

23/24



# San Francisco Symphony

Saturday, May 11, 2024 • 7:30 pm  
Jackson Hall, UC Davis

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We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people.

Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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### *In Memory of Rodney Boon* | 1967 - 2024

Rodney Boon began working for the Mondavi Center in 2011 with a background as a musician, touring sound engineer and tour manager working with bands in the 1990s and early 2000s. He was promoted to Head Audio Engineer in 2013. Over the years, he worked tirelessly to improve and upgrade the sound and sound control systems in both Jackson Hall and the Vanderhoef Studio Theatre, especially the Meyer Leopard speaker arrays that are hanging in Jackson Hall and strived to make our theatre spaces sound perfect for our patrons. In fact, whenever you hear the lobby chimes, know that he personally created and recorded them!

Rod was able to pass on his knowledge of touring and live sound mixing to our current Mondavi Center team and leaves behind a legacy of excellence and ensuring a superb patron experience for all who come to the Mondavi Center. He was also a great friend and mentor to all of us on the production team.

Rod's impact to the Center cannot be overstated and his presence is felt every time you hear music in our venues. Our thoughts are with his wife, Melissa, and Rod will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

# **San Francisco Symphony**

**Marta Gardolińska, conductor**

**Pablo Ferrández, cello**

## **PROGRAM**

**Overture**

**Grażyna Bacewicz**  
(1909-1969)

**Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85**

Adagio - Moderato

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro, ma non troppo

Pablo Ferrández, cello

**Edward Elgar**  
(1857-1934)

**---INTERMISSION---**

**Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56, ("Scottish")**

Introduction and Allegro agitato—

Scherzo assai vivace—

Adagio cantabile—

Allegro guerriero and Finale maestoso

**Felix Mendelssohn**  
(1809-1847)

**\*PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE\***

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### Overture (1943)

#### GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ

**Born:** February 5, 1909, in Łódź, Poland

**Died:** January 17, 1969, in Warsaw

Grażyna Bacewicz was educated as a violinist at the Warsaw Conservatory and then went to Paris, where in the mid 1930s she studied composition with the famed pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. She spent the second half of her career in the Soviet sphere, which in theory promoted total gender equality, and she gained international exposure with performances and prizes in the United States and Western Europe. And yet she mostly disappeared from concert programs until recently. If there's a bright spot to this story, it's that we now have a chance to hear excellent music from the recent past almost as if brand new.

Bacewicz wrote her Overture (*Uwertura* in Polish) in Warsaw in 1943 under German occupation. It was not premiered until September 1945, in a very different world. On August 1, 1944, the underground Polish Home Army began to strike Nazi positions in Warsaw. Encouraged by Moscow Radio, and expecting imminent support from the Red Army, tens of thousands of citizens took up arms. But the Western-aligned resistance also posed a threat to Soviet postwar plans, so the Red Army halted on the outskirts of Warsaw, allowing the Germans to kill 250,000 more people and raze the city. "Suffice to say that Warsaw is no more," Bacewicz wrote to her brother the following year, three months after Germany's surrender. "The city is gone for but a few houses . . . there is no railway station there, not a single bridge, nothing but heaps of ruins." In the same letter, she noted that she'd saved all her compositions "apart from Overture, which I've recently reconstructed." She published it in 1947.

The piece begins with timpani and a scrubby romp in the strings. It's a typical Bacewicz effect—dissonant and noisy in the details, but cogent and lively in shape and attitude. A more lyrical middle section features the flute, somewhat French in style, while the end is an exhilarating, optimistic, and brilliantly orchestrated rush.

—BENJAMIN PESETSKY

A version of this note previously appeared in the program book of the Melbourne Symphony.

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### Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85 (1919)

#### EDWARD ELGAR

**Born:** June 2, 1857, in Broadheath, outside Worcester, England

**Died:** February 23, 1934, in Worcester

Edward Elgar's was a strangely paced career. He was a few weeks short of 40 when he first drew attention with an *Imperial March* for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, he composed all the music upon which his reputation rests between the ages of 42 and 62, and he lived to be 76. Once on his way, he quickly achieved an eminence of which few artists dare dream, the first performances of his Symphony No. 1 in 1908 marking the zenith of his fame. At the premiere of his Symphony No. 2 two-and-a-half years later, it was clear that the tide had turned. By 1919, the year of the Cello Concerto, he was a monument. He commanded some respect and provoked occasional ridicule, but for the most part he was an object simply of indifference. The prospect of the first major Elgar score since the 1913 tone-poem *Falstaff* was not enough to fill Queen's Hall when the Cello Concerto was premiered; no one, moreover, bothered to protest on the composer's behalf when Albert Coates, the conductor for the rest of the program, usurped much of Elgar's rehearsal time to work on Borodin's Symphony No. 2 and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*. Only consideration for his soloist kept Elgar from withdrawing his concerto. The performance was a near disaster.

Elgar had a keen sense of his own "irrelevance." The 1914 war had depressed Elgar utterly. The slaughter of men and horses (the latter almost more important to him than the former) caused him unquenchable anguish, and he saw clearly that a whole world—his world—was being swept away forever. *Falstaff* was completed in July 1913. For four years after that, Elgar wrote only minor and occasional pieces. In 1918 and 1919 he wrote, almost as postscript, a series of compositions whose intimacy was new in his work: the Violin Sonata, the String Quartet, the Piano Quintet, and the Cello Concerto. A week after the first performance of the concerto, Alice Elgar, eight years older than her husband, entered her final illness. She died five months later, in April 1920. That closed down Elgar's spirit for good and ended his life as a composer, except for minor scores.

The conductor Adrian Boult said: "With the Cello Concerto [Elgar] struck a new kind of music, with a more economical line, terser in every way. He was rather good at it, and having written the Cello Concerto it is extraordinary he didn't get bitten by the new style." Boult's remark is surprising in that it does not take into account the crushing of Elgar's spirit by his wife's death, something on which all accounts by those who knew him agree, but the musical observation is important.

## THE MUSIC

The soloist begins the concerto with a sentence of recitative that is spacious, extroverted, noble, and tinged by melancholy. What happens in the orchestra, a few notes of accompaniment and a brief woodwind echo of the first phrase, is a miracle of unostentatious mastery. Picking up the cello's last note, the violas begin a gentle, ambling theme; this was the first idea Elgar had noted for this work. It descends beyond the violas' range, is carried on by the cellos, and is then reiterated and expanded by the soloist. Unaccompanied at first, it gets a lovely series of subtly oblique harmonizations once the soloist has taken it on. Clarinets and bassoon propose a new lilting theme, and the cello makes gently tristful comment—which does not, however, keep the tune from moving into warm E major. The first section is recapitulated with ever more beautiful scoring. Enjoy, for example, the delicately placed notes for the timpani.

The first movement subsides on a low E, plucked in the solo, bowed in the orchestra. The sound of that note in the orchestral cellos and basses seems to remind the soloist of the way the concerto began. It is enough, at any rate, to get him to reminisce, still in pizzicato, about the recitative. The orchestra is quick to discourage any such sentimentality, urging the soloist to get going. The scherzo, when it is finally under way, is a brilliant study in repeated notes, full of rhythmic surprises, and the orchestra accompanies with the utmost deftness. A delightfully flush theme makes a few visitations, but the dominant style of this movement is lighter-than-air.

Now the stage is darkened. The songful Adagio is a great page by a great composer of slow movements. It rises briefly to an urgent climax and sinks to a close on a question mark. The orchestra takes the hint and begins a distant march-like music, but modulating rapidly so as to bring things around to the soloist from his Adagio musings; instead, it immediately sets him into the recitative mood again. The brief accompanied cadenza done, the march takes off and the finale is under way. Up to a point it seems to be a cheery, uncomplicated rondo. Then a new and slower theme in a broader meter and rich chromatic harmony changes the mood. That somber mood established, another change of meter, now to triple-time, brings the music to its most impassioned climax. We catch just a ghost of the Adagio, followed by a recollection of the opening recitative, and then the concerto hurries to its close.

—MICHAEL STEINBERG

## Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56 ("Scottish") (1842)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

**Born:** February 3, 1809, in Hamburg

**Died:** November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

Felix Mendelssohn, a child of privilege, grew up in cosmopolitan Berlin, surrounded by money and culture. Grandson of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, his father was a successful

banker. Felix's genius manifested early, not just in music—his keyboard and compositional facility is often compared to the young Mozart's—but he possessed as well a remarkable gift for drawing and painting, for poetry, for languages. Mendelssohn augmented his education by traveling widely, trips to England winning him fans among British music-lovers including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He dressed with style and paid attention to his appearance. He is often thought of as an artistic dandy, as though the elfin quality of his music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had migrated in listeners' minds to his other works. In his 2003 biography of the composer, R. Larry Todd attempted to demolish the perception that "Mendelssohn's music evinced a 'pretty' elegance and superficiality that could not withstand the weightier 'profundity' of Beethoven and Wagner." Wagner, indeed. It was Wagner who attacked Mendelssohn in his 1850 essay "Judaism in Music," a document as obtuse and hateful as anything spat out by an Oathkeeper or a Proud Boy, attacking Jewish culture in general and Mendelssohn in particular for a catalog of offenses and inadequacies, among them the inability to create art that penetrated to the essence of things.

Mendelssohn embraced classical principles and wanted to please his audience with music whose appeal lay not just in the beauty of its skin but also in the firmness of the sinews beneath. His *Scottish Symphony* is cast in a pictorial vein, and very vaguely it is "about" something, inspired by or commenting on the world outside itself—the Scottish landscape, say, though it is as much about music itself as it is about lochs and moors and heather.

In 1829, after wowing London's music lovers, Mendelssohn took a break and set out with a friend on a tour of Scotland, including a visit to the Inner Hebrides, off the country's northwest coast. On the island of Staffa, they visited Fingal's Cave, a grotto that attracted a host of Romantic writers and artists, among them Keats and Wordsworth, Tennyson and Turner. The barren seascape captivated Mendelssohn, and even before setting eyes on the cave he sketched a theme intended to suggest the rolling sea and Hebridean mists. These impressions made their way into the overture we know today both as *The Hebrides* and *Fingal's Cave*.

The Mendelssohn symphony on this program also owes its genesis to that tour of Scotland. At sunset one July evening, visiting Mary Queen of Scots' Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, Mendelssohn was moved by the ruins of the abbey and by what he knew of the ill-fated queen's history. He would translate these reflections into the opening of his *Scottish Symphony*, which, like the overture, would wait years to be realized. Both works, writes R. Larry Todd, "seem inspired more by a synaesthetic blending of the visual and musical, and by highlighting the painterly attributes of music [rather] than by elucidating a dramatic narrative." Exactly how music suggests visual images is a puzzle that perhaps only a psychologist or philosopher can solve. Our willingness to play along surely helps, although a listener's enthusiasm can be misleading. No less a listener than Robert Schumann confused Mendelssohn's *Scottish* and *Italian* symphonies. He praised the *Scottish*'s "beautiful Italian pictures."

## THE MUSIC

Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3 is dedicated to Queen Victoria, and it was first performed in 1842, 13 years after the evening at Holyrood that inspired it. If we choose to, we can detect something of that solemn twilight scene in the brooding, impassioned introduction. From this slow music, the allegro emerges. Perhaps the music is tinged with a Scottish quality, though you should know that Mendelssohn himself dropped the work's "Scottish" title. The keening second subject suggests a folkloric character before the music grows nebulous, transitioning to the development, in which an overtly pictorial passage suggests sudden gusts of wind. The movement ends as it began, that slow music setting the stage for a buzzing in the strings, background to a rustic dancelike tune in the winds, the onset of the scherzo. This brief interlude leads back to the spirit of the symphony's introduction and sets the stage for an elegant adagio, wistful and pensive. From an almost motionless calm, the mood shifts into an aggressive forward motion, announcing the final movement. Suddenly the tempo slows. Winds call to each other. After a brief silence, the orchestra proclaims a noble theme that emerges as though from nowhere. It is unmistakably triumphant, as though all the struggles and tensions visited until now are finished—not so much resolved as forgotten.

—LARRY ROTHE

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



### MARTA GARDOLIŃSKA

Marta Gardolińska is music director of Opéra National de Lorraine and principal guest conductor of Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona. She came to international attention in 2018 as a young conductor in association at the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, which led to a Dudamel

Fellowship with the Los Angeles Philharmonic during the 2019–2020 season. She served as second conductor to Gustavo Dudamel on a Grammy Award-winning Deutsche Grammophon recording of Ives's Symphony No. 4, and she made her LA Phil debut at the Hollywood Bowl.

Ms. Gardolińska debuts this season with the BBC Scottish Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, and San Francisco Symphony. She also returns to the Orquestra Sinfònica de Tenerife and conducts Haydn's *Creation* with the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona. Recent debuts include the London Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and Royal Northern Sinfonia. Other highlights include Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Polish National Radio Symphony, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Ms. Gardolińska studied conducting at the Chopin University of Music in Warsaw and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. In 2016 she was named an "Outstanding Pole in Austria" for her efforts in popularizing Polish culture and music.



### PABLO FERRÁNDEZ

Pablo Ferrández was a prizewinner at the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition. This season he debuts with the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Tonhalle Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Dusseldorf Symphony, HR-Sinfonieorchester, and San Francisco Symphony. Recent highlights include appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, Bavarian Radio Symphony, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchestra, Tonkünstler Orchestra, Vienna Radio Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, and Seoul Philharmonic.

A Sony Classical exclusive artist, Mr. Ferrández released his debut album, *Reflections*, in 2021, earning the Opus Klassik Award. In 2022 he recorded the Brahms Double Concerto and Clara Schumann's Piano Trio with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter.

Born in Madrid in 1991 to a family of musicians, Mr. Ferrández joined the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía at age 13, completed his studies at the Kronberg Academy, and became a scholar of the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation. He plays Antonio Stradivari's 1689 "Archinto" cello on a generous lifelong loan from a member of the Stretton Society.

### SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

The San Francisco Symphony is among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. In the 2020–21 season, the San Francisco Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its 12th Music Director, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape. In their inaugural season together, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of cultural disciplines: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers, along with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony, have set out to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners' unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas.

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