

FINLANDIA and SCHUMANN'S PIANO CONCERTO

*Friday and Saturday, October 4-5 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, October 6, 2019 at 2 p.m.*

HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*
MARTIN HELMCHEN, *piano*

SIBELIUS *Finlandia*, op. 26

R. SCHUMANN Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 54
I. Allegro affettuoso
II. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso
III. Allegro vivace
MARTIN HELMCHEN, *piano*

— **INTERMISSION** —

DANIEL KELLOGG *The Golden Spike*
I. Black Powder and Hell on Wheels
II. Promontory
III. Manifest Destiny
Kansas City Symphony commission, world premiere

SMETANA “Blaník” from *Má vlast*

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JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Finlandia, op. 26 (1899) 8 minutes

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle and strings.

In 1809, Finland became a Grand Duchy under the Russian Czar. Finland enjoyed relative autonomy for the greater part of the 19th century. But as the century drew to a close, Russia exerted increased domination over Finland. The threat of Russian censorship of the Finnish press inspired the “Press Pension Fund Pageant,” held in November 1899.

As part of the pageant, the director of the Helsinki Finnish Theater arranged a series of six tableaux depicting important moments in Finnish history. Sibelius composed his tone poem *Finlandia* for the final tableaux, entitled “Finland Awakes.” The accompanying text for the tableaux begins, “The powers of darkness menacing Finland have not succeeded in their terrible threats. Finland awakes!” *Finlandia* depicts both the oppression of the Finnish people and their ultimate victory.



Finnish composer Jean Sibelius composed *Finlandia* at a time when his country was under increased control and oppression by Russia.

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Robert Schumann composed his Piano Concerto for his wife, the composer and virtuoso pianist Clara Wieck Schumann.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 54 (1845) 31 minutes

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

Robert Schumann composed this concerto for his wife, the pianist and composer Clara Wieck Schumann (1819-1896). The work originated in May 1841 as a *Fantasy in A Minor* for piano and orchestra. In 1845, Schumann added two movements to the *Fantasy*. Clara Schumann wrote in her diary, “[The *Fantasy*] has now become a concerto that I mean to play next winter. I am very glad about it for I have always wanted a great bravura piece by him.” The following month, Clara enthused, “I am happy as a king at the thought of playing it with orchestra.” Clara Schumann was the soloist in the concerto’s December 4, 1845 premiere.

The Concerto is in three movements, the final two played without pause. The first movement opens in dramatic fashion, with a loud orchestral chord, immediately followed by an emphatic descending passage for the soloist. The oboes, supported by the clarinets, bassoons, and horns, sing the *espressivo* principal theme, soon repeated by the soloist. The brief second movement is in A-B-A form. The soloist, in dialogue with the strings, presents the charming opening theme, derived from the ascending portion of the principal melody of the first movement. The cellos launch the more rhapsodic “B” section. In the finale, the soloist introduces the joyous principal theme, again related to the principal melody of the opening movement. The finale concludes with an expansive coda, in which the soloist takes center stage, closing with a dazzling ascending flourish.

DANIEL KELLOGG (b. 1976)

The Golden Spike (2019) 25 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, anvil, 2 bass drums, brake drum, cowbell, Mahler hammer, snare drum, suspended cymbals, tam-tam, tambourine, timbales, triangle, wood block, harp, piano and strings.

On May 10, 1869, in a desolate wind-swept vale high up in the Promontory Mountains north of the Great Salt Lake, a ceremonial golden spike marked the completion of the massive transcontinental railroad endeavor set in motion seven years prior. At 12:47 p.m., the telegraph transmitted, “Dot, dot, dot, done.” The first transcontinental railroad linked the growing population of the Pacific Coast with the rest of the nation. It led to the development of both the “great American desert” and the fertile agricultural industries of the west coast. It created a vast and profitable trade between the East and the West, and it provided the unfortunate means of subduing the beleaguered Native Americans of the western plains and mountains.



Kellogg was inspired by his father Spencer Kellogg’s keen interest in the history of the transcontinental railroad, particularly the Central and South Pacific half.

I. Black Powder and Hell on Wheels

Black powder was a mixture of saltpeter, charcoal and sulfur used to explode rock in the extensive tunnels and cuts dug in the Sierra Nevada granite of California by the Central Pacific. Hell on Wheels was the temporary rowdy lawless tent town that followed the Union Pacific as they made their way west. These two groups of poor young men embodied the massive human labor required. This gritty music grinds and hammers forward with increasing tension as all obstacles are overcome by sheer force of muscle.

II. Promontory

The railroad spanned six existing and future states in the heart of American western wilderness, a pristine and undeveloped land that ultimately was tamed by the railroad and the civilization that came with it. This slow movement captures the raw power, isolation and natural beauty of this incredible expanse. The music is majestic, lyrical and grand. Portions of this movement also are filled with lament. Something sacred was lost; Native American cultures were displaced and decimated.

III. Manifest Destiny

The American settlers were destined to move across the great expanse of the American West. With two coasts connected, new economies flourished, towns and cities sprang forth, and the vast territory of America became a unified country. The music is grand and celebratory. It includes the victorious bells and cannons that rang out simultaneously in New York City and San Francisco on May 10, 1869.

— Daniel Kellogg



Czech composer Bedřich Smetana's *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*) is a collection of six orchestral tone poems celebrating his native land.

BEDŘICH SMETANA (1824-1884)

“Blaník” from *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*) (1879) 14 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, triangle and strings.

In fall 1874, Bedřich Smetana suddenly found himself totally deaf. He was forced to resign all his public appointments, and it appeared the career of the first great Czech nationalist composer was at an end. However, Smetana's passion to express unbounded love for his Czech homeland was too powerful. This devastating period witnessed the triumphant birth of Smetana's orchestral masterpiece, *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*). Smetana composed this

collection of six orchestral tone poems between 1874 and 1879.

“Blaník,” the last of the *Má vlast* tone poems, follows “Tábor,” a depiction of the Hussite struggle. The following is Smetana’s description:

“Blaník” begins where the preceding composition ends. Following their eventual defeat, the Hussite heroes took refuge in Blaník Mountain where, in heavy slumber, they wait for the moment when they will be called to the aid of their country. Hence the chorale, which was used as the basic motif in “Tábor,” is used as the foundation of this piece. It is on the basis of this melody, the Hussite chorale, that the resurrection of the Czech nation, its future happiness and glory, will develop. With this victorious hymn, written in the form of a march, the composition ends, and within the whole cycle of *Vlast*. As a brief intermezzo, we hear a short idyll, a description of the Blaník region where a little shepherd boy plays a pipe while the echo gently floats back to him.