

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**MOZART AND DVOŘÁK**  
**A Jacobs Masterworks Concert**  
**Johannes Debus, conductor**

November 30 and December 2, 2018

**WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI** *Mala suita (Little Suite)*

Fife  
Hurra Polka  
Song  
Dance

**W. A. MOZART**

**Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219: *Turkish***

Allegro aperto  
Adagio  
Rondo: Tempo di menuetto  
**Jeff Thayer, violin**

INTERMISSION

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK**

**Symphony No. 6 in D Major, Op. 60**

Allegro non tanto  
Adagio  
Scherzo (Furiant): Presto  
Finale: Allegro con spirito

## MUSIC FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

All three works on this program were composed in Central Europe, and all three are very attractive music. So attractive, in fact, that one might not guess that they all reflect some of the tensions that have afflicted the region of their creation. Lutosławski's charming *Mala suita* (Little Suite) was composed at a time when communist authorities had locked their artists into a suffocating straitjacket, allowing them to create only "politically correct" works. The last movement of Mozart's *Turkish Concerto* charms audiences today, but it reminds us that in the eighteenth century Turkey (and all the forces to the east) were a threat to the Hapsburg Empire, a threat that sometimes brought war. But the Hapsburg Empire could in turn be quite threatening itself – the Vienna Philharmonic refused to play the Dvořák symphony on this program because it did not want to promote non-Germanic composers. Dvořák had to go to Prague to get it premiered.

### ***Mala suita (Little Suite)***

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI

Born January 25, 1913, Warsaw

Died February 7, 1994, Warsaw

A pretty tough story lurks behind this gentle little piece. Witold Lutosławski graduated from the Warsaw Conservatory in 1937, but his plans to study in Paris were thwarted by the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. Lutosławski served as a radio operator in the Polish army but was captured by the Nazis. He escaped, walked 250 miles back to Warsaw, and went underground. The Nazis banned concerts during the war, and Lutosławski supported himself by playing the piano in nightclubs until the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto forced him to flee that city – he lost all his early compositions when that part of the city was destroyed. After the war, Poland fell under the domination of the Soviets, who enforced a rigorously simplistic artistic doctrine: all art must be accessible to the masses, inspiring and uncomplicated. When Lutosławski's First Symphony was premiered in 1948, Russian critics walked out, the Polish vice-minister of culture remarked that Lutosławski should be thrown under a streetcar, and further performances were banned.

Serious composers found that any thought of developing according to their own ideals was impossible. Lutosławski's good friend Andrzej Panufnik fled to the West in 1954 and made

his career in England, but Lutosławski chose to remain in Warsaw, where he found his options limited: he was free to compose film scores, patriotic choruses and children's songs. A further possibility was music based on folk songs, and here Lutosławski turned to the model of a composer he greatly admired, Béla Bartók (though the irony of course is that Bartók's music was banned by the Soviets for its "formalism").

In 1950, two years after the debacle of his First Symphony, Lutosławski had a request from Warsaw Radio for a piece based on folklore. For that commission he composed his *Little Suite*, and it was premiered the same year by what the official catalog of his works describes as "a light-music chamber orchestra." The *Little Suite* proved a success, and the following year Lutosławski arranged it for full symphony orchestra. This version was successfully premiered by the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Grzegorz Fitelberg on April 20, 1951.

Lutosławski's model for the *Little Suite* may well have been Bartók's charming *Romanian Folk Dances* of 1915, in which Bartók orchestrated and briefly extended folk dance tunes. Lutosławski chose folk tunes from around the village of Máchów in the far southeastern corner of Poland and used them to compose his *Little Suite*, whose four movements span barely ten minutes. *Fajurka* (that title translates as "fife") opens appropriately with the bright sound of piccolo stamping out the principal theme; this is developed energetically, and the opening melody returns to close out the movement. The curious thing about the *Hurra Polka* (Hurray Polka) is that it dances in a triple meter rather than the duple meter we expect of the polka. A melancholy clarinet solo opens *Piosenka* (Song), but this quiet opening quickly builds to a strident climax before the music subsides to its quiet close. The vivacious concluding *Taniec* (Dance) does indeed dance brightly before giving way to a singing, surging central episode; the opening material returns, but Lutosławski rounds off the *Little Suite* with a brisk and emphatic coda.

What are we to make of this gentle and apparently well-behaved piece of music? Is it the work of an obedient servant intent on satisfying repressive authorities? Or is it perhaps something more significant? When he wrote the *Little Suite*, Lutosławski was working within tight strictures, but he recognized – just as Bartók had before him – that there were possibilities within folk music. In *Little Suite* he refines his technique carefully: he presents the folk tunes, develops them crisply and subtly, and orchestrates them cleanly and brightly. Lutosławski's use of folk material would culminate in his Concerto for Orchestra of 1954, in which folk tunes are

broken down into component intervals and bits and used as the basis for a brilliant orchestral work. The Concerto for Orchestra was a sort of break-out work for Lutosławski. Its success, and gradually relaxing government control, allowed him to compose serial music and later music based in part on chance. By the time he reached an authentic voice as a composer, Lutosławski had left his early folk-inspired pieces far behind. But the *Little Suite* remains one of the most popular of his early works.

**Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219: Turkish**

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg

Died December 5, 1791, Vienna

Mozart's twenty-seven piano concertos span his career, but he wrote only five violin concertos, and these all come from his teenage years. The absence of more concertos for violin is surprising, given the fact that Mozart was admired as much for his violin playing as for his piano playing. Mozart wrote his First Violin Concerto in 1773, and the remaining four come from June, September, October and December 1775. Each shows clear development over the previous one, and the Fifth – written the month before Mozart's twentieth birthday – has become the most popular of the set.

The concerto's many imaginative touches are evident from the very beginning. A vigorous orchestral introduction marked *Allegro aperto* (*aperto* means clear or distinct) opens the movement, but the entrance of the soloist brings a surprise: instead of pressing ahead at the initial tempo, the music slows to an *Adagio*, and over murmuring string accompaniment the violinist makes a simple and graceful entrance. The *Allegro aperto* suddenly resumes, and now the violinist plays the true opening theme, a variation of its slow first statement. This energetic movement takes its character from this soaring idea.

By contrast, the *Adagio* is poised and melodic. Mozart switches to an unexpected key – E Major, a key he almost never used – and the violin picks up and develops the orchestra's lyric opening idea. Gradually, though, the music becomes more complex – the violin's melodic line is encrusted with trills and decorations and moves into minor keys.

The last movement, a rondo in the form of a minuet, is the most original. Solo violin immediately lays out the minuet theme and is answered by the orchestra. All seems set for a

standard rondo-finale, but partway through Mozart bursts in suddenly with an *Allegro* that disrupts everything. The interruption is by “Turkish” music, and because of it this concerto is sometimes nicknamed the “Turkish.” In eighteenth-century Europe there was a fascination with all things Turkish, but it was an ambivalent fascination. The East might produce coffee, tea, silk and spice, but it also brought the threat of military invasion, so there was an element of danger mixed in with the exotic. This fascination also showed up in European music of the era, where Turkish music generally meant “exotic” music, featuring vigorous rhythms and noisy percussion instruments. This fashion can be seen in Mozart’s own opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and in works by many other composers (Beethoven’s *Turkish March*, for example). Here it takes the form of vigorous leaps, grace notes, thumping rhythms and chromatic growls from the orchestra. The minuet-rondo resumes, and the concerto closes with a wonderful touch: the music suddenly vanishes in mid-phrase, as easily as something disappearing into mist.

Mozart would go on to write over 400 more works after completing this concerto, but none of them would be a violin concerto. The Fifth Violin Concerto – and the promise contained within this music – makes Mozart’s failure to write another violin concerto all the more painful.

### **Symphony No. 6 in D Major, Op. 60**

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8, 1841, Muhlhausen, Bohemia

Died May 1, 1904, Prague

In November 1879 Hans Richter led the Vienna Philharmonic in a performance of Dvořák’s *Third Slavonic Rhapsody*. Dvořák, who was sitting with his friend Brahms at that concert, reported that the applause was so strong that he was called to the stage, and on the spot Richter asked him for a new symphony. Dvořák wrote that symphony, which we know today as his Sixth, the following summer. He retreated to his summer home at Vysoká, and there – in the quiet forests and fields of the Czech countryside – he set to work on August 27, 1880. Dvořák was a fast worker: he had the symphony done by October 15, Richter was enthusiastic about it, and Dvořák hoped that it would be performed that fall. But at this point awkward problems arose. The Vienna Philharmonic was a very conservative organization, and some of its members objected to playing works by Dvořák – a foreign composer – in successive seasons. Richter tried to keep this a secret from the composer, explaining the delay as the result of illnesses within his

own family, but finally Dvořák gave up and asked permission to have the symphony premiered elsewhere. Adolf Čech led the Czech Philharmonic in the first performance on March 25, 1881 (which was, coincidentally, the day Béla Bartók was born), and the audience was so enthusiastic that the symphony's third movement had to be repeated on the spot. The Sixth was quickly performed throughout Europe, Theodore Thomas led the American premiere in New York in 1883, and Dvořák himself conducted it in London and St. Petersburg. Despite the awkwardnesses surrounding the premiere, Dvořák remained grateful to Richter and dedicated the symphony to him (and it should be noted that Richter himself eventually did conduct the Sixth Symphony).

Despite its successful launch, however, the Sixth Symphony has not held the stage in the way that Dvořák's final symphonies have. Those three symphonies – the dramatic Seventh, the lyrical Eighth, and the epic *New World Symphony* – have become regular features of our concert life, but the Sixth Symphony has so slipped into the shade that performances today are rare. Which is too bad, because this is an attractive piece of music, full of Dvořák's characteristic virtues—attractive themes, rhythmic energy and a flair for the dramatic.

The Sixth has a very unassuming beginning, however. Over quietly-pulsing chords comes a gentle theme that has reminded many of the beginning of Brahms' Second Symphony, also in D Major. Quickly comes another surprise: that gentle opening theme rises up, takes on strength, and suddenly shows that it has some dramatic bite. Dvořák sets this off with the oboe's almost delicate second idea, and these will be the materials for this extended sonata-form movement. The movement is not as extended as it might be: Dvořák had originally written in a repeat of the entire opening section, but when he was preparing his manuscript for publication, he made clear that he did not want this repeat to be taken, noting in the manuscript: "Once and for all, without repetition." The long development leads to a powerful coda and grand climax stamped out by trumpets and horns.

The subdued opening of the *Adagio* is deceiving, for this movement will erupt in great explosions of sound across its long span. Dvořák sets these off with some of his loveliest writing – this is a movement of extremes, from whispering lyricism to powerful outbursts. The third movement, the one that had to be repeated at the premiere, has always been the most popular in the symphony. Dvořák calls it a *Furiant*, an old Czech dance built on constantly-shifting meters, but as countless commentators have pointed out, Dvořák does not shift meters in this movement

– the entire movement is in 3/4. He does, though, arrange his phrasing so that the stress often does not fall on the downbeat, and so this music feels fresh and full of rhythmic surprises; it is fast (Dvořák's marking is *Presto*) and exhilarating to hear. The central episode, which slows down a little, features the silvery sound of the piccolo before accelerating back into the opening section.

The finale is another movement that has reminded many of Brahms' Second Symphony. In fact, Dvořák appears almost to have "lifted" the opening of this movement from the finale of Brahms' symphony: both begin quietly with themes of similar shape, and both soon explode with energy. But there are worse models than Brahms' Second, and there is enough authentic Dvořák here to satisfy any listener. Particularly exciting is the very ending, where racing strings propel this symphony to its conclusion on a series of D Major chords that should ring throughout the hall.

**-Program notes by Eric Bromberger**

### **PERFORMANCE HISTORY**

**by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, San Diego Symphony Archivist**

The *Little Suite* by Lutosławski is being heard for the first time at these concerts. The last and perhaps the most popular of Mozart's five violin concertos, the so-called *Turkish* concerto, was introduced to San Diego Symphony audiences when Yehudi Menuhin played it here during the 1972-73 season. Peter Erős conducted. Most recently, Augustin Hadelich played it under Jahja Ling's direction during the 2011-12 season, for its eighth hearing at these concerts. The Dvořák Sixth Symphony was first played at these concerts under the direction of Charles Groves during the 1980-81 season. Since then, it has been repeated here five times, most recently under Jahja Ling's direction during the 2012-13 season.