



presents...

PATRICIA KOPATCHINSKAJA | Violin
POLINA LESCHENKO | Piano

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

BARTÓK

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Sz.76

Molto moderato

Allegretto

POULENC

Sonata for Violin and Piano

Allegro con fuoco

Intermezzo

Presto tragico

INTERMISSION

ENESCU

Violin Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Opus 25

Moderato malinconio

Andante sostenuto

Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso

RAVEL

Tzigane

Patricia Kopatchinskaja is represented by HarrisonParrott Ltd
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Polina Leschenko is represented by Mark Stephan Buhl Artists Management
Geylinggasse 1, 1130 Vienna, Austria msbuhl.com

Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

ARTIST PROFILES

Tonight is the San Francisco recital debut of Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Polina Leschenko.



Moldovan born violinist and “one of the most distinctive voices in the violin world,” **Patricia Kopatchinskaja’s** unique approach shows itself in her diverse repertoire ranging from baroque and classical works played on gut strings, to new commissions and re-interpretations of modern masterpieces. “A player of rare expressive energy and disarming informality, of whimsy and theatrical ambition” (Zachary Woolfe, *New York Times*, June 2018).

2018–19 is another exciting season for Kopatchinskaja as she continues to collaborate with leading conductors and orchestras. The season begins with a debut for Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal (Kent Nagano), performances with the Bayerisches Staatsorchester and Berliner Philharmoniker (Kirill Petrenko) and a European tour with Kammerorchester Basel (Heinz Holliger). In the U.S., Kopatchinskaja will make another important debut with Cleveland Symphony Orchestra for concerts of Péter Eötvös’s *Seven* and under the baton of Currentzis she will revive Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto* with Musica Aeterna for a Japanese Tour.

With recital partner, Polina Leschenko she has released *Deux* (Alpha), which the duo will tour, making their collective debut to the U.S. and Japan.

Kopatchinskaja has held the position of Artistic Partner with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra since 2014 and was awarded a Grammy in 2018 for their recording, *Death and the Maiden* (Alpha). Other accolades include the prestigious Swiss Grand Award for Music in 2017, a recognition of exceptional talent and in-

novation awarded by the Federal Office of Culture for Switzerland.

Highlights last season included the world premiere of her new project, *Dies Irae* at the Lucerne Festival where she was “artiste étoile.” The project also received its North American premiere as part of Kopatchinskaja’s position as Music Director at the Ojai Music Festival this summer. Other highlights include appearances at the Salzburger Festspiele with Markus Hinterhauser and Camerata Salzburg for pieces by Ustwolskaja and Hartmann.



Polina Leschenko was born in St Petersburg into a family of musicians and began playing the piano under her father’s guidance at the age of six. Two years later she made her solo debut with the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra in St Petersburg. She studied with Sergei Leschenko, Vitali Margulis, Pavel Gililov, Alexandre Rabinovitch-Barakovsky and Christopher Elton. At the age of 16 she received her Higher Diploma with the greatest distinction from the Royal Conservatory in Brussels.

Leschenko works with orchestras around the world including Camerata Salzburg, Hallé, London Mozart Players, Scottish Chamber, Bournemouth Symphony, Britten Sinfonia, Bern Symphony, Russian National, I Pomeriggi Musicali in Milan, Orquesta de Euskadi and Australian Chamber Orchestra. A regular visitor to the Hallé, she performed in their 150th birthday celebration concert in February 2008, and in September 2008 she toured South America with the orchestra and Sir Mark Elder. As an accomplished and admired chamber musician, Polina Leschenko also performs frequently at many festivals, including Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Risør, Stavanger, Istanbul, Progetto Martha Argerich in Lugano, the Salzburg Festival and Musiktage Mondsee.

Regular collaborations with artists include Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Alissa Margulis, Priya Mitchell, Daniel Rowland, Alexander Sitkovetsky, Ivry Gitlis, Maxim Rysanov, Mark Drobinsky, Natalie Clein, Heinrich Schiff, Torleif Theodéen and the Auryn Quartet. Leschenko has given major solo recitals in Vienna’s Konzerthaus, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw and New York’s Carnegie Hall, as well as in Salzburg, Milan, London, Paris, Brussels, Minnesota and Atlanta.

In 2009 Leschenko began a new position as International Chair in Piano at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff, where she had a three-year residency.

In 2003 Polina Leschenko recorded a debut CD for EMI in the series *Martha Argerich presents...* with works by Liszt, Chopin, Kreisler/Rachmaninov, Brahms and Bach/Feinberg. She has also recorded a well-received disc of Prokofiev chamber music with Martha Argerich, Christian Poltéra and Roby Lakatos for Avanticlassic, with whom she has a recording contract. Avanticlassic released her recital disc, featuring an all-Liszt program including the B minor Sonata, in May 2007. The disc has won several awards: a Choc du Monde de la Musique, *Pizzicato* magazine’s Supersonic and a Joker from Belgian magazine *Crescendo*.

In 2009, EMI Classics released a recording of Glinka’s Sextet as part of the *Martha Argerich and Friends Live from the Lugano Festival* series.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Sz.76

BÉLA BARTÓK
(1881–1945)

World War I cut Bartok off from contemporary trends in music, but the end of the war freed musical life in Europe, and Bartók—then in his early forties—came into contact with the recent music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky. The effect on him was profound. Schoenberg’s influence in particular can be felt in Bartók’s two sonatas for violin (1921–22), where traditional tonality is often blurred. While he was tempted by Schoenberg’s theories, Bartók could never bring himself to renounce tonality completely. Looking back several years later he noted, “it is an unmistakable characteristic of my works of that period that they are built upon a tonal base.”

Such a description is a good introduction

to Bartók's *Violin Sonata No. 2*, composed in 1922. While this sonata still can seem bracing and dissonant, Bartók believed it to be firmly anchored in the key of C Major, and its dissonance, in fact, seems almost incidental. Bartók's biographer Halsey Stevens has noted that in this sonata, it "is as if the players were engaged upon different works simultaneously: works which correspond in length and structure and complement each other at every point, but share no themes or motives."

The *Molto moderato* is marked by extraordinary rhythmic freedom. The meter changes almost constantly, giving the music an improvisatory quality, as if this were in fact exotic gypsy fiddling: the haunting violin part is full of swirls, glissandos, and a variety of other decorations. The entire sonata is unified around the violin's simple rising-and-falling figure heard at the very beginning of this movement, which will reappear in a variety of shapes. Bartók proceeds with almost no pause into the *Allegretto*, introduced by the piano's brusque chords; the violin's main theme, played pizzicato, is a variant of the first movement's opening melody. At the close, the violin sings a broad restatement of the sonata's opening theme, and gradually the music trails off to its extraordinary ending: the violin has a harmonic E at the extreme top of its range, while the piano has a low C; into this Bartók inserts a solitary G, completing the sonata in quietly shimmering C Major.

Sonata for Violin and Piano

FRANCIS POULENC
(1899–1963)

A dark atmosphere hangs over Poulenc's *Violin Sonata*. He composed it in Paris in 1942–43, during the German occupation, and dedicated it to the memory of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, who had been murdered by the Fascists during the Spanish Civil War. Poulenc was the pianist at the premiere of the *Violin Sonata*, and the violinist on that occasion was the young French violinist Ginette Neveu. When she was killed in an air crash in 1949, Poulenc went back and revised the last movement of this sonata, which is pointedly marked *Presto tragico*.

One should not approach this sonata thinking that it is all darkness and gloom, for it is not. The sonata is in the expected three movements, and Poulenc treats the piano and violin as equals. The aptly

marked *Allegro con fuoco* is indeed full of fire. Its agitated beginning rides along a spiky energy that gives way to a more relaxed central episode, full of an unexpected sweetness. Poulenc attached a fragment of a quotation from Lorca to the slow movement—"The guitar makes dreams weep"—and we may hear something of the guitar, an instrument Lorca played, in the violin's pizzicato strokes here. The concluding *Presto tragico* returns to the manner of the opening movement, with a bristling energy and brilliant violin passages, including some for left-handed pizzicato. The ending is striking, and perhaps this is the section Poulenc re-fashioned after Neveu's death: the energy dissipates on a cadenza-like flourish for violin, and the sonata vanishes on sharp strokes of sound.

Violin Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Opus 25

GEORGE ENESCU
(1881–1955)

Enescu composed his *Violin Sonata No. 3* in 1926. The key to this striking music can be found in its subtitle: "in the popular Romanian character." Enescu sets out here to wed Romanian folk music with the classical violin sonata: the result is a virtuoso violin sonata and a very exotic piece of music. Though the sonata contains no specific folk tunes, Enescu assimilates a folk idiom so completely that it becomes the raw material for his own music. Romanian folk music inevitably suggests a gypsy character, and listeners will hear that in this sonata, as well as characteristic Romanian melodic patterns and Enescu's attempt to mirror the sound of native instruments such as the cimbalon and lautar. He notates the score with unusual precision, specifying notes to be played slightly sharp or flat, how the piano is to be pedaled, and so on.

Something of the emotional character of this sonata can be understood in a remark Enescu made to one of his students: he described it as "a fantasy on the life and soul of the gypsy fiddler, the kind of musical vagabond who roamed about Europe in the old days, playing at campfires, imitating not only the sounds of nature but also the techniques and stunts of other gypsy players."

The sonata is in the standard three movements but is quite free in structure and expression. The opening *Moderato malinconico* does indeed have a melancholy air. Its first theme-group consists of a series of brief thematic ideas, all riding along

a very supple rhythmic pulse; these will be combined and developed across the span of the movement. The dancing second group quickly turns passionate and soaring; the brief development leads to a modified return of earlier material and a quiet close.

The *Andante sostenuto* opens with the strange sound of a one-note piano ostinato—a high B—sounding obsessively; over this constant pulse the violin sings the first idea entirely in harmonics. This movement is quite varied, with moments of calm giving way to more ebullient episodes. The finale dances to life on the piano's sharp-edged chords, and quickly the violin leads the way through a series of varied sections, finally driving to a resounding conclusion marked triple *forte*.

Tzigane

MAURICE RAVEL
(1875–1937)

In 1922 Ravel heard a performance of his brand-new *Sonata for Violin and Cello* by Jelly d'Arányi and Hans Kindler. Ravel was so impressed by d'Arányi's playing that he stayed after her concert and talked her into playing gypsy tunes from her native Hungary for him—and he kept her there, playing until 5 a.m. Inspired by d'Arányi's playing and the fiery gypsy tunes, Ravel set out to write a virtuoso showpiece for the violin based on gypsy-like melodies (the title *Tzigane* means simply "gypsy"). Trying to preserve a distinctly Hungarian flavor, he wrote *Tzigane* for violin with the accompaniment of luthéal, a device which—when attached to a piano—gave the piano a jangling sound typical of the Hungarian cimbalon.

Ravel enters fully into the "gypsy" spirit and creates a virtuoso showpiece redolent of campfires and smoldering dance tunes. *Tzigane* opens with a long cadenza (nearly half the length of the entire piece) that keeps the violinist solely on the G-string across the span of the entire first page. While *Tzigane* seems drenched in an authentic gypsy spirit, all of its themes are Ravel's own, composed in the spirit of the tunes he heard d'Arányi play late that night. Gradually the accompaniment enters, and the piece takes off. Across its blazing second half Ravel demands such techniques from the violinist as artificial harmonics, left-hand pizzicatos, complex multiple-stops, and sustained octave passages as *Tzigane* rushes to its scorching close.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger