

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Romeo and Juliet with Dudamel

Thursday, February 2, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.
Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE THE SHOW

- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed some of the most popular classical music of all time, including *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *The 1812 Overture*. But during his lifetime, he was criticized for combining Russian and western European musical traditions.
- Sergei Prokofiev tried to re-envision the ending to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but instead Soviet authorities rearranged his composition.
- Violinist Lisa Batiashvili is a virtuoso who performs regularly with the world's leading orchestras and was named *Musical America's* 2015 Instrumentalist of the Year.
- The Walt Disney Concert Hall, instantly recognizable from the outside as the work of celebrity architect Frank Gehry, has an interior that was designed to create an exceptional acoustic experience.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

ALFRED SCHNITTKE, (K)ein Sommernachtstraum

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY, Violin Concerto

SERGEI PROKOFIEV. Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*

Alfred Schnittke, who was born in Russia in 1934 and died in Germany in 1998, wrote everything from chamber works to operas to film scores. He was influenced by the experimental techniques of Austrian composer Anton Webern, but ultimately pursued his own experiments in composing, most notably combining elements of humor and seriousness in the same work. *(K)ein Sommernachtstraum*, which Schnittke composed in 1985, bears a German-language joke in its title. In German, "ein" means "a," while "kein" means "not," so *(K)ein Sommernachtstraum* translates to *(Not) a Summer Night's Dream*. Commissioned for a program of works based on Shakespearean themes, the piece delightfully exemplifies Schnittke's postmodern approach to composition: it contains styles and musical quotes from throughout music history in an entertaining and accessible pastiche. The parenthetical "(K)ein" of the title is classic Schnittke, who said, "This piece should be played in a concert of Shakespeare settings, though it has no direct connection to Shakespeare." Schnittke must have winked (at least on the inside) when he said this, as educated listeners will clearly hear echoes of the forest and fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *(K)ein Sommernachtstraum*.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893) was a Russian composer of symphonies, concertos, operas, ballets, chamber music, and religious choral music, which contained elements of both Russian and western European musical traditions. He is considered a master of the late Romantic period, with an exceptional ability to express intense emotion through melody. Several of his works—including *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and the *1812 Overture*—are highly recognizable and are among the most popular pieces in the history of classical music. Tchaikovsky composed his technically challenging Violin

Concerto in Switzerland in 1878, inspired by violinist Josef Kotek. When the concerto was premiered, the reactionary critic Eduard Hanslick was more disturbed than impressed, writing, “It is no longer a question of whether the violin is being played, but of being yanked about and torn to tatters. Whether it is at all possible to extract a pure sound out of these hair-raising acrobatics I do not know.” History has been kinder to Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto. It is now widely considered one of the best violin concertos, and one of the most difficult to play.

Russian composer **SERGEI PROKOFIEV** (1891–1953) circulated in the European avant-garde of the 1920s and ’30s, returned to the Soviet Union in 1936, and lived through the Soviet persecution of composers in the late 1930s and the horrors of World War II. Composed in 1935, Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* is remarkable for its nuanced evocation of characters and moods: the angry dissonance of the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets, the evolution of Juliet from buoyant innocence to emotional maturity, the ornamental dances, and the unique themes for characters as different as Romeo and the friar. But even this masterpiece did not escape the controlling attentions of Soviet authorities. At their insistence, for the Kirov Ballet’s 1940 performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev’s piece was shortened, rearranged, and reorchestrated. The authorities’ intent was to defend Shakespeare’s story from Prokofiev’s creative liberties—the composer had given the young lovers a happy ending because, as he said, “living people can dance, the dead cannot.” Soviet authorities may have revoked Prokofiev’s poetic license, but even the altered version of his work retained enough of Prokofiev’s brilliance to enthrall audiences.

LISA BATIASHVILI

Georgian violinist Lisa Batiashvili, *Musical America’s* 2015 Instrumentalist of the Year, has performed with the world’s leading orchestras. Last year she was artist-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic, and this year she is artist-in-residence with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in the Netherlands. She has longstanding relationships with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Chamber Orchestra of Europe, among many others. Based in Germany, she is renowned among musicians for her virtuosity and sensitivity. A Deutsche Grammophon artist, Batiashvili’s latest album features Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto as well as the Violin Concerto by Jean Sibelius.

GUSTAVO DUDAMEL

Gustavo Dudamel, born in Venezuela in 1981, is the music and artistic director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and music director of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. A dynamic violinist and conductor, he has worked with major orchestras around the world and is acclaimed not only for his extraordinary musical talent, but also for his explosive energy. Dudamel has been a Deutsche Grammophon artist since 2005. In 2009, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Venezuela’s Universidad Centro-Occidental Lisandro Alvarado. Dudamel began to learn the art of conducting in his early teens. As an adult, he is committed to developing musical spirit from an early age, especially among youth in his native Venezuela. In 2008, Harvard University awarded him the Q Prize for his dedication to youth. In 2015, he conducted the title music composed by John Williams for *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*. And in 2016, he conducted Youth Orchestra Los Angeles as they accompanied Beyoncé, Coldplay, and Bruno Mars at the Super Bowl.

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC

Critics have described the Los Angeles Philharmonic as “forward-thinking,” “contemporary-minded,” and “the most creative, and, therefore, the best orchestra in America.” Founded in 1919, the orchestra performed in Philharmonic Auditorium, on the corner of Fifth and Olive (now a parking lot),





until 1964, when it moved to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion at the Music Center. The LA Phil moved into Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2003. Under the 17-year tenure of music director Esa-Pekka Salonen (which ended in 2009), the LA Phil joined the ranks of the world's elite orchestras. Salonen worked as a champion of new music, challenging Los Angeles audiences to listen to the unexpected. The orchestra has continued to innovate under the leadership of Gustavo Dudamel. The LA Phil performs a regular season of concerts at Disney Hall, as well as a summer season at the Hollywood Bowl.

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

Walt Disney Concert Hall was designed by architect Frank Gehry to be one of the top acoustically conscious concert halls in the world. Construction began in 1999 and took four years to complete. It was funded by a major contribution from Walt Disney's widow, Lillian Disney, and various other donors, totaling \$240 million. The building's bold stainless-steel exterior makes it instantly recognizable as a Gehry building. Inside, the hardwood construction aims to perfectly funnel the sounds of music. Esa-Pekka Salonen said of the hall: "Everyone can now hear what the LA Phil is supposed to sound like."

As beautiful as the exterior is, it initially created some problems for the neighbors. A few highly reflective panels of the building focused sunlight onto adjacent condos and sidewalks; residents' air-conditioning bills skyrocketed and hot spots on the street rose to 140°F. In 2005, the offending panels were lightly sanded to reduce the glare.

Recently opened across the street from Disney Hall is The Broad, L.A.'s newest museum of contemporary art. Architect Elizabeth Diller said of The Broad, "Our goal for the museum is to hold its ground next to Gehry's much larger and very exuberant Walt Disney Concert Hall through contrast. As opposed to Disney Hall's smooth and shiny exterior that reflects light, The Broad will be porous and absorptive, channeling light into its public spaces and galleries."

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Can you tell whether you heard the Stalin-approved edit or the composer's original version of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*?
- What do you think of Prokofiev's idea of rewriting Shakespeare?
- Can you imagine music, or any other art form, being edited by government authorities today? What do you think motivates government involvement in art? Are there potential benefits to this sort of intervention? Is it something we need to guard against? Why?
- Did you notice a difference in the acoustics of the Walt Disney Concert Hall compared to other venues where you have heard music?
- What caught your attention about Dudamel's style of conducting?

IF YOU LIKED TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

- Performances by the USC Thornton Symphony and the USC Thornton Chamber Orchestra
<https://music.usc.edu/usc-thornton-symphony-orchestra/>
 and <https://music.usc.edu/thornton-chamber-orchestra/>
- Classical-music resources in USC Libraries
- Some of L.A.'s other classical-music ensembles, such as the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra or the conductorless community orchestra Kaleidoscope
www.laco.org and www.kco.la
- *Art and Politics: Between Purity and Propaganda* by Joes Segal (Amsterdam University Press, 2016)

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Librarians **MELISSA MILLER** and **ROSS SCIMECA** have selected the following resources to help you learn more about Tchaikovsky and tonight's performance. Print resources are identified by call number, and you can access electronic resources through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Brown, David. *Tchaikovsky, the Man and His Music*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. [Music Library ML410.C4 B76 2006]
- Ivashkin, Alexander. *Alfred Schnittke*. London: Phaidon, 1996. [Music Library ML410.S276 I92 1996]
- Kearney, Leslie. *Tchaikovsky and His World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. [Music Library ML410.C4 T36 1998]
- Morrison, Simon Alexander. *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. [Music Library ML410.P865 M67 2009]
- Odam, George. *Seeking the Soul: The Music of Alfred Schnittke*. London: Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2002. [Music Library ML410.S276 S3 2002]
- Samuel, Claude. *Prokofiev*. New York: Marion Boyars, c2000. [Music Library ML410.P865 S3513 2000]

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Naxos Music Online—an electronic resource accessible through the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu—has the following recommendations for further listening. Either one of the short pieces by Schnittke is good. With regard to Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto there are many awesome interpretations. We would recommend Nathan Milstein and/or David Oistrakh. If you want to hear the complete *Romeo and Juliet*, listen to Maazel recording with the Cleveland Orchestra or Andre Previn with the London Symphony Orchestra. If you want just to hear an abridged selection, by all means listen to Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's outstanding recording with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.