

**UGA**  
**presents.**

24|25 SEASON

**MAXIM VENGEROV**, violin  
and **POLINA OSETINSKAYA**, piano

FRI, NOV 15, 7:30 pm

Hodgson Concert Hall

**Supported by**

**JOHN A. MALTESE**

**BRAD AND VERA TUCKER**

**DR. JANICE SIMON**

Please silence all mobile phones and electronic devices. Photography, video and audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.

## PROGRAM

**SERGEY PROKOFIEV** (1891-1953)  
Five Melodies, Op. 35a [13:00]

### PROKOFIEV

Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op. 94bis [24:00]

## INTERMISSION

### CÉSAR FRANCK

(1822-1890)  
Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano [29:00]  
I. Allegretto ben moderato  
II. Allegro  
III. Ben moderato: Recitativo–Fantasia  
IV. Allegretto poco mosso

### MAURICE RAVEL

(1875-1937)  
*Tzigane* [9:30]

Program is subject to change.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Five Melodies, Op. 35a

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953)

In the violin world, Sergei Prokofiev is celebrated for his violin concerti and two sonatas. His 5 Melodies, Op. 35a are a delightful complement to the literature for violin and piano. As their title suggests, they originated for voice: Five Songs Without Words composed in 1920. Prokofiev had left Russia in 1919 in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, making his way to America via Vladivostok and Tokyo. His most recent composition with voices was the opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, completed in 1919. Its vocal lines were harsh and angular, focusing on the irregular rhythms of speech.

The 1920 songs represented a dramatic stylistic shift, presaging the soaring lyricism that would flower in later works like *Romeo and Juliet*. Prokofiev wrote them for the Ukrainian émigré soprano Nina Koshetz, whom he had known in Russia before the revolution. When he completed the set in December 1920, he was on tour in California, playing concerts in Los Angeles and San Francisco. His diary entries at the time comment on the Pacific Ocean's shimmering colors at sunset. Those breathtaking seascapes translated into limpid, ingratiating vocal lines, supported by a richly flowing piano accompaniment.

In 1924, Cecilia Hansen, a Swedish violinist who had been a fellow student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, persuaded him that the second song would transfer beautifully to violin. He decided to transcribe all five Melodies, enlisting the assistance of the Polish virtuoso Pawel Kochański, who had collaborated with him on his First

Violin Concerto. Prokofiev was delighted with the result, writing to Nikolai Miaskovsky, "The Songs without Words for violin and piano came out better than it did for solo voice."

Prokofiev dedicated the second Melody to Hansen, the last to the Hungarian violinist Josef Szigeti, and the remaining three to Kochański.

### Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op. 94bis

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953)

Prokofiev's D major sonata is one of the most popular chamber works in the 20th-century literature. It came about as the result of a commission that Prokofiev sought out from the Soviet Committee on Artistic Affairs in 1942, because he felt the flute was under-represented in the repertoire. His work on the Flute Sonata provided a change of pace from his labors on the ballet *Cinderella*, which dominated calendar 1943 for him.

Initially, Prokofiev set out to compose a sonata that would reflect the clarity and transparency he so admired in the flute sound. His piece has elements of both mischief and fantasy, with a pastoral scherzo and a sparkling finale that continue to delight players and audiences. Structurally, his four-movement movement layout adheres to the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* [church sonata] pattern of slow-fast-slow-fast. The music, however, has a stronger kinship to the classical era. The first movement, for example, is in clear sonata form, complete with a repeat of the exposition.

Emotionally straightforward, the sonata has little of the Russian darkness and sardonic wit that so frequently permeate Prokofiev's music. When he

employs his sense of humor, it is light-hearted and playful, as in the delightful second movement scherzo. For the most part, this piece is very upbeat. Its overriding moods are lyric serenity and joy. An abundance of melodies has helped to make it Prokofiev's most beloved chamber composition.

The first performance took place in Moscow on 7 December, 1943. Nikolai Kharkovsky was the flutist; Sviatoslav Richter was at the piano. Among the audience was the great Russian violinist David Oistrakh, who heard it in his mind's ear as a violin/piano sonata. He persuaded Prokofiev to transcribe the work for him, arguing that the piece deserved a broader audience than he, Oistrakh, could deliver through his extensive concertizing. With Oistrakh's advocacy, the D major sonata embarked on a second life. Inevitably, other instrumentalists, including clarinetists, have been drawn to the piece as well. We hear it in the version that Prokofiev wrote for his friend Oistrakh.

—Laurie Shulman ©2024

### **Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano César Franck (1822-1890)**

Although César Franck began as a child prodigy, he might also be seen as an encouragement to late bloomers. It was not until he was well into his fifties that Franck started producing the masterpieces for which he is remembered: in particular, his contributions to the genres of the symphony, string quartet, piano quintet, and violin sonata—one of each. The Violin Sonata in A major dates from 1886, when Franck was 63 years old.

Born in 1822 in Liège (eight years before modern Belgium was established), Franck became a French citizen when he was a teenager. His father pressured

him to prepare for a virtuoso piano career by enrolling at the Paris Conservatoire. Frankly, the young musician was too introspective and modest to be comfortable in that role. He found his niche by taking on various organ posts and, eventually, was named organist at Sainte-Clotilde in Paris, where he could build on his reputation as an improviser and composer of organ and sacred music.

Franck's appointment as organ professor at the Conservatoire in 1872 signaled a new phase of intense creativity. In the wake of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, a desire to promote an authentic French style in instrumental music intensified. Franck's synthesis of Romantic language with Classical forms made a profound mark on a new generation of French composers.

The Violin Sonata, like the earlier Piano Quintet, bursts with passions that were a bit hard to square with the sober, pious figure that Franck's reputation as an organist had encouraged. Rumors spread that the Quintet secretly encoded the composer's infatuation with one of his pupils, the highly colorful Irish firebrand and fellow composer Augusta Holmès, generated scandal (and furnished the backdrop for Ronald Harwood's historical novel from 1978, *Cesar and Augusta*).

Franck presented the Violin Sonata as a wedding gift to the so-called "king of the violin," Eugène Ysaÿe (who had also been born in Liège) and his wife. Ysaÿe and the pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène hastily rehearsed the new score so that they could play it for the gathered wedding guests in the fall of 1886; but the official public premiere took place at an afternoon concert in December at the Musée Moderne de Peinture in Brussels.

One of Franck's most devoted followers, Vincent d'Indy, later described the dramatic circumstances of the first public performance. It was almost canceled because no artificial illumination was allowed in the museum, and visibility was quickly reduced as daylight diminished: "The two artists, plunged into gloom ... performed the last three movements from memory, with a fire and a passion the more astounding to the audience in that there was an absence of all externals which could enhance the performance. Music, wondrous and alone, held sovereign sway in the darkness of night."

Franck casts the work in four movements, but these are interlinked as two pairs forming a slow-fast pattern. The fantasia-like third movement, for example, has a preludial function with respect to the faster final movement, distantly echoing the older church sonata form of the Baroque era. Yet alongside any archaizing tendencies, Franck devises a tightly integrated narrative based on the cyclical reappearance and transformation of thematic material across the entire work.

The violin plays the sonata's germinal idea in the opening, barcarolle-like movement, which features subtle dialogue with the piano. White-hot passion bursts forth in the chromatically heaving Allegro. Franck, whose keyboard style reflects his unusually large hands, places extravagant demands on the pianist in this movement in particular.

The "Recitativo-Fantasia," as Franck styles the third movement, introduces a striking phrase, full of yearning, on the violin that is a possible candidate for the famous "little phrase" Proust describes as haunting the protagonist

of *Swann's Way* when he hears a fictive sonata by Vinteuil.

The Allegretto poco mosso fourth movement begins as a rondo on a theme decorously presented in canonical exchanges between the instruments. But this music, too, grows impassioned as Franck recalls earlier ideas—including the "little phrase"—and culminates in an exuberant affirmation by the musical partners as they conclude the work—and Franck's wedding gift.

### **Tzigane**

**Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

The final work on our program represents a particularly intriguing case of being inspired by a characterful performer. Jelly d'Arányi (1893-1966), a transplant from Hungary to London, was a violin virtuoso and grand-niece of Joseph Joachim, the 19th-century celebrity violinist and close friend of Brahms. She practiced spiritualism and even claimed that she could communicate with Robert Schumann through séances—a skill that would play a part in the bizarre history of the rediscovery of Schumann's Violin Concerto.

Maurice Ravel encountered d'Arányi in the early 1920s when he heard her interpretation of his Sonata for Violin and Cello. He wrote *Tzigane* to showcase d'Arányi's phenomenal talent, describing the work as "a virtuoso piece in the style of a Hungarian rhapsody."

Ravel was a perfectionist and worked diligently right up to the premiere in April 1924, for which Henri Gil-Marchex accompanied d'Arányi at the keyboard. A few months afterward, he also created a version for solo violin and orchestra. The title *Tzigane* is a French term for the Romani people, but the

piece manifests French fantasies of an undifferentiated “Eastern European” exoticism that became associated with stereotypes of Hungarian folk music and so-called “Gypsies” (a term regarded by many Roma as a racial slur).

For the premiere, Ravel specified using a now-obsolete keyboard attachment called a *luthéal*, which had been patented in 1919 and gave the pianist access to an expanded range of tonal effects. One of the *luthéal*'s stops could mimic the sonority of the Hungarian cimbalom, or hammered dulcimer.

*Tzigane* combines Ravel's enthusiasm for the specific character of d'Arányi's virtuosity with gestures that evoke a spirit of wildly celebratory music-making. Formally, the piece moves from slow music to a fast-paced finish, following the pattern of the *csárdás*,

the folk dance that Liszt immortalized in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Ravel moreover paid close attention to the “diabolical” virtuosity of Paganini's *Caprices*.

For the slow first part, the violinist has the stage alone and plays a kind of incantatory cadenza low on the G string. An actual theme is stated when the piano enters the picture, and the dance progresses through a series of variations. Ravel loads up a gamut of special effects and technical hurdles—from harmonics and multiple stops to left-hand pizzicato—in a way that creates the illusion of a Shiva-limbed musician whose magic never fails to leave audiences breathless.

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Highlights of recent seasons saw Mr. Vengerov opening the season of the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala with Maestro Chailly, a Residence with Monte Carlo Philharmonic and the Philharmonie in Paris as well as worldwide recital tours. Highlights of the 22/23 season saw him in an extensive U.S. and Canadian recital tour including Berkeley, Kansas City, New York and Toronto, and an 11 concert tour in the UK. Other orchestral performances as a soloist include Montreal, Vienna, London, Paris, and Taiwan and chamber music concerts with Evgeny Kissin and Stephen Isserliss at Carnegie Hall, and in Switzerland with Simon Trpcesky and Stephen Isserliss. He also joined the Aspen and Bravo Vail festivals in the States this summer in recital, masterclasses and concerto performance with Fabio Luisi and the Dallas SO and celebrated 40 years on stage at a sold-out Royal Albert Hall concert performing both the Brahms violin concerto and Double Concerto. In 2023/24 he opened the Shanghai International Festival with Christoph Eschenbach, and embarked on another worldwide recital tour including America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia and orchestra concerts in amongst others in Vienna, Paris and Milan.

This season will see him return in a recital tour to the U.S. including Berkeley, Boston, and New York, as well as concerts at La Scala, the Musikverein Vienna and an extensive tour in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and China for his 50th birthday celebrations.

Highlights of the 24/25 season will be the start of a 3-year Perspective at Carnegie Hall with over 12 concerts, starting with all Mozart concertos this November over two evenings and ending with all Beethoven Sonatas in 2027. His Perspective will also see him partner up with various famous chamber music partners, including Evgeny Kissin, Yefim Bronfman, and Martha Argerich.

In 2020 Maxim Vengerov became Classic FM's first solo Artist in Residence and released a new recording of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with conductor Myung-Whun Chung and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, coupled with works by Saint-Saëns and Ravel as well as a live recital from Carnegie Hall.

As one of Mr Vengerov's greatest passions is the teaching and encouraging of young talent, he has held various teaching positions around the world. He currently holds the Stephan and Viktoria Schmidheiny Stiftungsprofessor at the Mozarteum University Salzburg and since September 2016 he is also the Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin at the Royal College of Music in London. In 2018 Maxim Vengerov became the Goodwill Ambassador of the Musica Mundi School—a unique institution that supports young talents. With the vision of democratizing the access of music learning, he launched his own online platform in January 2021: [www.maximvengerov.com](http://www.maximvengerov.com), and created an impact across 170 countries and over 190 million people reached. His first-year programs include partnerships with musical institutions from around the world, the Lottery Ticket program, a guest artist series inaugurated with Brett Yang from TwoSet Violin, as well as his new global community group whose initiatives include the world leading mentoring program, rural musical communities initiative and the Musical Pen Pals program for children.

Mr Vengerov has been profiled in a series of documentaries, including *Playing by Heart*, which was recorded by Channel Four Television and screened at the Cannes

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### MAXIM VENGEROV

Universally hailed as one of the world's finest musicians, and often referred to as the greatest living string player in the world today, Grammy award winner Maxim Vengerov also enjoys international acclaim as a conductor and is one of the most in-demand soloists.

Born in 1974, he began his career as a solo violinist at the age of 5, won the Wieniawski and Carl Flesch international competitions at ages 10 and 15 respectively, studied with Galina Tourchaninova and Zakhar Bron, made his first recording at the age of 10, and went on to record extensively for high-profile labels including Melodia, Teldec, and EMI, earning, among others, Grammy and *Gramophone* artist of the year awards.

In 2007 he followed in the footsteps of his mentor, the late Mstislav Rostropovich, and turned his attention to conducting and in 2010 was appointed the first chief conductor of the Gstaad Festival Orchestra. June 2014 saw Mr. Vengerov graduate with a Diploma of Excellence from the Moscow Institute of Ippolitov-Ivanov with professor Yuri Simonov and he has since finished a further 2-year program of opera conducting.

Television Festival in 1999, and *Living the Dream*, which was released worldwide and received the Gramophone Award for Best Documentary in 2008.

Mr. Vengerov has received prestigious fellowships and honors from a number of institutions. In 2012 he was awarded an Honorary Visiting Fellowship at Trinity College Oxford and in 2019 he received an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal College of Music London and the Order of Cultural Merit from the Palace Monte Carlo.

Mr. Vengerov has also received numerous awards including Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with Orchestra) (2003), two Gramophone awards (1994, 1995), a Classical Brit Award (2004), five Edison Classical Music Awards (1995, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2004), two ECHO awards (1997, 2003) and a World Economic Forum Crystal award (2007)—honoring artists who have used their art to improve the state of the world.

He plays the ex-Kreutzer Stradivari (1727) among other instruments.

**Polina Osetinskaya** is an acclaimed concert pianist and author of a bestselling autobiography *Farewell, Sadness*. Please see the program booklet for her complete biography.



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