Eastman School Symphony Orchestra

Mei-Ann Chen,
conductor

Rebecca Bryant Novak,
assistant conductor

Qi Su,
violin

Monday, December 9, 2024
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre
7:30 PM



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

~ PROGRAM ~
Eastman School Symphony Orchestra
Mei-Ann Chen, *conductor*

Overture in C Major (1832) — **Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel** (1805-1847) — 11’

Rebecca Bryant Novak, *conductor*

Violin Concerto No. 5 in D Major, K. 219 (Turkish) (1775) — **W. A. Mozart** (1756-1791) — 31’

I. Allegro aperto
II. Adagio
III. Rondo: Tempo di Minuetto

Qi Su, *violin*

~ INTERMISSION ~

Symphony No. 5 in D Major, Op. 107 (Reformation) (1830) — **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) — 27’

I. Andante - Allegro con fuoco
II. Allegro vivace
III. Andante
IV. Chorale: Andante con moto - Allegro vivace

~ PROGRAM NOTES ~

Overture in C Major

Fanny Mendelssohn wrote her Overture in C Major between 1830 and 1832, around the same time as her brother Felix's Reformation Symphony, also on the program tonight. This overture is her only composition written for orchestra alone. The overture is cheerful, and though it is formally straightforward, it builds in excitement from the beginning. The overture begins with a slow introduction. The first note is an octave G played by two horns, followed by melodic fragments played by the strings, which then lead to a conversation of fragments in both the winds and strings. These fragments then become a constant stream of moving and modulating 8th notes in the strings. After recalling the opening, the music grows more confidently until unfolding with a flute solo. Next, an improvisatory run in the violins provides a smooth transition to the fast main section, bleeding into the exciting first theme, built on a downwards arpeggio and a figure that rises by step. This first theme repeats a whole step lower and jumps into the transition. Similar to many other sonata-form works, the second theme contrasts with the first and is lyrical, with the melody in the violins, and the cellos having wide spaced arpeggios. The short development uses fragments of the first theme and modulates to increasingly distant keys, until landing in F# major. Soon after, horns play a return of the first theme, but this is a fake recap, as a few bars later, we return to the dominant and with a fanfare, Fanny returns to the recap. The recap is more conventional, until the second theme. After the first statement of the second theme, Fanny presents a slower version of the second theme, combining it with fragments of the first theme in the cellos. This begins the coda, which slowly builds using fragments of both themes. Finally, the tempo increases, as the music drives to its joyful conclusion.

- **Immanuel Mykyta-Chomsky**

Violin Concerto No. 5 in D Major, K. 219 (Turkish)

Visitors to the small, sparse museum located in the putative home of the Mozarts in Salzburg will see a glass display case containing the little violin of the young Wolfgang. And it reminds us of the centrality of the violin in Mozart's younger days. His father, Leopold, was the author of the most celebrated tutor for the violin in the eighteenth century. Little Wolfgang was his prize pupil, and his performances on the violin were a mainstay of his celebrity during all those barnstorming tours as a child. A little older, and back home in Salzburg, Mozart led the little court orchestra as a virtuoso concertmaster. In 1775, at the age of nineteen, Mozart composed all five of his violin concertos, for own use, of course. Though composed rather quickly in succession, each concerto shows growing mastery of the genre, culminating in the important A Major concerto. In many respects it is his swansong for the violin, for after leaving Salzburg for Vienna a few years later, he never again played the violin in any significant situations, preferring to play the viola in private music making with his friends.

The A Major concerto is perhaps the best violin concerto of the latter half of the eighteen century, and probably the most frequently played violin concerto. It certainly merits the attention, for this is a work that marks Mozart's emerging mature style in every way. In the first movement Mozart's imagination comes to the fore immediately, for upon the entrance of the soloist, the whole atmosphere of the movement changes for a bit, as the bustling tempo of the orchestra is replaced by a brief slow passage of considerable gravitas for the soloist. The faster tempo resumes, but in the middle of the movement, we encounter darkly colored excursions in minor keys and somber emotion. This is rather typical of music from this period in Mozart's life, and some listeners may remember similar passages in his so-called "Little G Minor" symphony from the same period. The middle movement is predictably a lyrical one, simply of exquisite beauty.

It is the last movement that gives the concerto its moniker, and starts out as a fairly conventional dance (it's a minuet) in a form in which the main idea alternates with other contrasting ideas. But, it is in the contrasting section that occurs just before the last statement of our familiar main theme that Mozart "drops the bomb." For this surprise he employs a kind of "Turkish" march in A minor—a style familiar to most from his "Rondo alla Turca" in his A major piano sonata. It's different in every way: tempo, meter, mood, culture—you name it. So-called "Turkish" music was all the rage then in Vienna, owing to the threat to the city by the Turks for centuries (museums in the city, today, are full of artifacts from the wars). All of the major composers wrote pieces with what the Viennese thought of as Turkish qualities: cymbals, drums, triangles, piccolo, thumping bass lines, etc. You will remember Beethoven's use of the conceit in the last movement of his Ninth Symphony. Well, it comes as a complete surprise, here, rather like an uninvited drunken guest at the party, and it's all great fun. The basses enhance the effect of tomfoolery by striking the strings with the wooden part of their bows. Just when things seem out of control, the graceful minuet returns and all's put right. Surprising, the movement ends quietly, almost with a sigh, not apologetically, but definitely rather like conciliatory relief.

- **Wm. E. Runyan**

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Symphony No. 5 in D Major, Op. 107 (Reformation)

Felix Mendelssohn composed his "Reformation" Symphony between 1829-1830. Even though this Symphony is numbered 5th, it was composed before the more popular "Scottish" (No. 3) and "Italian" (No. 4). However it was not published until 1868, more than 20 years after Mendelssohn's death. It was composed as a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, which reformed the Lutheran church and was a major document of the Protestant movement. In this symphony, Mendelssohn pictures the struggles and triumph of the Reformation. His sister Fanny gave the symphony the name it is known by today. In addition to all of these religious connotations behind the symphony, Mendelssohn, always inspired by Bach, included moments of complicated counterpoint as well as multiple fugues.

The first movement starts with a slow introduction, beginning with a calm prayer-like theme, which references Mozart's Jupiter Symphony in the low strings, bassoons, and flutes, with beautiful counterpoint and suspensions. This leads to a chorale played by all winds, before the prayer resumes. The chorale starts to gain in intensity and eventually, leads to forceful interjections in the winds. These chant-like declarations grow more and more insistent, until they reach a climax, but the strings respond twice with a quiet, six note rising figure, known as the "Dresden Amen," which in this piece, seems like a prayer for peace. However, the rest of the first movement is fast and dramatic and full of struggle, and it never seems to be able to rest. After the whole orchestra comes crashing down, we hear the "Dresden Amen" again, and the shortened recapitulation of the movement follows, beginning hushed, but nervous, before the coda starts to build in intensity with a fanfare, referencing back to the end of the first movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. The movement ends in D minor with a dark, dramatic plagal cadence.

Instead of the expected slow movement as the second movement, Mendelssohn switches the two, and has a light and upbeat dance-like scherzo as the second movement. The middle section features the oboes in a lyrical song-like melody. The first section returns again and the 2nd movement ends sweetly. The short but aching 3rd movement is the slow movement of the symphony, and is similar to one of Mendelssohn's many "Songs without Words," with a singable melody over a moving accompaniment. The third movement connects without a break to the final movement.

The 4th movement begins with a quotation of the Martin Luther chorale "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" in the winds. This chorale grows in intensity, and enters a driving section with fragments of the chorale thrown around the orchestra. Finally this all leads to the joyful main section of the final movement, picturing the triumph over the struggles. During this movement Mendelssohn throws in fragments of the Martin Luther chorale throughout, until it is restated in its entirety by the winds over a continuing string fugue. The movement continues to grow in energy, until finally the piece ends with one more statement of the chorale played by the entire orchestra, and ending on a warm and joyful D Major chord.

- **Immanuel Mykyta-Chomsky**

~ MEET THE ARTISTS ~

Bold, passionate and innovative, Taiwanese American conductor **Mei-Ann Chen** is renowned as one of the most versatile and dynamic conductors on the podium today, praised for the energy and enthusiasm with which she infuses orchestras and performances. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, her contract has been unanimously extended through the end of the 2028-2029 season. Named Artistic Advisor of Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA) in March 2024, Chen has been Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation - Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since fall 2021, following two seasons as the orchestra's first-ever Principal Guest Conductor, making her the first female Asian conductor to hold this position with an Austrian orchestra. She has served as the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO since 2019, and since 2022, as an Artistic Partner with Northwest Sinfonietta (WA). In the recording field, she has made recordings for Cedille Records, Innova Records, and Naxos. A passionate advocate for music education, Ms. Chen dedicates significant time in mentoring young conductors through various programs, including the Chicago Sinfonietta Freeman Conducting Fellowship program and the Taki Alsop Fellowship, and conducts ensembles at important educational institutions, both nationally and abroad. Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and a creative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, she has appeared with distinguished orchestras throughout the Americas, Europe, Taiwan, The United Kingdom, and Scandinavia, and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide (over 150 orchestras to date).

Qi Su, an award-winning violinist, has earned acclaim as a soloist, chamber musician, and concertmaster. A first-prize winner of the Hong Kong International Violin Competition and Shlomo Mintz International Violin Competition, Qi has performed extensively across China, the U.S., Japan, and Germany, captivating audiences with his artistry and virtuosity.

As a soloist, he has premiered with prestigious orchestras such as the Central Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra and the China Youth Symphony Orchestra. His chamber music achievements include a Best Chamber Music Album Award from China Records, showcasing his collaborative depth, refined technique, and interpretive insight.

Qi's leadership as concertmaster has included the China Youth Symphony Orchestra and Beijing Youth Orchestra, collaborating with world-renowned conductors like Gustavo Dudamel and Lü Jia. In 2024, he delivered a celebrated performance at Carnegie Hall during World Orchestra Week, earning high praise from Clive Gillinson, Executive and Artistic Director of Carnegie Hall.

Qi's academic journey began at the Middle School of Central Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Sheng Zhifa, Professor Tong Weidong, and Professor Xie Nan. Currently he is an exchange student at the Eastman School of Music under Professor David Bowlin. He performs on a 1925 Oddone Violin, generously loaned by Eastman School of Music, further refining his artistry and exploring new musical horizons

~ PERSONNEL ~

Eastman School Symphony Orchestra

Violin I
Hannah Lee,
concertmaster
Kellen Mikesell
Miyako Cornelius
Sanne Zwikker
Lauren Edwards
Kaitlyn Lien
Claire Chien
Mark Hung
Sedona Kmen
Leena Hocutt Duarte
Olivia Lieto
Alex Dimaras
Max Chu

Violin II
Karen Wang,
principal
Sofia Grimes
Ellie Dixon
Emily Bellman
Chloe Hyun
Yixin Dai
Leo Yen
Eric Wang
Tiara Lai
Harry Yang
Lydia McConkie
Yinghao Chang

Viola
Vivienne Lucier,
principal
Jordan Fletcher
Israel Anselme
Abigail Benzinger
Keon Sagara
Thomas Ahl
Kyla Bozkaya
Mia Gensure
Elliot Tyler
Cristian Yohannes

Violoncello
Felix Harkness,
principal
Ariun-enerel Gantumur
Pyotr Alvarado
QiuWu Wang
Lily Yuan
Audrey Cherwinski
Tyler Brown

Double Bass
Austin Beck,
principal
Annaliese White
Gregory Galand
Izzy Williams
Tristan Wiafe
Zoë Gutierrez

Flute
Haley Gruwell
Tammy Pao
Alison Schultz
Jenny Zhang

Oboe
Torie Ramey
Kate Roberts
Gus Smith

Clarinet
Audrey Bray
Jay Kline

Bassoon
Trey Barrett
Fabrizio Milcent
Alison Pollock

Horn
Andrew Foster
Nick Grey
Diego Solis
John Wellmann
Sam Wood

Trumpet
Emily Lipper
Nati Noriega
Callie Siamof

Trombone
John Robinson
Jonas Ruelas
Sam Streeter

Timpani
Ryan Cozzolino
Liz Morad

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