad repertoire experience and for his American focus with the Berlin Academy of American Music. He is consistently admired for the enthusiasm and synergy he builds with musicians and audiences.

Keast began his career in New York as Associate Conductor of the New York City Opera before launching his career in Europe in 2011 with engagements at the Paris Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Oper Bonn, and the NDR Sinfonieorchester in Hamburg. Today, he regularly appears at venues including Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Brussel’s BOZAR, the Staatsoper Hamburg, the Aspen Music Festival, Theater an der Wien, and the Festspielhaus Baden-

Baden. Described as drawing out “refined and concentrated playing” with “assured sensitivity” (*Financial Times*), Keast has conducted performances with orchestras such as the Tonkünstler Orchester, Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, the Atlanta Symphony, Los Angeles Opera Orchestra and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.

The 2021 and 2022 seasons brought Keast to the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg with two orchestras: the Berlin Academy of American Music with a program of Bernstein, Caroline Shaw, Copland, Gershwin and Stravinsky; and the TONALi Orchester featuring a new music program of five European composers. In addition, he conducted the Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin in a Euroarts recording of Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, led two subscription weeks with the Borusan Philharmonic Orchestra in Istanbul, and conducted a masterwork’s program with the San Antonio Symphony. In opera houses, he led John Neumeier’s *Bernstein Dances* in the Los Angeles Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and the Staatsoper Hamburg, and conducted a new production of *Jekyll & Hyde* at the Finnish National Opera & Ballet.

Always eager to serve as a cultural bridge between America and Europe, Keast is a prominent interpreter of repertoire from his homeland and continuously develops new and exciting programming. In recent seasons this American focus has brought him performances with the Tonkünstler Orchester Vienna, Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg, Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, and with the Hamburg Ballet at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, Los Angeles Opera, and the Staatsoper Hamburg. More recently, Garrett Keast is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Berlin Academy of American Music, a newly founded chamber orchestra made up of world-class musicians sharing a common focus to perform and promote the greatest works of American and American immigrant composers. The orchestra’s debut recording, *Transatlantic*, was released in October 2021 on the ONYX Classics label and features soprano Chen Reiss, violinist Noah Bendix-Balgley and flutist Stathis Karapanos.

With distinct performances leading over sixty symphony orchestras and more than twenty opera companies across four continents, the conductor’s experience on the podium showcases extraordinary range. His symphonic repertoire extends from Haydn and Brahms to Adams, Britten and Widmann. From the operatic canon, Keast has led

masterworks of modern composers such as Bernstein, Glass and Unsuk Chin, to traditional and iconic pieces by Mozart, Puccini, Strauss and Wagner.

Throughout his career, Garrett Keast has been invited to conduct important international orchestras including the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, SWR Symphonie Orchester Stuttgart, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg, Bamberger Symphoniker, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Opéra National de Lorraine à Nancy (New Year's Concerts), Atlanta Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Royal Danish Orchestra, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, Odense Symphony Orchestra (Carl Nielsen Violin Competition), and the Prague Philharmonia.

Garrett Keast has conducted opera and ballet productions such as *Faust* and *Swan Lake* with the Opéra National de Paris, *Die Zauberflöte* with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Sylvia* and *Jekyll & Hyde* with the Finnish National Opera & Ballet, *La Bohème* at the Aspen Music Festival, *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Theater Erfurt, *Rigoletto* at Theater Bremen and *Bluthaus* at Oper Bonn. At the Staatsoper Hamburg, Keast has enjoyed a long relationship with John Neumeier's Hamburg Ballet where he has led over one hundred performances of nine productions. Additionally, he has conducted performances at the Royal Danish Ballet, the Staatsoper Hannover, Opera San Antonio, New Orleans Opera, Virginia Opera, as well as a highly praised *Così fan tutte* at the Fort Worth Opera Festival.

Garrett Keast was mentored by Christoph Eschenbach at the Houston Symphony and studied at the Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals. He was awarded the *Bruno Walter Career Development Grant* during his tenure as Associate Conductor of the New York City Opera. Keast has held positions as Assistant Conductor at the Opéra National de Paris, the Wiener Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and has continuously accompanied Maestro Eschenbach as his musical assistant throughout international orchestra tours and opera productions.



NANCY ZHOU, *VIOLIN*

Lauded as one of today's probing musical voices, Chinese-American violinist Nancy Zhou is the winner of the 2018 Shanghai Isaac Stern Violin Competition. With a robust online presence that seeks to invigorate appreciation for the art and science of the violin, her thoughtful musicianship resonates with a global audience in such a way that brings her on stage with leading orchestras around the world.

Making her orchestral debut at the age of 13 with her hometown orchestra, the San Antonio Symphony, the violinist went on to collaborate with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Padua Chamber Orchestra, among others. She has collaborated with conductors such as Jaap van Zweden, Sakari Oramo, Hannu Lintu, Eun Sun Kim, Peter Oundjian, Christoph Poppen, Jean-Jacques Kantorow, Michael Stern, and Darrell Ang.

Alongside undertaking projects as a soloist, Nancy holds an interest in chamber music and in providing guidance to young musicians. As a collaborator, she has performed at the Tanglewood Music Festival, Verbier Festival, Ravinia Festival, Bronisław Huberman Festival, Tongyeong Music

Festival, Festspiele Mecklenburg- Vorpommern, Festival de Coimbra, and the Marvão Festival, and the Paganini Genova Festival. In 2017, she was invited by the Encore Chamber Music Festival to serve as guest artist and faculty member. She is a regular guest educator in Taiwan, holding masterclasses at various institutions and conducting private classes. Since the spring of 2020, the violinist devotes time to a private online studio, teaching a number of students across the globe and presenting public group classes on fundamental training and cultivating mindful awareness critical to performance.

This season will see the violinist explore works outside the traditional classical oeuvre, a gesture which both emboldens her personal heritage and holds relevance to the global order. Chinese composer Zhao Jiping's first violin concerto will be performed with the New Jersey Symphony and Maestra Xian Zhang at the Lincoln Center and Ukrainian composer Alexey Shor's "Phantasms" with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra. The violinist will also present the latter work upon her return to Italy, as part of the newfound Accordi Musicali Festival, and subsequently appear in performances with the Würzburg Philharmonic in Germany, under the baton of Enrico Calesso.

Born in Texas to Chinese immigrant parents, Nancy Zhou began the violin at age four under the guidance of her father. She went on to study with Miriam Fried at the New England Conservatory while pursuing her interest in literature and subsequently earning a Bachelor of Arts at Harvard University. She is as well an Associated Artist of the Queen Elisabeth Chapel, where she studied with Augustin Dumay. Nancy currently plays on an 1815 Giovanni Battista Ceruti.

Dances In Canebrakes (1953)

Florence Price (Little Rock, AR, 1887 – Chicago, 1953)

Orchestrated by William Grant Still

(Woodville, MS, 1895 – Los Angeles, 1978)

Canebrakes are thickets of tall, bamboo-like cane, once common in the southern United States. For Florence Price—an African-American composer born in Arkansas who often drew inspiration from old Black tunes from the South—they were symbolic of her personal identity as well as of her musical roots.

These three dances, originally for piano, were the last pieces Price was able to complete before her death. Despite the notoriety she received when the Chicago Symphony performed her First Symphony in 1933, and some other major accolades that came her way over the years, her work was largely forgotten and not rediscovered until a few years ago. The publication of a definitive biography by Linda Rae Brown in 2020 has contributed to a major renaissance of her life and work, and she is well on her way to becoming part of the permanent concert repertoire in the United States. The first movement, “Nimble Feet,” takes its inspiration from early 20th-century ragtime. The second (“Tropical Noon”) develops a sweet, lyrical melody that grows gradually more animated and then quiets down again. The last (“Silk Hat and Walking Cane”) is reminiscent of a cakewalk. The three attractive piano pieces were orchestrated after Price’s death by her distinguished colleague William Grant Still.

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 26 (1866)

Max Bruch (Cologne, 1838 – Friedenau, nr. Berlin, 1920)

Bruch’s Violin Concerto in G minor is the work of a young man of 28 who already had several successful compositions to his credit, including an opera, *Die Lorelei*, performed in several German theaters. With his violin concerto, Bruch, who had recently been appointed as music director in the city of Coblenz, intended to confirm his position as a prominent composer of the Schumann-Mendelssohn school (as opposed to the modernists Liszt and Wagner). While he was working on the concerto, he confided to his former teacher Ferdinand Hiller in a letter,

“My Violin Concerto is progressing slowly—I do not feel sure of my feet in this terrain. Do you not think that it is in fact, very audacious to write a Violin Concerto?” Bruch finally sought the advice of Joseph Joachim, one of the greatest violinists of the day, who also helped Brahms and Dvořák with their concertos. The correspondence between Bruch and Joachim, which contains extensive musical notation, reveals how many details had to be changed before the concerto assumed its final form.

Bruch may have been a traditional composer, but he was not one to follow the conventions slavishly. The form of his first movement, which bears the title “Vorspiel” (Prelude), is much looser and more fantasy-like than the first movements of most concertos. It begins with a violin cadenza, followed by the main theme which, too, has a certain cadenza-like freedom to it, despite its strict rhythm marked by the timpani and the double bass. The lyrical second theme evolves into a section filled with scintillating passagework, followed by a dramatic section for orchestra alone. After this, the initial cadenza returns, and a short orchestral transition leads directly into the second-movement Adagio, warmly lyrical and exceptionally rich in melodic invention.

The theme of the third-movement Finale begins after an introduction of a few bars. It is a brilliant melody full of virtuosic double-stops and arpeggios, followed by a dramatic second theme. The movement is in sonata form with a brief development and an extensive coda, introducing some harmonic surprises and previously unheard variations on the two themes.

Bruch lived for more than fifty years after completing his G-minor concerto. He wrote about a hundred compositions, including the popular *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra, the *Kol Nidrei* for cello and orchestra, and two more violin concertos. Yet it is the present work that has kept his name firmly in the repertoire since the day of the premiere. The composer, who sold the rights to his work to the publisher for a one-time lump payment, no doubt regretted that decision in later years.

Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88 (1889)

Antonín Dvořák (Nelahozeves, Bohemia, 1841 – Prague, 1904)

Something remarkable happened in the history of music during the 19th century: composers of symphonic music increasingly turned away from happy or cheerful feelings in favor of dramatic or even tragic ones. Instead of the light and unclouded tone found in many major works by Haydn or Mozart, Romantic composers predominantly used darker colors. Lightness was gradually pushed to the periphery of classical music and relegated to new popular genres (for instance, operetta), while large-scale symphonic works increasingly emphasized high passion and brooding melancholy.

There were two great exceptions to this general trend: Mendelssohn in the first half of the century, and Dvořák in the second half. Both had the unusual gift of writing radiantly happy music in an era where such an approach was often taken for either conservatism or naïveté. It was neither: it was merely a sign of a different artistic personality.

If we compare Dvořák's Eighth Symphony (1889) to some of the great symphonic works written around the same time, the difference will become readily apparent. In the previous year, 1888, Tchaikovsky completed his Fifth (E minor), in which he was grappling with grave questions about Fate and human life. The same year, César Franck introduced his Symphony in D minor, whose complex emotional journey leads from self-doubt to eventual triumph. Johannes Brahms finished his fourth and last symphony (E minor) just a few years earlier (1885) with a magnificent *passacaglia* that infused that Baroque variation form with genuine Romantic passion. (Brahms's "sunny" Second Symphony from 1877 is the exception that confirms the rule.)

Dvořák's cheerfully optimistic Eighth opens with an expressive melody in G minor that prepares the entrance of another theme, a playful idea in G major first given to the solo flute. A dynamic sonata exposition soon gets underway. Dvořák "overshoots the mark" as he bypasses the expected secondary key, D major, in favor of a more remote but even brighter-sounding B major. The development section works up quite a storm, but it subsides when the playful main theme returns, now played by the English horn instead of the flute (two octaves lower than before). The recapitulation ends with a short but very energetic coda.

The second movement ("Adagio") begins with a simple string melody in darker tonal regions (E-flat major/C minor) that soon reaches a bright C major where it remains. The main theme spawns various episodes, in turn lyrical and passionate. After a powerful climax, the movement ends in a tender *pianissimo*.

The third movement ("Allegretto grazioso") is neither a minuet nor a scherzo but an "intermezzo" like the third movements of Brahms's First and Second Symphonies. Its first tune is a sweet and languid waltz; its second, functioning as a "trio," sounds more like a Bohemian folk dance. After the return of the waltz, Dvořák surprises us by a very fast ("Molto vivace") Coda, in which commentators have recognized a theme from one of Dvořák's earlier operas. But this Coda consists of exactly the same notes as the lilting "trio" melody, only in a faster tempo, with stronger accents, and in duple instead of triple meter. It is interesting that, in the third movement of his Second Symphony, Brahms had transformed his "trio" theme in exactly the same way.

A resounding trumpet fanfare announces the fourth movement ("Allegro ma non troppo"), a complex theme-and-variations with a central episode that sounds at first like contrasting material but is in fact derived from the main theme. Dvořák's handling of form is indebted to Beethoven and Brahms, but he filled out the form with melodies of an unmistakably Czech flavor and a joviality few composers at the time possessed. The variations vary widely in character: some are slower and some are faster in tempo, some are soft (such as the virtuosic one for solo flute), and some are noisy; most are in the major mode, though the central one, reminiscent of a village band, is in the minor. The ending seems to be a long time coming, with an almost interminable series of closing figures. When the last chord finally arrives, it still sounds delightfully abrupt due to its unusual metric placement.

Notes by Peter Laki

"Gentlemen, in Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle—they always call to the dance!"

(Czech conductor Rafael Kubelik during a rehearsal of the trumpet fanfare opening the last movement of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony.)



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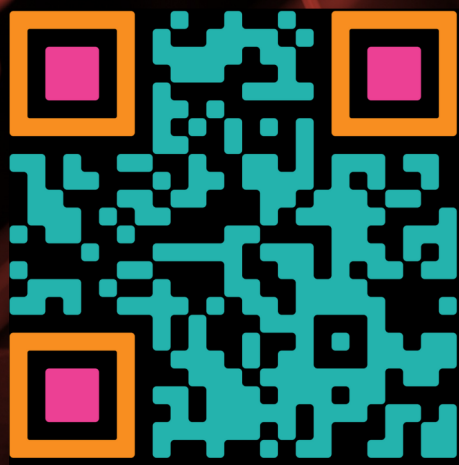


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