



New England
Conservatory

Concert Program

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NEC Chamber Orchestra

Donald Palma, artistic director

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Edward Elgar
(1857–1934)

Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op. 47

solo string quartet

Masha Lakisova, Yeji Lim, violin

Njord Fossnes, viola

Yi-I Stephanie Yang, cello

Christopher Theofanidis
(b. 1967)

Visions and Miracles (1997/2002)

All joy wills eternity

Peace Love Light YOU ME ONE

I add brilliance to the sun

Intermission

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906–1975)
arr. Rudolf Barshai

Chamber Symphony in C Minor, op. 110a

Largo

Allegro molto

Allegretto

Largo

Largo

Elgar *Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op. 47*

The idea for the *Introduction and Allegro* was first put to **Elgar** by August Jaeger — Nimrod of the Enigma Variations — who suggested that he write a piece for the recently founded London Symphony Orchestra. Jaeger's proposal was for "a brilliant, quick scherzo", an apt description for this exhilarating work. Elgar's normal method of composition included the use of themes which he had jotted down in his sketchbooks as they occurred to him, often years earlier, waiting for the right work in which to use them. The *Introduction and Allegro* contains one such theme in particular, what Elgar himself referred to as the 'Welsh tune'. It had come to him in August 1901 when the Elgars had been on holiday in Cardiganshire, West Wales, supposedly inspired by the distant singing of Welsh folk tunes. Elgar believed it to capture a Welsh musical idiom and had planned to use it in a projected Welsh Overture. That work never materialised, however, so Elgar used the theme in this work instead. Despite a number of early champions, the work took many years to gain the popularity and esteem it has today. After an initial handful of performances which were generally coolly received, the work remained largely ignored for the next thirty years or so. Perhaps the complexity of the work deterred performers, for it was only with the general improvement in the standard of orchestral string sections since the Second World War that the work gained a foothold in the concert repertoire. Today, its position is secure.

– *Elgar Society*

Theofanidis *Visions and Miracles*

While I was writing *Visions and Miracles*, I had been listening to the medieval Spanish work, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, performed by the wonderful early music group, Ensemble Alcatraz. That music struck me as fantastically joyous and graceful, and the asymmetric melodic and rhythmic characters of these pieces became a major inspiration for me in composing this work.

All joy wills eternity takes its title from a line of Friedrich Nietzsche, and features the strings in the very fast tempo of quarter note equals 232 alternating groupings of 2s and 3s. Melodies ride over this erratic and unpredictable pulse.

The second movement's title, *Peace Love Light YOU ME ONE*, comes from a poetic fragment of the 60s counterculture figure, Timothy Leary. The movement proceeds as a kaleidoscopic presentation of ascending scales over a drone note which is finally released at the end. Strands of melodies momentarily form and submerge from these scales.

I add brilliance to the sun is a line from a medieval troubadour song, and like the first movement, this movement has an unusually fast tempo. The melodic lines here come from a descending line of differing lengths in rapid succession.

Visions and Miracles was originally commissioned in 1997 by the Barlow Endowment for the Cassatt, Muir, and Cuartetto Latinoamericano string quartets, and was adapted for string orchestra in 2002 for SONYC (String Orchestra of New York City). It lasts approximately 17 minutes.

– *Christopher Theofanidis*

Shostakovich Chamber Symphony for Strings in C Minor, op. 110a

Originally composed as String Quartet No. 8, the Chamber Symphony was arranged for string orchestra by Rudolf Barshai and approved by Shostakovich.

In the summer of 1960, Shostakovich went to Dresden to write the score for a new film by the director Lev Arnshtam. *Five Days, Five Nights* tells the story of eight Soviet soldiers who are charged with tracking down the priceless Dresden art treasures stolen by the Nazis under orders from Goebbels. The film, Arnshtam later told *The New York Times*, focuses on a German painter, wounded during combat, “who feels that art should depict suffering and therefore a measure of life.”

“Everything there was very well set up for me to work,” Shostakovich wrote to his lifelong friend, the Leningrad literary critic Isaak Glikman, as soon as he returned from Dresden. “Conditions for composing were ideal.... However, try as I might I was unable to compose the film music, even in rough. And instead I wrote a quartet that’s of no use to anybody and full of ideological flaws.” The quartet, composed in just three days, is his Eighth, and it is one of the most powerful and personal works of twentieth century art – a score that, behind its dark and troubled façade, is unmistakably autobiographical – a true measure of life.

Publicly, Shostakovich said the quartet was inspired by the sight of Dresden – “He walked among the ruins of Dresden, shaken by the scenes of devastation,” Arnshtam remembered – and that he decided to dedicate the score to “the memory of the victims of fascism and war,” a line that ran atop the published score. But his letter to Glikman tells another side of the story:

I’ve been thinking that when I die, it’s hardly likely that anybody will ever write a work dedicated to my memory. So I have decided to write one myself. The dedication could be printed on the cover: “Dedicated to the memory of the composer of this quartet.”

The autobiographical nature of the music was hardly secret, for, as Shostakovich told Glikman, the main theme of the quartet, boldly stated in the opening measures and woven into nearly every page of the score, consists of his initials, D, S, C, H. Anyone who knew Shostakovich’s catalog would also recognize, scattered throughout the quartet, quotations from his other works, including his First Symphony, his breakaway composition written thirty-five years earlier; the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which had famously invoked Stalin’s fury in 1936; and the First Cello Concerto, composed for Mstislav Rostropovich just one year before the quartet.

“The pseudo-tragic side of this quartet,” Shostakovich wrote to Glikman, “is so powerful that when I was writing it, tears flowed as freely as water passed after a few beers. Since coming home, I’ve tried to play it through twice, but again the tears started flowing.” Written as five connected movements, the quartet as a whole is a kind of lament.

The first movement, a measured elegy, is a fugato based entirely on the four-note motif of Shostakovich’s musical monogram, interrupted by fragments of his First Symphony. The brutal force of the second movement – it interrupts the opening Largo without warning – recalls the composer’s famous war music, particularly that of the Eighth Symphony, and concludes with the great surging theme from one of his

most celebrated works, the Second Piano Trio. The middle movement is a sour waltz, a kind of dance of death. The fourth is an amazing collage – the opening chords, like gunshots, recalling the grand, slashing chords of Siegfried’s funeral march; a haunting melody sung by Katerina in Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk; hints of the “Dies irae” chant for the dead; a popular Russian folk dirge, Tormented by Grievous Bondage, which ends, pointedly, with Shostakovich’s own initials lightly etched in the music. The last movement, slow and desolate yet filled with intimate asides, is too numb even for recollection – there are no quotations here, just the hollow sound of inconsolable sorrow.

NEC Chamber Orchestra

Donald Palma, artistic director

Violin

Kitty Amaral ‡
David Carreon **
Hayong Choi *
Nick Hammel §
Hyeon Hong
Harin Kang ‡‡
Masha Lakisova +
Yeji Lim ++
Qiyang Xing §§

Viola

John Clark *
Njord Fossnes +
Rituparna Mukherjee §
Maureen Sheehan ‡

Cello

Alexander Davis-Page §‡
Claire Park *
Yi-I Stephanie Yang +

Bass

Daniel Slatch

Principal players

+ Elgar quartet
§ Elgar
‡ Theofanidis
* Shostakovich

Double symbol for principal 2nd violin

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The NEC Chamber Orchestra was created to provide the students with an opportunity to apply the principals of chamber music in a small orchestral setting. The participants are chosen by audition at the beginning of the academic year and remain together throughout. As the ensemble rehearses and performs without a conductor, leadership responsibilities are rotated for every work performed. This affords the students an opportunity to develop communication skills, take responsibility for musical decisions and broaden their aural and score reading capabilities. Participation in the program also allows them to explore a wide range of the incredibly rich chamber orchestra literature.

Donald Palma

Artistic Director

Donald Palma has an active career as double bassist, conductor, and educator. A native New Yorker, Don attended at the Juilliard School and at the age of nineteen joined Leopold Stokowski's American Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the newly formed contemporary music ensemble, Speculum Musicae, he went on to win the Naumburg Competition and secure management with Young Concert Artists. A founding member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Don has toured the globe and recorded over fifty compact discs for Deutsche Grammophone, including the Grammy Award winning Stravinsky CD, *Shadow Dances*. Don has also been a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and played Principal Bass in the National Arts Centre Orchestra under Trevor Pinnock. He played principal bass for Leonard Bernstein on his recording of *West Side Story* and was a featured artist on Kathleen Battle's recording, *Grace*. As a performer devoted to contemporary music, he has played and conducted dozens of premieres and recordings of important works. Elliott Carter's *Figment III*, Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronism No. 11*, and Charles Wuorinen's *Spin-Off* are among the many works composed for him. He has conducted three critically acclaimed CDs of American music with the Odense Symphony in Denmark. Don has conducted the Xalapa Symphony, the Bridgeport Symphony, at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. He recorded Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* with Rogers Waters narrating which was released by SONY in 2018. Don also appears with Orpheus on Wayne Shorter's *Emanon*, which won a 2018 Grammy. He frequently performs with Mistral, the Walden Chamber Players, at the Bridgeton Chamber Music Festival, the White Mountains Festival and is Music Director of the Symphony-by-the-Sea in Beverly, MA.

Symphonic Music at New England Conservatory

Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras Hugh Wolff is joined by Associate Director of Orchestras David Loebel, Chamber Orchestra founder Donald Palma, and a rich array of guest conductors and coaches for dozens of FREE orchestral concerts in NEC's Jordan Hall this year.

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NEC SYMPHONY, David Loebel, conductor

Coleman *Seven O'Clock Shout*; Haydn *Symphony No. 95*; Sibelius *Symphony No. 2*
Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC PHILHARMONIA, Earl Lee, guest conductor

Schumann *Manfred Overture*; Shin *Upon His Ghostly Solitude* (2023);
Brahms *Symphony No. 2 in D Major, op. 73*
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, Donald Palma, artistic director

Haydn *Symphony No. 6 "Le Matin"*; Stravinsky *Concerto in D*;
Rózsa *Concerto for Strings, op. 17*
Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC PHILHARMONIA & SYMPHONIC CHOIR, David Loebel, conductor

Pärt *Fratres*; Mozart "Great" *Mass in C Minor, K.427*- soloists: Yeonjae Cho,
Josie Larsen, Ruoxi Peng, Hyungjin Son, Suowei Wu, Shiyu Zhou
Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC SYMPHONY, Paul Biss, conductor

Zwiliich *Jubilation*; Rachmaninoff *Piano Concerto No. 2*
Dvořák *Symphony No. 8*
Wednesday, November 15, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

CAVALLI: LA CALISTO

Performed by opera students and members of NEC Philharmonia;
Brenna Corner, director; Robert Tweten, conductor
Thursday-Sunday, November 16-19, 2023, times vary
Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

NEC PHILHARMONIA, Hugh Wolff, conductor

Frank *Escaramuza*; Lutoslawski *Cello Concerto*, Leland Ko '24 AD, soloist;
Rachmaninoff *Symphonic Dances*
Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

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