UNLV Symphony Orchestra
Taras Krysa, conductor
Tracy Bu, violin – UNLV Concerto Competition Winner

PROGRAM

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)
Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47
I. Allegro moderato
II. Adagio di molto
III. Allegro, ma non tanto

INTERMISSION

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)
Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra (“Enigma”), Op. 36
Theme (Andante)
Variation I (L'istesso tempo) "C.A.E."
Variation II (Allegro) "H.D.S.-P."
Variation III (Allegretto) "R.B.T."
Variation IV (Allegro di molto) "W.M.B."
Variation V (Moderato) "R.P.A."
Variation VI (Andantino) "Ysobel"
Variation VII (Presto) "Troyte"
Variation VIII (Allegretto) "W.N."
Variation IX (Adagio) "Nimrod"
Variation X (Intermezzo: Allegretto) "Dorabella"
Variation XI (Allegro di molto) "G.R.S."
Variation XII (Andante) "B.G.N."
Variation XIII (Romanza: Moderato) "* * *"
Variation XIV (Finale: Allegro presto) "E.D.U."

Tuesday, April 26, 2011 7:30 p.m. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall Performing Arts Center University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Taras Krysa
Music Director & Conductor

Taras Krysa was born in Kiev, Ukraine and began his formal studies as a violinist at the Moscow Conservatory. After moving to the United States, Mr. Krysa continued his studies at Indiana University and Northwestern University, both in violin and conducting. His conducting teachers have included Victor Yampolsky, Jorma Panula and David Zinman. As a violinist, Mr. Krysa has performed with the New World Symphony Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. His conducting appearances have included the National Ukrainian Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra van het Osten, New World Symphony, St. Petersburg Symphony, Moscow Soloists, Slovak Sinfonietta, Spoleto Festival Chamber Orchestra, Kiev Chamber Orchestra and the Lublin Philharmonic Orchestra. He has made three critically acclaimed recordings for the Brilliant Classics label. In addition, Mr. Krysa has served as Principal Conductor of the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, which he led on several European tours with an appearance at the Concertgebouw Hall. Currently Taras Krysa is serving as the Director of Orchestras at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Music Director of Henderson Symphony Orchestra, and Artistic Director of Las Vegas Sinfonietta.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

In no violin concerto is the soloist’s first note—delicately dissonant and off the beat—more beautiful. It made Sibelius happy, too. In September 1902 he wrote to his wife Aino—and this was the first mention of the concerto—that he had just had “a marvelous opening idea” for such a work. But after that inspired start the history of the piece was troubled. Sibelius was drinking heavily and seemed virtually to be living at Kamp’s and König’s restaurants in Helsingfors. He was limitlessly inventive when it came to finding ways of running from work in progress. He behaved outrageously to Willy Burmester, the German virtuoso who had been concertmaster in Helsingfors for a while in the 1890s, who admired Sibelius and was ambitious on his behalf, who stirred him up to write a violin concerto and of course hoped to give the first performance. Sibelius sent the score to Burmester (“Wonderful! Masterly! Only once before have I spoken in such terms to a composer, and that was when Tchaikovsky showed me his concerto”) and let word get about that the work would be dedicated to him, but at the same time pushed for a premiere at a time when Burmester was not free or, at best, would have had too little time to learn a piece that in its original form was still more demanding technically than it is now.

Victor Nováček was a violin teacher with no reputation as a performer. That he would fail with this concerto was a foregone conclusion, yet that was the plan the self-destructive Sibelius chose. After the near-disastrous premiere Burmester offered his services again for a series of performances in October 1904—“All of my twenty-five years’ stage experience, my artistry and insight will be at the service of this work... I shall play the concerto in Helsingfors in such a way that the city will be at your feet”—only to find himself passed over again, this time in favor of Karl Halir, concertmaster in Berlin, a former member of the Joachim Quartet, and himself a distinguished quartet leader. Burmester never played the work, and the dedication finally went to yet another player, Ferenc von Vecsey, a Hungarian violinist born in 1893, who in his prodigy days was one of the concerto’s earliest champions.

Most of the famous violin concertos have been written for others to play. Sibelius wrote his for a kind of ghostly self. He was a failed violinist. He had begun lessons late, at fourteen, but then “the violin took me by storm, and for the next ten years it was my dearest wish, my overriding ambition, to become a great virtuoso.” In fact, aside from the double handicap of his late start and the provincial level of even the best teaching available in Finland, he had neither the physical coordination nor the temperament for such a career. In 1890–91, when he was in Vienna studying composition with Robert Fuchs and Karl Goldmark, he played in the conservatory orchestra (its intonation gave him headaches), and on January 9, 1891, he auditioned for the Philharmonic. “When he got back to his room,” we read in Erik Tawaststjerna’s biography, “Sibelius broke down and wept. Afterwards he sat at the piano and began to practice scales.” With that he gave up, though a diary entry in 1915 records a dream of being twelve and a virtuoso. His Violin Concerto is, in any event, imbued both with his feeling for the instrument and the pain of his farewell to his “dearest wish” and “overriding ambition.”

The two violin concertos that most imaginatively explore the structural and expressive potential of cadenzas are Elgar’s and Schoenberg’s. Without intending anything as dramatic or fantastical, Sibelius assigns a role of unprecedented importance to his first-movement cadenza, which in fact takes the place and function of the development section. The original 1903-04 version has two large cadenzas in the first movement, the familiar one that survives and another, near the end, that is full of echoes of the solo Bach pieces to which Sibelius never advanced.

What leads up to that big cadenza is a sequence of ideas that begins with the sensitive, dreamy melody that introduces the voice of the soloist. This leads to what we might call a mini-cadenza, starting with a flurry of sixteenth-notes marked veloce. From this solo passage there emerges a declamatory statement upon which Sibelius’s mark is ineluctable, an impassioned, super-violinistic recitation in sixths and octaves. What follows is a long tutti that slowly subsides from furious march music to wistful pastoral to darkness. It is out of this darkness that the development/cadenza erupts, an occasion for sovereign virtuosity, brilliantly, fancifully, and economically composed.

Whether comparing his own concerto with Brahms’s, which he heard in Berlin in January 1905, or, many years later, with the Prokofiev D major, Sibelius set store by having composed a soloistic concerto rather than a symphonic one. It seems an odd point for him to be so stubborn about it for so long. True, there is none of the close-knit dialogue characteristic of the great concertos of
Brahms, Beethoven, or Mozart (the Mozart of the piano concertos, not the early, lovely, and quite simply composed violin concertos). Sibelius opposes rather than meshes solo and orchestra or casts the orchestra as accompanist. But while it is true that the Sibelius is one of the really smashing virtuoso concertos, it would be a mistake to associate it with the merely virtuosic tradition represented by the concertos of, say, Tchaikovsky, Bruch, and perhaps even the elegant Mendelssohn, to say nothing of Paganini, Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, and others of that ilk. Sibelius's first movement, with its daring sequence of disparate ideas, its quest for the unity behind them, its bold substitute for a conventional development, its recapitulation that continues to explore, rearrange, and develop, its wedding of violinistic brilliance to compositional purposes, is one that bears the unmistakable stamp of the symphonist—perhaps the greatest symphonist after Brahms.

The second and third movements proceed from a lesser level of structural ambition, which does not mean, however, that the Adagio is anything other than one of the most moving pages Sibelius ever achieved. Between its introductory measures and main theme there is a fascinating disparity. Clarinets and oboes in pairs suggest an idea of rather tentative tone, one also in which something survives of Sibelius's early passion for Wagner. This is a gentle beginning, leading to the entry of the solo violin with a melody of vast breadth. *Sonoro ed espressivo*, it speaks in tones we know well and that touch us deeply. The world and the gestures evoked are the world and the gestures of Beethoven, particularly those of the Cavatina in the B-flat major Quartet, Opus 130. Sibelius never found, perhaps never sought, such a melody again: This, too, is farewell. Very lovely, later in the movement, is the sonorous fantasy that accompanies the melody (now in clarinet and bassoon) with scales, all *pianissimo*, broken octaves moving up in the violin, and with a delicate rain of slowly descending scales in flutes and soft strings.

“Evidently a polonaise for polar bears,” said Donald Francis Tovey of the finale—a remark it seems no program note writer can resist quoting. The charmingly aggressive main theme was an old one, going back to a string quartet from 1890. The enlivening accompaniment in the timpani against the figure in the strings is one of the fruits of revision. As the movement goes on, the rhythm becomes more and more giddily inventive, especially in the matter of the recklessly across-the-beat bravura embellishment the soloist fires across the themes. It builds to a drama that reminds us how much Sibelius enjoyed Dvořák's D minor Symphony when he heard Hans von Bülow conduct it in Berlin in 1890, to end in utmost and syncopated brilliance.

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**Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

**Variations on an Original Theme for Orchestra (“Enigma”), Op. 36**

Following the initial statement of the theme (*Andante*), the *dramatis personae* appear in the following order:

I (*L'istesso tempo —"C.A.E."). The initials identify the composer's wife, Caroline Alice Elgar

II (*Allegro —"H.D.S.-P."). Hew David Steuart-Powell, an amateur pianist

III (*Allegretto —"R.B.T."). Richard Baxter Townshend, a popular author who enjoyed mimicry and whose voice rose in pitch during excited performances

IV (*Allegro di molto —"W.M.B."). William Meath Baker, a country squire, barking orders to his guests and making a brusque exit

V (*Moderato —"R.P.A."). Matthew Arnold's son Richard, good-natured but given to day-dreaming

VI (*Andantino —"Ysobel"). Miss Isabel Fitton, an amateur violist who always had trouble crossing from one string to another

VII (*Presto —"Troyte"). Arthur Troyte Griffith, an architect, persistently unsuccessful in his attempts at playing the piano

VIII (*Allegretto —"W.N."). This variations is actually not so much a portrait of Miss Winifred Norbury, a music-lover and nonstop talker, as an evocation of her splendid house, the scene of numerous performances and gatherings of musicians.

IX (*Moderato —"Nimrod"). A reference to the slow movement of the *Pathétique* Sonata in the opening of this variation represents Elgar and his closest friend, the aforementioned August Jaeger (whose surname, the German word for “hunter,” is clearly hinted at in the heading of this variation), engaged in a discussion of Beethoven.

X (*Intermezzo —"Dorabella"). Dora Penney (Mrs. Richard Powell, daughter of the Rector of Wolverhampton) was a vivacious young woman whose curious speech pattern Elgar tried to imitate here. His remark to her that she of all people ought to have guessed the identity of his theme has been cited in support of the “Rule Britannia” possibility, since the figure of Britannia appeared on the old British penny.
XI (Allegro di molto —"G.R.S."). George Robertson Sinclair was the organist of Hereford Cathedral; his bulldog Dan is heard barking as he jumps into the River Wye to fetch a stick.

XII (Andante —"B.G.N.") Basil G. Nevinson, an amateur cellist who played trios with Elgar and H.D.S.-P.

XIII (Moderato —***-Romanza). Lady Elgar is said to have inserted the asterisks, presumably to cloak the identity of Lady Mary Lygon, who had sailed for Australia at about the time Elgar began composing the Variations; the citation of Mendelssohn’s overture Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage was thought to allude to her ocean trip. The possibility was raised, however, that the allusion may have been to Helen Weaver, to whom Elgar had been engaged in 1883-84 and who also sailed to Australia, but in this case as an emigrant rather than a visitor. It now seems most likely that the unidentified subject was actually Alice Stuart-Wortley, a daughter of the English painter Sir John Everett Millais. Elgar had a close relationship with her for some 35 years; she was the secret dedicatee of his Violin Concerto in 1910, and probably of his Second Symphony as well.

XIV (Finale: Allegro —"E.D.U."). A self-portrait, of which Elgar (called “Edoo) by his wife) noted: “Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer’s musical future, this variation is merely intended to show what E.D.U. intended to do. References are made to two great influences upon the life of the composer: C.A.E. and Nimrod. The whole work is summed up in the triumphant broad presentation of the theme in the major.”

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UNLV SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Taras Krysa, Music Director

First Violins
Christina Riegert
Sandro Lalu
Edward Mendiola
Matthew Tsai
Tracy Bu

Second Violins
Michael Burkhardt
Amanda Gentile
Belinda Martinez
Robert Hunt
Anna Childs
Marla Huizar
Stefanie Martin
Megan Hermansen

Violas
Rahmaan Phillip
Youngmee Merrick
Joe Cha
John Pollock

Cello
Eddie Yue
David Warner
Anthony Rodriguez
Courtney Waldron
Adrian Smallwood
Bradley Taylor
Jeremy Russo
Dominique Jackson
Robert Chavez
Cynthia Javier

Basses
Blake Riley
Zuriel Santoyo
Mykah Krason

Flutes
Emilee Wong
Asuka Kawashima
Kristen Mosca

Oboes
Alex Hayashi
Matt Guschl
Chris Fujiwara

Clarinets
Kanade Oi
Tallyn Wessner
Isaiah Pickney

Bassoons
Kim Chai
Emily Grady
Brandon Durham

French Horns
Fred Stone
Chris Kase
Erin Paul
Kyle Tolstyka
Jordan Rush

Trumpets
Allison McSwain
Kendall Demavivas
Kyle Overlay

Trombones
Sara Geiger
Noe Otani
Saxon Lewis

Tuba
Garrison Gilham

Timpani
Chris Bernabe

Percussion
Kyle Bissantz
Bronson Purdy
Corene Peltier