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Los materiales del programa de esta noche están disponibles en español; solicite un folleto al acomodador.

Osmo Vänskä’s profile appears on page 8, Goitsemang Lehobye’s on page 43.

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George Enescu

Romanian Rhapsody in A major, Op. 11, No. 1
Premiered: March 8, 1903

George Enescu (1881-1955) remains Romania’s most famous composer, so highly respected in Romania that there is a festival, a composer’s prize, a symphony orchestra and even a town (his birthplace) named after him. His output is considerable, and includes five symphonies (two incomplete), three orchestral suites, the opera Oedipe, much chamber music, and many songs to words by the Queen of Romania. He is, however, best known for the first of his two Romanian Rhapsodies.

In musical terms, a rhapsody may be defined as a highly-charged instrumental work in irregular, free or improvisatory form. Though in a single movement, a rhapsody usually consists of several linked sections, such as we find in the Romanian Rhapsody No. 1. Enescu conducted the first performance of both his Romanian Rhapsodies (written in 1901 and 1902) at a concert in Bucharest on March 8, 1903 (though some sources say the premiere was in Paris in 1908).

The folk element is naturally predominant, and Enescu has commented on it as follows: “Contrary to the general idea, Romania is not a Slavic country, but a Latin one. Settled 2,000 years ago, it has maintained its completely Latin character...Our music, curiously enough, is influenced not by the neighboring Slav, but by the Indian and Egyptian folk songs introduced by the members of these remote races, now classed as gypsies, brought to Romania as servants of the Roman conquerors. The deeply oriental character of our own folk music derives from these sources and possesses a flavor as singular as it is beautiful.”

Jimmy López

Perú Negro
Premiered: May 17, 2013

A native of Peru, Jimmy López (born 1978) has made a name for himself from New York to New Zealand as one of the most exciting and attention-grabbing composers of the younger generation. His musical studies began in Lima, continued with a master’s degree from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and concluded with a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. His music has been performed by the major orchestras of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore; by the national orchestras of Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Argentina; and by many other ensembles in Asia, Australia and Europe. He is currently composer in residence with the Houston Symphony. His latest work, Dreamers, is a 45-minute oratorio about the undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, reflecting on how they attempt to survive prosecution and threatened deportation.

Perú Negro was commissioned by conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya (himself a Peruvian) for the centennial season of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, which gave the premiere on May 17, 2013. “Instead of simply dedicating the piece to Miguel,” says López, “I decided to imprint it with his initials right from the beginning. The first motif, played by the horn, establishes the notes E, B, B-flat and G, which correspond to Miguel (M = E) Harth (H = B-natural) Bedoya (B = B-flat) Gonzáles (a family name, G). These four notes rule the intervallic and harmonic structure of the entire piece.” Into the 17-minute work López has incorporated six traditional Afro-Peruvian songs, assimilated into his own personal musical language.

The orchestra includes a wide array of percussion instruments including cajons (Peruvian box drums), tom-toms, ratchet, cowbells, donkey jawbone, temple blocks and a thunder sheet, among others. Music critic Wayne Lee Gay, writing in the Dallas-based D magazine, described the score as “a melodic, noisy, and colorful orchestral showpiece in the tradition of Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring and Prokofiev’s Scythian Suite, well worthy of a spot in the orchestral repertoire.”

Heitor Villa-Lobos

Aria (Cantilena): Adagio, from Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 for Soprano and Orchestra of Cellos
Premiered: March 25, 1939

H eitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) had a special love for the cello, the instrument that makes up an entire “orchestra” in his Bachianas Brasileiras No. 1 and in his most famous work, the Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5. A keen interest in Brazilian folklore, the country’s colorful history, its native music and landscapes all served as sources of inspiration to Villa-Lobos. Another element that deeply infuses many of his works is the spirit of Bach, whom he called “a kind of mystic ‘intermediary.’” Villa-Lobos fused the seemingly disparate elements of folklore and Bach into a series of nine compositions entitled Bachianas Brasileiras, which the composer described as “a special kind of musical composition based on an intimate knowledge of the great works of J.S. Bach, and the harmonic, contrapuntal and melodic atmosphere of the folklore of the northeastern region of Brazil.”

The fifth of the Bachianas Brasileiras consists of the Aria, surely the most famous single movement of all nine Bachianas, written in 1938, and the concluding Dansa, added in 1945. Tonight’s concert features the Aria, which is in three connected parts, with a contrasting, more animated central section.
Arturo Márquez

Danzón No. 2

Premiered: March 5, 1994

Arturo Márquez (born 1950) ranks as one of Mexico's most prominent living composers, largely through the huge success of his "Danzón No. 2. His teachers have included Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras, Hector Quintanar and Rederico Ibarra in Mexico; Jacques Castérède in Paris; and Mel Powell, Morton Subotnick and James Newton in California. Márquez has received grants from the Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico, the French Government, and the Fulbright Foundation. In 2006, Márquez became the first musician to receive the Medalla de Oro de Bellas Artes (Gold Medal of Fine Arts), the highest honor given to artists by Mexico's government.

Márquez's Danzón series now numbers nine. A danzón is a formal dance for couples that developed from elements of the habanera and contradanza. It is generally considered to be of Cuban origin, in rondo form, and 2/4 meter with a characteristic syncopated rhythmic pattern. “What I do,” says Márquez, “is to take up the spirit of the rhythm and the harmony and the melody and transport it to the concert hall....The danzón is still very popular in Mexico. In Veracruz there are special town squares where it is still danced two or three times a week. It's a very strong tradition. In Mexico City there are special dance halls where only the danzón is danced.” Danzón No. 2 was written in 1994 and premiered that March 5 by the Filarmonica de la UNAM in Mexico City conducted by Ronald Zolman. Long melodic lines and montuno rhythms characterize the ten-minute dance, now a popular favorite.

Alberto Ginastera

Variaciones concertantes, Opus 23

Premiered: June 2, 1953

Argentina's best-known composer was born of an Italian mother and a father of Catalan descent. Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) was heavily involved with promoting Argentine music and in developing the musical life of his country. Many of his early works, including Panambi and Estancia, are representative of what he called his “objective nationalism” style—music that deliberately and overtly employed the rhythms and melodies of native Argentine folksongs and dances.

The Variaciones concertantes comes from Ginastera's second style period, which he termed “subjective nationalism.” Here the composer still employs native Argentine style traits, but these are now more subtly worked into the musical fabric. The Variaciones concertantes was commissioned by the Asociación Amigos de la Música de Buenos Aires, and was premiered there on June 2, 1953,