Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

JUN MÄRKL, Conductor
GIORA SCHMIDT, Violin

Friday, October 12, 2018 at 8 pm
Dr. Bobbie Bailey & Family Performance Center, Morgan Hall
Eighteenth Concert of the 2018-19 Concert Season
HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803–1869)
Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*, Opus 23 (1838)

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820–1881)
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 5 in A minor, Opus 37 (1861)

I. Allegro non troppo; Moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro con fuoco

Giora Schmidt, violin

Intermission

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)
*Daphnis et Chloé* (1912)

I. *Première Partie*
II. *Deuxième Partie*
III. *Troisième Partie*
Overture to Benvenuto Cellini, Opus 23 (1838)

Hector Berlioz was born in La Côte-Saint-André, Isère, France, on December 11, 1803, and died in Paris, France, on March 8, 1869. The first performance of Benvenuto Cellini took place at the Opéra in Paris on September 10, 1838, with Françoise-Antoine Habeneck conducting. The Overture to Benvenuto Cellini is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and strings. Approximate performance time is eleven minutes.

In 1833, Hector Berlioz read the autobiography of the Italian Renaissance sculptor, goldsmith, architect, writer, and musician, Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571). Today, Cellini is best known for his statue of Perseus (1545–54), on display in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence. As Berlioz recalled in his Memoirs: “I had been greatly struck with certain episodes in the life of Benvenuto Cellini, and was so unlucky as to think they offered an interesting and dramatic subject for an opera.”

The premiere of Berlioz’s Benvenuto Cellini took place at the Paris Opéra on September 10, 1838. The performers, perplexed by Berlioz’s revolutionary score, did not do the work justice. In addition, Berlioz now had to face an audience that included composers and artists he had pointedly criticized in his own music reviews. Berlioz recalled that during the September 10, 1838 premiere, the Overture “received exaggerated applause, and the rest was hissed with admirable energy and unanimity. It was given three times, however, after which (tenor Gilbert-Louis) Duprez threw up the part of Benvenuto, and the work disappeared from the bills, not to reappear until long afterwards…”

Benvenuto Cellini did enjoy some revivals during Berlioz’s lifetime, notably an 1852 staging in Weimar conducted by Franz Liszt. However, Benvenuto Cellini has for the most part remained on the fringes of the operatic repertoire. In 1850, Berlioz commented: “I have just re-read my score carefully and with the strictest impartiality, and I cannot help recognizing that it contains a variety of ideas, an energy and exuberance and a brilliance of colour such as I may perhaps never find again, and which deserved a better fate.”
The brilliant Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*, incorporating melodies from the opera, contains in abundance the positive qualities Berlioz found in his complete score. And indeed, the Overture has enjoyed “the better fate” the composer wished for his opera, and remains a staple of the concert repertoire.

**Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 5 in A minor, Opus 37 (1861)**

**Henri Vieuxtemps** was born in Verviers, Belgium, on February 17, 1820, and died in Mustapha, Algiers, Algeria, on June 6, 1881. In addition to the solo violin, the Concerto in A minor is scored for flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. Approximate performance time is eighteen minutes.

Henri Vieuxtemps, one of the finest violinists of the 19th century, was noted for his pristine technique, beautiful tone, and exemplary musicianship. The eminent Viennese critic, Eduard Hanslick, once wrote: “Listening to Vieuxtemps is one of the greatest, most unqualified pleasures music has to offer. His playing is as technically infallible and masterly as it is musically noble, inspired, and compelling. I consider him the first among contemporary violinists.” During his career, Vieuxtemps concertized to great acclaim throughout Europe, Russia and the United States.

Henri Vieuxtemps composed his Concerto No. 5 for Violin and Orchestra in 1861. He originally intended the work to serve as a competition piece for the Brussels Conservatory. However, the Concerto became a favorite of such notable virtuosos as Henryk Wieniawski and Jascha Heifetz. The marvelous synthesis of virtuoso display, elegance, and melodic charm continues to make the Vieuxtemps Fifth Violin Concerto a welcome part of any concert program.

The Concerto is in three movements, played without pause. The first (*Allegro non troppo*) begins with a stormy orchestral introduction, presenting the first of two central themes. The fury subsides, leading to the soloist’s elaborate entrance, which incorporates the opening theme. The movement’s second theme, introduced by the soloist, is a lovely, flowing melody that Vieuxtemps directs be played in an unaffected manner (*semplice*). The repetition of the melody by various wind instruments serves as counterpoint to the soloist’s brilliant display. The opening theme dominates the ensuing orchestral tutti, as well as the return of the soloist. The movement ends with an extended solo cadenza, capped by a *fortissimo* orchestral proclamation.
Two brief movements conclude the work. The first is a heartfelt *Adagio*, based upon the opening movement’s second theme. The *Adagio* proceeds to a grand crescendo, leading directly to the concluding *Allegro con fuoco*, a breathtaking showpiece for the soloist.

*Daphnis et Chloé (1912)*

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937. The first performance of *Daphnis et Chloé* took place at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris on June 8, 1912, with Pierre Monteux conducting the Ballets Russes. *Daphnis et Chloé* is scored for two piccolos, three flutes, alto flute, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, military drum, tambourine, tam-tam, xylophone, crotales, castanets, wind machine, jeux de timbres à clavier, two harps, celesta, and strings. Approximate performance time is fifty minutes.

In the summer of 1909, Sergey Diaghilev’s spectacular Ballets Russes burst upon the Paris artistic scene. Diaghilev’s brilliant and controversial productions inspired audience and critical reactions that ranged from adulation to violent rebellion. During his early years in Paris, Diaghilev made the acquaintance of several young composers with whom he would collaborate on some of his company’s greatest triumphs. For example, a meeting with the young Igor Stravinsky led to premieres by the Ballets Russes of such works as *The Firebird* (1910), *Pétrouchka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913).

Around that same time, Diaghilev met French composer Maurice Ravel. It was not long before Diaghilev, greatly impressed by Ravel’s talent and affinity for the theater, commissioned a ballet based upon the story of Daphnis and Chloe, a pastoral romance attributed to the Greek writer, Longus (approx. 2nd /3rd Century AD). Choreographer Michel Fokine adapted the story for Ravel’s composition. Ravel began work on *Daphnis* in 1910 and finished the piano score that year. However, the compose, dissatisfied with the finale, continued to make revisions. Ravel finally completed the fully-orchestrated score on April 5, 1912, just two months before the work’s premiere.
The preparations and rehearsals for the *Daphnis* premiere were fraught with tension. Ravel conceived of his score as “a large fresco painting, less in keeping with antiquity than with the Greece of my dreams, which was more closely related to a Greece such as French artists had portrayed at the end of the eighteenth century.” Choreographer Michel Fokine and Léon Bakst (who designed the staging and costumes) shared a more revolutionary view that contemplated modern dance movements and garish color schemes. There were also arguments between Fokine and the legendary Vaslav Nijinsky, who danced the role of Daphnis at the premiere.

The first performance of *Daphnis et Chloé* took place in Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet on June 8, 1912. Despite the incredible assemblage of talent (including Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina in the title roles, conductor Pierre Monteux, choreographer Fokine and designer Bakst), the lack both of sufficient rehearsal time and unanimity of artistic vision produced a rather lackluster premiere.

In truth, full productions of *Daphnis* on the ballet stage have been rare. On the other hand, the score Ravel termed “a choreographic symphony in three movements” has enjoyed tremendous success in the concert hall. The Orchestral Suites Ravel fashioned from the complete work are staples of the concert repertoire—particularly the Second Suite, containing the majestic *Sunrise* and thrilling *Danse générale* from the ballet’s *Third Part*. Still, it is the complete score of *Daphnis et Chloé* that reveals the full genius of Ravel’s ability to grip his audience with an unerring sense of color, drama, and atmosphere.

The shepherd, Daphnis, and Chloe are in love. In the ballet’s *First Part*, an *Introduction and Religious Dance* precede the couple’s arrival. A series of games ensues, including a contest between Daphnis and the bumbling cowherd Dorcon, with the reward being a kiss from Chloe. Later, Chloe is captured by pirates. Daphnis discovers Chloe’s disappearance and collapses in despair. Daphnis has a dream in which he encounters the god Pan (*Nocturne*).

*Second Part. (Interlude)* The scene changes to the pirate camp (*Dance of the Warriors*). Chloe, now a prisoner, is forced to dance for her captors. Suddenly, Pan appears as a fearsome image, causing everyone to flee. *Third Part.* After the majestic *Lever du jour (Sunrise)* Daphnis and Chloe are reunited. The two mime the tale of Pan and Syrinx (*Pantomime*). Daphnis pledges himself to Chloe, and the ballet concludes with a thrilling, joyous dance (*Danse générale*).
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‡ rotate between sections  
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Jun Märkl, conductor has long been known as a highly respected interpreter of the core Germanic repertoire from both the symphonic and operatic traditions, and more recently for his refined and idiomatic explorations of the French impressionists. His long-standing relationships at the state operas of Vienna, Berlin, Munich and Semperoper Dresden have in recent years been complemented by his Music Directorships of the Orchestre National de Lyon (2005-11) and MDR Symphony Orchestra Leipzig (to 2012).

From 2014–17 seasons, he was Principal Conductor to the Basque National Orchestra. He guests with the World's leading Orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic and Tonhalle Orchester Zürich. Märkl works regularly with many North American Orchestras – St. Lois, Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Minnesota, Detroit, Houston and Vancouver, among others. Märkl has been a regular guest at
the State Opera of Vienna, Munich and Semper Oper Dresden, and was until 2005 Permanent Conductor of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich.

In 2014 Naxos released two Hosokawa discs recorded by Jun Märkl with Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He has also recorded the complete Schumann symphonies live with the NHL Symphony, Dvořák on Telarc, Mendelssohn and D'Albert with MDR, and Ravel, Messiaen and a highly acclaimed nine-disc Debussy set with the Orchestre National de Lyon on Naxos. Presently he is recording a cycle of works of Saint-Saëns and Hosokawa for Naxos. In recognition of his achievements in Lyon, he was honored by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012 with the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

**Giora Schmidt, violinist** has appeared with many prominent symphony orchestras around the globe including Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Canada's National Arts Centre, Toronto, Vancouver and the Israel Philharmonic. He made his Carnegie Hall debut performing the Barber Violin Concerto with the New York Youth Symphony.

In recital and chamber music, Giora (pronounced ghee-OH-rah) has performed at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, San Francisco Performances, the Louvre Museum in Paris, and Tokyo's Musashino Cultural Hall. Festival appearances include the Ravinia Festival, the Santa Fe and Montreal Chamber Music Festivals, Bard Music Festival, Scotia Festival of Music and Music Academy of the West. He has collaborated with eminent musicians including Efim Bronfman, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Lynn Harrell, Ralph Kirshbaum and Michael Tree.

Born in Philadelphia in 1983 to professional musicians from Israel, Giora began playing the violin at the age of four. He has studied with Patinka Kopec and Pinchas Zukerman at the Manhattan School of Music, and Dorothy DeLay and Itzhak Perlman at The Juilliard School.
Committed to education and sharing his passion for music, Giora was on the faculty of the Juilliard School and the Perlman Music Program from 2005-2009. He was appointed Associate Visiting Professor of Violin at the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music in August 2017. Through technology and social media he continues to find new ways of reaching young violinists and music lovers around the world. His Facebook page (facebook.com/gioraschmidt) has over 70,000 global followers. Giora was the First Prize winner of the Philadelphia Orchestra's Greenfield Competition in 2000, the recipient of a 2003 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and in 2005 won the Classical Recording Foundation's Samuel Sanders Award. From 2004-2006 he was selected to be a Starling Fellow at the Juilliard School.

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO), currently in its 74th season, continues to affirm its position as one of America’s leading orchestras with excellent live performances, renowned guest artist features and engaging education initiatives. The ASO performs more than 150 concerts each year from the Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concert Series, Atlanta Symphony Hall LIVE and the Coca-Cola Holiday Series, as well as community and education concerts.

Now in his 18th season as Music Director, Robert Spano’s continued commitment to nurturing and championing contemporary American music, through the Atlanta School of Composers and other partnerships, has defined a new generation of American composers. In 2016, he received the American Composers Forum’s Champion of New Music Award. During his tenure, the Orchestra has performed more than 28 ASO commissions, as well as several co-commissions.

The Orchestra continues to record regularly on its in-house label, ASO Media, further demonstrating the Orchestra’s commitment to celebrating classical masterworks, while continuing to perform commission, premiere and record with some of today’s leading composers. During the ASO’s 32-year history with Telarc, the Orchestra and Chorus have recorded more than 100 albums and its recordings have won 28 Grammy® Awards in categories including Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, Best Choral Performance and Best Opera Performance.
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Stephen W. Plate, Director, KSU School of Music

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