

# Estonian National Symphony Orchestra

# Neeme Järvi

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Garrick Ohlsson / Piano

Saturday Evening, February 3, 2018 at 8:00 Hill Auditorium Ann Arbor This evening's performance is supported by Bank of Ann Arbor, Anne and Paul Glendon, and Dody Viola. Media partnership provided by WGTE 91.3 FM, WRCJ 90.9 FM, and Ann Arbor's 107one. The Steinway piano used in this evening's concert is made possible by William and Mary Palmer. Special thanks to Tom Thompson of Tom Thompson Flowers, Ann Arbor, for his generous contribution of lobby floral art for this evening's performance. Mr. Ohlsson and the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra appear by arrangement with Opus 3 Artists. The Estonian National Symphony Orchestra's 2018 US tour is made possible through the support of Estonia's centenary celebrations. In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices

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during the performance.

#### **PROGRAM**

# Heino Eller

# Five Pieces for String Orchestra (excerpt)

**Homeland Tune** 

#### Johannes Brahms

# Piano Concerto No. 1 in d minor, Op. 15

Maestoso Adagio

Rondo: Allegro non troppo

Mr. Ohlsson

#### Intermission

Eduard Tubin
Symphony No. 5 in b minor

Allegro energico Andante Allegro assai

# FIVE PIECES FOR STRING ORCHESTRA (EXCERPT) (1953)

Heino Eller Born March 7, 1887 in Tartu, Estonia Died June 16, 1970 in Tallinn, Estonia

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

# Snapshots of History...In 1953:

- · U-M alumnus Arthur Miller's The Crucible opens on Broadway
- The first Chevrolet Corvette is built in Flint, Michigan
- The Korean War ends

Heino Eller "was able to establish totally new standards in small Estonia, thereby laying the cornerstone of professionalism in music." It was Eller's most famous former pupil, Arvo Pärt, who praised his teacher (himself a student of Rimsky-Korsakov) in these words. Thanks in no small part to the advocacy of Neeme Järvi, Eller's music has been receiving more international attention in recent years.

"Homeland Tune" is the last of Five Pieces for String Orchestra. orchestrations of short piano pieces written over the years. The short suite blends Baltic/Nordic influences with the Russian tradition: Tchaikovsky meets Grieg, Romanticism becomes enriched with gentle impressionistic overtones, and echoes of Estonian folk music are integrated into an international musical idiom, "Homeland Tune" is a hymn-like, dignified melody that conjures up images of the vast forests, winding rivers, picturesque lakes, and long coastline of Estonia, a country tiny by size but rich in its history and natural beauty.

# PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1 IN D MINOR, OP. 15 (1858)

Johannes Brahms Born May 7,1833 in Hamburg, Germany Died April 3,1897 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Pianist William Kapell with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Alexander Hilsberg; May 1946 in Hill Auditorium.

# Snapshots of History...In 1858:

- · Macy's department store opens in New York City
- · Hymen Lipman patents a pencil with an attached eraser
- · Homosexuality is legalized in the Ottoman Empire

I have always thought that some day, one would be bound suddenly to appear, one called to articulate in ideal form the spirit of his time, one whose mastery would not reveal itself to us step by step, but who, like Minerva, would spring fully armed from the head of Zeus. And he is come, a young man over whose cradle graces and heroes have stood watch. His name is Johannes Brahms...and he bears even outwardly those signs that proclaim: here is one of the elect.

These prophetic words were written by Robert Schumann, in an article titled "New Paths" that was to end almost 20 years of his activities as a music critic (including quite a few as the main editor) of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, Germany's most important music journal. The date was October 28, 1853. Brahms was barely 20 years old, and had not composed anything but piano music and songs, although these already included the three big piano sonatas. In addition, his piano playing was unusually expressive. A single visit by Brahms at the Schumanns' in Düsseldorf was enough to convince the older

composer that "here was one of the elect."

Sadly, with this article Schumann was not only welcoming a major new talent; he was also passing on the torch. For only four months later, on February 26, 1854, he attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine, and was subsequently taken to a mental asylum where he died two years later. Brahms was deeply shaken by these tragic events. Upon hearing the news of Schumann's illness, he rushed to Düsseldorf to provide support for Clara Schumann, who was expecting her seventh child at the time. He fell passionately in love with Clara, 14 years his senior, who was one of the greatest pianists of her day, and a woman of exceptional culture, intelligence, and charm. He was torn between his feelings of loyalty to his friend and mentor and his love for his friend's wife. a love probably not unreturned, despite Clara's devotion to her husband. After Schumann's death, however, Brahms and Clara pulled apart, later settling into a warm friendship that was to last until Clara's death in 1896. (Brahms himself died the following year.)

This emotional turmoil was further aggravated by a professional crisis for the young Brahms. The high expectations raised by Schumann's glowing article weighed heavily on him. He received some valuable introductions as a result of that article. and got his first works published by the prestigious Leipzig publisher, Breitkopf&Härtel. Nevertheless, he felt that he had yet to prove himself, had yet to write the Great Work that would establish him as the new genius whose advent Schumann had prophesied. He made sketch after sketch, filled notebook after notebook, but was dissatisfied with everything he wrote. Two of the large-scale compositions started during this time were finished only 20 years later: the Piano Quartet in c minor (1875), and Symphony No. 1 (1876), also in c minor. The third one, and the first to reach completion, was what eventually became the d-minor Piano Concerto.

In 1854, Brahms was reportedly working on a symphony, now lost. It has been suggested that these sketches already contained some of the music for the Concerto, but this cannot be proven as Brahms destroyed his sketches. By February 1855, he had decided on a concerto. but the work still caused him much trouble and worry. The music was sent back and forth between Brahms and his best friend, violinistcomposer Joseph Joachim, whose advice Brahms trusted more than anyone else's. The composer often despaired of ever being able to set right the "disastrous first movement, which cannot be born." Joachim was generous with his advice, freely criticizing what he did not like and

working closely with Brahms on many details over a period of two years. In December 1857, Brahms lamented, "Nothing sensible will ever come of it." By the next spring, however, he finished the concerto, and Joachim started rehearsing it with his orchestra in Hanover.

A performance had been planned for the spring of 1858, but that did not materialize. The premiere finally took place on January 22, 1859, in Hanover. Joachim conducted, and Brahms himself played the piano part. It was well received, if without any particular enthusiasm. In contrast, the second performance five days later, at the famous Gewandhaus in Leipzig, turned out to be the greatest fiasco of Brahms's entire life. There the orchestra was led by a musician who did not know Brahms very well, one Julius Rietz, Brahms wrote to Joachim after the concert:

I played considerably better than in Hanover, and the orchestra was excellent....The first and second movements were heard without the slightest motion. At the close, three pairs of hands attempted slowly to strike against one another, whereupon a perfectly unequivocal hissing from all sides forbade such demonstrations. Nothing further to report about that event, for nobody has yet said a word about the piece to me, with the exception of [concertmaster] Ferdinand David, who was very friendly.... I believe this is the best thing that could happen to one; it forces one to pull one's thoughts together and stimulates one's courage. After all, I am only experimenting and feeling my way as yet. But the hissing was too much, wasn't it?

One might wonder about the causes of this failure. After all, Brahms could hardly have been decried as one of those "incomprehensible modernists." The world of German music at the time had begun to polarize into two camps. The traditionalists, who wrote the name of Schumann on their banner, were opposed by those who rallied around Liszt and his so-called "New German School," There was no doubt that Brahms belonged to the first of these camps. Yet the unusually heightened dramatic quality of the concerto posed a challenge that few listeners were prepared to meet. Ironically, the intensity of the gesture in the concerto's first few bars is somewhat reminiscent of the opening of Liszt's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, premiered only a few years earlier in 1855. The two works, of course, later progress in entirely different directions, yet both begin in ways that contemporaries could not help perceiving as outrageously modern.

Even today, when Brahms isn't "modern" in the same way anymore, a sensitive listener will be struck (in the strong sense of the word) by the timpani roll, followed by a melody that startles with its violent accents, interspersed with tensionfilled pauses, and a tonal ambiguity resulting from the fact that the first cadence in d minor (the home key of the piece) does not arrive until measure 66. An extended passage in the home key is not heard until the piano makes its first entrance with a soft, lyrical melody. Until then, the music constantly modulates, and it often remains unclear for several measures what the key is. At the very beginning, the notes of the B-flat-Major triad over a continuing drumroll on 'D' produce a very unsettling effect, compounded by the repeated appearance of 'A-flat' (emphasized by trills and accents), which produces a strong dissonance with the bass. The repeat of the same music a half-step lower is an even stronger surprise.

Eventually, the movement settles into a fairly regular sonata form, with exposition, development, and recapitulation. But its dimensions are enormous, and the contrasts between the numerous themes are extreme. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (also in d minor), which Brahms heard for the first time during his years of struggle with the concerto, was a decisive influence. Among the many unforgettable moments in the first movement are the extended, hymnlike piano solo in a slower tempo and the haunting horn solo following shortly. The periodic returns of the dramatic initial theme retain their power and energy to the end.

The second-movement "Adagio" is one of Brahms's most intimate musical statements. In the original manuscript, the movement bore a quotation from the Latin Mass: Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord). The expressive theme, played by strings (violins muted) and bassoons, is taken over by the piano, which embellishes it with ornaments and figurations. The clarinets introduce a second theme, which leads to a brief forte exclamation. The first theme soon returns and, after a short and dreamlike cadenza, the movement ends with the sudden entrance of the timpani. silent until this point in the "Adagio."

The fact that the timpani does not play 'D' (the pitch of the home key) but its dominant 'A,' results in a strange suspense at the movement's end.

In the last movement, Brahms seems to pay tribute simultaneously to Bach and Beethoven. The polyphonic textures and vigorous syncopations of the main theme recall Bach's Piano Concerto in d minor, while Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in c minor was a model in other respects. The central fugato, or section in imitative counterpoint, was certainly inspired by a similar passage in the Beethoven. If the first movement lacked a cadenza, the finale has two. The first, marked "quasi Fantasia," is a series of figurations over a sustained pedal that is sometimes in the low. and sometimes in the middle or high register. This is followed by the modulation from gloomy and dramatic d minor to festive and serene D Major, a change that gives the "Rondo" theme an entirely new character. We barely recognize the theme when the bassoons and oboes intone it with a dolce (sweet) sound quality. This variation on the theme leads into a brief orchestral fortissimo and then into the second cadenza (this one also based on a sustained pedal, but more melodic than figurative in character). After this second cadenza, there is only a short, jubilant coda left to close the work.

At age 25, Brahms felt he had accomplished the Great Work he had aspired to write, but the response he had hoped for failed to appear. Although subsequent performances were more successful than the disastrous Leipzig premiere, the composer was deeply wounded, and this may explain in part why he waited almost 20 years before completing his first symphony.

# SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN B MINOR (1946)

Eduard Tubin Born June 18, 1905 in Torila, Estonia Died November 17, 1982 in Stockholm, Sweden

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

# Snapshots of History...In 1946:

- · Charles de Gaulle resigns as President of France
- Six inmates unsuccessfully try to escape from Alcatraz Prison, resulting in the Battle of Alcatraz
- · Yogi Berra makes his Major League Baseball debut

Eduard Tubin, who studied with Heino Eller a generation before Arvo Pärt, fled Estonia in 1944 when the Soviets invaded and annexed the previously independent country. He and his family found a new home in Sweden, where he completed a distinguished oeuvre of 10 completed symphonies, five concertos, operas, ballets, and a significant body of chamber music.

Tubin's Fifth Symphony was written two years after the composer's arrival in Stockholm, and was premiered there on November 16, 1947. The three-movement work begins with a sonata "Allegro" whose two themes (one soft and rhythmically active, the other lyrically expansive) are almost always heard simultaneously after being first introduced one after the other. The beginning of the development is marked by a new theme, announced by a pair of horns: the entire section will be dominated by the brass. In the recapitulation, the rhythmically active first theme, which had been played piano at the beginning, turns into a massive statement for full orchestra in quadruple fortissimo. At the same

time, the trombones continue their theme from the development section. The coda brings back the earlier horn theme, adding a wild duo — or duel — between the two timpani players (a little like in Carl Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, "The Inextinguishable," from 1916). For the end of the movement, the tempo broadens as the violins announce the final theme con passione.

The pizzicato music of the cellos that opens the second movement is derived from an Estonian folk song whose words express feelings of nostalgia about a happy childhood in a distant land. This folk song, however, is used merely as an accompaniment to another melody, the Estonian chorale "Night Will Soon End," first played by the violas. The chorale theme is followed by six variations, gradually rising in intensity until a climax is reached. At this moment, the first movement's initial rhythmic idea reappears in the two timpani parts, as a reminder of past conflicts. The "Andante" ends with an ethereal restatement of the chorale melody by muted strings.

The last movement is characterized by a high level of rhythmic energy until shortly before the end when, after a gradual decrescendo, a slower tranquillo section is suddenly introduced with a new lyrical melody in the strings. This melody is combined with a fanfare for three trumpets that starts piano and becomes more and more powerful; another martial timpani duo is also added to the mix. It is interesting that each of the symphony's three movements ends with prominent timpani solos. The third one is the most grandiose of all, allowing for a weighty and solemn statement to end the symphony.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

#### ARTISTS

The head of a musical dynasty, **Neeme Järvi** (artistic director and principal conductor) is one of today's most highly respected maestros. A prolific recording artist, he has amassed a discography of more than 600 recordings.

Over his long and highly successful career he has worked with the most prestigious orchestras including the Berliner Philharmoniker. Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and Wiener Symphoniker, as well as the major orchestras in the US including the New York and Los Angeles philharmonic orchestras. He also continues to have regular relationships with the NHK. Shanghai, and Singapore symphony orchestras as well as the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Goteburg Symphoniker, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Maestro Järvi has held positions with orchestras across the world. He is currently artistic director of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, as well as music director emeritus with both the Residentie Orkest and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He is also principal conductor emeritus of the Gothenburg Symphony, conductor laureate of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and head of conducting/artistic advisor of the Gstaad Conducting Academy. He was artistic and music director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande until summer 2015, and ended his tenure with a European tour.

Maestro Järvi has recorded with Chandos for over 30 years and his most recent discs are Leó Weiner's *Five Divertimentos and Serenade* and *Strauss*  in St. Petersburg, both with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra. Other recent releases include Tchaikovsky's complete ballets with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, symphonies and orchestral music by Swiss composer Joachim Raff, and music by Massenet, Chabrier, Saint-Saëns, Atterberg, Suchon, Ibert, and Xaver Scharwenka.

Maestro Järvi has been honored with many international awards and accolades. From his native country, these include an honorary doctorate from the Music Academy of Estonia in Tallinn, and the Order of the National Coat of Arms from the President of the Republic of Estonia. Mr. Lennart Meri. The Mayor of Tallinn presented him with the city's firstever ceremonial sash and coat of arms insignia, and he has been named one of the "Estonians of the Century." Neeme Järvi holds an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters from Detroit's Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, as well as honorary doctorates from the University of Aberdeen and the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, He has also received the Commander of the North Star. Order from King Karl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.

# The Estonian National Symphony Orchestra (ENSO: known in Estoni

Orchestra (ENSO; known in Estonian as Eesti Riiklik Sümfooniaorkester or ERSO) is the longest continually operating professional orchestra of its kind in the country. The Orchestra's history dates back to 1926 and, like that of many other world orchestras, is connected to the birth of national broadcasting. Since 2010, it has been led by principal conductor and artistic director Neeme Järvi, while Paavo Järvi has been its artistic advisor since 2002, and Olari Elts its principal quest

conductor since 2007. The Orchestra's previous principal conductors were Olav Roots (1939–44), Paul Karp (1944–50), Roman Matsov (1950–63), Neeme Järvi (1963–79), Peeter Lilje (1980–90), Leo Krämer (1991–93), Arvo Volmer (1993–2001), and Nikolai Alexeev (2001–10).

The Orchestra performs with renowned conductors and soloists from around the world, naturally including Estonian musicians of the highest caliber. Its recordings on CD (Chandos, BIS, Erato, Harmonia Mundi, ECM, Virgin Classics, and ERP) demonstrate a quality recognized by many prestigious music magazines, having won several prizes, including a Grammy Award. In addition to broadcast performances on Estonian Public Broadcasting, the ENSO has also been

aired on the Mezzo television channel. The Orchestra's home venue is the Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn, but it has also undertaken more than 50 concert tours. most notably three-week tours of Italy in 2003, the US in 2009 and 2013, and China in 2016. In addition, the ENSO has regularly given concerts in European and Scandinavian countries, appearing at many prestigious festivals in Köln, New York, Verona, Genoa, Munich, and Stockholm, With a repertoire ranging from the Baroque period to the present, the ENSO has also given premiere performances of symphonic works by almost every Estonian composer, including Arvo Pärt, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Eduard Tubin, Eino Tamberg, Jaan Rääts, Lepo Sumera, Tõnu Kõrvits, and Helena Tulve.

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In celebration of the centenary of the Republic of Estonia, the ENSO embarks on a tour to Hong Kong, Germany, and Georgia in addition to the US. In February 2018, shortly before the centenary of the Republic of Estonia, Maestro Neeme Järvi will bring Estonia's first oratorio — Jonah's Mission by Rudolf Tobias — with the ENSO to the renowned concert stage of the Konzerthaus Berlin. For more information, please visit www.erso.ee.

Garrick Ohlsson (piano) has established himself worldwide as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. Although long regarded as one of the world's leading exponents of the music of Chopin, Mr. Ohlsson commands an enormous repertoire ranging over the entire piano literature and he has come to be noted for his masterly performances of the works of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, as well as the Romantic repertoire. To date he has at his command more than 80 concertos, ranging from Haydn and Mozart to works of the 21st century.

This season that vast repertoire can be sampled in concerti ranging from Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Barber, and Busoni in cities including St. Louis, Washington, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Portland, Prague, Stockholm, Wroclaw, and Strasbourg. In recital he can be heard in New York's Tully Hall, Seattle, Denver,

Houston, Los Angeles, and Puerto Rico. He will appear twice during the season with the Indianapolis Symphony — first playing two Prokofiev concerti in one weekend in which all five will be programmed, and returning later in the season with Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1*.

An avid chamber musician, Mr. Ohlsson has collaborated with the Cleveland, Emerson, and Tokyo string quartets, and this fall will tour with the Takács Quartet. Together with violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier, he is a founding member of the San Francisco-based FOG Trio. Mr. Ohlsson can be heard on the Arabesque, RCA Victor Red Seal, Angel, BMG, Delos, Hänssler, Nonesuch, Telarc, Hyperion, and Virgin Classics labels.

A native of White Plains, New York, Mr. Ohlsson began his piano studies at the age of eight at the Westchester Conservatory of Music; at 13 he entered The Juilliard School in New York City. He has been awarded first prizes in the Busoni and Montreal Piano competitions, the Gold Medal at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw (1970), the Avery Fisher Prize (1994), the UMS Distinguished Artist Award in Ann Arbor, (1998), and the Jean Gimbel Lane Prize in Piano Performance from the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music (2014). Mr. Ohlsson is a Steinway Artist.

#### UMS ARCHIVES

This evening's concert marks Maestro **Neeme Järvi**'s 11th appearance under UMS auspices, following his UMS debut in November 1973 in Hill Auditorium with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. He appeared at UMS eight times in the 1990s during his tenure as music director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and most recently appeared at UMS in February 2000 in Hill Auditorium conducting the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. Pianist **Garrick Ohlsson** makes his 12th appearance under UMS auspices this evening, following his UMS debut in a July 1971 recital in Rackham Auditorium. He was awarded the UMS Distinguished Artist Award in May 1998 as part of the Ford Honors Program, and most recently appeared at UMS in October 2002 with the Takács Quartet in Rackham Auditorium. UMS welcomes the **Estonian National Symphony Orchestra** as the Orchestra makes its UMS debut this evening.

#### ESTONIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Neeme Järvi / Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

## Violin I

Arvo Leibur / Concertmaster Triin Ruubel / Concertmaster Marge Uus / Associate Concertmaster Nina Kawaguchi Kristiina Kungla Kirti-Kai Loorand Astrid Muhel Hanna-Liis Nahkur Merje Roomere Piret Sandberg Danae Taamal Kaiu Talve

#### Violin II

Tarmo Truuväärt

Kaido Välja / Principal Kadi Vilu / Associate Principal Eeva-Liisa Ehala-Tammiku Johanna Marie Kork Triin Krigul Miina Laanesaar Egert Leinsaar Kristjan Nõlvak Varie Remmel **Urmas Roomere** 

### Violas

Rain Vilu / Principal Helena Altmanis Mall Help Kaja Kiho Sandra Klimaité Julija Makarina Juhan Palm-Peipman Toomas Veenre

#### Cellos

Theodor Sink / Principal Riina Erin Joosep Kõrvits Paul-Gunnar Loorand Katrin Oja Aare Tammesalu Maris Vallsalu Villu Vihermäe

#### **Double Basses**

Mati Lukk / Principal Regina Udod / Associate Principal Imre Eenma Madis Jürgens Xiaonan Nie Ants Õnnis

#### **Flutes**

Mihkel Peäske / Principal Linda Vood Janika Lentsius / Piccolo

#### Oboes

Guido Gualandi / Principal Heli Ernits Tõnis Traksmann / English horn

#### Clarinets

Signe Sõmer / Principal Madis Kari / Associate Principal Meelis Vind / Bass clarinet

#### Bassoons

Peeter Sarapuu / Principal Kaido Suss Martin Tuuling / Contrabassoon

#### Horns

Ye Pan / Principal Mattias Vihmann / Associate Principal Kalle Koppel Tõnu Künnapas Valdek Põld

## Trumpets

Indrek Vau / Principal Erki Möller / Associate Principal István Baráth

#### **Trombones**

Andres Kontus / Principal Peeter Margus / Associate Principal Väino Põllu

#### Tuba

Madis Vilgats

#### Percussion

Madis Metsamart / Principal Rein Roos / Associate Principal Kaspar Eisel Kristjan Mäeots

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#### MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

2/14 Emmanuel Pahud

2/17 The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess

4/22 Murray Perahia

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

#### ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

2/13 Artist Interview: Janai Brugger
(Watkins Lecture Hall, Moore Building, 1100 Baits Drive, 2:30 pm)

2/16–17 The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess: A Symposium (Gallery, Hatcher Graduate Library, 913 S. University Avenue)

Please visit smtd.umich.edu/Gershwin for full schedule details and to register.

2/19 FRAME: A Salon Series on Visual Art, Performance, and Identity (202 S. Thayer Street Building, Atrium, 7:00 pm)

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.