

Total performance time: approximately 130', including an interval of 20 minutes

Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra

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Liudmyla Monastyrska soprano

Anna Fedorova piano

Keri-Lynn Wilson conductor

Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937)

Symphony No.7 (2003) 18'

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor, Op.21 (1829) 32'

i. Maestoso

ii. Larghetto

iii. Allegro vivace

INTERVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Abscheulicher! Wo eilst du hin?, from Fidelio, Op.72 (1805) 8'

Text: Joseph Sonnleithner (1766–1835). Surtitled.

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Symphony No.9 in E minor 'From the New World', Op.95 (1893) 42'

i. Adagio – Allegro molto

ii. Largo

iii. Scherzo: Molto vivace – Poco sostenuto

iv. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Valentin Silvestrov is one of the most significant Ukrainian voices of the 20th and 21st centuries; he has recently written several choral works to show solidarity with his fellow Ukrainians during the present war. Initially self-taught, at the age of 15 Silvestrov began his musical studies privately and at the Stetsenko Adults' Evening Music School. In 1955 he graduated with a Gold Medal; meanwhile he was training to be a civil engineer at the Kyiv Institute of Construction Engineering. Silvestrov pursued further musical studies at the Kyiv Conservatory between 1958 and 1964. His early style combined elements of diatonic and chromatic writing with hints of atonality, and as his language matured he started to explore the interplay between 'cultural' (precisely notated) and 'mysterious' (improvisatory) procedures. Hugely admired by Alfred Schnittke and Arvo Pärt among others, Silvestrov was at the forefront of the Soviet *avant-garde*; but he is also a devoted Mahlerian, and the single-movement Symphony No.7 weaves references to Mahler's music into a work that includes a tense introduction, a central piano cadenza, and contemplative episodes. At the symphony's end the music gradually evaporates into the ether, reflecting Silvestrov's philosophy that: 'Music should be so transparent that one can see the bottom and that poetry shimmers through this transparency'.

Polish composer **Frédéric Chopin** wrote his Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor before the Piano Concerto No.1; their assigned numbers reflect the order in which they were published. Chopin struggled to complete his first concerto, which he wrote during 1829 and 1830 and which was keenly anticipated. One article read: 'Mr Chopin's works unquestionably bear the stamp of genius ... among them is said to be a concerto in F minor, and it is hoped that he will not delay any longer in confirming our conviction that Poland too can produce great talent'.

Chopin was eventually ready to perform the finished work at Warsaw's National Theatre in March 1830. The reviews were fulsome; one critic argued that: 'The creative spirit of the young composer has taken the path of genius ... I felt that in the originality of his thought I could glimpse the profundity of Beethoven'. The audience seemed less ecstatic, from Chopin's perspective: 'The first Allegro is accessible only to a few', he wrote to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski. 'There were some bravos, but I think only because they were puzzled – What is this? – and had to pose as connoisseurs!' The slow movement and finale 'had more effect; one heard some spontaneous shouts'. After a dramatic opening movement comes an exquisite, nocturnal Larghetto thought to have been inspired by Chopin's feelings for soprano Konstancja Gładkowska. The lively final rondo is characterized by dazzling pianism and remarkable orchestration (for which Chopin may have been helped by his friends Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński and Tomasz Nidecki), including 'col legno' strings (using the wood of the bow), and the arresting horn flourish that ushers in the coda.

Fidelio is the only opera by **Ludwig van Beethoven**, and follows the heroine Leonore as she dresses as a man, 'Fidelio', in order to rescue her husband Florestan,

a political prisoner. The *Fidelio* Overture is more frequently performed than the opera itself (and even this success was hard won; Beethoven produced three *Leonore* overtures before coming up with the lighter piece performed today). It is almost impossible in the wake of Putin's invasion of Ukraine not to hear in Leonore's recitative and aria 'Abscheulicher! Wo eilst du hin?' and 'Komm, Hoffnung' ('Monster! Where do you go so quickly?' and 'Come, hope') as embodying both defiance in the face of persecution, and steadfast, confident hope that justice will be done and peace restored.

The Symphony No.9 in E minor, 'From the New World', by **Antonín Dvořák** is also particularly relevant in the context of Ukraine's current circumstances and the many stories of displaced Ukrainians finding sanctuary in other countries. As a Czech man in America, Dvořák knew what it was to be an immigrant embraced into a new culture. Once there, he absorbed and paid tribute to the music of marginalized people including African and Native Americans: 'I am now satisfied that the future music of America must be founded on what are called the Negro melodies. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are America.' Dvořák left his beloved Bohemia behind having been persuaded by patroness of the arts Jeannette Thurber to become director of the National Conservatory of Music, which she had recently founded in New York. 'The Americans are expecting great things of me', Dvořák wrote soon after he arrived. 'Apparently I am to show them the path to the promised land and the kingdom of a new, independent art; in short, to create a national music!' These high expectations seem to have been met by the Symphony No.9, which was so well received at its Carnegie Hall premiere that *The Herald* reported 'a large audience of usually tranquil Americans enthusiastic to the point of frenzy. The work appealed to their sense of the aesthetically beautiful by its wealth of tender, pathetic, fiery melody; by its rich harmonic clothing, by its delicate, sonorous, gorgeous, ever-varying instrumentation.'

Dvořák had begun by writing the famous slow movement, its cor anglais solo unfurling a folk-like theme that, like the flute melody of the first movement, evokes African American spirituals. He wrote to friends back home in Bohemia: 'It seems to me that the American soil is having a beneficial effect on my mind and I would almost say that you will be able to hear something of this in my new symphony.' Even so, Dvořák insisted that this was still, essentially, Czech music: 'It is only the spirit of Negro and Indian music which I have endeavoured to reproduce in my symphony. I have simply written characteristic themes'. The energetic rhythms of the Scherzo are said to have been inspired by a description of an Indian dance at Hiawatha's wedding, and the finale's introduction has been likened to a steam engine gathering speed – Dvořák loved to watch Chicago express trains thundering by. But he also regularly went down to the docks to watch boats bound for Europe, and the Bohemian elements in this symphony reveal a man who, despite embracing his new surroundings, was longing for home.

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Extract of a message from President Zelensky of Ukraine to accompany the tour of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra

An artistic resistance to the Russian invasion is one of the most important forms of resistance, because the seizure of territories begins with the seizure of people's minds and hearts.

Music can be a powerful weapon against invaders. That is why the initiative of the Metropolitan Opera and the Polish National Opera, which gathered the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, is so important. The orchestra includes the best musicians who perform both in Ukraine and outside of Ukraine.

This summer, the orchestra will have a European and American tour to raise funds to support Ukrainian artists affected by the Russian war.

The concerts will be dedicated to those who are currently fighting against the enemy, who gave their lives for Ukraine, as well as to the innocent victims of this terrible war.

This tour will allow the world to become more familiar with Ukrainian culture, its identity, and consolidate Ukrainian art in the world cultural context.

I would like to thank General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Peter Gelb, and the Director of the Teatr Wielki–Polish National Opera, Waldemar Dabrowski, as well as all the musicians who joined this project. Ukrainian art is the art of being brave in the face of the enemy and winning.

President Volodymyr Zelensky

Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra

Violin 1 Marko Komonko, Iuliia Rubanova, Andrii Chaikovskyi, Olga Sheleshkova, Adrian Bodnar, Alisa Kuznetsova, Mykola Haviuk, Viktor Hlybochanu, Marta Bura, Marta Semchyshyn, Anna Bura, Tetiana Khomenko, Daniil Gonobolin, Iryna Solovei

Violin 2 Nicolai Tsygankov, Viktor Ivanov, Kateryna Boychuk, Ostap Manko, Yuliya Tokach, Marta Kachkovska, Viktor Semchyshyn, Liudvika Ivanova, Olha Malyk, Marta Kolomyiets, Hanna Vikhrova, Mariya Sichko

Viola Andrii Chop, Ustym Zhuk, Yevheniia Vynogradska, Dmytro Khreshchenskyi, Kateryna Suprun, Andrii Tuchapets, Iya Komarova, Hryhorii Zavorodnii, Roksolana Dubova, Lyudmyla Garashchuk

Cello Artem Shmahaylo, Viktor Rekal, Lesya Demkovych, Yevgen Dovbysh, Mariia Mohylevska, Oksana Lytvynenko, Olha Boichuk, Yuliia Bezushkevych

Double Bass Nazarii Stets, Yurii Pryriz, Mykola Shakhov, Ivan Mukha, Viktor Ashmarin, Serhii Dikariev

Flute Ihor Yermak, Inna Vorobets

Oboe Yurii Khvostov, Yevhen Marchuk

Clarinet Oleg Moroz, Vasyl Riabitskyi

Bassoon Mark Kreshchenskyi, Aleksandra Naumov

Contrabassoon Ihor Nechesnyi

French Horn Dmytro Taran, Dmytro Mytchenko, Igor Szeligowski, Oleg Bezushkevych

Trumpet Ostap Popovych, Arsen Khizriev

Trombone Taras Zhelizko, Vasyl Shparkyi, Andriy Shparkyi

Tuba Oleksandr Yushchuk

Timpani Dmytro Ilin

Percussion Yevhen Uliyanov, Sviatoslav Yanchuk

Celesta Khrystyna Boretska

Harp Nataliya Konovalenko

Piano Oksana Gorobiyevska