

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

Dvořák's Cello

Gustavo Gimeno, conductor
Pablo Ferrández, cello

Antonín Dvořák
Othello Overture, Op. 93

Francisco Coll
Lilith

(North American Première/TSO Co-commission)

I. Contrapunto erótico

II. Three Angels – Vals de la huida

III. Nocturna – Euphoria

Intermission

Antonín Dvořák
Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104

I. Allegro

II. Adagio ma non troppo

III. Finale: Allegro moderato

Program 3

Thursday,
March 12, 2026
7:30pm

Friday,
March 13, 2026
7:30pm

Saturday,
March 14, 2026
7:30pm

*Pablo Ferrández's
appearance is generously
made possible by Tom and
Ellen Smee.*

*The North American
Première of Lilith is
generously supported by
Margie and Peter Kelk.*

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

***Othello* Overture, Op. 93**

Composed 1891

15 min

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK'S JOYFUL CARNIVAL

OVERTURE, Op. 92, ranks among his popular instrumental works, but many people probably don't realize that it was originally conceived as part of a trilogy of overtures titled *Nature, Life and Love*. The composer wrote the three in 1891 before he set off a year later for his famed three-year stay in the United States, which included a stint as director of the National Conservatory of Music of America and a summer trip to the Czech town of Spillville, Iowa. Dvořák led performances of the overtures together in Prague and New York in 1892, but they have mostly been performed individually since, with the *Othello* Overture, Op. 93, being the most rarely heard of the three. A fascinating

side note is that, because Dvořák was in America when Simrock planned to publish the three overtures, Johannes Brahms served as the editor for the project, citing particular admiration for the *Othello* Overture.

For his depiction of love in his third overture, Dvořák turned to Shakespeare's *Othello*, with musical portrayals of the title character and his wife, Desdemona, as well as evocations of the tumultuous emotions that run through the tragedy, especially the devouring fire of jealousy. The approximately 15-minute work opens placidly with a string chorale, but darker motifs soon appear. The remainder of this piece, written in Dvořák's characteristically rich, Romantic style, veers between moments of hushed delicacy, ominous unease, and stormy outbursts, and culminates with a final musical thunderclap.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

Francisco Coll (b. 1985)

Lilith

North American Première/
TSO Co-commission
Composed 2025

23 min

FROM THE COMPOSER: Like artists throughout history, I have been drawn to the multi-faceted and sometimes contradictory myth of Lilith, who, according to Hebrew texts, was Adam's first wife. Intoxicated by her seductive beauty and beguiling personality, they all brought new nuances to her story—there are as many Liliths as there are interpreters of her. My work, conceived as a ballet without choreography, adds another.

The first movement, an expressive adagio, evokes desire and fear at the same time—it celebrates a union of opposites. Lilith

dwells in the ruins after abandoning Adam; from these vestiges, Renaissance-inspired polyphony emerges, its lines sharp and with the clarity of poison.

The second movement is divided into two parts. "Three Angels" describes a torturous labyrinth in which a battalion of three seraphim seek out the fugitive Lilith. "Vals de la huida"—"Waltz of the Escape"—is tragic and grotesque, bordering on hysterical.

The third movement also has two sections. In Hebrew, Lilith (Leilit) also means "nocturnal"; "Nocturna" explores this aspect of her nature. Musically speaking, it is a study of volume, manipulating space and timbre as if it were a sound sculpture. In "Euphoria" Lilith arrives in the modern city and joins in a wild orgy, as the masses are swept up by her seductive force.

COMPOSER BIO: Composer-conductor Francisco Coll has found advocates in the world's leading orchestras and ensembles, including the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Los Angeles Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, and Ensemble Modern. His music has been heard at festivals—from Aldeburgh, Aix, and Aspen, to the BBC Proms, Verbier, and Tanglewood—and performed by leading instrumentalists including Kirill Gerstein, Javier Perianes, Pekka Kuusisto, Sol Gabetta, Augustin Hadelich, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sean Shibe, and Cuarteto Casals.

Born in Valencia in 1985, Coll studied at the Valencia and Madrid Conservatories before moving to London to work privately with Thomas Adès (as his only pupil to-date) and with Richard Baker at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. His chamber opera, *Café Kafka*, was premièred to great acclaim by Aldeburgh Music, Opera North, and the Royal Opera and has since been produced at Valencia's Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia. *Enemigo del pueblo*, an evening-length opera after Ibsen, was premièred in November 2025. Coll has been Composer-in-Residence with Camerata Bern and the Orquesta de València, and, as composer and conductor, is Artistic Partner to the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias.

His Violin Concerto for Kopatchinskaja, commissioned by the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, London Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, NTR ZaterdagMatinee, and Bamberger Symphoniker, was premièred in February 2020. His Cello Concerto for Gabetta was premièred in 2022 by the Philharmonie de Paris, conducted by the composer, and received its UK première at the 2024 BBC Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tianyi Lu. In 2024, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Gustavo Gimeno premièred *Ciudad sin sueño*, a new work for piano and orchestra for Javier Perianes; the North American Première was performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

A portrait disc of Coll's orchestral works, with Gimeno conducting, was released on Pentatone in 2021. Recent accolades include the 2022 BBC Music Magazine Award for Camerata Bern's recording of *Les Plaisirs Illuminés*, which he conducted, and International Classical Music Awards in 2019 and 2022 (first composer recipient).



Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104

Composed 1894–1895

40 min

THE CELLO IS A BEAUTIFUL INSTRUMENT, but its place is in the orchestra and in chamber music.... I have also written a 'cello-concerto, but am sorry to this day I did so, and I never intend to write another.

So said Dvořák late in life, according to one of his students—surprising sentiments for a composer whose Cello Concerto ranks among his greatest and most popular works. He wrote the concerto, he claimed, only after persistent pestering by a friend, the cellist Hanuš Wihan, with whom he had undertaken a concert tour of Bohemia and Moravia in 1892, shortly before leaving home to become

director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York. But he was also inspired by a cello concerto by a colleague at the conservatory, Victor Herbert. He attended the première of Herbert's concerto in Brooklyn, on March 10, 1894, and toward the end of that year, he found himself, to his surprise, writing a cello concerto of his own.

Dvořák completed the work in February of 1895, in New York, but in June, back home in Bohemia, he made revisions. Most significantly, he added an extraordinary, deeply poetic new ending as a heartfelt response to the death, in May, of his sister-in-law, who had been his first love 30 years earlier and had remained a close friend. One writer aptly described the new ending as "a long good-bye." Dvořák himself said it was "like a sigh." The concerto had its première, under the composer's baton, with the London Philharmonic Society, on March 19, 1896.

Dvořák audaciously chose to place his soloist before a large orchestra that includes trombones, tuba, piccolo, and triangle, yet he sidestepped problems of balance with great imagination, while still exploring an impressive range of textures and tone colours. Passages for the full orchestra are relatively rare—they serve as punctuation—and episodes featuring the cello are generally scored with a subtlety and transparency akin to chamber music. By the standards of most contemporary cello concertos, there is little dazzle and display in the solo part, and there are no cadenzas—though Wihan wanted one, and even composed one, which Dvořák rejected. To be sure, the drama, rhetoric, and interplay of forces in this work mark it as a true concerto, yet Dvořák tends to treat the soloist more as a singer than a virtuoso, and the lyricism of the cello part (most obviously in the gorgeous outpouring of song in the "Adagio") calls to mind his lifelong interest in opera.

Moreover, the music throughout has a folk-like cast that is typical of Dvořák, established at once in the opening theme (clarinets), with its flattened seventh, and

emphasized a few pages later in the great second theme (horn), with its pentatonic colouring. The allusions to folk music, the emotionally direct and picturesque quality of the music, the often driving rhythms (as in the "Finale"), the sometimes pastoral mood (as in the rapt conclusion of the "Adagio", where the woodwinds imitate birdsong, or in the sweet episode in the middle of the "Finale")—all are typical of Dvořák's "American style," though the boundary between American and Bohemian in his music is, admittedly, often blurry, and some listeners have (plausibly) heard in this concerto an expression of the homesickness he felt during his years in America.

The long orchestral introduction to the first movement promises a work of symphonic ambitions, and indeed Dvořák handles Classical forms here with confidence, ingenuity, and flexibility (the recapitulation of the first movement, for instance, begins with the second theme rather than the first). The movements are rich in themes and can seem episodic on first hearing, yet each is organized with great subtlety and evolves logically, organically. Dvořák reveals an impressive command of thematic variation and development. In the first movement, for instance, the cello enters with a long, passionate meditation in which the themes of the orchestral introduction are completely reimagined (as they will be, again, in the recapitulation and coda). Later, at the heart of the development section, the main theme is recast as a slow, mournful cello-flute duet in the far-distant key of A-flat minor. Like Brahms, his hero and champion, Dvořák, at this late stage in his career, was incapable of repeating an idea without showing it in some surprising and profound new light. It is no surprise that Brahms, after encountering this score not long before his death, was heard to remark, "Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a Violoncello Concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!"

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

For a biography of Gustavo Gimeno, please turn to page 8.



Pablo Ferrández, cello

These performances mark Pablo Ferrández's TSO début.

Prizewinner at the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition and Sony Classical exclusive artist Pablo Ferrández has been hailed as a "new cello genius" (*Le Figaro*). A captivating performer, "Ferrández has the lot: technique, mettle, spirit, authority as a soloist, expressivity and charm" (*El País*). Introduced by the Pittsburgh Symphony as "the next Yo-Yo Ma," Ferrández has turned into a cello phenomenon and one of the most in-demand instrumentalists of his generation.

His début album under Sony Classical, *Reflections*, released in 2021, was highly acclaimed by the critics and praised with the OPUS KLASSIK award. In fall 2022, Ferrández released his second album, which comprised the Brahms Double Concerto, performed with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Czech Philharmonic under Manfred Honeck, and Clara Schumann's Piano Trio, performed with Mutter and Lambert Orkis. *Moonlight Variations*, which includes Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*, was released in May 2025 and is Ferrández's most recent release on Sony Classical, this time with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Martin Fröst, and Julien Quentin as partners. It also received rave reviews.

Ferrández has, in recent seasons, appeared with the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Tonhalle Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony, hr-Sinfonieorchester, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Seoul Philharmonic, and many others. He has also toured with the London Philharmonic, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, WDR Sinfonieorchester, Antwerp Symphony, Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic, and Czech Philharmonic.

Ferrández is frequently invited to internationally renowned festivals such as the Verbier, Salzburg, Dresden, Rheingau, Sion, Aix-en-Provence, Tsinandali, Tongyeong, Abu Dhabi, and Dvořák Prague Festivals, among others.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include débuts with The Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony (US), Toronto Symphony, Utah Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony, SWR Symphonieorchester, China NCPA Orchestra, and Tsinandali Festival's Pan-Caucasian Youth Orchestra under Zubin Mehta. Ferrández also returns to the Boston Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Vienna Symphony, Antwerp Symphony, Festival Strings Luzern, Barcelona Symphony, Tenerife Symphony, Orquesta Filarmonica de Gran Canaria, Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana, and Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI.

Additionally, Ferrández will be Artist-in-Residence at the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Castilla y León Symphony Orchestra, performing various programs with the orchestras as well as in recital. The season also includes a trio tour with Mutter and Yefim Bronfman, and European tours with the European Union Youth Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko and with the Spanish National Symphony and David Afkham.

Ferrández plays the Stradivarius "Archinto" 1689, on generous life-long loan from a member of the Stretton Society.