With a “dark-hued tone and razor-sharp technique” (*The New York Times*), Russian-American violinist Yevgeny Kutik has captivated audiences worldwide with an old-world sound that communicates a modern intellect. Praised for his technical precision and virtuosity, he is also lauded for his poetic and imaginative interpretations of standard works as well as rarely heard and newly composed repertoire.

A native of Minsk, Belarus, Yevgeny Kutik immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of five. His 2014 album, *Music from the Suitcase: A Collection of Russian Miniatures* (Marquis Classics), features music he found in his family’s suitcase after immigrating to the United States from the Soviet Union in 1990, and debuted at No. 5 on the Billboard Classical chart. The album garnered critical acclaim and was featured on NPR’s *All Things Considered* and in *The New York Times*. Kutik’s 2012 debut album, *Sounds of Defiance*, also on the Marquis label, features the music of Achron, Pärt, Schnittke, and Shostakovich. Kutik released his third solo album, *Words Fail*, to critical acclaim on Marquis Classics in October 2016. The album uses Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words* as a starting point to expand upon the idea that music surpasses traditional language in its expressive capabilities, and includes two new commissions on the theme by Timo Andres and Michael Gandolfi.

Highlights of Yevgeny Kutik’s current season include his debut with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra playing Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 3, as well as debuts with the La Crosse and Tallahassee symphony orchestras, and performances with the Traverse and Berkshire symphony orchestras. Highlights of his recitals this season include performances at the University of Arizona Presents, Kean Stage, Tuesday Evening Concert Series, the Glacier Symphony & Chorale’s Festival Amadeus, and the Nantucket Musical Arts Society. Additionally, at the invitation of the International March of the Living, he will perform concerts in Warsaw and Krakow, and appear at the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony at Auschwitz in April 2018.

Deeply committed to fostering creative relationships with living composers, Yevgeny Kutik has been involved in commissioning and premiering new works. Recent highlights include the world premieres of Timo Andres’ *Words Fail* at The Phillips Collection, Michael Gandolfi’s *Arioso Doloroso/Estatico* at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, Ron Ford’s concerto *Versus* with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and Sheila Silver’s *Six Beads on a String*, as well as the New York premiere of George Tsontakis’ Violin Concerto No. 2 at the 92nd Street Y. He has also been involved in the performances of new and rarely played works by Kati Agócs, Joseph Schwantner, Nico Muhly, and Donald Martino.

Passionate about his heritage and its influence on his artistry, Kutik is an advocate for the Jewish Federations of North America, the organization that assisted his family in coming to the United States, and regularly speaks and performs across the United States to both raise awareness and promote the assistance of refugees from
around the world.

Yevgeny Kutik made his major orchestral debut in 2003 with Keith Lockhart and The Boston Pops as the First Prize recipient of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Young Artists Competition. In 2006, he was awarded the Salon de Virtuosi Grant as well as the Tanglewood Music Center Jules Reiner Violin Prize.

Yevgeny Kutik began violin studies with his mother, Alla Zernitskaya, and went on to study with Zinaida Gilels, Shirley Givens, Roman Totenberg, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a bachelor's degree from Boston University and a master's degree from the New England Conservatory and currently resides in Boston. Kutik’s violin was crafted in Italy in 1915 by Stefano Scarampella.

For more information, please visit www.yevgenykutik.com.

~Program Notes~
Berkshire Symphony Orchestra
November 17, 2017

Walter Piston (1894-1976)
Serenata for Orchestra

The prolific composer Walter Piston is perhaps one of American music’s great forgotten gems. His is perhaps best remembered as a professor of Theory and Composition at Harvard, where he exerted a tremendous influence on American music - indeed, his students included Leonard Bernstein, Elliot Carter, John Harbison, Samuel Adler, and Frederic Rzewski. But Piston was a prolific composer in his own right, with numerous compositions to his name, including orchestral works, ballets, concerti, and chamber and solo works.

Piston’s music is reflective of his diverse musical influences. Before studying at Harvard, Piston joined the Navy as a band musician during World War I where he taught himself to play most wind instruments. Then, at Harvard, Piston became interested in the developing serial techniques of Schoenberg that were in vogue in the academy. Following graduation, he received a fellowship to study in Paris with the great counterpoint instructor Nadia Boulanger. The resulting sound was unique and distinctive, which earned him commissions from major orchestras and a Pulitzer Prize for his third symphony. Still, among American composers, Piston has never quite broken through to the level of lasting fame achieved by Copland, Bernstein, and Gershwin; indeed, he has remained relegated to a second tier of American composers including Roy Harris and Howard Hanson.

In the Sinfonietta, scored for chamber orchestra, Piston shows his interest in reviving classical forms and adapting them to his own distinctive sound. The piece is of a smaller scale compared to his other orchestral literature - it is scored for a small
orchestra and lasts only fifteen minutes. Piston wrote the Sinfonietta for the conductor Bernard Zinghera, who conducted its premiere in Boston on March 10, 1941.

- Leonard Bopp

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 14

Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, composed 1939-40, was the first concerto the composer ever wrote, to be followed by the Cello Concerto of 1945 and, much later, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Piano Concerto of 1962, the latter written for the opening of the new Philharmonic Hall (now David Geffen Hall) at New York's Lincoln Center, where it was premiered by Erich Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony Orchestra with John Browning as soloist. Another BSO music director, Serge Koussevitzky, was an important early champion of Barber's. It was Koussevitzky who, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, gave the first performances of Barber's Cello Concerto in 1946, and of his Knoxville: Summer of 1915 in 1948.

Barber's musical legacy stands as testimony to the awareness he expressed when he was eight or nine, in a hesitant "Notice to Mother and nobody else" which reads in part: "To begin with I was not meant to be an athete [sic]. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I'm sure... Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football— Please—Sometimes I've been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very)."

Barber began piano lessons when he was six, started composing when he was seven, and briefly took cello lessons; he was encouraged in his musical pursuits by his maternal aunt, the contralto Louise Homer. In 1924, when he was fourteen, Barber entered the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia as a member of its first class, studying piano, composition, conducting, and voice. (In 1928, another student of composition, Gian Carlo Menotti, entered the Curtis Institute, where he and Barber began a friendship; the two became lifelong companions.) Already during his eight years at Curtis, where he later taught composition from 1939 until 1942, he produced several works that marked him as a talented composer, among them his Opus 3 Dover Beach, a setting for voice and string quartet of Matthew Arnold's text, which Barber himself recorded in 1935.

By the time of his death in January 1981, the seventy-year-old composer had produced works in nearly every important genre; anyone beginning to investigate his music will want to know at least this small cross-section of his output: Knoxville, Summer of 1915, a setting for soprano and orchestra of a James Agee text; the Hermit Songs and Despite and Still, both for voice and piano; the Cello Sonata and the Piano Sonata; the
Adagio for Strings (originally the slow movement of his String Quartet, and premiered, along with the composer's First Essay for Orchestra, by Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony in 1938); and the Overture to The School for Scandal, the first of his works to be performed by a major orchestra (it was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra in August 1933). In addition, there are two important operas: the Pulitzer Prize-winning Vanessa, which was premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1958 and produced at the Salzburg Festival the same year, and Antony and Cleopatra, which was entirely overwhelmed by Franco Zeffirelli's production when it opened the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in September 1966 and which began to win fair treatment only in its revised version of 1974 upon its premiere at the Juilliard School in February 1975. (The only available recording was drawn from performances at the 1983 Spoleto Festivals in Charleston and Italy; more recently, Antony and Cleopatra was produced by Lyric Opera of Chicago during the 1991-92 season.)

In his approach to musical form and harmony, Barber never attempted to deny his affinity for the musical romanticism of the nineteenth century. In 1971 he observed that, when writing, say, a concerto, "I write what I feel. I'm not a self-conscious composer. . ." His work is always lyrically and dramatically expressive in a way that readily brings the listener into his music.

Barber wrote the Violin Concerto on commission from the Philadelphia businessman Samuel Fels, who was the manufacturer of Fels Naphtha soap* and a member of the Curtis Institute of Music's Board of Trustees. The work was intended for Fels's adopted son, Iso Briselli, a former child prodigy then in his late twenties. Barber composed the first two movements in Switzerland in the summer of 1939 and sent them to Briselli. According to Nathan Broder's 1954 biography of the composer, Briselli found these two movements "too simple and not brilliant enough for a concerto"—though this account was disputed in the November 1995 issue of The Strad, where an article by George Diehl describes Briselli's reaction only as "one of enthusiasm and admiration." Barber subsequently began the finale in Paris but completed it only after the increasing anxiety of war necessitated his return home.

There are also conflicting accounts of what happened next. According to Broder, Briselli declared the last movement too difficult and Fels demanded the return of his payment, whereupon Barber arranged a private performance by the American violinist Oscar Shumsky to demonstrate that the work was in fact playable. In her recent biography of the composer, Barbara B. Heyman relates that Briselli—in a 1982 interview with Heyman—later claimed only to have found the third movement "too lightweight" compared to the rest of the piece (with no mention of technical difficulties) and even suggested certain structural changes. (This is supported in the aforementioned Strad account.) In any event, a demonstration was set up to show that the concerto was
playable—though it remains unclear who needed convincing, since, according to Diehl's article, this was not for the benefit of Briselli and Fels, both of whom remained unaware of this "test" until afterwards. Again, according to Heyman, the demonstration took place at Curtis in the fall of 1939, even before the last movement was finished; Herbert Baumel played the violin part from manuscript with just two hours' notice. The upshot: Barber received his full commission, and Briselli relinquished the premiere (though according to Broder, Barber bought back the right of first performance by returning half of Fels's original payment). When the concerto was finished, it was played by Baumel with the Curtis Institute Orchestra under Fritz Reiner, and then privately by Oscar Shumsky with Barber at the piano, to allay any lingering concerns on the composer's part before the official premiere, which took place on February 7, 1941, with violinist Albert Spalding and the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy.

The music itself needs little introduction. Despite its "Allegro" marking, the first movement is generally melodic and expansive, its moments of tension and climactic outbursts typically giving way to the characteristic song-fullness. A poignant oboe line, only later taken up by the solo violin, sets the mood of the Andante, which moves from C-sharp minor to E major and whose tranquil atmosphere likewise stands in sharp contrast to the quick-moving perpetual-motion brilliance of the finale.

— Marc Mandel

Arthur Honegger (1892-1955)
Pastorale d'été

It is widely acknowledged that the famous "Groupe des Six," the six French composers traditionally bracketed together as the avant-garde of the 1920s, had no common aesthetic and no real standing as an artistic movement. The lack of homogeneity in the group is normally ascribed to one member, Arthur Honegger, since he never showed any enthusiasm for the iconoclastic outbursts of Cocteau and Satie, and went his own way as a composer. The other five were disparate in their own ways, but Honegger departed most obviously from their manufactured orthodoxy.

No work confirms this independence more clearly than Pastorale d'été, composed within a few months of the curious proclamation in the French press that six young composers were taking music into the new era. At the Armistice in 1918, Milhaud had come back to Paris from Brazil. In January 1920, he invited a group of fellow musicians to a private soiree in his apartment. Durey, the oldest, was thirty-two, never very committed to music and no natural path-breaker; Germaine Tailleferre, at twenty-eight, and Honegger, twenty-five, had been classmates with Milhaud at the Paris
Conservatoire; Poulenc and Auric, both twenty, were looking for musical adventure. One work by each composer was played, Honegger playing his own violin sonata with his future wife at the piano.

Among the handful of journalists invited to the soirée was Henri Collet of the arts journal *Comœdia*. He it was who proclaimed "*les Six Français*" to be the new "*Russian Five*." Satie was cast in the role of prophet of the group and Cocteau the mouthpiece. In a radio interview in 1950 Honegger said: "*Les Six*? No one would ever have used this label without Collet's article. Cocteau? He's not a musician, not even enough to justify scattering arbitrary judgments about Bach and Beethoven. Satie? I don't think much of his music"—a discreetly coded condemnation. He continued with a fair summary of his own aesthetic position: "There's no point knocking down doors you can open. To go forward it seems to me essential that you remain solidly attached to what came earlier. There's no need to break with musical tradition. A branch severed from its trunk quickly dies. You have to be the new player of the old game because changing the rules destroys the game and takes you back to the beginning."

As we can hear in *Pastorale d'été*, Honegger admired both Wagner and Debussy, both composers condemned by Cocteau, and he was close to Ravel, whom the others halfheartedly cold-shouldered. He was not interested in music-hall or in the new craze for jazz. He stood instead for the classical virtues of balance and craftsmanship, and he was drawn to Romantic imagery, ranging from the sweet to the violent. His most pioneering music in the 1920s belongs to the category of machine music, notably in his evocation of an express train in *Pacific 231*, which influenced Prokofiev. Later he came to draw back from his attachment to program music, claiming that Pacific 231 was to be judged as "*pure music,*" not as a vivid portrayal of power and speed (which is what it manifestly is). A later piece which conveys violent action he called simply "*Mouvement Symphonique* No. 3," to avoid the charge of being too naively programmatic.

In the same spirit the editor of the pocket score of *Pastorale d'été* in 1924 declared that the work is "strictly absolute music which steers clear from literary or descriptive tendencies." This is nonsense. *Pastorale d'été* is the most perfect example of illustrative music at its most beautiful. The title tells us that we are in the country on a summer’s day, and the epigraph from Rimbaud—"*J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été*" ("I have embraced the summer dawn")—adds the detail that it is first light. The murmuring accompaniment in the strings reminds us of Wagner’s *Forest Murmurs* (from *Siegfried*) and of all the impressionist orchestral writing that sprang from that source, including Debussy’s *Prélude à l’Après-midi d’un faune*. It is a warm, still summer morning, we may be sure. A solo horn represents pure languor while the flute and clarinet tell us that the birds are already singing. Violins take up the horn’s melody, with the horn following closely in their footsteps, and the music speeds up a little with some mildly agitated
movement in the strings. The bassoon leads off a sprightly passage and the winds turn to a peasant mode somewhat reminiscent of Beethoven's pastoral images. A climax is reached, but the music soon returns to the calm of the opening and to the wonderfully languorous atmosphere with which the piece began. Perfect balance and the scented fragrance of summer combine to form a piece of exquisite quality.

The gathering at Milhaud's apartment created a buzz in Paris and brought six new names to the attention of the public. Honegger was writing music at a furious pace. In the summer of that same year, 1920, he took a holiday in Switzerland, and it was there that he wrote the *Pastorale d'été*. Although he spent most of his life in France, his parents were Swiss, he had served in the Swiss army, and he returned to Switzerland regularly throughout his life. The work was first performed in Paris by Vladimir Golschmann, a young French conductor who had formed his own orchestra and who presented many new works in his Paris concerts and also worked with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. It was introduced to American audiences by Honegger's fellow-Swiss Rudolph Ganz, who had just taken direction of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. It has been recorded by many conductors, including Honegger himself.

Honegger's subsequent fame rests on a series of larger works remote from the *Pastorale d'été* in style and scale. His very next composition was a large symphonic score entitled Horace victorieux, closer to Strauss than to Debussy. The following year he wrote *Le Roi David* (*King David*), a full-scale oratorio on the biblical story, and in 1935 came *Jeanne d'Arc au bucher* (*Joan of Arc at the Stake*), a dramatic oratorio combining speech and singing and a full orchestra. These larger works carry an intense emotional impact. *Pacific 231* and *Rugby*, both for orchestra alone, can leave an audience gasping, while the serene Pastorale d'été, in contrast, stands out as a perfect demonstration of the composer's ability to evoke a world free of violence and drama of any kind.

– Hugh Macdonald

**George Gershwin (1898-1937)**

**An American in Paris**

The son of Jewish-Russian immigrants who arrived in New York from St. Petersburg in the 1890s, George Gershwin grew up in Harlem and on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He dropped out of high school toward the end of his sophomore year to take a job as a song plugger for a music publishing firm, but continued his study of piano, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration with a variety of distinguished teachers. He won public acclaim in the early 1920s for his songs and musical comedies, and for his *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924; orchestrated by Ferde Grofe) for jazz band and
piano, which he wrote for himself to play with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra at a
concert at New York's Aeolian Hall on February 12, 1924. In July 1925, he became the
first composer to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine. As he continued to collaborate
with his brother, lyricist, Ira Gershwin, on a series of successful Broadway and
Hollywood musical comedies (including the 1931 *Of Thee I Sing*, the first musical to win
a Pulitzer Prize), Gershwin also wrote a few concert works, including the Piano Concerto
in F (1925), which he premiered with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony
Society on December 3, 1925 (of which more below); the tone poem *An American in
Paris* (1928); and the Second Rhapsody for orchestra with piano, which he premiered
with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on January 29, 1932. His
career cli-maxed with the opera *Porgy and Bess*, which had its world premiere on
September 30, 1935, at Boston's Colonial Theater before moving to Broadway. Gershwin
died of a brain tumor in 1937 at age thirty-eight, while working in Hollywood on the film
musical *The Goldwyn Follies*.

It was in April 1926, after spending a week in Paris, that Gershwin sent his hosts
a thankyou postcard with a musical fragment marked "Very Parisienne" and labeled, "An
American in Paris." As he set out in early 1928 to write an orchestral piece—his third
large concert work, and only his first without a solo piano part for himself—he returned
to this motif, but was not sure of how to develop the music. However, as he pondered
his attachment to the Hudson River from his home on West 103rd Street in Manhattan,
he had a flash of inspiration: "an American in Paris, homesickness, the blues."

Gershwin worked on the music during the spring and summer of 1928 during an
extended stay in Europe, during which time he met with Weill, Schoenberg, and Lehar in
Berlin, Berg and Kalman in Vienna, and Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and a host of others —
including such members of the "French Six" as Honegger and Poulenc—in Paris. These
experiences made an impression; he would describe the opening of his work-in-progress
as "in the manner of Debussy and the Six." Moreover, he went about Paris purchasing
taxi horns so that he could introduce their distinctive sound into his composition, which
at the time he sometimes referred to as a "ballet."

Gershwin completed the work—finally designated a "tone poem"—at the home
of his friends James Warburg and Kay Swift on November 28. Leopold Stokowski, the
conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, expressed interest in premiering the work, as
did the great ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev. But, having granted the right of first
refusal to Walter Damrosch in appreciation of that conductor's commission of his
previous concert work, the Piano Concerto in F (premiered by Damrosch with the New
York Symphony Society on December 3, 1925), Gershwin agreed to let Damrosch
introduce *An American in Paris* with the recently merged New York Philharmonic-
Symphony Society.
For the Philharmonic program book, the composer-critic Deems Taylor (in consultation with Gershwin) penned an extensive and rather whimsical narrative guide to the work, one which has been reprinted hundreds of times over the years. Gershwin provided his own, shorter note for his syndicated radio show, "Music by Gershwin," in 1934:

“This piece describes an American's visit to the gay and beautiful city of Paris. We see him sauntering down the Champs Elysees, walking stick in hand, tilted straw hat, drinking in the sights, and other things as well. We see the effect of the French wine, which makes him homesick for America. And that's where the blue begins. I mean the blues begin. He finally emerges from his stupor to realize once again that he is in the gay city of Paree, listening to the taxi-horns, the noise of the boulevards, and the music of the can-can, and thinking, "Home is swell! But after all, this is Paris—so let's go!"

During an early stage of composition, Gershwin also sketched out an encapsulated program—in which he mentions meeting and flirting with a girl and speaks of a "love theme"—that implies a more romantic subtext than might be inferred from the foregoing lines.

The work consists of five sections, each with its own principal theme or themes, which once stated, however, reappear through the piece, often ingeniously juxtaposed with one another. The first two sections portray the "sauntering" American; the next two sections (comprising a slow blues and a fast blues, respectively) depict his "blues," and the final section, his cheerful resignation. For some extra local color, the first section quotes a popular maxixe from 1905 (presumably, the "can-can" music) known by various names (including "La Mattchiche" and "La Sorella") and popularly parodied in the States as "My ma gave me a nickel, to buy a pickle." Gershwin scored the piece for a large orchestra, featuring a contingent of three saxophones and an extensive percussion battery, including four taxi horns.

At its December 13, 1928 premiere at Carnegie Hall, a star-studded audience, including such notables as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jascha Heifetz, and Francis Poulenc, greeted the piece enthusiastically. (Poulenc would later cite the work as one of his favorite compositions of the century.) Gershwin responded appreciatively with as many as a dozen bows from his box, where he could be observed smiling and chortling aloud during the performance. Most of the critics weighed in with positive reviews as well, deeming the piece an advance over the Concerto in F. However, Gershwin privately disapproved of Damrosch's too leisurely approach, and on August 26, 1929, he made his highly successful conducting debut before an audience of many thousands, performing the music himself with the New York Philharmonic at Lewisohn Stadium on the campus of the City University of New York. In that same year, he also played the celesta part on
the first recording of the work, with the Victor Symphony Orchestra under Nathaniel Shilkret.

Gershwin continued to perform the piece with major symphony orchestras throughout his short life, even as such eminent conductors as Fritz Reiner, Arthur Rodzinski, and Alfredo Casella took up the work, as did in later years Arturo Toscanini, Morton Gould, Leonard Bernstein, and scores of others. The work quickly became a popular dance score as well. In 1929, dance director Albertina Rasch mounted an abridged version of the piece in a Gershwin musical produced by Florenz Ziegfeld, Show Girl. And in 1936, the distinguished Chicagoan dancer Ruth Page choreographed it as a ballet for her dance company. When Gershwin died in 1937 during production of the movie revue The Goldwyn Follies (1938), foiling a planned collaboration between himself and George Balanchine, the latter also staged An American in Paris, but producer Samuel Goldwyn scrapped the dance after attending the final rehearsal, complaining "that the miners in Harrisburg wouldn't understand it," and observing, in inimitable Goldwyn fashion, that the ballet had "too much ballet." However, the music—reorchestrated and otherwise highly adulterated — made it to the silver screen as choreographed by Gene Kelly for the climactic sequence of the 1951 blockbuster MGM musical, also entitled An American in Paris.

—Howard Pollack