

Moscow Soloists

Saturday, April 5, 2003, 8 pm
Hertz Hall

Yuri Bashmet, conductor and viola

PROGRAM

- Johann Sebastian Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 6
in B-flat major, BWV 1051
Allegro
Adagio ma non tanto
Allegro
- Benjamin Britten Lachrymae, Reflections on a Song of Dowland,
for Viola and String Orchestra, Op. 48a
- Toru Takemitsu Three Film Score Excerpts
"Music of Training and Rest" from José Torres
"Funeral Music" from Black Rain
"Waltz" from The Face of Another

INTERMISSION

- Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky Souvenir de Florence in D major, Op. 70
Allegro con spirito
Adagio cantabile e con moto –
Moderato – Tempo I
Allegro moderato
Allegro vivace
Arranged for string orchestra

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Brandenburg Concerto No. 6
in B-flat major, BWV 1051

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Brandenburg, in Bach's day, was a political and military powerhouse. It had been part of the Holy Roman Empire since the mid-12th century, and its ruler—the Markgraf, or Margrave—was charged with defending and extending the

northern imperial border (“mark,” or “marche” in Old English and Old French), in return for which he was allowed to be an Elector of the Emperor. The house of Hohenzollern acquired the margraviate of Brandenburg in 1415, and the family embraced the Reformation a century later with such authority that they came to be regarded as the leaders of German Protestantism; Potsdam was chosen as the site of the electoral court in the 17th century. Extensive territorial acquisitions under Frederick William, the “Great Elector,” before his death in 1688, allowed his son Frederick III to secure the title and the rule of Brandenburg’s northern neighbor, Prussia, with its rich (and nearby) capital city of Berlin; he became King Frederick I of Prussia in 1701. Frederick, a cultured man and a generous patron, founded academies of sciences and arts in Berlin, and built the magnificent palace Charlottenburg for his wife, Sophie Charlotte, which became one of the most important musical centers in early-18th-century Germany. When Frederick William I succeeded his father in 1713, however, he turned the court’s focus from music to militarism, and dismissed most of the excellent musicians that his father had assembled; several of them found employment at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig, where a young prince was just starting to indulge his taste and talents for music. Frederick William did, however, allow his uncle, Christian Ludwig, younger brother of the late King Frederick and possessor of the now-lesser title of Margrave of Brandenburg, to remain at the palace and retain his own musical establishment.

Johann Sebastian Bach met Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, in 1719, during his tenure as music director at the court of Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, the young prince who had recently signed up some of the musicians fired by Frederick William I. Bach worked at Anhalt-Cöthen from 1717 to 1723, and he and Leopold seem to have gotten along splendidly. The Prince enjoyed travel, fine art, and, above all, music, and he respected and encouraged Bach in his work, even occasionally participating in the court concerts as violinist, gambist, or harpsichordist. Provided by Leopold with an excellent set of instruments and a group of fine players (and the second-highest salary of any of his court employees), Bach enjoyed a fruitful period at Cöthen—many of his greatest works for keyboard, chamber ensembles, and orchestra date from those years.

Early in 1719, Leopold sent Bach to Berlin to finalize arrangements for the purchase of a new harpsichord, a large, two-manual model made by Michael Mietke, instrument-builder to the royal court. While in Berlin, Bach played for Christian Ludwig, who was so taken with his music that he asked Bach to send some of his compositions for his library. Bach lost an infant son a few months later, however, and in 1720, his wife died and he rejected an offer to become organist at the Jacobkirche in Hamburg, so it was more than two years before he fulfilled Brandenburg’s request. By 1721, however, Leopold had become engaged to marry a woman who looked askance at his huge expenditures for musical entertainment. Bach seems to have realized that when she moved in, he would probably be moved out, so he began casting about for a more secure position. He remembered the interest the Margrave Brandenburg had shown in his music, and thought it a good time to approach him again, so he picked six of the finest concertos he had written at Cöthen, copied them out meticulously, had them bound into a sumptuous volume (at no little cost), and sent them to Christian Ludwig in March 1721 with a flowery dedication in French—but to no avail. No job materialized at Brandenburg, and in 1723, Bach moved to Leipzig’s Thomaskirche, where he remained for the rest of his life. It is possible that the Margrave never heard any of these magnificent works that immortalized his name, since records indicate that his modest Kapelle might not have been able to negotiate their difficulties and instrumental requirements. The concertos apparently lay untouched in his library until he died 13 years after Bach had presented them to him, when they were inventoried at a value of four groschen each—only a few cents. Fortunately they were preserved by the noted theorist and pedagogue Johann Philipp Kirnberger, a pupil of Bach, and came eventually into the collection of the Royal Library in Berlin. They were brought to light during the 19th-century Bach revival, published in 1850, and have since come to be recognized as the supreme examples of Baroque instrumental music.

The Concerto No. 6 is in the three movements traditional for the form. The opening Allegro, athletic and dance-like at the same time, brings the violas to the fore with strict canonic writing above the steady accompaniment, and occasional comments, of the lower instruments. Bach’s pupil J.P. Kirnberger, who took an important role in preserving the Brandenburg Concertos, cited the opening measures of this movement in his composition tutor, *Kunst des reinen Satzes*, as the finest

example of strict counterpoint known to him. The second movement is one of Bach's richest long-limbed, contrapuntally bedecked melodic flights, informed with an intensity of emotion that borders on the operatic. The finale returns the buoyant mood and dancing rhythmic figurations of the opening movement.

Lachrymae, Reflections on a
Song of Dowland, for Viola
and String Orchestra, Op. 48a
Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

John Dowland was the greatest lutenist of his era and one of the outstanding composers of Elizabethan England. He was born in 1563, probably in London, but the earliest reliable biographical records place him in Paris as a teenage retainer to Sir Henry Cobham, the English ambassador, around 1580. Dowland was in London by the mid-1580s, when he was studying at Christ Church, Oxford, but, failing to secure a post as court lutenist, went back to the Continent, where he found extravagantly remunerated work at Wolfenbüttel and Cassel before traveling to Italy. In Rome, Dowland, a devout Catholic, fell in with some papists who were plotting the overthrow of the Protestant English monarchy. Horrified at the threat to his native land, he recanted his faith, offered his services as spy to Sir Robert Cecil, British Secretary of State (he was refused), and went home in 1597. He issued his First Book of Ayres for solo voice and lute in that year, but again failed to obtain an appointment to the court, and found a position at the court of Christian IV in Denmark in 1598. He published his Second Book of Ayres in 1600, and returned to London again in 1603. He stayed in England for a year, during which time he issued his remarkable *Lachrymae* for viols and lute, returned to Elsinore briefly, and then settled in London for good in 1606. After a period of unsettled employment, he was finally appointed as a court musician by King James in 1612, and lived out the remaining 14 years of his life in honor and financial stability. He was succeeded as lutenist at court by his son, Robert. Dowland is remembered as one of the finest composers for lute and voice in an era resplendent with musical genius. His three Books of Ayres (the third was published in 1603) were among the most popular works of their kind, and his *Lachrymae* ("Tears") of 1604–21 movements in various dance idioms, including seven pavane-variations on his touching song "Flow, My Tears"—is one of the grandest instrumental conceptions of the late Renaissance. His music is mostly sad or nostalgic in expression, a reflection of the man himself, who adopted as his motto, *semper Dowland, semper dolens*—"forever Dowland, forever grieving."

In 1950, Benjamin Britten took as the subject for a work for viola and piano a deeply felt song from Dowland's Second Book of Ayres, "If My Complaints Could Passions Move" (also known in an instrumental version as "Captaine Piper's Galliard"). The composition, which Britten called *Lachrymae* after Dowland's variation cycle, was written for violist William Primrose and premiered by him and the composer at the Aldeburgh Festival on June 20, 1950. Britten rescored his *Lachrymae* for string orchestra in February 1976 to fulfill a long-standing request from violist Cecil Aronowitz; it was one of the last projects that he completed before his death on December 4, 1976. Britten subtitled his *Lachrymae* "Reflections on a Song of Dowland" to indicate that the work occupies a stylistic niche somewhere between true formal variations and symphonic motivic development. Dowland's theme, which consists of three distinct phrases, is implied rather than stated completely in the slow opening section—the second phrase is given clearly in the low notes of the accompaniment, but only the general shape and the most distinctive melodic turns of the first and third phrases are indicated. Ten variations in widely contrasting styles, based only on the opening phrase of Dowland's song, follow; the viola supplements this material in the sixth variation with the closing lines of the song "Flow, My Tears," the subject of Dowland's original *Lachrymae*. It is only in the coda, where the texture clears and the harmony reverts to unadulterated tonality, that Dowland's "If My Complaints" is played in full by the viola. It is one of the most eloquent and moving moments in 20th-century English music.

Three Film Score Excerpts
Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996)

Japanese in birth and sensibility, and Western in his compositional techniques and instrumental sonorities, Toru Takemitsu belied Kipling's old adage that East and West would never meet by creating music that sings of universal human experience. Takemitsu sought in his many works to transmute dreams, water, trees, gardens, sky, birds, wind, the flickering images of film, the quiverings of the human heart, the resonance of a read word into patterns of sounds and silence that would penetrate to the quiet, inner place where the spirit dwells. "When one life calls out to another," he wrote, "sounds are born. Silence bordered with a necklace of sounds, which become scales. Little by little, the strands of scales are bundled into a sheath of light, rising into the sky, or gushing out, splashing, like the body of a river finding liberation as it reaches the sea. They fill the universe: enormous, soundless sounds." Though Takemitsu's music is meticulously structured and unified through the conventional European practice of transformation of thematic motives, it gives the feeling of spontaneity and freedom and space, of being released from the earth, of being at once substantial and equivocal. He was preoccupied with timbre and texture rather than with traditional rhythmic and harmonic organization, with the aural point hovering between sound and silence, with discovering music that seems to issue from the very air and earth, with giving, he said, "a proper meaning to the 'streams of sounds' that penetrate the world which surrounds us." His creative voice—quiet/disturbing, joyous/sad, universal/personal—is unique in modern music, a manifestation of a world brought closer together by diversity, and expanded by individuality.

Takemitsu devoted more of his career to films than any other classical composer of comparable stature, writing 93 scores between 1956 and his death 40 years later. He was called upon by some of Japan's most respected directors—Kurosawa, Teshigahara, Imamura, Shinoda, Oshima—to complement their images and stories with evocative music, and he collaborated closely with them from a film's first unedited rushes to develop an appropriate sound world for each project. His music for films was honored with awards from the Mainichi Music Festival (for *Seppuku*, 1962) and the Los Angeles Film Critics (Ran, 1987).

Takemitsu proved to be a remarkable musical chameleon in his film music, easily adopting styles precisely suited to the movie's setting, mood, and characters. Hiroshi Teshigahara's *José Torres* (1959), a boxing documentary filmed in the gyms and streets of New York City, called from Takemitsu a cool, jazzy score fitted to the movie's gritty urban setting. *Black Rain* (1989), directed by Shohei Imamura, is the wrenching story of a village family whose bodies and lives are poisoned by the nuclear fallout of the Hiroshima atomic bomb. A feeling of guilt over Japan's role in World War II was a strong emotion in Takemitsu's early adult years, and he captured in his score for *Black Rain* both the pain of the afflicted villagers and the subtle, internalized, and, according to Imamura, unjustified shame addressed in this film. Hiroshi Teshigahara's *The Face of Another* (1966) is a surreal tale in which a scientist is terribly scarred in a laboratory fire. A doctor fits him with a life-like new face, and the scientist takes on another identity with his changed appearance. He tests out both by trying to seduce his own wife. For a scene in a beer hall, Takemitsu provided a voluptuous waltz with a caustic Kurt Weill-like edge.

Souvenir de Florence in D major, Op. 70

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky's soul was seldom at rest in the years following his marital disaster in 1877, and he sought distraction in frequent travel abroad; Paris and Italy were his favorite destinations. In January 1890, he settled in Florence, and spent the next three months in that beautiful city working on his latest operatic venture, *Pique Dame* ("The Queen of Spades"). He took long walks along the Arno, marveled that spring flowers sprouted in February, and savored the food. "I have found here all I need for satisfactory work," he wrote to his brother Modeste. After a brief stay in Rome, he arrived back in Russia on May 1st, noting five days later to a friend that after finishing *Pique Dame*, "I want to make sketches for a sextet for strings." The orchestration of the opera was completed by early the next month, and on June 12th, he told Modeste that he was "starting the string sextet tomorrow."

For the sextet, Tchaikovsky apparently used some sketches that he had made for a similar composition three years earlier, but almost immediately admitted to his brother running into trouble with the new piece: "I started working on it the day before yesterday, and am writing under great strain, the difficulty being not necessarily a lack of ideas, but the new format. Six independent

voices are needed, and, moreover, they have to be homogeneous. This is very difficult.” He persevered, however, and by the end of the month he had completed the first draft. He began the orchestration of the score on July 13th in anticipation of its performance the next month in St. Petersburg, but that concert never materialized, and he did not hear the work until it was played for him by some friends in his St. Petersburg apartment in November. As with other of his works, his initial pleasure with the piece evaporated after hearing it. He began a revision early in 1891, but had to put it aside for his tour to the United States in April and May, and then for the composition and production of *Nutcracker* and the opera *Iolanthe*; the new version was not finished until January 1892 in Paris. It was at that time that Tchaikovsky, without further explanation, appended the phrase “Souvenir de Florence” to its title. Jurgenson published the score and parts in June, and the *Souvenir de Florence* was given its public premiere, with good success, in St. Petersburg on December 7, 1892 by an ensemble including the famous violinist Leopold Auer.

In their biography of Tchaikovsky, Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson wrote, “The *Souvenir de Florence* is not great music but it is very pleasant and extremely cleverly constructed. It is above all suffused with an atmosphere not often associated with this composer, of a calm geniality.” It is probably this quality that prompted Tchaikovsky, who often wrote in his letters of the “heavenly” Italian climate, to add the sobriquet to the work’s original title. The music itself is decidedly Russian in mood and melody, with only a certain lightness of spirit in the first two movements showing any possible Italianate traits. Indeed, if anything, the work exhibits a strong German influence in the richness of its string sonorities and thematic development, which frequently recall Brahms’ chamber music. The opening movement is a full sonata structure given in the style of a bustling waltz. The following Adagio is disposed in a three-part form whose brief center section is constructed from a delightful, fluttering rhythmic figuration. The two closing movements are based on folk-like themes, the first a sad song that is the subject of considerable elaboration as it progresses, the other a bounding Cossack dance.

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The Moscow Soloists, one of the world’s most highly acclaimed chamber ensembles, was founded by Yuri Bashmet in March 1992. Comprised of leading young graduates—all under 30 years old—from the Moscow Conservatory, the orchestra made its debut in May 1992 at the main hall of the Conservatory. Two days later, the ensemble made a highly successful Paris debut at the Salle Pleyel.

Since that time, the Moscow Soloists have performed in many other prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Royal Albert Hall and the Barbican Centre in London, the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris, the Philharmonie in Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. Additionally, tours have taken the orchestra to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Israel, Greece, and Turkey. The group’s festival appearances have included concerts at the BBC Proms, the Evian Festival, the Montreux Music Festival, the Sydney Festival, and the annual “December Nights” Festival in Moscow.

The ensemble has worked with such celebrated soloists as Sviatoslav Richter, Gidon Kremer, Mstislav Rostropovich, Viktor Tretyakov, Maxim Vengerov, Barbara Hendricks, Lynn Harrell, and James Galway. In 1994 the Moscow Soloists recorded the Schnittke “Triple Concerto” for EMI Classics, with Kremer, Rostropovich, and Bashmet as soloists. A 1998 recording for Sony Classical, featuring works of Brahms and Shostakovich, was nominated for a Grammy Award. The Moscow Soloists have also recorded programs for broadcast by Russian television and on many of the world’s major radio networks, including the BBC, Bavarian Radio, Radio France, and the NHK in Japan.

The original Moscow Soloists were founded by Yuri Bashmet in 1986. After several years together, the musicians in the orchestra emigrated from Russia, while Bashmet remained in Moscow and re-established the ensemble with an entirely new group of virtuoso players.

The group’s most recent tour of the United States, in March 2000, included performances at Carnegie Hall in New York and Orchestra Hall in Chicago, as well as stops in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Fort Worth. In June 2001, the ensemble participated in the Festival Casals in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Yuri Bashmet (conductor and viola) is widely recognized as one of the leading string players in the world. He launched his international career in 1976 when he took first prize at the International Viola Competition in Munich, and has since performed in recital and with the foremost orchestras and conductors in nearly every major European and North American music center. In a review of his 1989 recital at London's Wigmore Hall, *The Times* described him as "without doubt, one of the world's greatest living musicians."

Bashmet has appeared with all the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Montreal Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, and the Philharmonia Orchestra. In 1993, the London Symphony presented a four-concert Yuri Bashmet Festival, and in 1998, he was artist-in-residence of the Bath International Festival. Recent highlights include appearances throughout Europe and the United States with Anne-Sophie Mutter playing Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*, and performances with the Deutsche Sinfonie Orchester Berlin and Kent Nagano, the New York Philharmonic and Kurt Masur, and the London Symphony and Sir Colin Davis.

Yuri Bashmet has inspired many composers to write for him. He enjoyed an especially close and productive relationship with Alfred Schnittke, whose *Viola Concerto* was premiered at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam in 1986 and which has become firmly established in the repertoire. Other works written for Bashmet include Georgian composer Giya Kancheli's *Viola Concerto* (premiered at the Berlin Festival); *The Myrrh Bearer* by John Tavener; a concerto by Poul Ruders; and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Viola Concerto*, premiered with the Chicago Symphony in April 1997. In 1998, Bashmet gave the world premiere of Benjamin Britten's recently edited *Double Concerto for Violin and Viola* with Gidon Kremer, and in November 1999, he performed the world premiere of Kancheli's *Styx*, playing the solo viola part written especially for him. Mark-Anthony Turnage has recently completed a new concerto for him, *On Opened Ground*, which was premiered in Cleveland in November 2002.

In a number of major concert halls, including La Scala in Milan and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Bashmet has been the first violist ever to give a solo recital. He appeared on many occasions with Sviatoslav Richter and has performed chamber music with numerous leading artists, including Natalia Gutman, the Borodin Quartet, Gidon Kremer, Viktoria Mullova, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Maxim Vengerov. Highlights of last season saw an acclaimed new trio program with Angelika Kirchsclager and Jean Yves Thibaudet, a residency in Vienna, and five chamber music concerts with Myung-Whun Chung in Korea to celebrate the World Cup championships.

In 1992, Yuri Bashmet formed the Moscow Soloists, which he directs himself and with whom he appears throughout the world. Comprised of musicians nominated by professors at the Moscow Conservatory as the cream of the new generation of string players, the Moscow Soloists have been rapturously received in Moscow, Athens, Amsterdam, Paris, and at the BBC Proms in London, as well as on several tours of the United States.

Yuri Bashmet's many recordings include an arrangement for viola and string orchestra of Brahms' *Clarinet Quintet* and Shostakovich's *Quartet No. 13*, performed with Moscow Soloists (Sony Classical); and Britten's *Double Concerto for Violin and Viola* with Kent Nagano and the Hallé Orchestra (Erato). His most recent release is of the Gubaidulina *Concerto* and Kancheli's *Styx* (Deutsche Grammophon), released in 2002, winner of a Diapason D'Or Award and nominated for a Grammy Award in 2003.