

Matthias Pintscher Welcomes Gil Shaham

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
GIL SHAHAM, VIOLIN



October 4-6, 2024

Helzberg Hall,
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

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Matthias Pintscher Welcomes Gil Shaham

Friday and Saturday, October 4-5, 2024 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, October 6, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
GIL SHAHAM, VIOLIN

ALEXANDER ZEMLINSKY

Sinfonietta, op. 23

- I. Sehr lebhaft
- II. Ballade: Sehr gemessen,
doch nicht schleppend
- III. Rondo: Sehr lebhaft

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra,
op. 35

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Canzonetta: Andante
- III. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo
Gil Shaham, violin

Intermission

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, op. 56, "Scottish"

- I. Andante con moto — Allegro agitato
- II. Scherzo: Vivace non troppo
- III. Adagio cantabile
- IV. Finale guerriero: Allegro vivacissimo —
Allegro maestoso assai



Matthias Pintscher

MUSIC DIRECTOR
AND CONDUCTOR

Matthias Pintscher is the newly appointed music director of the Kansas City Symphony, beginning with the 2024/25 season. He has just concluded a successful decade-long tenure as the music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the iconic Parisian contemporary ensemble founded by Pierre Boulez and winner of the 2022 Polar Prize. During his stewardship, Pintscher led this most adventurous institution in the creation of dozens of world premieres by cutting-edge composers from all over the world and took the ensemble on tours around the globe — to Asia and North America and throughout Europe to all the major festivals and concert halls.

The 2023/24 season was Pintscher's fourth year as Creative Partner at the Cincinnati Symphony, where he conducted a new work by intí figgis-vizueta, as well as an immersive video concert of Olivier Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux étoiles*. He also toured with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie where he is artist-in-residence. As guest conductor, he returned to the RAI Milano Musica, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, NDR Hamburg, Indianapolis

Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Barcelona Symphony, Lahti Symphony, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, La Scala and Berlin's Boulez Ensemble. Pintscher has conducted several opera productions for the Berliner Staatsoper, Wiener Staatsoper and Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. He returned to the Berliner Staatsoper in 2024 for Beat Furrer's *Violetter Schnee*.

Pintscher is also well-known as a composer, and his works appear frequently on the programs of major symphony orchestras throughout the world. In August 2021, he was the focus of the Suntory Hall Summer Festival — a weeklong celebration of his works with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra as well as a residency by the Ensemble Intercontemporain with symphonic and chamber music performances. His third violin concerto, *Assonanza*, written for Leila Josefowicz, premiered in January 2022 with the Cincinnati Symphony.

Gil Shaham

VIOLIN

Gil Shaham is one of the foremost violinists of our time; his flawless technique combined with his inimitable warmth and generosity of spirit has solidified his renown as an American master. He is sought after throughout the world for concerto appearances with leading orchestras and conductors, and regularly gives recitals and appears with ensembles on the world's great concert stages and at the most prestigious festivals.

Highlights of recent years include a recording and performances of J.S. Bach's complete sonatas and partitas for solo violin and recitals with his long-time duo partner, pianist Akira Eguchi. He regularly appears with the Boston, Chicago and San Francisco symphonies; with the Berlin, Israel and Los Angeles philharmonics; and in multi-year residencies with the orchestras of Montreal, Stuttgart and Singapore.

With more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs to his name, Shaham has earned multiple Grammy® Awards, a Grand Prix du Disque, a Diapason d'Or and Gramophone Editor's Choice. Many of these recordings appear on Canary Classics, the label he founded in 2004. His 2016 recording "1930s Violin Concertos Vol. 2" as well as his 2021 recording of Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos with The Knights were nominated for Grammys.

Shaham was born in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, in 1971. He moved with his parents to Israel, where he began violin studies with Samuel Bernstein of the Rubin Academy of Music at the age of 7, receiving annual scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. In 1981, he made debuts with the Jerusalem Symphony and the Israel Philharmonic, and the following year took the first prize in Israel's Claremont Competition. He then became a scholarship student at Juilliard, and also studied at Columbia University.

Shaham was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990, and in 2008 he received the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. In 2012, he was named Instrumentalist of the Year by Musical America. He plays the 1699 Countess Polignac Stradivari and also performs on an Antonio Stradivari violin made c. 1719, with the assistance of Rare Violins in Consortium, Artists and Benefactors Collaborative. He lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, and their three children.





Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942)

Sinfonietta, op. 23 (1934)

22 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tambourine, tom-toms, triangle, xylophone, harp and strings.

THE STORY

The origin story of the Sinfonietta by Viennese composer Alexander Zemlinsky is, shall we say, a little less than romantic. In 1931, the composer complained to his publisher, Universal Edition, that they weren't promoting his music enough. In response, he received a letter that complained right back: "The greatest obstacle is that we possess no purely orchestral work of yours. As soon as soloists are involved, marketing becomes far more difficult ... Would you not care to write an orchestral work, short and practical in its requirements, hence also easier to promote?" After a delay of several years, Zemlinsky composed the Sinfonietta to fit the purpose. It met

with success both in Europe and in the United States, but unfortunately Zemlinsky was unable to enjoy it. The year of its composition, 1934, was the year the Nazis banned "degenerate art" and the composer had to leave Germany for his native Vienna. He fled the annexation of Austria in 1938 and made his way to New York. Dmitri Mitropoulos conducted the work with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in 1940, garnering acclaim from audiences and critics, but Zemlinsky had suffered a severe stroke and could not attend the performance. He died of pneumonia two years later, and his music fell into relative obscurity for several decades.

THE MUSIC

The first movement of Zemlinsky's Sinfonietta is a flight of fancy, moving through quickly shifting moods, harmonies, rhythms and instrumental colors. The quiet theme introduced by clarinets and violas after the first few bars of the opening is his "Self" motif, which was wrapped up in his kabbalistic fascination with numerology and which he used in other works to represent himself. It is answered in the clarinets and bassoons by a musical phrase from one of his songs, used to set the phrase "Where are you going?" This phrase morphs into the main melody of the second movement, titled "Ballade." The movement is less of a ballad

than a funeral march, which reaches several impassioned but short-lived climaxes before fading away.

The energetic third movement is a rondo, meaning that several different sections of music make reappearances throughout. Its mischievous introduction and main melody (presented by the woodwinds) each come back multiple times. Near the end, a solo flute is accompanied only by quiet notes from the clarinet and harp, followed by a frantic layering of different melodies before the introductory line, played by the full orchestra, brings the piece to a close.

— AJ Harbison

On Stage

Imagine sitting on the Helzberg Hall stage with a world-renowned guest artist and our musicians as they perform chamber music. You're only a few feet away from the action! Music Director Matthias Pintscher invites you to On Stage, a special experience where the music, musicians and audience come together. Enjoy a cocktail and wine reception when you arrive, then prepare yourself for the ultimate immersive concert created just for you — filled with artistry and adrenaline. Only 100 tickets per performance are offered, so secure your tickets.

NEW CONCERT EXPERIENCE

Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 8 p.m.
Emmanuel Pahud, flute

Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 8 p.m.
Conrad Tao, piano

Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 8 p.m.
Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Visit [kcsymphony.org](https://www.kcsymphony.org) for tickets.





Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, op. 35 (1878)
34 minutes

Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

While Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote only one violin concerto, it's a masterpiece. However, the circumstances of its arrival in the world were challenging. Although gay, Tchaikovsky sought a modicum of social respectability by marrying a former student in 1877. It was immediately apparent that the marriage was disastrous and he fled to Europe, spending the next eight months in Austria, Italy and Switzerland, recovering his mental health. His friend, the violinist Iosif Kotek (a former student and brief infatuation), visited Tchaikovsky in Clarens, Switzerland on

Lake Geneva. They played some violin literature and Tchaikovsky was especially taken with Édouard Lalo's charming *Symphonie espagnole*. At Kotek's urging, he immediately began composing his Violin Concerto. In the heat of inspiration, Tchaikovsky sketched the piece in only eleven days and had it scored two weeks later. Throughout the process, Kotek provided advice concerning the solo violin part.

At this point, things got complicated. Tchaikovsky's brother, Modest, and Kotek expressed dissatisfaction with the second movement, prompting

composition of an entirely new movement. Tchaikovsky then considered the politics of dedicating the concerto to Kotek and decided that it might provoke unwelcome gossip. Instead, he dedicated the work to Leopold Auer, famed violin professor at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Auer declared the concerto unplayable and rejected it. Kotek, likely hurt by the dedication to Auer, also declined to perform the concerto. It was nearly three years before Adolf Brodsky, a former colleague of Tchaikovsky's at the Moscow Conservatory, learned the work and premiered it with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Hans Richter in December 1881. While the audience loved the concerto, music critic Eduard Hanslick blasted the work by saying, "Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto gives us for the first time the hideous notion that there can be music that stinks to the ear." Tchaikovsky was stung by the brutal review and could recite it word-for-word for the rest of his life. Auer eventually came around and championed the work, especially with his students Jascha Heifetz, Mischa Elman and Efrem Zimbalist.

THE MUSIC

The concerto has an unpretentious beginning. After a brief and restrained introduction, the solo violin presents the theme, as graceful and lovely a strain as Tchaikovsky ever wrote. There are, of course, numerous showy solo bits but Tchaikovsky the melodist is in the forefront. The solo violin sometimes whispers and occasionally roars but is always thrilling.

The "substituted" second movement, an endearing canzonetta ("little song"), exemplifies the singing quality of its title. It is filled with yearning and moments of exquisite beauty. The brief orchestral interlude that follows is interrupted with a bang and the final movement is off and running. A short violin cadenza captures attention and sets the stage for a ripping dance. A pair of lyrical breaks in the swirling, stomping and general boisterousness allows musicians and audience both to catch their breath. Each time, the solo violin leads the ensemble back to enthusiastic celebration. The concerto ends with a grand shout.

— *Eric T. Williams*

“

A virtuoso and a player of deeply intense sincerity ... One of today's pre-eminent violinists.”

— **The New York Times**



GIL SHAHAM



Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, op. 56, “Scottish” (1829-42) 43 minutes

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

Felix Mendelssohn was following a longstanding tradition when he embarked on his Grand Tour (a phrase coined in 1670 by priest and writer Richard Lassels) in 1829. For more than two centuries, privileged young men and a few women typically undertook a journey — sometimes lasting years — across Europe to see the art and architecture of France and Italy as a capstone of their education. Paris, Vienna, Venice, Florence and Rome were the usual destinations. Thus, it was somewhat unusual that the 20-year-old Mendelssohn left home in Berlin to begin his tour in London. The Mendelssohn family had good motives for sending their scion

westward, though. A family friend, Karl Klingemann, was based in London as a diplomat and could serve as a well-connected companion for Felix. The two young men were quite compatible and their friendship would be lifelong.

After Mendelssohn dazzled London audience members with his Symphony No. 1 and a superb performance of Beethoven’s “Emperor” Piano Concerto (for perspective, recall that Beethoven had died only two years prior), he and Klingemann headed to the even more unlikely destination of Edinburgh, Scotland. Their plan was to meet the renowned author Walter Scott for intellectually stimulating

conversation and then explore the rugged Scottish moor. The meeting with Scott was brief and unsatisfying — nothing more than pleasantries were exchanged with the curmudgeonly author. The hike across Scotland proved to be far more inspiring and Mendelssohn documented the journey on a near-daily basis with extensive sketches of the landscape. A talented artist in addition to his profound musical capabilities, he later produced a number of watercolors depicting the scenic beauty.

The “Scottish” Symphony, No. 3 in order of publication but the last completed, was inspired by Mendelssohn’s brief stay in Edinburgh. A visit to historic Holyrood Palace on July 30, 1829, certainly stirred thoughts of Mary, Queen of Scots, and it was in the ruins of the adjacent chapel that the opening theme of the symphony came to Mendelssohn. He wrote:

In darkening twilight today, we went to the [Holyrood] Palace where Queen Mary [Stuart] lived and loved ... The chapel beside it has lost its roof and is overgrown with grass and ivy, and at that broken altar Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland. Everything there is ruined, decayed and open to the clear sky. I believe that I have found there today the beginning of my Scotch Symphony.

As the Scottish adventure progressed, a number of musical sketches joined the art portfolio. The next, more traditional portion of Mendelssohn’s Grand Tour took him to Italy, the inspiration for his “Italian” Symphony, a sunny and vivacious work in sharp contrast to the more rugged sounds of the “Scottish” Symphony. Indeed, he found it difficult to rekindle the spirit he had felt in Edinburgh, writing to his family: “A genial blue sky outside and a journey to Naples in my every thought ... Who can wonder that I find it impossible to return to my misty Scottish mood?”

He laid the work aside for more than a decade, eventually finding sufficient stimulus to complete the symphony on January 20, 1842. He premiered the work with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra on March 3, 1842, and conducted the work’s first London performance a few months later on June 13. Following a meeting with Britain’s young Queen Victoria on June 15, Mendelssohn sought permission to dedicate the symphony to her, which she graciously granted.

THE MUSIC

Despite the initial geographic inspiration and mention of the work, Mendelssohn did not refer to the symphony as “Scottish,” a title popularized only after his death. Similarly, although it is tempting — and indeed easy — to visualize a

MENDELSSOHN *continued*

spectacular Scottish landscape on hearing the music, the work is not overtly programmatic.

Mendelssohn preferred no interruption to the flow of the music, writing in a preface to the score: “The movements of this symphony must follow one another immediately, and must not be separated by the customary long pauses.”

The symphony’s somber introduction gradually gives way to a very soft statement of the plaintive thematic material, which soon grows impassioned. Fragments of the theme are tossed about as Mendelssohn masterfully paces the buildup and release of tension throughout the repeated exposition and subsequent development. The agitated music subsides and the introductory notes bookend the movement.

The brief second movement is quintessential Mendelssohn with its fast tempo and sparkling themes. The short-long rhythm known as the “Scotch snap” is heard throughout and everyone has a virtuosic turn before the party atmosphere recedes into the distance.

Two basic ideas constitute the slow third movement: a beautiful song without words alternating with an inexorable march. A placid benediction concludes the movement and Mendelssohn emphatically directs the ensemble to proceed immediately with the final movement. Intense and brimming with verve, the music fairly careens along even in the soft passages. Copious counterpoint (two or more independent musical lines played together) enlivens the texture. After much ado, the vigor slowly wanes, eventually giving way to clarinet and bassoon intoning a yearning phrase that floats gently above a timeless held note in the bass before dying away. From the silence, a triumphant melody emerges, rising in exultation. The energy builds and, with a soaring clarion call, the horns lead the way to the symphony’s glorious ending.

—Eric T. Williams



KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

In only its 42nd season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomes conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians are an international dynamic force, all of whom live, work, teach and play in Kansas City. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera

of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

Top international soloists perform with the Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other creative performers. The Symphony also accompanies a wide range of fan-favorite films, playing the soundtrack live as the movie is projected on a giant screen above the stage.

Music connects us; it has the unique ability to draw us closer to our inner selves and also closer to one another, transcending our differences. Every Kansas City Symphony concert will take you on an emotional journey — a journey that's deeply personal but also a journey that we all experience together as one.

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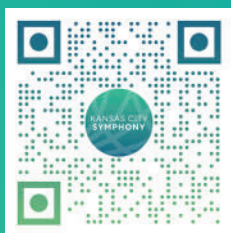
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Mozart's Requiem

Friday, November 1 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

Saturday, November 2 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 3 at 2 p.m.

Bernard Labadie, guest conductor

Liv Redpath, soprano

Avery Amereau, mezzo-soprano

Andrew Haji, tenor

Neal Davies, bass-baritone

Kansas City Symphony Chorus, Charles Bruffy, chorus director

Franz Schubert Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Requiem ★



Strauss' Alpine Symphony, with Chopin

Friday, November 22 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

Saturday, November 23 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 24 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Yunchan Lim, piano

Carlos Simon *Warmth from Other Suns* for String Orchestra

Frédéric Chopin Concerto No. 2 in F Minor for Piano and Orchestra ★

Richard Strauss *An Alpine Symphony* ★

★ Selections will be played during Friday night Symphonic Piazza performances

