

Dancing in the Scores

Sinfonietta

David Avshalomov

- I. Business as Usual
- II. Forest, Farewell
- III. Expiration (Farewell Air)

Harp Concerto in C minor

Henriette Renié

Dan, Levitan, Harp

- I. Allegro risoluto
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Final

Rumanian Folk Dances

Béla Bartok

-
- I. *Bot tánc / Jocul cu bâță* (Stick Dance)
 - II. *Brâul* (Sash Dance)
 - III. *Topogó / Pe loc* (In One Spot)
 - IV. *Bucsumí tánc / Buciumeana* (Dance from Bucsum)
 - V. *Román polka / Poarga Românească* (Romanian Polka)
 - VI. *Aprózó / Mărunțel* (Fast Dance)

Three Dances from "*The Bartered Bride*"

Bedrich Smetana

- I. Polka
- II. Furiant
- III. Dance of the Comedians

Joropo

Moises Moleiro

Guest artist: Jackeline Rago, Maracas

PROGRAM NOTES

David Avshalomov (b. 1946): *Sinfonietta*

David Avshalomov is a third-generation classical composer, conductor, and singer born in New York City. He studied at Harvard University and the University of Washington, later serving as a Singing Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force, where he continued composing.

Commissioned in 2018 by conductor Emily Ray for the Mission Chamber Orchestra of San Jose, *Sinfonietta* is a powerful three-movement work that reflects the composer's deep concern for the environment and the spiritual cost of global materialism.

The opening movement, *Business as Usual*, launches the full orchestra into a bold, tightly structured sonata-form piece in a modern Romantic style—brusque, bitter, and urgent. The second movement, *Forests, Farewell*, offers a poignant contrast, scored for strings alone. Its flowing, episodic melodies form an arch of sorrow and remembrance, mourning the loss of ancient forests and evoking images of clear-cutting and fire. The final movement, *Expiration*, begins as a restless, ironic anti-scherzo, moving through a dreamy interlude that gazes longingly at the Milky Way. The return of the scherzo fragments and fades, ultimately dissolving into silence—a haunting symbol of a world out of breath.

Henriette Renié: Harp Concerto in C minor

Henriette Renié was a pioneering French harpist, composer, and pedagogue whose legacy helped elevate both the harp repertoire and the role of women in classical music. A prodigy who rose to fame at a young age, Renié overcame societal barriers to forge a distinguished career as a performer and teacher. Her harp method remains a foundational text for harpists worldwide.

Composed in 1901, Renié's *Concerto in C minor* is a masterful blend of virtuosity and lyricism, showcasing her deep understanding of the harp's expressive potential. Cast in four movements and rooted in the Romantic tradition, the work weaves a refined musical tapestry. The slow movement glows with serene, transparent beauty, while the scherzo dances with balletic grace. The dramatic finale, tinged with operatic flair, reveals Renié's theatrical instincts and compositional confidence. Throughout, the dialogue between harp and orchestra is delicately balanced, resulting in a sound world both intimate and radiant.

This concerto stands as a testament to Renié's artistry and vision—a shining example of her enduring influence on harp music and her trailblazing role in music history.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945): *Romanian Folk Dances*

Composed in 1915 and later orchestrated in 1917, Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* are a vibrant celebration of traditional music and a testament to his groundbreaking work as a composer and ethnomusicologist. During his travels through Transylvania—then part of Hungary, now Romania—Bartók collected countless folk melodies, recording and preserving a musical heritage that was at risk of disappearing.

This short suite of six dances is based on authentic Romanian tunes originally played on fiddle or flute in village celebrations. Each movement captures a distinct rhythm and mood, from spirited and rustic to lyrical and wistful. Though brief, these dances are packed with character and color, showcasing Bartók's brilliance in transforming folk material into concert music without losing its raw vitality.

With its lively rhythms and evocative textures, *Romanian Folk Dances* remains one of Bartók's most popular works—an enduring bridge between the past and the concert hall, folk tradition and modern artistry.

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884): *Three Dances from The Bartered Bride*

Bedřich Smetana, widely considered the father of Czech national music, composed *The Bartered Bride* in 1866 with a libretto by Karel Sabina. Though its premiere met with modest success, the opera was gradually revised and eventually became a national treasure—and one of the few 19th-century Czech operas to enter the international repertoire.

Set in a Bohemian village, this comic opera tells the story of a young woman navigating an arranged marriage with wit and determination. Smetana infused the score with lively, folk-inspired music that reflects both the humor and heart of village life.

The three orchestral dances heard in concert are some of the opera's most beloved highlights. The *Polka*, which ends Act I, features jaunty rhythms, playful pauses, and sudden tempo shifts. The *Furiant*—a fast, fiery Bohemian dance—displays Smetana's clever use of shifting accents and syncopations to create rhythmic tension. The *Dance of the Comedians*, from Act III, accompanies a traveling circus troupe with whirlwind energy and a spirited rondo form, complete with a brief lyrical interlude before its exuberant finish.

Together, these dances showcase Smetana's flair for national style, theatrical color, and melodic invention.

Moisés Moleiro (1904–1979): *Joropo*

Moisés Moleiro was a celebrated Venezuelan composer and pianist known for infusing his works with the rich musical traditions of his homeland. Among his most iconic compositions is *Joropo*, a dazzling piano piece that captures the infectious spirit of Venezuela's national dance.

Rooted in the folk traditions of the Venezuelan plains (*llanos*), the joropo is a fast-paced, rhythmically intricate style of music and dance. Moleiro translates this vibrant form into a virtuosic showpiece for solo piano, evoking the percussive strumming of the *cuatro* and the crisp rhythms of maracas through sparkling, syncopated textures and spirited melodies.

Though originally written for piano, *Joropo* has been arranged for various ensembles, reflecting its universal appeal. It remains a favorite in the Latin American repertoire, radiating joy and national pride while bridging folk traditions with classical technique.