

Winter Concert



Presented by Hart House Orchestra
Henry Janzen, Principal Conductor & Music Director
Matthew Graystone, Guest Conductor

Thurs. Feb. 12, 2026

8 pm

Great Hall

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PROGRAMME

Overture to the Opera Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
The Abduction from the (1756–1791)
Seraglio

Violin Concerto in A minor, op.52 Alexander Glazunov
 I. Moderato (1865-1936)
 II. Andante
 III. Più animato
 IV. Allegro

Frédéric Mercier - Violin

Intermission

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, op. 7 Carl Nielsen
 I. Allegro orgoglioso (1865-1931)
 II. Andante
 III. Allegro comodo – Andante sostenuto – Tempo I
 IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco

ABOUT THE PIECES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Overture to the Opera The Abduction from the Seraglio



Instrumentation: piccolo, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in C, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in C, 2 trumpets in C, timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and strings.

Approximate duration: 6 minutes.

The Abduction from the Seraglio is the opera that established Mozart's reputation as a serious composer in Vienna. It is the first German opera to withstand the test of time, and to become part of the operatic canon.

The genesis of the opera is rather different than the fictionalized version presented in the movie Amadeus, in which Mozart convinces the emperor Joseph II to commission a German opera. The subject of the opera came from Gottlieb Stephanie who was the inspector of the Nationalsingspiel. The Nationalsingspiel was a pet project of the emperor, who had set up the company to perform operas in the German language in order to counteract the popularity of Italian opera in Vienna. Stephanie presented Mozart with a libretto which was the unattributed adaptation of an earlier work by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner. At Mozart's request, it was then heavily revised for dramatic and musical effect, resulting in months of delay to the completion of the work. Bretzner later complained publicly about the misappropriation of his original work.

The first performance the Abduction in July of 1782 met with a very enthusiastic reception. The emperor found the opera too long (although his remark: "Too many notes, dear Mozart" may be apocryphal). Regardless, the opera was a huge success throughout the German speaking world, and it became Mozart's most popular opera during his lifetime, and it soon became a fixture of the operatic repertoire.

The opera refers to the then current practice of Barbary pirates preying on shipping in the western Mediterranean, and taking hostages of both the cargo and people on board. The plot of the opera revolves around the Spaniard Belmonte, who – with the help of his servant Pedrillo who was also taken hostage, attempts to free his beloved Constanze and her English maid Blonde from Pasha Selim's harem. The plot is foiled by the palace overseer Osmin, who gloats about sending the conspirators to the gallows. In the end, however, Pasha Selim generously forgives the fugitives and allows them return to Spain. The Abduction of the Seraglio is written in the Singspiel ("song play") style, which is more akin to operetta or musical theater: in which spoken dialogue, which carries the action, is interspersed with musical numbers. The Singspiel was traditionally light-hearted and populated by stock characters. The dramatic plots were weak, and the musical numbers simple. In the Abduction, however, Mozart goes well beyond the

conventions of the Singspiel:, he fleshes out the characters musically, the orchestration is rich, and the arias are among Mozart's most difficult and spectacular (Konstanze's aria "Marten alle Arten" being the supreme example).

The Abduction joined a myriad of 18 th century, Turkish-inspired works which were very popular with Viennese audiences as a result of the 1683 siege of Vienna, when the city almost fell to the Turks. Mozart made the most of the opportunity to include some "Turkish music" in the opera, which was a Western interpretation of Turkish janissary music (janissaries were the elite infantry in Turkish army). Mozart imitated the sonority of "Turkish" music by enlarging the orchestra to include cymbals, triangles, tambourines, a bass drum, and occasionally, piccolo.

The Overture to The Abduction from the Seraglio is a dashing movement in a Presto (very fast) tempo. There is a slow middle section which anticipates Belmonte's aria that opens Act I. After this short intermezzo, the Presto returns. In the opera, the overture has an open ending that is immediately followed by Belmonte's aria. However, tonight's performance features a concert ending written by Johann Anton André, a contemporary composer of Mozart and music publisher who printed many Mozart first editions.

Alexander Glazunov – Violin Concerto in A minor, op.52



Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in A, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets (E-flat and A), 3 trombones, timpani, percussion (cymbals, glockenspiel, and triangle), harp, strings, and solo violin.

Approximate duration: 20 minutes

Glazunov was a prolific composer who composed over 150 works characterized by an exceptional orchestration technique and a great sense of musical architecture.

However, posterity was not kind to him, with most of his works falling into near oblivion. This is due mainly to the fact that his music was deeply steeped in the Romantic tradition at a time when Romanticism was losing its appeal for reasons that went much deeper than a mere change in taste or fashion.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century artists were grappling with the question of how to respond to the social and political turmoil that culminated in World War I and the following Russian revolution and found the artistic values of the Romantic school increasingly irrelevant. Inevitably, artists started to turn away or rebel, against Romanticism, and to experiment with new languages and forms in response to a quickly changing world. It is, perhaps, the realization that he was about to be swamped by the tides of radical waters that caused Glazunov to stop composing after his Eighth symphony, completed in 1906.

The violin concerto is one of the few compositions by Glazunov that has withstood the test of time. One of the most charming and original works in the violin concerto repertoire, it owes its popularity to the seamless combination of deep lyricism and brilliant virtuosity. The musicologist Abraham Veinus wrote that the concerto “makes the Tchaikovskian point that a Russian melody can comport itself with social grace amid elegantly cosmopolitan surroundings. It is an excellent example of the urbane turn-of-the-century habit of crossing melancholia with virtuoso brilliance.”

Glazunov composed the concerto in 1904 and dedicated it to his colleague at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the Hungarian violinist Leopold Auer. Auer is best known as the teacher who counted among his students some of the greatest 20th century violinists: Nathan Milstein, Jascha Heifetz, Misha Elman and Efrem Zimbalist, to name a few. It was Auer who premiered the concerto in February of 1905 under the composer’s baton. The reception was enthusiastic, even though some critics found fault with the unconventional structure of the work.

The concerto’s popularity spread outside Russia when the 14-year old Misha Elman premiered it in London in 1906, and then took it on an extended European tour. In 1911 the concerto crossed the Atlantic and was premiered in Boston by Efrem Zimbalist. Although Glazunov’s Violin concerto is one of most technically challenging works in the violin repertoire, the composer deliberately avoided virtuosity for its own sake. Rather, Glazunov shifted the focus onto the lyrical aspect of the concerto and the solo violin is fully embedded in the rich orchestration of the work.

The concerto does not have the traditional breaks between movements but is ingeniously divided into several sections. One of the most original features of the concerto is that the first movement is in effect wrapped around a slower section, which stands in the place of the expected development section.

The first section, Moderato, opens with the solo violin in the lower register, giving voice to an expressive rich line tinged with melancholy. Seemingly improvisational in the beginning, the violin part becomes more virtuosic until the arrival of the second, more serene theme. Following an agitated passage, an Andante section introduces another lyrical theme. This part is characterized by an increasingly complex orchestration featuring contributions from harp and horn. The music then returns to the opening Moderato this time being more assertive and agitated.

The third section concludes with one of the most difficult cadenzas in the violin repertoire. Glazunov employs double trills and left-hand pizzicato, resulting in a cadenza filled with double stops playing both melody and accompaniment. The cadenza also forms the bridge to the last movement, a traditional rondo with a “hunting” style main theme announced by the trumpets and immediately repeated by the solo violin. The last movement features two subsidiary episodes, one light and charming, the other rustic. A frenzied coda brings the concerto to its conclusion.

Carl Nielsen – Symphony No. 1 in G minor, op. 7



Instrumentation: 3 flutes (flute 1 doubles piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B-flat, 2 bassoons, 4 horns (2 in E-flat, 2 in B-flat), 2 trumpets in E-flat, 3 trombones (2 tenor, bass), timpani, strings.

Approximate duration: 35 minutes.

Nielsen was only 27 years old when composed his First Symphony, and did so despite having very little experience as a composer, and practically no experience with composing for orchestra. However, he played an inner voice in an orchestra and that surely guided his compositional work. His very first composition was a suite for strings, which is as close as he came to writing for orchestra. His First Symphony, on the other hand, far from being an apprentice work, is a composition that already exhibits many characteristics of Nielsen's very personal style.

Nielsen did not benefit from a solid education in harmony, counterpoint and composition. He was - to a great extent - self-taught. Therefore, he developed a very individual musical style that has often been described as idiosyncratic, and even quirky, because it eludes classification.

Even though he came to be regarded as the Danish national composer and his work contains echoes of Danish folk tunes with which he grew up, he was skeptical of the assertive - and often militant - musical nationalism embraced by representatives of the various national schools of music. It is interesting to contrast his reserved attitude with the fervent nationalism of the young Jan Sibelius, who was his exact contemporary in Finland. In 1925 he wrote: "Nothing destroys music more than nationalism does ... and it is impossible to deliver national music on request".

Nielsen was not ambiguous about his attitudes to late Romantic German music which he once dismissed as "Germanic fat and gravy." In a 1909 letter to the Dutch composer Julius Röntgen, he wrote: "I am surprised by the technical skills of the Germans nowadays, and I cannot help thinking that all this delight in complication must exhaust itself... We must go back ... to the pure and the clear." For Nielsen, the "pure and clear" was the first Viennese school, and he acknowledged that Mozart was his favorite composer.

Nielsen composed the First Symphony in 1891-92 and dedicated it to his wife, the Danish sculptor Anne-Marie Carl-Nielsen. Nielsen had the support of his conductor, the Norwegian composer Johan Svendsen, who promised to give the symphony its first performance when it was finished. The premiere of the First Symphony in March of 1894 had Svendsen

conducting the Chapel Royal Orchestra (later the Royal Danish Orchestra) with Nielsen standing up from his desk in the second violin section of the orchestra to acknowledge the applause at the end. The symphony was warmly received by both audience and critics. One of them, Charles Kjerulf wrote that the symphony “seems to presage a coming storm of genius”, describing it as “unsettled and brutal... and yet nevertheless so wonderfully innocent and unknowing, as if seeing a child playing with dynamite.”

Nielsen’s First Symphony is a reaction to the late Romantic excesses and national musical clichés which he mockingly described as “6/8 time in minor, plus Danish stewed pears”, and displays his striving for clarity and economy. At the time of its genesis, Nielsen was immersed in the study of Beethoven’s symphonies. He was particularly captivated by manner in which the first four sounds of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony lead to the highly concentrated musical material of the work. This became the guiding light for Nielsen’s work and much of the musical material in this symphony comes from its first seven notes. The work breaks, however, with the classical norm by moving away from its opening key of G minor to C major in the finale. This migration (known as Progressive Tonality) is the basis of the tonal structure of the entire work, and it became a hallmark of Nielsen’s compositional technique.

The first movement has an unusual tempo marking: *Allegro orgoglioso*, which can be translated as “proud allegro” or even “haughty allegro”. This tempo marking is borne out in the driven, almost swashbuckling energy of the opening. This theme sets the mood for the whole symphony, as one gets glimpses of this motif in the rest of the work. This is contrasted by a wistful, lyrical second theme introduced by the oboe and flute, which is still related to the first theme. The development section, a meandering tune introduced by the clarinet, is short but dramatic. The movement then ends with a fast fugato coda.

The second movement is tender, without being sentimental. The strings introduce a peaceful tune, which then begins to swell with the oboe entrance. It builds up to a big climax with strings and brass soaring over the timpani. As the climax subsides the individual wind instruments echo the opening theme in short phrases as the movement comes to an enchanted end.

Nielsen originally marked the third movement with the oddly defensive tempo direction “*non è scherzo*” meaning “not a scherzo”. (Scherzo is both the Italian word for “joke” and a musical term referring to a quick-moving piece of music with a humorous mood). . In the published score however, Nielsen simply settled for “*allegro comodo*” or “comfortably cheerful”. Even though the movement is not supposed to be a scherzo, Nielsen displays his sense of humour, by having the woodwinds playing out of sync with the rest of the orchestra and by insistently repeating a dramatic figure over and over again throughout the movement.

The last movement, marked *Allegro con fuoco* (fiery allegro) returns to the drive and passion of the first movement. The structure follows a sonata-like form, beginning with a bold, rousing principal theme presented by the full orchestra in a dance-like rhythm that conveys passionate momentum. This theme, characterized by its vigorous string swells and contrasting woodwind interjections is presented in various ways both in the musical material, and in the instrumentation, with each section getting its share of the spotlight. The music alternates between major and minor tonalities and at its central climax has the orchestra in a monumental unison. The symphony ends convincingly in C major with a fast ecstatic coda.

Program notes by Joseph Nachman©

SOLOIST



Frédéric Mercier - Violin Soloist

Music—and the violin in particular—has always accompanied Frederic throughout his life and artistic encounters, both in France and in Canada.

Trained at the Conservatoire de Châteauroux with Pierre-Olivier Queyras, he further benefited from masterclasses with Marie-Annick Nicolas, Jacques Ghestem, and Devy Erlih.

Alongside engineering studies at INSA Lyon, he continued advanced violin training with Devy Erlih at the École Normale de Musique Alfred Cortot in Paris, where he developed a particular affinity for 20th-century French repertoire.

An avid chamber and orchestral musician, Frederic Mercier has served as concertmaster of several Parisian student orchestras and is now based in Toronto, where he performs with Orchestra Toronto, the Summerhill Orchestra, and the Hart House Orchestra. He has also participated in masterclasses at the Royal Conservatory of Music with Jonathan Crow and Suhashini Arulanandam.

CONDUCTED BY



Henry Janzen, Hart House Orchestra Music Director and Principal Conductor

Henry has extensive international experience conducting a variety of ensembles. A highlight for him was conducting the Hart House Orchestra 40th year celebratory concert at Carnegie Hall. He has toured Europe both as violist and conductor.

As President of the Canadian Viola Society he represented Canada at International Viola Society meetings. One of his accomplishments was the re-drafting of the International Viola Society bylaws.

At present, in addition to conducting the Hart House Orchestra, he teaches Applied Instrumental techniques at the University of Toronto Schools and the University of Guelph.

Music has its own language. Through music we communicate with each other in a way which both transports and transforms us, enriching both our lives and the lives of our listeners.



Matthew Graystone, Guest Conductor

Matthew Graystone is an alumnus of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, where he studied with Christopher Gongs, Gillian MacKay, and Uri Mayer. He is currently completing his Master of Teaching at OISE and was the recipient of the Lillian and Henry Regehr Scholarship in Music Performance in 2022. A member of the Hart House Orchestra for five years, Matthew has served as Principal Horn for the past two seasons and performs regularly as a freelance musician throughout Ontario. As an educator, he has led bands and orchestras including the Toronto

Metropolitan University Players and various youth ensembles. He plans to move to Europe in fall 2026 to teach music and continue his studies. Outside of music, Matthew is a passionate road cyclist and the 2025 Cat D Provincial Champion. He is deeply grateful to Henry Janzen for the invaluable opportunity to work with the fine musicians of the Hart House Orchestra.

ORCHESTRA MEMBERS OF 2025-2026

Violin I

Joanna Tang CM (Fall)
Haruna Monri CM
Cathy Xi Chen AssocCM
Rena Far
Yuna Koh
Frederic Mercier
Emilie Anne Charest
Fei Ye
Jolie Ho
Silvana Pesenti
Angang Evelyn
Hayden Wong
Ayala Revah
Madeleine Tait
Ben Lai
Ryan Woodland
Hans Fischer
Nathalie Ott Mercier
Joseph Nachman

Violin II

Tim Leung P
Trish Howells AP
Philip Richard AssocP
Sophia Lee
Kate Sohn
Yiou Zheng
Brenna Whyte
Vincent Hung
Dania González
Catherine Chen
Millie Newis
Behram Hathi
Faye Wan
Peter Martin
Perry Wong
Allie Jeon
Anina Zhao
Ryan Fu
Nicole Desaulnier

Viola

Julian Fisher P
Elliott McMurchy
Luciano Salvetti Martinez
Aaron Shulman
Jesse Coleman
Bridget Allen-O'Neil

Jeff Baker
Sela Zhao
Elizabeth Brubaker
Elisabeth Widner
Arn Macpherson
Sooa Lim

Cello

Adam Caulfield P
Betty Tang AP
Ilyas Syed
Chelsea Cheng
Nicole Weng
Nathaniel Dickie
Hilary Parkes
Lara Isaac
Kj Aitken
Alistair Grieve
Tyson Caul
Julia Kim *

Bass

Hannah Rubia P
David McElroy
Radek Puky
Nikita Kullojka

Flute/Piccolo

Laura Bolt CP
Renee Willmon CP
Ayla Denenberg
Troy Whynot

Oboe

Megan Yuen P
Jeremy Lavrence
Catherine Lu
Mira Teresi

Clarinet

Daniel Choi P
Anka Stefanovic
(Bass)
Evan Lawrence
Joshua Zung

Bassoon

Zenghao Wang P
Reid Sox-Harris
Joshua Zung

Horn

Matthew Graystone P
Damir Pavelic
Yonatan Kahn
Adam Rosenfield
Grace Song
Nathan Bergman

Trumpet

David Forsey P
Brennan Schommer*

Trombone

Chien-Hsun Chiu P
Chenhao Gong
Shaiyan Keshvari

Tuba

DaeGeon Kim

Timpani

Phoenix Mok-Wong

Percussion

Tom Philip

Harp

Nikki Chang*

CM – Concert Master
AssocCM – Associate CM
P – Principal
AssocP – Associate
Principal

AP – Assistant Principal
CP – Co-principal

*Guest Musician

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