

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

*Dvořák Symphony No. 8*

**Oksana Lyniv**, conductor  
**Illia Ovcharenko**, piano

**Zoltan Almashi**  
*Maria's City*  
Canadian Première

**Franz Liszt**  
**Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major**  
I. Allegro maestoso. Tempo giusto  
II. Quasi adagio – Allegretto vivace  
III. Allegro marziale animato

**Intermission**

**Antonín Dvořák**  
**Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88**  
I. Allegro con brio  
II. Adagio  
III. Allegretto grazioso – Molto vivace  
IV. Allegro ma non troppo

*Program 2*

Thursday,  
November 16, 2023\*  
8:00pm

Saturday,  
November 18, 2023  
8:00pm

\*There is a special free pre-concert performance at 6:45pm by the Ukrainian Art Song Project as part of The TSO Chamber Soloists series prior to the Thursday, November 16 performance only, for holders of tickets to that evening's performance.

Andrea Ludwig, mezzo-soprano  
Benjamin Butterfield, tenor  
Steven Philcox, piano

Ostap Nyzhankivsky  
"Ode to a Swallow"

Mykola Lysenko  
"Oriental Melody"

Stanyslav Liudkevych  
"A Memory"

Yaroslav Lopatynsky  
"A Blossoming Rose"

Vasyl Barvinsky  
"I Met You in My Dreams"

Yakiv Stepovy  
"Not All Sorrows Have Died"

Myroslav Volynsky  
"I Ache for You"  
"An Evening Tryst"

Kyrylo Stetsenko  
"Evensong"

The Ukrainian Art Song Project TSO pre-concert is funded in part by the BCU Foundation, and by Bohdan Leshchysheh and Myroslava Dubyk.

*Presented in partnership  
with the Canadian Ukrainian  
Opera Association.*

*Illia Ovcharenko's  
appearance is presented  
with support from the  
Honens International  
Piano Competition.*

Zoltan Almashi (b. 1975)

## Maria's City

Canadian Première

Composed 2022

11 min

**THE TITLE *MARIA'S CITY*** refers to Mariupol, the city that was destroyed in Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022. A place close to the composer's heart, Mariupol is the dedicatee of this powerfully poignant work for strings.

*Maria's City* begins quietly, meditatively, with solo viola intoning an arch-like phrase. It then muses on a turning motif, on which the rest of the strings soon join in and extend into a melodically evocative song. Solo violin leads out with the opening phrase, while a single cello follows in step with a delicate counterpoint.

From here, the mood blossoms to a more vibrant colour, with viola murmurs giving momentum to the warm chorale of harmonies in the rest of the strings. Thereafter, the strings begin to trade off an energetic rising motif that becomes increasingly determined, then defiant, as they come together and move through a sharply rhythmic dissonant passage. Upon reaching a cacophonous climax, the strings land on a piercing high note in the first violins. As the note gradually fades, the opening phrase re-emerges on solo viola, and here again solo cello lends support. Silence follows, then fragments of sound, after which solo instruments pick up the pieces of the turning motif, eventually leading to a reprise of the wistful song by the whole orchestra. This time, it develops further into an earnest melody of renewal. After the arch-like melody returns, there's a new reflective episode for string quintet, which ultimately fades out with the double bass on the opening phrase, weighty with expectation.

**COMPOSER BIO:** Zoltan Havrylovych Almashi is a Ukrainian composer, cellist, and teacher. Born in Lviv to a family of musicians, he studied cello and composition, eventually graduating from the city's Lysenko National Music Academy in both disciplines. Between 1999 and 2002, he continued doctoral studies in composition at the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Music Academy. Active in the musical life and contemporary music scene of Ukraine, Almashi has held many roles including artist and soloist instrumentalist of the National Ensemble of Soloists "Kyiv Chamber" and the Ricochet contemporary-music ensemble (since 2000); member of the Ukrainian contemporary-music ensemble *Nostri Temporis* (since 2007); and founder and director of the Gulfstream festival of classical and contemporary chamber music (since 2012).

Almashi has, to date, created more than 80 works, predominantly for chamber orchestra, which have been performed worldwide. His music is a synthesis of the traditional and the innovative in genre and style, with a tendency toward neo-Romanticism though infused with modern compositional elements. In his work, Almashi strives for vivid imagery, strong emotional expression, structural clarity, and a sense of dramatic arc.



—Program note written and bio edited by  
Hannah Chan-Hartley, PhD

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

## Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major

Composed 1832–1856

21 min

**IN 1848, HAVING TURNED HIS BACK** on a glamorous and lucrative international concert career—that he called a “circus” life—Liszt took a low-profile, low-paying conducting job in Weimar, a provincial German town that, over the next 13 years, he transformed into the capital of Europe’s musical avant-garde. There he radically reconceived traditional forms (Mass, oratorio, symphony, sonata) and invented new ones (symphonic poem), while revising some early works, including two of his three piano concertos (the third was discovered only in 1988). No. 1—gleaming, extroverted, thrillingly virtuosic—was conceived around 1832 but went through many bouts of revision in the two decades that followed. Liszt gave the first performance, in Weimar, on February 17, 1855, under no less a conductor than Hector Berlioz, though he made the final revisions to the score only the following year.

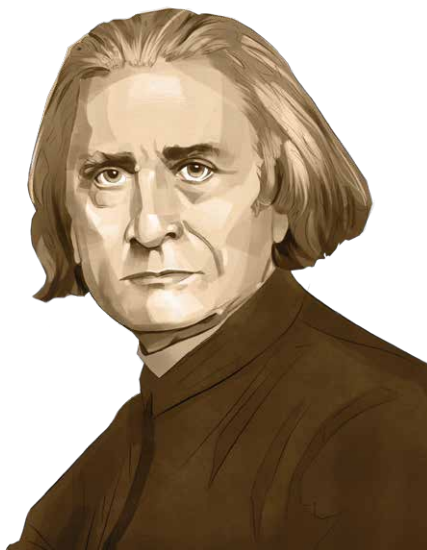
In form, the concerto is at once radically innovative and reliant (albeit loosely) on Classical models: it unfolds as a single

continuous drama, yet comprises four discrete sections that mimic the movements of a Classical symphony (fast, slow, scherzo, fast). Each of the first three “movements” has its own themes, but the march-like finale—heralded by the return of the opening theme—is made up entirely of themes from earlier “movements,” now wholly transformed. The cumulative effect provides a satisfying sense of closure.

Rhetorically, piano and orchestra are hardly equals here. From the very first pages, in which, repeatedly, it forcibly wrests the focus of attention from the orchestra to itself, the piano takes the lead in developing the musical plot. The brilliant piano writing is a culmination of techniques Liszt had been developing for 30 years, in solo works like the *Transcendental Études*, and, though the orchestra is more an accompanist than a partner, the scoring is colourful and innovative. After all, by 1856, Liszt had

worked on more than a dozen orchestral pieces. The charming—once notorious—triangle part in the scherzo and finale is but one example of his imagination. And, for the record, the old canard that this concerto was really orchestrated by one of his colleagues has been definitively refuted.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



↑  
Franz Liszt—by Dane Thibeault

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

## Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88

Composed 1889

36 min

**THE EIGHTH SYMPHONY** was a product of one of those periodic, prolific upsurges of nationalist sentiment during which Dvořák favoured a distinctively Slavonic idiom. He wrote the work quickly in the late summer of 1889, in the Bohemian countryside, and completed the scoring in November, in Prague, where he conducted the première the following February.

Every movement of the Eighth alludes to Slavonic folk music, through rustic-sounding melodies and harmonies, country-dance rhythms, and imitations of traditional instruments; we hear, too, Dvořák's great love of nature. This is a cheerful, proud, optimistic work, unusually animated and tuneful, though it incorporates a streak of melancholy that occasionally erupts into fury. The first movement is mostly joyful and its main theme (first played by a flute) is chirpy and fetching, yet it opens with a chorale-like tune in a minor key, which reappears at important junctures. When the main theme is rescored for English horn late in the movement, it seems to have absorbed some of the darker emotion of the "chorale."



↑  
Antonín Dvořák—by Dane Thibeault

The movement's final effect is of happiness deepened by poetic sentiment.

Dvořák boasted of "individual thoughts worked out in a new way" in this symphony; perhaps he meant the clever transformations and interrelationships of themes, or the reimagining of Classical forms (sonata, rondo, variations). Or perhaps he meant the picturesque middle movements, which seem like miniature symphonic poems. The second seems to evoke the natural landscape and

social life of a Czech village; the two main, alternating sections are both unmistakably Slavonic, and the scoring sometimes suggests a village band. The third movement opens with a melancholy, lusciously scored waltz, and the Trio section in the middle features cross-rhythms reminiscent of the Dvořák of the *Slavonic Dances*; in a charming coda, the Trio theme becomes a little polka, and the final bars wittily parody a village band winding up.

The finale unfolds in an idiosyncratic and unpredictable variation form, with a curious, somewhat grotesque march in the middle and one wildly dancing variation (listen for raucous woodwinds and horn trills) that eventually yields an exhilarating coda.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzano



### **Oksana Lyniv, conductor**

These performances mark Oksana Lyniv's TSO début.

Oksana Lyniv was born in Brody, Ukraine. In 2004, she won the third prize at the Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition in Bamberg, Germany. From 2008 to 2013, she was Deputy Music Director at the Odessa National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, Ukraine, and in the 2013/14 season, she became the assistant to the Bavarian State Opera's Music Director Kirill Petrenko in Munich.

In August 2021, she was the first woman ever to conduct at the Bayreuth Festival, again leading *The Flying Dutchman*, which was a triumphant success. Since then, she has returned every summer. Since January 2022, she has been Music Director of the prestigious Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Italy.

Lyniv is also conducting symphonic concerts with orchestras such as the Munich Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, the London Philharmonic, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva, the Vienna Symphony, the Bruckner Orchester Linz, and, of course, her own orchestra of Teatro Comunale di Bologna. She also founded and has been the Artistic Director of the Young Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, which has performed at many European venues such as Young Euro Classic in Berlin and the Lucerne Festival, among others.



### **Illia Ovcharenko, piano**

These performances mark Illia Ovcharenko's TSO début.

Praised as "technically flawless and impeccably musical" (*International Piano*), and winner of the lauded 2022 Honens International Piano Competition, 21-year-old Ukrainian pianist Illia Ovcharenko has taken the piano world by storm. Ovcharenko embodies Honens's ideal with his technical mastery, his perseverance against adversity, and an understanding of musical text that is intellectual and emotional. Highlights of the 2022/23 season include two Carnegie Hall performances and an international tour spanning Brussels, Paris, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Germany, and Canada.

He has performed with leading orchestras including the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Pomeranian Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Ukrainian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Versailles Conservatory String Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra.

Prior to winning the Honens Competition, Ovcharenko won the New York International Piano Competition in 2022, received Second Prize at the Hilton Head International Piano Competition in 2022, became Laureate of the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition in Italy in 2021, won the Michelangeli Prize at the Piano Academy Eppan in Italy, and claimed First Prize at the International Competition for Young Pianists in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz in Ukraine in 2019.

Ovcharenko is a recipient of the Presidential Scholarship of Ukraine.