

Michael Francis, conductor
Joshua Bell, violin

Friday, November 23, 2018 at 8:00PM
Saturday, November 24, 2018 at 8:00PM
Sunday, November 25, 2018 at 3:00PM

ELGAR

(1857-1934)

In the South (Alassio), op. 50 (1903-1904)

BRUCH

(1838-1920)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, op. 26 (1866)

Prelude: Allegro moderato –

Adagio

Finale: Allegro energico

Joshua Bell, violin

INTERMISSION

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872-1958)

Symphony No. 2 in G major

(A London Symphony) (1913-1914, rev. 1918, 1934)

Lento - Allegro risoluto

Lento

Scherzo (Nocturne)

Andante con moto – Maestoso alla marcia

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2018/2019 Classical Series is presented by **World Wide Technology** and **The Steward Family Foundation**.

These concerts are presented by the **Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation**.

Michael Francis is the **Stanley J. Goodman Guest Artist**.

Joshua Bell is the **Carolyn and Jay Henges Guest Artist**.

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PROGRAM NOTES

BY RENÉ SPENCER SALLER

The three pieces featured in this concert—one from the second half of the 19th century and two from the earlyish 20th—are cherished by performers and audiences alike.

Hummable melodies abound. Orchestral colors glow and ripen. Dance-derived rhythms cast spells and shadows. All three works, to varying degrees, are forms of “program music”—music that aims to tell a story, set a scene, evoke a mood. Although the music does this wordlessly, the accompanying text, or program, provides the narrative background. Ideally, the words and music reinforce each other.

Without even so much as a descriptive title, much less a fanciful storyline, Bruch’s Violin Concerto No. 1 is the least programmatic of the three pieces. And yet it’s teeming with vivid details, including several references to the Hungarian heritage of its first soloist, the virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Completed in 1868, the fantasia-like concerto deviates so far from genre norms that Bruch asked Joachim, his original chief technical advisor, if the term *concerto* even applied. (Short answer: yes!)

This enduring staple of the German Romantic violin repertoire is sandwiched between major works by English composers (and sometime frenemies) Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Inspired by a vacation in Italy, Elgar finished his *In the South (Alassio)* in 1904, the same year that this self-taught son of a shopkeeper was knighted. He augmented the manuscript with carefully chosen quotations, all evoking a sunny southern idyll. The music, as he later explained, came to him in “a flash” of inspiration soon after he arrived in Alassio.

About a decade later, Vaughan Williams followed an equally programmatic path toward *A London Symphony*, which revels in the rich din of the English capital: horse-drawn cabs, chapel bells, accordions.

When composers (or their proxies) translate these sound-symbols for us in the program notes, we learn to hear through their ears. But that’s strictly optional. All we need to do is listen: tune out the background *blah-blah-blah*, and reject any analysis that restricts the pleasure of music qua music. We need to trust our response to find our way inside.



EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath, England

Died February 23, 1934, Worcester, Massachusetts

In the South (Alassio), op. 50

Southern Exposure

Edward Elgar helped revive English concert music after its 200-year, post-Purcell dormancy.

He was a loyal British subject from birth until death, but his musical affiliations were trickier. His nostalgic nationalism was always steeped in continental influences, especially the tone poems of Richard Strauss, whose *Aus Italien* is an obvious touchstone.

Elgar loved Italy and traveled there at least five times in just over a decade. He composed the concert overture *In the South* (“Alassio”) in the winter of 1903–1904, during one such trip. The title refers to the town where he and his wife were vacationing, on the Italian Riviera.

As he later recalled, “...in a flash, it all came to me—the conflict of the armies on that very spot long ago, where I now stood—the contrast of the ruin and the shepherd—and then, all of a sudden, I came back to reality. In that time I had composed the overture—the rest was merely writing it down.”

The manuscript is lavish with literary quotations, such as these sun-drenched, rhyme-drunk lines by Tennyson: “What hours were thine and mine / In lands of palm, and southern pine / In lands of palm, of orange-blossom / Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.”

Elgar described the introduction’s leaping, exuberant main theme as “Joy of living (wine and macaroni).” He based it on a theme from his “Enigma” Variations, one originally assigned to “Dan the Bulldog.”

The central interlude evokes Italian popular song with its Neapolitan-flavored main tune, first sung by solo viola and then horn. With its delicate flicks of harp and glockenspiel, it sounds like a “*canto popolare*” (or “popular song”), as he dubbed it, but it’s an Elgar original.

The finale revisits the earlier themes, gradually upping the urgency until the coda’s ecstatic release.

First Performance March 16, 1904, London, Elgar conducting the Hallé Orchestra

First SLSO Performance February 22, 1918, Max Zach conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance October 6, 2007, Nicholas McGegan conducting

Scoring 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, snare drum, glockenspiel, cymbals, bass drum), 2 harps, and strings

Performance Time approximately 20 minutes



MAX BRUCH

Born January 6, 1838, Cologne, Germany

Died October 2, 1920, Friedenau, Germany

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, op. 26

Bittersweet Success

Although he lived to be 82, Max Bruch never wrote anything that people love the way they love his Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, which he wrote at age 28.

Bruch suffered many financial hardships during his long career, and even his most enduring success was marred by rotten luck. As an impoverished young composer, he sold the publishing rights to this first violin concerto for a pittance. Even worse, his later compositions were nowhere near as popular.

He was still seething twenty years later. “Every two weeks another one comes to me wanting to play the First Concerto; I have now become rude, and tell them: Go away, and play the other concertos, which are just as good, if not better.”

Few of those German violinists listened, and who can blame them? Bruch’s G minor Violin Concerto is rhapsodic and soulful, replete with endless, long-breathed melodies.

As Bruch was first to admit, the three-movement concerto is strangely shaped. Starting with its Beethovenian opening gesture, a rolling timpani whisper, the *Vorspiel* (“Prelude”) thrillingly subverts the expected form.

The solo violin lingers, flutters, soars like a lark ascending. The orchestra surges against it: an elemental exchange, like tide and moon. At the ultra-Romantic midpoint, the violin swoops up and down in wild chromatic abandon. But just when we expect the music to surge ahead into new thematic terrain, it circles back to the start, hushed and expectant.

Just like that, the *Vorspiel* seeps into the *Adagio*, the concerto’s radiant core. Here, melodies sound spontaneous as birdsong, essential as sunlight.

The finale hits the sweet spot between reckless and restrained. The orchestra trades tunes with the solo violin, sometimes supplying thoughtful counterpoint, sometimes erupting into pyrotechnics. The soloist doles out Hungarian-spiced licks (Bruch’s stylistic nod to Joachim’s ethnic heritage) interspersed with crowd-pleasing, virtuoso passagework.

First Performance April 24, 1866, Koblenz, Bruch conducting with Otto von Königslow as soloist

First SLSO Performance November 10, 1912, Max Zach conducting with Rhetia Hesselburg as soloist

Most Recent SLSO Performance October 19, 2014, Leonard Slatkin conducting with David Halen as soloist

Scoring solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

Performance Time approximately 24 minutes



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Born October 12, 1872, Down Ampney, England

Died August 26, 1958, London, England

Symphony No. 2 in G major (*A London Symphony*)

Urban Idyll

Vaughan Williams began *A London Symphony* (Symphony No. 2) in 1914, not long before he enlisted, at age 41, to serve in World War I. After the only copy of the completed score disappeared, swallowed up in the global chaos, he reconstructed and revised the symphony at least three times.

As with Elgar and so many of their contemporaries, Vaughan Williams felt deeply disillusioned by his wartime experiences. Years of bearing stretchers in the battlefields of France and Greece ravaged his hearing and caused, or at least contributed to, what we would now call emotional trauma. One response to such grief and terror is nostalgia, a retreat into a mistily misremembered, pastoral past. In his *Pastoral Symphony*, for instance, which he composed after the end of the war, a soprano keens a wordless elegy, equal parts longing and loss. You can't go home again, but the homesickness persists.

In 1920 he revisited his second symphony—he avoided calling it that—the reconstructed, four-movement *A London Symphony*. Vaughan Williams dedicated it to his fellow composer, song collector, and war veteran George Butterfield, who was killed by a sniper on the Somme.

Butterfield, he claimed, did much more than give him the initial idea:

“We were talking together one day when he said in his gruff, abrupt manner: ‘You know, you ought to write a symphony’. I answered... that I’d never written a symphony and never intended to... I suppose Butterworth’s words stung me and, anyhow, I looked out some sketches I had made for... a symphonic poem about London and decided to throw it into symphonic form.... I can never feel too grateful to him for all he did for me over this work, and his help did not stop short at criticism.”

First Performance March 27, 1914, London, Geoffrey Toye conducting

First SLSO Performance December 12, 1924, Rudolph Ganz conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance September 22, 1991, Raymond Leppard conducting

Scoring 3 flutes (2nd and 3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (glockenspiel, tam tam, snare drum, triangle, sleigh bells, cymbals, bass drum, suspended cymbal), 2 harps, and strings

Performance Time approximately 44 minutes

Thanks to its crisply evocative title and its vivid simulation of horse-drawn cabs, accordions, and church bells, *A London Symphony* has a cinematic scope. But Vaughan Williams didn't much care about the precise geographical details, claiming that he might just as easily have named it "Symphony *by* a Londoner" (never mind that he was actually born in Down Ampney, in the Cotswold district of Gloucestershire).

"If listeners recognize the suggestion of such things as the Westminster Chimes or the Lavender Cry," he wrote, "they are asked to consider these as accidents, not as essentials, of the music." He also said that of all his nine symphonies, *London* was likely his favorite.



Vaughan Williams in uniform during World War I.

SAFE RAPE

Pronouncing Ralph Vaughan Williams's name induces mild panic in the average 21st-century American. A quick refresher: *Ralph* is pronounced *Rafe* (rhymes with *safe*). *Vaughan* isn't the composer's middle name but the first half of his last name, which is an open (single space, no hyphen) compound. But if that's still too daunting a mouthful, just use the abbreviation RVW.

– René Spencer Saller

A POIGNANT POSTSCRIPT

By the end of World War I, Bruch was 80 and perilously poor. With the European economy in ruins, he had no way to collect royalties and no regular income. Although his terrible publishing deal meant that he couldn't profit from the runaway success of his first violin concerto, he hoped to make some quick cash by selling his original copy of the score.

He sent it to the concert pianists Rose and Otilie Sutro, who were supposed to sell it for him in the United States. Instead, they bamboozled the desperate old man, who died on October 2, 1920, still waiting on his check. The sisters sent some worthless German money to Bruch's family and refused to answer questions about the anonymous buyer who had supposedly purchased the score.

In 1949, the swindling Sutros finally managed to sell it to the Standard Oil heiress Mary Flagler Cary, who ultimately bequeathed it, along with the rest of her papers, to the Pierpont Morgan Public Library in New York.

– René Spencer Saller



Michael Francis is making his SLSO debut.

MICHAEL FRANCIS

Stanley J. Goodman Guest Artist

Michael Francis is the current Music Director of The Florida Orchestra and San Diego's Mainly Mozart Festival.

Highlights of Francis' 2018/2019 Season include appearances with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Other guest and return appearances in North America have included Cleveland Orchestra, New York, Cincinnati, Houston, Atlanta and Pittsburgh, as well as the symphonies of Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa. His European engagements have included Dresden Philharmonic, Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, Helsinki Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE Madrid and Mariinsky Orchestra. In the UK, his has worked with London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and BBC Scottish Symphony. In Asia, Maestro Francis has conducted the NHK Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan as well as Hong Kong and Japan philharmonics and has returned to Malaysia and Seoul philharmonics.

Francis' discography includes the Rachmaninov piano concertos with Valentina Lisitsa and the London Symphony Orchestra, Wolfgang Rihm's *Lichtes Spiel* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the New York Philharmonic, and the Ravel and Gershwin piano concertos with Ian Parker.

Now entering his fourth season as Music Director of The Florida Orchestra, Michael Francis' contract has already been extended to 2021. He is also Music Director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, where he has launched an ambitious multi-year exploration of Mozart's life. He was recently Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra from 2012 to 2016.



Joshua Bell most recently appeared with the SLSO in September 2015.

JOSHUA BELL

Carolyn and Jay Henges Guest Artist

With a career spanning over thirty years as a soloist, chamber musician, recording artist, conductor and director, Joshua Bell is one of the most celebrated violinists of his era. Since 2011, Bell has served as Music Director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, succeeding Sir Neville Marriner, who formed the orchestra in 1958. Bell's interests range from the repertoire's hallmarks to commissioned works, including Nicholas Maw's Violin Concerto, for which Bell received a Grammy award. He has also premiered works of John Corigliano, Edgar Meyer, Jay Greenberg, and Behzad Ranjbaran.

Committed to expanding classical music's social and cultural impact, Bell has collaborated with peers including Chick Corea, Wynton Marsalis, Chris Botti, Anoushka Shankar, Frankie Moreno, Josh Groban, and Sting. In Spring 2019, Bell joins his longtime friends, cellist Steven Isserlis and pianist Jeremy Denk, for a ten-city American trio tour.

Bell maintains an avid interest in film music, commemorating the 20th anniversary of *The Red Violin* (1998) in 2018-19. The film's Academy-Award winning soundtrack features Bell as soloist; in 2018, Bell brings the film with live orchestra to various summer festivals and the New York Philharmonic. In addition to six *Live From Lincoln Center* specials, Bell is also featured on a PBS *Great Performances* episode, "Joshua Bell: *West Side Story* in Central Park."

Through music and technology, Bell further seeks to expand the boundaries of his instrument. He has partnered with Embertone on the Joshua Bell Virtual Violin, a sampler created for producers, engineers, and composers. Bell also collaborated with Sony on the Joshua Bell VR experience.

An exclusive Sony Classical artist, Bell has recorded over 40 albums garnering Grammy®, Mercury®, Gramophone and ECHO Klassik awards. Sony Classical's June 2018 release, with Bell and the Academy, features Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* and G minor Violin Concerto.

In 2007, a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* story, on Bell performing incognito in a Washington, D.C. metro station, sparked a conversation regarding artistic reception and context. It inspired Kathy Stinson's 2013 children's book, *The Man With The Violin*, and a newly-commissioned animated film. Bell debuted the 2017 *Man With The Violin* festival at the Kennedy Center, and, in

March 2019, presents a *Man With The Violin* festival and family concert with the Seattle Symphony.

Bell advocates for music as an essential educational tool. He maintains active involvement with Education Through Music and Turnaround Arts, which provide instruments and arts education to children who may not otherwise experience classical music firsthand.

Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Bell began the violin at age four, and at age twelve, began studies with Josef Gingold. At age 14, Bell debuted with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and debuted at Carnegie Hall at age 17 with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Bell received the 2007 Avery Fisher Prize and has recently been named *Musical America's* 2010 "Instrumentalist of the Year" and an "Indiana Living Legend." He received the 2003 Indiana Governor's Arts Award and a 1991 Distinguished Alumni Service Award from his alma mater, the Jacobs School of Music.

Bell performs on the 1713 Huberman Stradivarius violin, with a François Tourte 18th-Century bow.



THE HUBERMAN VIOLIN

BY JOSHUA BELL

My violin is over 300 years old.

Known as the Gibson ex Huberman, the revered instrument came into my life one fateful day. During the summer of 2001, I was in London, getting ready to play a 'Proms' concert at the Royal Albert Hall and decided to stop by the famous violin shop J & A Beare. As I entered the shop, Charles Beare was just coming out of the back room with a stunning violin in hand. He told me that it was the famous Huberman Strad. I was intrigued.

I soon learned the details of the violin's remarkable history, complete with twists and turns to rival the film that I had only recently finished working on - *The Red Violin*.

Believed to be one of only five or six instruments made in 1713 by Antonio Stradivari in Cremona, Italy, the violin has belonged to many musicians, including the English violinist George Alfred Gibson. But it was its connection to Bronislaw Huberman that I found particularly fascinating and somewhat personal.

Huberman was a Jewish Polish violinist who lived from 1882-1947. He was a child prodigy who was revered for his remarkable virtuosity and daring interpretations. Huberman studied under Joseph Joachim in Berlin, and by the age of eleven he was already touring Europe as a virtuoso. It was during one of those early tours that he met the pianist Arthur Rubinstein, who was only six at the time, and had not yet achieved the legendary status that he came to hold. The two musicians remained lifelong friends.

At thirteen Huberman had the honor of performing the violin concerto of Johannes Brahms in the presence of the composer himself, who was stunned by his interpretation. According to biographer Max Kalbeck, "As soon as Brahms heard the sound of the violin, he pricked up his ears, during the *Andante* he wiped his eyes, and after the *Finale* he went into the green room, embraced the young fellow, and stroked his cheeks. When Huberman complained that the public applauded after the cadenza, breaking into the lovely *Cantilena*, Brahms replied, 'You should not have played the cadenza so beautifully.'"

Huberman became one of the most celebrated musicians of his time, but it was in 1929 that his contribution to humanity took on an added dimension. During that year he visited Palestine and came up with the idea to establish a classical music presence there. During Hitler's rise, Huberman realized he could save many Jewish artists while fulfilling his desire to start a Palestinian Orchestra.

Huberman auditioned musicians from all over Europe. Those selected for the orchestra would receive contracts and, most importantly, impossible-to-get exit visas to Palestine. Huberman raised the money for the musicians and then their families. By the end of that tour, the money for the orchestra was secured and sixty top-rate players had been chosen from Germany and Central Europe.

All in all, it was a fantastically successful tour, barring one particular performance at Carnegie Hall on February 28th. That night Huberman chose to play the second half of his concert on his 'other violin', a Guarneri del Gesu. During the applause following his performance of the Franck Sonata, Huberman's valet walked on stage to inform him that his Stradivarius had been stolen from his dressing room. The police were called while Huberman tried not to panic, continuing optimistically with his encores.

There are several versions as to exactly how and why the violin was stolen, but what we know for sure is that the instrument ended up in the hands of a young freelance violinist by the name of Julian Altman. Some say Altman's mother convinced him to steal it; others report that Altman bought it off the actual thief for \$100. Regardless, Altman took great pains to conceal the violin's true identity, covering its lovely varnish with shoe polish and performing on it throughout the rest of his career, which included a stint as first chair with the National Symphony Orchestra during World War II.

Heartbroken, Huberman never saw his Stradivarius again. However, his great dream was fulfilled when the new Palestine Orchestra made its debut in December of 1936 with the great Toscanini on the podium. I like to imagine that my own relatives might have been in the audience on that opening night, as my grandfather was born there and my great grandfather was part of the first "Aliyah" of Russian Jewish immigrants to Palestine in 1882.

As for his violin, it was played by its suspected thief for over fifty years, and in 1985, Julian Altman made a deathbed confession to his wife, Marcelle Hall, about the true identity of the instrument. She eventually returned the violin to Lloyd's of London and received a finder's fee; and the instrument underwent a nine month restoration by J & A Beare Ltd which noted it was like "taking dirt off the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel."

The instrument was then sold to the late British violinist Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus String Quartet. Previous to my fortuitous encounter with the violin at J & A Beare, Brainin had once let me play it after a rehearsal of the Mozart G minor string quintet, which I had the pleasure of playing with him one evening in the 1990s. "One day you might be lucky enough to have such a violin," he had said prophetically.

And so here I was in 2001, buying some strings at the violin shop and I was introduced to the 1713 Stradivarius again. As it was handed to me, I was told it was being sold to a wealthy German industrialist for his private collection. However, after playing only a few notes on it I vowed that this would not happen. This was an instrument meant to be played, not just admired. I fell in love with the instrument right away, and even performed that very night on it at the Royal Albert Hall. I simply did not want it to leave my hands.

This violin is special in so many ways. It is overwhelming to think of how many amazing people have held it and heard it. When I perform with the Israel Philharmonic, I am always touched to think how many of the orchestra and audience members are direct descendants of the musicians Huberman saved from the Holocaust – with funds raised by concerts performed on the very same instrument I play every day.

Who knows what other adventures will come to my precious violin in the years to come? While it certainly will be enjoyed and admired long after I am not around anymore, for the time being I count myself incredibly lucky to be its caretaker on its 300th birthday.

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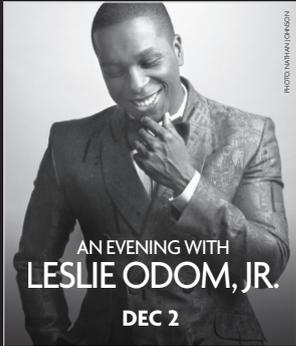


PHOTO: WALTER JOHNSON

AN EVENING WITH
LESLIE ODOM, JR.

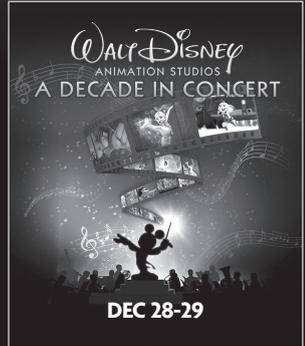
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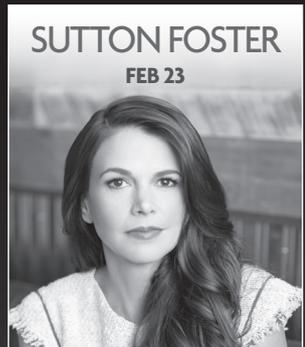
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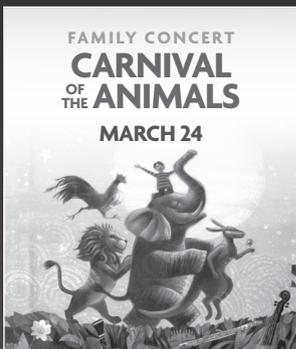
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