



#### **Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto**

November 7, 2024 | 7:30 PM

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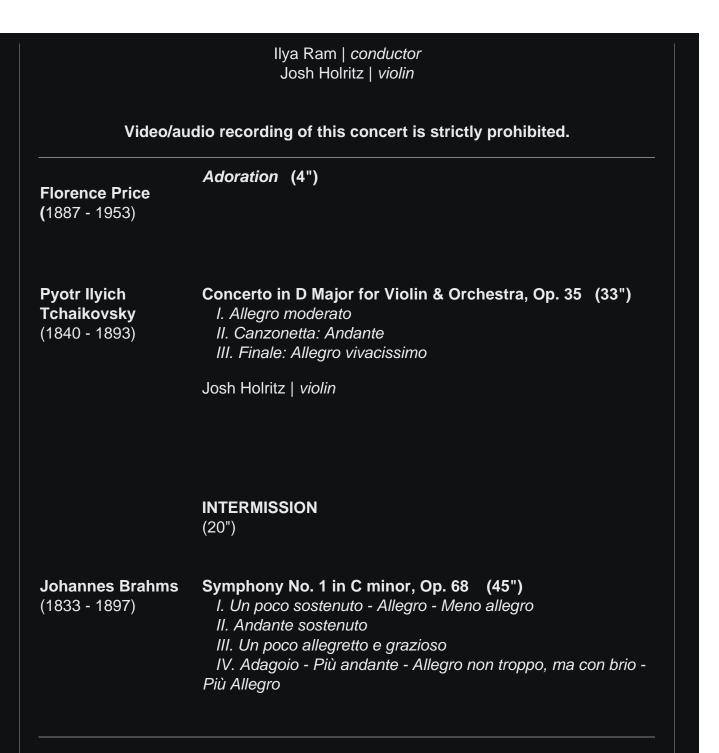
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#### Program

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Barnett & Company Classics Series TCHAIKOVSKY VIOLIN CONCERTO

November 7, 2024 | 7:30 PM Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium



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#### **Artist Biographies**



Volkszeitung)

#### Ilya Ram

Music Director Designate

"Although Ram [...] presents himself as deliberately casual in his shiny silver sneakers, his conducting is the opposite: energetic, spontaneous, yet clear, precise, and attentive to detail."(Leipziger

Israeli-American conductor Ilya Ram, praised for his charismatic and energetic performance by Crescendo-Magazine and his "expressive spontaneity" (Diaposon), is internationally sought-after for his creative new approach to classical music.

Prize winner of the 5th Evgeny Svetlanov Competition in Montecarlo, Ram has recently been named the next Music Director of the Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, the fourth artistic leader in the organization's 91-year history. He has also served as Music Director of the Akademische Philharmonie Heidelberg since the 23/24 season.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Szczecin Filharmonia, Orquestra do Algarve, Orchestra Indiana, Deutsche Philharmonie Merck, Magdeburg Philharmoniker, Ensemble Tempus Konnex, Elbland Philharmonie Sachsen, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Ra'anana Sinfonietta, Robert-Schumann Philharmonic, as well as being spotlighted by the IMPULS Festival for contemporary music to which he will returns in 24/25. He had the pleasure of working with soloists such as Pekka Kuusisto, Kristne Balanas, Amandine Savary, Ilian Garnetz, Ildikó Szabó and Charlotte Thiele, to name a few.

Equally comfortable in the pit as on stage, Ram made his Semperoper Dresden debut and return premiering Zad Moultaka's "Drei Miese, fiese Kerle". He was Guest Resident Conductor at the Theater Chemnitz for the 19/20 season where he led the revival of Udo Zimmermann's Weiße Rose and Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. As scholarship holder of the Akademie-Musiktheater-Heute supported by the Deutsche Bank Stiftung, he will premiere three new operas with Ensemble Modern in 24/25.

As a strong believer that anyone can achieve the highest musical result through joy, passion, and creative rehearsal strategies, Ram has worked with the German National Youth Ballet and the Youth North-German Philharmonic, the Dresden Special Music Highschool (Spezialschule), and as music director of the Leipzig University Orchestra between 2019-2024.

Always looking to deepen his understanding of current developments in art, Ram is one of the few candidates to have completed the Music.Multimedia.Managemt Project led by the Szczecin Philharmonic in collaboration with Fjord Cadenza Festival and TRAFO Center for Contemporary Art. Ram has participated in several international masterclasses and festivals, including the first-ever masterclass at the Bayreuther Festspiele for conductors. He has studied with Christian Thielemann, Klaus Mäkelä, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Sakari Oramo, Neeme Järvi, Marek Janowski, Hartmut Haenchen, Robert Treviño, Steven Sloane, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Timothy Redmond, Nicolás Pasquet, Johannes Schlaefli, and Jorma Panula.

In 2015 Ram graduated Cum Laude from the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music in Tel-Aviv with a B.A. in Orchestral Conducting and Musicology. He completed his Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at the Hochschule für Musik "Carl Maria von Weber" in Dresden, in the class of Prof. Ekkehard Klemm and has completed the Advanced Professional Training for Conductors Program at the UdK Berlin, studying with Maestros Steven Sloane and Harry Curtis. Throughout his studies he has been supported by generous scholarships from the "Yotzrim" foundation for independent artists, AICF "Sharet", and the DAAD Scholarship.

A firm believer in education and social causes, Ram spent a year before beginning his formal studies volunteering in underprivileged communities in Israel, working with children both in and outside the education system. During his studies in Tel-Aviv, he continued volunteering at the Israeli branch of Physicians for Human Rights.



Josh Holritz

violin

Hailed as "particularly outstanding" (Chattanooga Times Free Press), violinist Josh Holritz enjoys an exciting and varied career spanning the gamut of performing and teaching.

Recently appointed as Concertmaster of the Hunstville Symphony Orchestra, Josh began his tenure with the HSO in 2022. Josh also serves as the Associate Concertmaster of the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, a position he has held since 2014. Previous memberships include the Glens Falls and Greensboro Symphony Orchestras. Josh has performed as guest Concertmaster for the Peoria and Bryan Symphony Orchestras and Macon Pops. He also regularly substitutes with the Charleston, Nashville, and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras and Nashville Opera.

An avid chamber musician, Josh performs weekly with the CSO String Quintet in their effort to bring classical music to local schools and the greater Chattanooga community. Josh also performs as part of the duo Schaafritz with his wife, CSO principal flutist, Kristen Holritz. Other recent collaborations include performances of the complete Beethoven Sonatas for Piano and Violin with Lee University professor Dr. ChoEun Lee.

Josh is an advocate for contemporary music and improvisation. His doctoral dissertation, entitled "A Player's Guide: Lera Auerbach's 24 Preludes for Violin and Piano, Op. 46", includes a complete recording of Auerbach's Op. 46 preludes. Josh's free improvisation work can be heard on Spotify under the album title Blow- Fi. Recent world premiers include chamber works by Chattanooga composers Douglas Hedwig (

*Moveable Borders* 2017) and Jonathan McNair (*All a-Cryin*' 2017). Josh has also collaborated on multiple projects with the Nashville based contemporary ensemble Intersection. As an active studio musician in Nashville, Josh has played on numerous soundtracks for many of today's popular films, television shows, and video games.

Josh is dedicated to training the next generation of musicians and currently serves as Adjunct Instructor of Violin and Viola for Lee University, Adjunct Instructor of Violin at Southern Adventist University, and Adjunct Professor at Covenant College where he teaches violin, viola, and chamber music. He has also served on faculty for the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts and is currently a faculty artist for the Bay View Music Festival.

Josh holds a B.M. from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, a M.M. from the University of Minnesota, and a D.M.A. from the University of Georgia.

#### **Program Notes**

#### Adoration

**Florence Price** 

#### Adoration

Florence Price (b. April 9, 1887 in Little Rock; d. June 3, 1953 in Chicago)

If you believe in prayer, settle in quietly, assume a prayerful countenance, and focus intently on the music. In less than 4 minutes the piece is over, the listener dumbstruck. The melody is simple, every note is purposeful, and no note is wasted. Price originally wrote the piece for organ, sometime before 1951, when it was published. It was up to others to grasp its special nature and arrange it for many different ensembles, including tonight's version by Elaine Fine for string orchestra.

It is a simple ABA form with a very short coda. Harmonically the B section serves to move the tonal center from C Major to D Major. The higher pitch makes the reprise of the A section more brilliant and intense.

Florence Price got her 15 minutes of fame in 1933 in a fairy-tale story that began when she broke her foot and was housebound for an extended period. Needing something to do, she sat at her kitchen table, wrote out a four movement Symphony in E Minor, and submitted it for the Wanamaker Foundation Awards. She won first prize!

Her good fortune continued when Chicago Symphony conductor Frederick Stock chose the work and premiered it at a Century of Progress Exposition concert in June 1933. It was the first work composed by a Black woman ever played by a major symphony and it was a gala occasion. George Gershwin attended. Roland Hayes, especially famous to Chattanoogans, performed.

Unfortunately vicious Jim Crow was the law of the South and the de facto law of the rest of the country. What she faced–as described in Women's Voices for Change, March 8, 2013–was "an uphill battle – a battle much larger than any war that pure talent and musical skill could win. It was a battle in which the nation was embroiled – a dangerous mélange of segregation, Jim Crow laws, entrenched racism, and sexism."

Born in the South right after the Civil War, when Reconstruction had not yet been dismantled, Florence Price was fortunate to grow up in an integrated setting in Little Rock. Her father was a well-respected Black dentist who served both Black and White patients, including a White governor of the state. Her musical talent was recognized early and she received superior instruction, advancing quickly. By 1906 she had earned two diplomas at the New England Conservatory of Music. She married a lawyer, Thomas J. Price, in 1912, and settled back in Little Rock where his practice was. Because Jim Crow had resegregated Little Rock by then, she found no work. Instead she began teaching piano privately, something she continued to do until shortly before her death.

The Prices decided to move after a 1927 lynching amid racial strife in Little Rock, joining the Great Migration and settling in Chicago. In 1931 she divorced her husband, who had become abusive, and moved in with a student where she began raising her two daughters as a single mother. Florence had been achieving substantial recognition for her compositions, piano works and song mainly, but was barely noticed outside the Black community.

Our CSO and countless other musicians owe a debt to arranger and composer Elaine Fine. All her arrangements and her own compositions as well are royalty free as a gift to help other musicians.

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Concerto in D Major for Violin & Orchestra, Op. 35

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

#### Concerto in D Major for Violin & Orchestra, Op. 35

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (b. May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia; d. November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg) Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto marks his full recovery from the intense disappointment he felt after his unwise marriage to Antonina Miliukova in July 1877 that lasted only six weeks before they separated. He escaped to his brother Anatolii's place in Switzerland where he could rest and recover. When Tchaikovsky went there in March 1878 it was with his violinist friend losif Kotek who was ready with vital technical assistance, Tchaikovsky plunged into creating his Violin Concerto in D major and did not surface until it was finished on April 11th.

A modest introduction of eight bars and the full orchestra begins an explosive buildup to the soloist's grand entrance—an arching phrase up and down leading to the main theme. A more ornamented restatement of the theme, then an extended transition with fireworks from the soloist leads to the second theme. A crescendo and accumulation of rhythmic intensity lead directly into the development beginning with the main theme for full orchestra. At the end of the development the solo violin's scintillating cadenza leads to the flute's statement of the primary theme and the recapitulation is underway. The coda ratchets up the tempo four times to a frenzied finish.

*Canzonetta*, in Tchaikovsky's lexicon, is an instrumental song. Chorale statements by the winds are like bookends around the soloist's remarkable outpouring. The violin not only sings, but yearns longingly, achingly, passionately. A cathartic experience that welled up and out of Tchaikovsky's soul, he completed this amazing movement in a single day.

The canzonetta leads into the finale without pause. A brief but forceful introduction segues to a short cadenza. Only now, the violin presents the rondo theme. The second theme brings some temporary lulls, but the violin brings back the main theme with gusto. Dramatic bravura riffs by the soloist alone are answered by the full orchestra. A brief pensive solo accelerates into the last statement of the rondo theme. More virtuoso riffs, and the violin begins a relentless torrent of notes, sprinting toward the goal while the orchestra cheerleads. Touchdown!

The road to its premiere was long and tortuous and not without hard feelings. He originally dedicated it to Leopold Auer who, he hoped, would premiere it. Auer returned it as unplayable so Adolf Brodsky gave its first performance in 1881 in Vienna. Brodsky was the dedicatee when the full orchestral score was published. Underrehearsed and played from mistake-filled parts that the musicians approached like a minefield, its debut was problematic. Brodsky believed in it, however, and played it repeatedly until it became the concert staple that it is today. Even Auer played it eventually and taught it to students like Heifetz and Milstein.

Although Tchaikovsky was predominantly homosexual, it is unfair to criticize him too harshly for marrying. He had a deep infatuation with Désirée Artôt that began in 1868 and they planned to marry. Tchaikovsky imagined and could appreciate a home life with children. He also knew how much it would please his father. Unfortunately she had a sudden change of heart and married someone else in 1869. In his marriage to Miliukova he was grasping to recover the trappings of normal family life he had lost with Artôt. Much later in life he admitted Artôt was the only woman he had ever loved. Johannes Brahms

### Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

#### Johannes Brahms

(b. May 7, 1833 in Hamburg; d. April 3, 1897 in Vienna)

Brahms was more than halfway through his career as a composer when his first symphony debuted in 1876. Twenty plus years in the making it was a smashing success. Whatever personal Hell he went through getting there, even crusty critic Eduard Hanslick gave the symphony his blessing. The next year conductor Hans von Bülow dubbed it as—probably the greatest accolade Brahms could imagine—"Beethoven's Tenth."

A tensely wrought introduction unfolds for nearly three minutes, subsiding at the end, only to meet the Allegro and new disquieted, urgent pronouncements. The movement follows a recognizable sonata-form; however, there is very little material that anyone will be whistling later.

Much has been made of the C-minor key—the same as Beethoven's legendary Symphony No. 5—and it can hardly be coincidence that its "fate knocking" rhythm, short-short-short-long, begins to dominate the movement. If there was any doubt, it is erased as the timpani relentlessly reiterate it while the movement subsides and gently comes to rest.

The second movement is in an utterly different place. Brahms is at his most unguarded and vulnerable. The oboe enters with the movement's main theme that describes a sublime place. The music soars and aspires to something beyond imagination. When a solo violin picks up the theme, it tugs at the heartstrings in a way likely to bring tears to all but the most immovable.

The short third movement is easy listening but offers some musical surprises. A minuet or scherzo belongs here and this is neither. A genial first part in 2/4 time gives way to a middle part with an impassioned climax. The opening theme returns and, for a moment, the strings foreshadow the famous theme of the last movement. Like the first movement, the energy ebbs away to a quiet end.

The final movement begins by recapitulating the feelings raised in the first two movements. Burning tension, roiling anticipation, where is this going? The horn then enters (Brahms called it the "alphorn" theme) and all is light and blessedness. The trombone choir, silent until now, reinforces the special moment. Gently arriving at a silence, it could be over—except for the lingering unresolved harmony. Enter the big

theme, familiar to almost everyone, where some may recognize it as the hymn, "We Are God's People." It has been likened to the "Ode to Joy" theme in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9—a similarity that Brahms himself said, "any ass" could see.

That's plenty of thematic material. What follows is cathartic jubilation—Brahms' demons have been exorcized. When the alphorn and hymn themes return, the joy overlaying them is palpable and the march to the end is transcendently triumphant.

How is it that Brahms, who by the 1870s had written large works that were enthusiastically received, still had his path to his first symphony blocked for so long? "You have no conception of how the likes of us feel when we hear the tread of a giant like [Beethoven] behind us!" Brahms wrote a friend. Had his early works been less eagerly received or had he not been hailed by the Viennese as Beethoven's rightful heir—Viennese who still remembered Beethoven walking in their midst—he might have had an easier time of it.

Brahms biographer Max Kalbeck found significant that Brahms began work on the symphony as Robert Schumann's life was ending in madness. With Robert gone he hoped for a romantic link to Robert's widow Clara whom he adored. We know Clara was kept informed of Brahms' progress on his symphony. If it was also entangled in unrequited love, it adds one more dimension to the struggle he had with it.

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#### Musicians

#### **Tonight's Musicians**

Violin 1 Nicholas Naegele Mark Reneau David Katz Jeanne Johnson Jasper Sewell Nick Hoy Mayumi Masri Jonathan Urizar J.P. Brien-Slack

#### Christy Song

#### Violin 2

Sheri Peck, Principal Rachael McFarlane Emily Drexler Rebecca James Lee Smith Mary Margaret Neel Joanna Pepple Mary Benno

#### Viola

Metiney Suwanawongse, Principal Cristina Micci-Barreca Casie Runkle Susan Saliny Rene Reder Theresa Abler

#### Cello

Eric Reed, Principal Suzanne Sims Micah Donar Paul Vest Annie Camp Sharon Reed

#### **Double Bass**

Taylor Brown, Principal Kaleb Collins Dexter Bell Given Graber Julia Milrod

#### Flute

Norman Menzales Charlotte Roth

#### Oboe

Jessica Smithorn, Principal Carey Shinbaum

#### Clarinet

Joey Miller Monte Coulter IV Bassoon Eric Anderson, Principal Nib McKinney G Eddie McCrary

#### French Horn Gordon James, Principal Eric Hawkins Matthew Meadows Joey Demko Mackenzie Newell

**Trumpet** Christian Pagnard, Principal Erika Schafer

#### Trombone

Prentiss Hobbs, Principal Sam Chen Evan Clifton

#### **Timpani** Christine Comer

#### **CSO Contract Musicians**

#### Violin 1

Joshua Holritz, Associate Concertmaster Nicholas Naegele, Assistant Concertmaster Nathan Banks Caroline Drexler Jeanne Johnson David Katz Calvin Lewis Mark Reneau Jasper Sewell

#### Violin 2

Sheri Peck, Principal Second Violin Mary Benno Emily Drexler Nick Hoy Rebecca James Rachael McFarlane Lee Smith Jennifer Whittle

#### Viola

Metiney Suwanawongse, Principal Katelyn Hoag Cristina Micci-Barreca Casie Runkle Susan Saliny Gabriel Schlaffer

#### Cello

Eric Reed, Principal Spencer Brewer Annie Camp Micah Donar Suzanne Sims Paul Vest

#### **Double Bass**

Taylor Brown, Principal Dexter Bell Kaleb Collins Jonathan McWilliams

#### Flute

Kristen Holritz, Principal Lisa Meyerhofer (Leave of Absence) Amelia Dicks, Principal Piccolo

#### Oboe

Jessica Smithorn, Principal Teresa Spilko Carey Shinbaum, English Horn

#### Clarinet

Robert West, Principal (Leave of Absence) Emily Bowland Joseph Miller, Bass Clarinet

#### Bassoon

Eric Anderson, Principal Shelby Jones <u>G. Eddie</u> McCrary, Contrabassoon

#### Horn

Gordon James, Principal Angela DeBoer Matthew Meadows Joseph Demko (Leave of Absence)

#### Mackenzie Newell

**Trumpet** Christian Pagnard, Principal Michael Brown

**Trombone** Prentiss Hobbs, Principal Kevin Dombrowski Christopher Brown (Leave of Absence) Evan Clifton

**Tuba** Neil Konouchi, Principal

**Timpani** Alex Wadner, Principal

**Percussion** Matthew West, Principal

Harp Caroline Brown Hudson, Principal

**Keyboard** Alan Nichols, Principal

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