

A Statement on Storytelling

The program for this concert was initially conceived when thoughts on resilience paired with imaginative storytelling. The thread in between is the power of love and its life-saving qualities.

Fidelio: a woman dresses as a man and risks her life to save her lover. The strength of her love empowers her journey and helps her overcome the obstacles of “becoming” someone else in order to rescue him. Love prevails and triumphs. Both of them remain alive - a living relationship.

Tabakova: a woman moves from Bulgaria to another country at a young age. A new people, a new language, a new everything. It certainly takes a lot of resilience to survive, pursue, and achieve one’s dreams in the face of such challenges. Being a female composer - like being a female conductor - requires an intensely high level of love for what one does, a huge amount of resilience and determination, and a lot of faith in one’s personal story and the construction of it. We will be exploring Tabakova’s Concerto for Cello and Strings - a dialogue, a conversation, a togetherness of what lies in between - a living relationship.

Scheherazade: a woman destined to die. She becomes deeply and enduringly creative in order to live and help others do the same. The result of her storytelling is the accomplishment of love. She is resilient and strong for the unimaginable duration of one thousand nights. She saves herself, she saves womanhood, she saves her lover from a metaphoric death, and she saves love itself - a living relationship.

I believe we are all here because of a relationship: the one that created us, the ones that connect us to life, the ones that develop us, the ones that define us, the ones that teach us to live and love.

I believe in love, humanity, and our storytelling. Their force is what makes us surpass difficulties, be resilient, continue our journey on this planet, and fulfill our personal missions. This program includes all of these beautiful humans, who are ready for love and connection through storytelling. Love makes them human. Love gives them strength and resilience. Love makes them creative. One dresses up as a man, the other composes an amazing piece of music, and the last becomes a storyteller for one thousand nights... If this isn’t love and life, then what is?

- Zoe Zeniodi

Program Notes

Beethoven: Overture to Fidelio, Op. 72

Fidelio is Beethoven's only opera, and was originally titled "Leonore or The Triumph of Marital Love." After many revisions, the opera established itself as "Fidelio." Leonore, disguised as a prison guard named Fidelio, rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison.

Though he really liked the libretto, Beethoven struggled to compose the opera, and had even more difficulty in writing the overture - he ended up writing four different versions! Every time he revised the opera, he wrote a new overture but was never satisfied enough. The original overtures are known as "Leonore" no. 1, no. 2, and no. 3, and are still performed on the symphonic stage.

The 'official' and final overture, used on the operatic stage, is known as "Fidelio" and is what we will hear the orchestra perform. Beethoven started it from scratch, and used no themes of the actual music of the opera for it. It is a compact and energetic piece with a direct impact to the listener due to two contrasting themes, a very rhythmical one and a more lyrical one that alternate until the end, when love triumphs.

Dobrinka Tabakova: Concerto for Cello and Strings

Dobrinka Tabakova was born in Bulgaria in 1980 but was raised in London. Her music is richly melodic, very emotional and transcendental, and full of sensual textures. She successfully combines her origins and her upbringing in her music, which is full of connectedness and compassion.

The Concerto for Cello and Strings was written in 2008 for Kristine Blaumane and the Amsterdam Sinfonietta. It includes a lot of the duality we find in Dobrinka's personal story. The work is technically demanding but very emotional and empathetic at the same time. It involves folk and traditional elements with a wonderful sensation of modernity.

The first movement is a strong dialogue between turbulent and angular themes of great rhythmic intensity and immense lyricism through a distinctive eastern tone. It resolves in a beautiful chorale which leads to the ecstatic second movement. The second movement is a very human movement full of a longing sensation; melancholic and nostalgic, it's one of the most beautiful and soaring pieces for cello and strings I have personally ever encountered. The concerto concludes with a very lively movement, reminiscent of the opening of the piece, with angular and accented rhythms, but this time, ends in a wonderfully joyful resolution.

Rimsky - Korsakov: Scheherazade, op. 35

One of Rimsky-Korsakov's most popular works, Scheherazade, is a symphonic poem composed in 1888, based on the story of the Arabian Nights. It features amazing, dazzling, and colorful orchestration as well as melodies that are famous, fresh, and beautiful. It has a mild oriental flavor and an incredible rhythmic vitality.

The composer used thematic headings for each of the four movements based on the tales of the story "One Thousand and One Nights." The titles are pretty vague and do not relate specifically to any particular story, thus giving freedom to the listener to become the 'creator' and 'storyteller' with the music and their imagination leading the way.

The movement titles are:

1. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
2. The Kalandar Prince
3. The Young Prince and The Young Princess
4. Festival at Baghdad. The Sea. The Ship Breaks against a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman.

Rimsky-Korsakov beautifully connects the movements by using the same thematic material throughout each of them. He also uses particular motifs and themes to depict some of the characters of the story. As an example, the initial strong and furious sounding opening is connected to the Sultan while the theme of Scheherazade is a tender and very sensuous melody for violin solo, accompanied by a harp, depicting her sweet response to his anger. Beautiful melodies, passionate sections, wonderful explorations in this deeply sensual work which finishes in a peaceful ending representing Scheherazade finally winning over the heart of the Sultan, saving her life and their love.

This masterpiece really captures the essence of one of the most intricate and deep storytelling sagas of all times!