

BEETHOVEN VIOLIN CONCERTO

GRIEG / SIBELIUS / MONTGOMERY

March 15 & 16, 2025

SUNSET CENTER, CARMEL

Sponsored by Lee and Shirley Rosen

Jayce Ogren, Music Director and Conductor

Simone Porter, violin

Soul Force

[running time 8']

Jessie Montgomery

(b. 1981)

Peer Gynt Suite [19']

Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

1. Morning Mood
2. Aese's Death
3. Anitra's Dance
4. Solveig's Song
5. In the Hall of the Mountain King

Finlandia, Op. 26 [8']

Jean Sibelius

(1865–1957)

INTERMISSION [20']

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 68 [42']

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

- I. Allegro, ma non troppo
- II. Larghetto
- III. Rondo. Allegro

*The March concert will be rebroadcast on KAZU's HD2 Classical station
on April 5th and 6th, 2025, both at 4 PM.*

Program Notes

By Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli

MARCH 15-16, 2025

Concert Synopsis

In this program, suppressed voices struggle to break free. With *Soul Force* contemporary composer Jesse Montgomery pits a solo horn and serene strings against raucous percussion in a sonic drama inspired by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We must respond to physical force with soul force." Two Scandinavians endeavor to establish sovereign identities. Norway's Edvard Grieg captured the character of a fairy-tale adventurer in his imaginative music to Henrik Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt*. Finland's Jean Sibelius composed the patriotic tone poem *Finlandia* in anticipation of his country's fight for independence. In 1806 Ludwig van Beethoven was facing several health crises and crippling physical pain. Yet in that year he produced an astonishing array of works now considered masterpieces—including his titanic Violin Concerto in D Major.

Soul Force (2015)

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)



Jessie Montgomery, Musical America's 2023 Composer of the Year, Jessie Montgomery, Musical America's 2023 Composer of the Year, is a Grammy-winning composer, violinist, and educator whose music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of twenty-first century American sound and experience. *Soul Force* was composed in 2015 and commissioned by The Dream Unfinished orchestra.

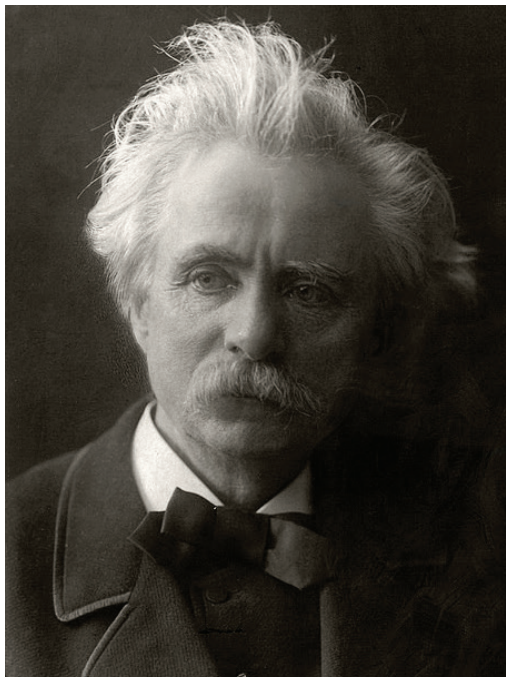
Montgomery has provided the following program notes:

"*Soul Force* is a one-movement symphonic work which attempts to portray the notion of a voice that struggles to be heard beyond the shackles of oppression. The music takes on the form of a march which begins with a single voice and gains mass as it rises to a triumphant goal.

Drawing on elements of popular African-American musical styles such as big-band jazz, funk, hip-hop and R+B, the piece pays homage to the cultural contributions, the many voices, which have risen against aggressive forces to create an indispensable cultural place.

I have drawn the work's title from Dr. Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech in which he states: 'We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.'

Peer Gynt Suite (1875)
Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)



Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen thought his surreal fable *Peer Gynt* would be impossible to stage so he initially published it as a poem intended solely to be recited aloud. *Peer Gynt's* unexpected success convinced Ibsen to attempt a staging at Oslo's Christiania Theater in 1876. Ibsen believed music was the key to unlocking the audience's imagination so he turned to countryman Edvard Grieg, a composer known for his brilliant Piano Concerto and arrangements of Norwegian folk music. Apprehensive about the "unmanageable subject," Grieg relented to Ibsen's request and labored to an impressive ninety minutes of music divided into twenty-six incidental pieces. Grieg published two suites from *Peer Gynt*. This program features Suite No. 1 in its entirety with the addition of "Solveig's Song" from Suite No. 2.

Based on a Norwegian folk tale, *Peer Gynt's* arrogant but loveable title character ventures from his home on a Norwegian farm, stumbles his way through a series of international misadventures, and returns home to receive love's redemption.

Morning Mood opens in the Moroccan desert at dawn. A solo flute presents a theme that audiences may recognize as the classic "sound of daybreak" from television and films. Flute and oboe trade the theme back and forth giving way to the theme's majestic statement for the violins.

Peer's mother contemplates the end of her life in *Aese's Death*. Opening with slow, mournful strings marked in the score as *doloroso* ("sorrowful"), the violin theme has the quality of a song without words made of melodies that continually reach upward. A second, descending phrase comes to rest on a final chord marked *morendo* ("dying").

A Moroccan princess attempts to seduce Peer in *Anitra's Dance*. Grieg sets the comical scene with a mischievous violin theme accompanied by plucked pizzicato strings playing a light rhythm marked *Tempo di Mazurka*, a reference to the waltz-like Polish dance form.

In *Solveig's Song*, a farm girl devoted to Peer yearns for his return. It begins in a relaxed *Andante* tempo with a melancholy violin theme evoking Solveig's suffering as she sits at her spinning wheel. The mood turns hopeful when Solveig reassures herself of Peer's dedication to her.

In the Hall of the Mountain King depicts Peer's narrow escape from the domain of the trolls. The plodding of pizzicato cellos and basses set into motion one of Grieg's most famous melodies. The theme builds slowly and with a menacing inevitability, portraying the Troll King's oncoming anger when Peer refuses to take his daughter's hand in marriage. British playwright George Bernard Shaw called it "a riotous piece of weird fun."

Finlandia, Op. 26 (1899)
Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)



As a Grand Duchy of the Russian Federation As a Grand Duchy of the Russian Federation, Finland enjoyed a reasonable amount of autonomy until Czar Nicholas II's February Manifesto of 1899 forced the use of Russian language, currency, and religious practices on the Finnish people. That year Finland's newspaper workers organized a benefit concert ostensibly to raise money for their pensions, but the concert's true purpose was the promotion of a free press and a fostering of national unity.

Jean Sibelius composed a new piece for the occasion: *A Press Celebration*. Sibelius already achieved success with a patriotic work for chorus and orchestra, *Kullervo*, based on Finland's national epic poem, the *Kalevala*. *A Press Celebration* consisted of a prelude followed by six tableaux, each portraying a different episode of Finnish history. The final tableau is the provocatively-titled "Finland Awakes," which Sibelius separated to create the symphonic tone poem *Finlandia*.

Finlandia's brassy and defiant introduction awakens a sleeping giant. Woodwinds answer the brass gently with a lyrical refrain reinforced aggressively by the strings. Rapidly repeating brass figures animate the exuberant Allegro. Woodwinds present a reverent hymn melody, one that moved Finnish poet V.A. Koskeniemi to bestow it with patriotic lyrics and the title "Be Still, My Soul." Finns embraced it as a song of national pride and it serves as the theme that triumphantly concludes Sibelius' most famous work.

The final tableau is the provocatively-titled "*Finland Awakes*," which Sibelius separated to create the symphonic tone poem *Finlandia*.

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 (1806)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)



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In 1802 Ludwig van Beethoven, despondent over his increasing deafness, wrote a letter to his brothers Carl and Johann from his country home in Heiligenstadt, Germany: “But what a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing...a little more of that and I would have ended my life. It was only my art that held me back. Oh, it seemed impossible to me to leave this world before I had produced all that I felt capable of producing...”

Those familiar with the life of Beethoven will recognize this as his famous Heiligenstadt Testament, a document that turned out to be less a letter than a manifesto. Beethoven not only never sent the letter, but he kept it close for the rest of his life as a comforting reminder of his mission.

For all of its reputation as a statement of artistic inspiration, the Heiligenstadt Testament also reveals a harsh reality. Age thirty-one and no longer able to perform, Beethoven faced the prospect of surviving only on his earnings as a composer. Even his distinguished predecessors Bach, Haydn, and Mozart never had that kind of economic insecurity.

Whether out of inspiration or desperation or both, Beethoven set out on a creative trajectory that is arguably unequalled in

history. In 1806 alone he composed an astonishing number of works now considered masterpieces: the three “Razumovsky” string quartets, the Fourth Symphony, most of the Fourth Piano Concerto, the second and third Leonore Overtures, a revision of his opera *Fidelio*, and the Violin Concerto in D Major.

Beethoven composed the concerto for soloist Franz Clement, a former child prodigy and popular Vienna concertmaster. Beethoven finished the score only two days before the premiere in December of 1806.

Having little time for experimentation, the concerto represents Beethoven at his most instinctive. The first movement, Allegro, ma non troppo (“not too fast”), establishes a march feel with four repeated timpani strokes. This uniquely simple motto ushers in a movement made from simple elements: four-bar phrases with flowing melodies made of step-wise scales. The slow movement, Allegretto, presents a serene theme embellished by ornamental filigree. The Rondo finale features “hunting” music with a galloping triplet feel and frequent French horn arpeggios. Historians speculate that Franz Clement composed the finale’s main theme himself to help Beethoven meet his deadline. Whatever the case, the theme and its accompaniment harken back to the more conventional, youthful Beethoven.

Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli

PROGRAM NOTES AUTHOR



Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli's innovative compositions for the concert stage, his deeply-felt scores for the studio and indie film worlds, and his skilled musical direction for artists from across the pop music spectrum earned him a reputation as a musician with a collaborative spirit and a broad vision.

His current release, *Continent's End*, received "Critic's Choice" from *Opera News*. The nine-song concert work for mezzo-soprano and piano on poems by California iconoclast Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) "perfectly embodies with its unpredictable harmonic twists and turns and its multi-tonality Jeffers' hyper-masculine, pantheistic, often erotic poetry" (*Raphael's Music Notes*). Nominated for an Emmy Award at age twenty-one, Anderson-Bazzoli composed scores for twenty feature and short films including the Venezuelan thriller *Ellipsis* (Fox) and the technology documentary *Revolution OS* (7th Art), among others. He received a Sundance Composer Fellowship and served as copyist, music librarian, or orchestrator on over three hundred films and TV shows including *Disney's Encanto*, *The Lion King* (2019), and *Top Gun Maverick*. As a conductor he worked with top recording artists Michael Bublé, Dr. Dre, Christina Aguilera, and She & Him (Zooey Deschanel and M. Ward) and served as editor and copyist for eminent composer-conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen.

While growing up in Pacific Grove, California, Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli learned tuba at age eleven, graduated from Stevenson School, and later earned a B.A. in Tuba and an M.A. in Music Composition from UCLA. In 2022 he relocated from Los Angeles to Carmel with his wife Donna Eshelman, a neuromuscular therapist and choreographer.