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MSM PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

Dmitry Yudin (BM '23), piano

Winner of the 2021–22 Eisenberg–Fried Competition

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2022 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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PROGRAM

QUINN MASON
(b. 1996)

Rise to the Occasion

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891–1953)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 16
Andantino–Allegretto
Scherzo: Vivace
Allegro moderato
Finale: Allegro tempestoso

Intermission

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
(1844–1904)

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95
("From the New World")
Adagio. Allegro molto
Largo
Scherzo: Molto vivace
Allegro con fuoco

MSM PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

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Qingdao, China

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PROGRAM NOTES

Rise to the Occasion

Quinn Mason

Based in Dallas, Texas, composer and conductor Quinn Mason serves as the Hartford Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-residence, whose responsibilities include writing a work that will close their 2022–23 season. He recently served as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Classical Roots composer in residence—the youngest composer to fill that role—and as the inaugural composer-in-residence for the Austin radio station KMFA.

Described as “a brilliant composer just barely in his 20s who seems to make waves wherever he goes” (*Theater Jones* online cultural magazine), Mason has had his works performed by renowned orchestras such as the San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Italy's Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, to name only a few. His compositions for winds have been performed by the Cobb Wind Symphony, Encore Wind Ensemble, Metropolitan Winds, and bands of numerous universities and schools throughout the U.S. and Canada. Countless chamber groups such as Voices of Change, Midsummer's Music, One Found Sound, and the Cézanne, Julius, Invoke, and Baumer string quartets have also championed his works.

Mason's compositions have garnered multiple awards and honors from such organizations as the American Composers Forum, Texas A&M University, the Dallas Foundation, the National Flute Association, and the International Clarinet Association among myriad others. In 2020 he was honored by the *Dallas Morning News* as a finalist for “Texan of the Year.”

Quinn Mason studied composition at the SMU Meadows School of the Arts and with Winston Stone at University of Texas at Dallas. He has also worked closely with renowned composers David Maslanka, Jake Heggie, Libby Larsen, David Dzubay, and Robert X. Rodriguez. Mason studied conducting at the National Orchestral Institute with Marin Alsop and James Ross and with Christopher Zimmerman (Fargo-Moorhead Symphony), Kevin Sütterlin (Fox Valley Symphony), Miguel Harth-Bedoya (Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra), and Will White (Harmonia Orchestra). He also counts Richard Giangiulio (Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra), Edwin Outwater (San Francisco Conservatory) and John Axelrod (City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra) as mentors.

Composed in 2021, *Rise to the Occasion* was premiered by the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra, conducted by the composer, on October 17, 2021. He dedicated the piece to Richard Giangiulio, the group’s music director, with whom he apprenticed as a conductor in 2019–20 and who is “a great example of someone who rose to the occasion with his successful building of the youth orchestra and inspiring of many generations of musicians. ‘Mr. G’ (as he is affectionately called by his students) likes to refer to himself as a ‘music educator with a baton,’ but the quality of work he has done shows him to be more than that; I personally refer to him as one of the best teachers anyone could ask for.”

Mason describes the piece as “both celebratory and festive, yet thoughtful and occasionally introspective. The jovial mood is established from the start, and it finds its way through these different moods in order to maintain that feeling. The piece is, in a sense, rising to the challenge of keeping the musical material fresh throughout.” Beginning with fanfares and darting flourishes, *Rise to the Occasion* sets up a rhythmic propulsion that then swells with lush, impassioned writing. A grand climax brings on an atmospheric oasis colored by trombone and flute lines before the return to the alternately jubilant and lush opening music.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 16

Sergei Prokofiev

Prokofiev’s brilliance was taken for granted by his teachers at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, but to his composition teachers (Liadov and Glazunov) he was an *enfant terrible*—a troublesome, brash character who rejected their aesthetic and wrote dissonant music. Outside the Conservatory his reputation as a composer and as a pianist, though controversial, was growing. By the time he composed his Second Piano Concerto in the winter of 1912–13 he had already had several of his numerous works published. For the Concerto’s first performance, which he gave at the resort town of Pavlovsk on September 5, 1913, his celebrity was considerable enough to entice a large crowd to make the seventeen-mile trip from St. Petersburg to hear it. Most of the audience was scandalized or annoyed—many hissed, some left—but those who remained witnessed Prokofiev bow impudently and play an encore. Out of twelve reviews, eight were negative, complaining of harsh dissonances.

Unfortunately we will never know exactly how the Concerto sounded at this performance; the original orchestral score, left behind when Prokofiev went to America in 1918, perished, apparently in a fire. Prokofiev “reconstructed” it in 1923, and according to his own statement the two versions differ markedly, since

he took advantage of what he had learned in the interim. It is hard to believe that Prokofiev toned down the dissonance; it was rather that audiences' perceptions had changed, accepting and admiring the work's aggressiveness and no longer overlooking its songful qualities.

The piano part of the Second Concerto not only dominates, but is fiendishly difficult. The enormous cadenza in the first movement that serves as the entire development section exemplifies both points. The main theme of the first movement is broadly lyrical, somewhat in the Rachmaninoff vein, as is the second theme in the last movement. This slightly melancholic lyricism was a direct result of the criticisms Prokofiev received of his First Piano Concerto. "The charges of superficial bravura and acrobatic tendencies led me to strive for greater depth in the Second," Prokofiev later remarked. The greater depth may also reflect his feelings about his close friend, pianist Max Schmidthof, who had committed suicide earlier that year; the Concerto is dedicated to him.

The second movement is a short, glittering perpetual-motion scherzo. Prokofiev once singled out this movement as a good example of the toccata-like or motor element in his music, "probably influenced by Schumann's Toccata, which impressed me greatly at one time." The pianist's two lines of busy sixteenth notes an octave apart never cease from first to last measure, while the orchestra adds thematic background.

Prokofiev opted not to write a slow movement in this work—the Intermezzo, marked *Allegro moderato*, is an intriguing mixture of deliberate barbarism and caprice, all with a slightly sinister tinge. The section marked *con brio* near the end with its wonderful, deliberately raucous sonorities must surely have prompted the reported remarks of the shocked first audience: "We can hear music like this from our cats at home."

The finale contains something of the savagery of the scherzo in its main theme. As if making up for the lack of a slow movement, Prokofiev incorporates an extensive slow section, with a "Russian" second theme presented at length by the piano alone before the orchestra joins in. This movement also contains a cadenza (briefer than that of the first movement), which leads back to the opening *Allegro tempestoso*. The movement ends with all the brilliance one would expect from a young pianist/composer hoping to impress the world.

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World")

Antonín Dvořák

Dvořák endured three homesick years in New York beginning in 1892, having been persuaded by the iron-willed, progressive Jeannette M. Thurber to serve as director of the National Conservatory of Music that she had founded in 1885. She hoped he would write an American opera based on Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*, which he already knew from a Czech translation, but his thoughts turned instead toward a symphony. His fascination with the epic poem is documented in five notebooks in which he kept dated and undated ideas for compositions. The first entry (December 1892) contains the melody of the middle section of the slow movement of the *New World* Symphony, under the heading "Legend." Other ideas for the first three movements came to him in January 1893, and the entire Symphony was completed by May 24. That same day he received the wonderful news by cable that his four children had arrived in Southampton on their way to spend the summer in America. The story that in his excitement he forgot to complete the trombone parts has been shown to be a myth.

The New York Philharmonic, conducted by Anton Seidl, premiered the work on December 15, 1893. Dvořák, who hated public display, was given an overwhelming ovation, which he described to his publisher Simrock:

The papers say that no composer ever celebrated such a triumph. Carnegie Hall was crowded with the best people of New York, and the audience applauded so that, like visiting royalty, I had to take my bows repeatedly from the box in which I sat. It made me think of Mascagni in Vienna.

Earlier that year Simrock had asked Brahms to proofread several of Dvořák's works, including the *New World*, which he wanted to publish as quickly as possible. Dvořák was so honored by Brahms's agreement that he wrote Simrock, "I can scarcely believe there is another composer in the world who would do as much."

Initially the Symphony's nickname caused much discussion, though Dvořák insisted that all it meant was "Impression and Greetings from the New World." Before the premiere Dvořák stated that future American music should be based on Black spirituals and American Indian songs and dances. He had become acquainted with spirituals as sung to him by Henry T. Burleigh, one of the African-American students at the National Conservatory, and "knew" American Indian music only from a small number of transcriptions he had been given. "They are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them. In the Negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music."

Back in Europe he later denied that his Symphony was based on such music; the truth lies somewhere in between. In any case, the similarities to folk and spiritual elements in his Symphony were soon analyzed by many: the first movement's second theme, introduced by flute, bears a similarity to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"; the English horn solo in the slow movement has the character of a spiritual; and the Scherzo, Dvořák himself said before the premiere, "was suggested by the wedding feast in *Hiawatha* where Indians dance, and is also an essay that I made in the direction of imparting the local color of Indian character to the music."

The composer used specific elements of then-current American musical vocabulary—such as syncopations and lowered seventh degrees in the minor scale (later to appear in blues)—but synthesized them in his own style. Many supposed that the famous English horn solo in the Largo quoted an existing spiritual, "Going Home," but the order is the reverse—Dvořák wrote it first. Seidl said, "It is not a good name, *New World* Symphony! It is homesickness, home longing." Dvořák's Bohemian roots are certainly evident; for instance the middle sections of the Largo sound more Czech than American and the Scherzo could just as easily depict Czech dances as American Indian.

Dvořák's sketches show that he originally thought of the first movement's main theme, the great arching horn fanfare, in F major. When he later settled on E minor, he wrote a sketch for the slow movement in C major, a third-related key that was quite normal for him. He had, however, first thought of the movement's beautiful English horn solo in D-flat major (related by third to his original F major) and discovered that by means of a now celebrated modulation he could retain his original colorful key. Thus he ended up with a wonderfully remote key relationship between the first two movements.

Another structural nicety, however, was part of Dvořák's concept from the start: the first movement's second theme (the "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"—like theme) first appears naturally in G major, the relative of the home key (E minor), yet the entire passage occurs in the distant key of A-flat major in the recapitulation—a novel harmonic idea. Dvořák was well into the sketch for the Scherzo before the master stroke occurred to him to make the symphony cyclic by recalling the horn theme of the first movement in each subsequent movement. He then had to make changes in the slow movement, and the Scherzo itself recalls both the main themes of the first movement in its coda. He further bound his Symphony together thematically by weaving subjects from all previous movements into the finale.

—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

George Manahan is in his 11th season as Director of Orchestral Activities at Manhattan School of Music, as well as Music Director Emeritus of the American Composers Orchestra. He served as Music Director of the New York City Opera for 14 seasons and was hailed for his leadership of the orchestra. He was also Music Director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for 12 seasons. Recipient of Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award, Mr. Manahan was also honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his "career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time." His Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* was hailed by audiences and critics alike. "The fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have ever encountered," said the *New York Times*.

Mr. Manahan's guest appearances include the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Atlanta, San Francisco, Hollywood Bowl, and New Jersey, where he served as acting Music Director for four seasons. He has been a regular guest with the Curtis Institute and the Aspen Music Festival and has appeared with the opera companies of Seattle, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe, Paris, Sydney, Bologna, St. Louis, the Bergen Festival (Norway), and the Casals Festival (Puerto Rico). His many appearances on television include productions of *La bohème*, *Lizzie Borden*, and *Tosca* on PBS. The Live from Lincoln Center telecast of New York City Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly*, under his direction, won a 2007 Emmy Award.

George Manahan's wide-ranging recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Tebillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas's *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson's *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*. He has conducted numerous world premieres, including Charles Wuorinen's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, David Lang's *Modern Painters*, Hans Werner Henze's *The English Cat*, Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, and Terence Blanchard's *Champion*.

He received his formal musical training at Manhattan School of Music, studying conducting with Anton Coppola and George Schick, and was appointed to the faculty of the school upon his graduation, at which time the Juilliard School awarded him a fellowship as Assistant Conductor with the American Opera Center. Mr. Manahan was chosen as the Exxon Arts Endowment Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony the same year he made his opera debut with the Santa Fe Opera, conducting the American premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*.

Dmitry Yudin (BM '23), piano

Dmitry Yudin, a student of Horacio Gutierrez at Manhattan School of Music, was the winner of the 2021–22 Eisenberg–Fried Competition,

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Manhattan School of Music's Centennial Project was an ambitious program of improvements to the School's architecturally distinguished campus coinciding with MSM's 100th anniversary. The centerpiece of the Project was the renovation of Neidorff-Karpati Hall, MSM's principal performance space, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art venue to showcase our talented students. Built in 1931 and designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building, the hall has been called "one of the Art Deco treats in the city" by the *New York Times*. The Project also included a dramatic and welcoming new campus entrance on Claremont Avenue, new practice rooms, and an expansion of the main entryway and lobby.

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