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String Orchestra, April 25, 2021

Glenn Block

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Illinois State University
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
School of Music

**Illinois State University
String Orchestra**

Glenn Block, *Music Director*

Center for the Performing Arts
April 25, 2021
Sunday Afternoon
7:00 p.m.

This is the one hundred and sixteenth program of the 2020-2021 season.

Program

Please silence all electronic devices for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Chamber Symphony for Strings, Op. 110A

- I. Largo
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Allegretto
- IV. Largo
- V. Largo

Dmitri Shostakovich

(1906-1975)

arr. Rudolf Barshai

Maiya Favis, *solo violin*

Alex Hibbard-Brown, *solo cello*

Sinfonietta No. 2. "Polonia" (2017/rev. 2018)

Maciej Balenkowski

(born 1993)

(winning composition of the 2021 ISU RED NOTE New Music Festival composition competition)

Program Notes

Chamber Symphony

Born September 25, 1906 in Saint Petersburg, Russia, Shostakovich was a soviet composer and pianist. He was also regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century with a unique harmonic language and historic importance due to his years of work under Stalin. Shostakovich achieved fame in the Soviet Union under the patronage of the Soviet Chief of Staff, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, but later had a complex and difficult relationship with the government. However, he still received high praise and accolades while serving in the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union from 1962 until his death. What made Shostakovich unique was his development of a hybrid voice, combining a variety of different musical techniques into his works. His music is characterized by sharp contrasts, elements of the grotesque, and ambivalent tonality. He was also heavily influenced by the neoclassical style pioneered by Igor Stravinsky and, especially in his symphonies by the late romanticism of Gustav Mahler.

In the summer of 1960, Shostakovich went to Dresden to write the score for a new film directed by Arnstam. However, he was unable to compose the film music and instead wrote a string quartet that was of no use to anyone and was filled with ideological flaws. The quartet was written in just three days and was his eighth quartet. Yet, it is one of the most powerful and personal works of the 20th century due to its dark and troubled emotions from World II War and in particular a representation of the feelings Shostakovich felt as he walked and saw the ruins of the Dresden Concentration Camp.

"I've been thinking that when I die, it's hardly likely that anybody will ever write a work dedicated to my memory. So I have decided to write one myself. The dedication could be printed on the cover: "Dedicated to the memory of the composer of this quartet."

The autobiographical nature of this music is evident by the use of Shostakovich's initials translated into musical notes, being stated in the opening measures and woven throughout the entire score. The initials consist of D, S, C, H which in musical notation refers to the opening notes of the double basses and cellos playing (D, E-flat, C, B-natural). Scattered throughout his string quartet were also quotations from his other works including his *Symphony No. 1*, his breakaway composition written thirty-five years earlier; the opera: *Lady MacBeth of Minsk*, which had famously invoked Stalin's Fury in 1936; and the *Cello Concerto No. 1*, composed for Mstislav Rostropovich just one year before the quartet.

The *Chamber Symphony* first movement, a measured elegy, is a fugato based entirely on the four-note motive of Shostakovich's musical monogram, interrupted by fragments of his *First Symphony*. The brutal force of the second movement—it interrupts the opening *Largo* without warning—recalls the composer's famous war music, particularly that of the *Eighth Symphony*, and concludes with the great surging theme from one of his most celebrated works, the *Second Piano Trio*. The middle movement is a sour waltz, a kind of dance of death. The fourth is an amazing collage—the opening chords, like gunshots, mimicking the three knocks on doors as the Gestapo would invade homes of Polish Jews, prior to taking them to concentration camps. Other musical references in the fourth movement include the grand, slashing chords of *Siegfried's Funeral March*; a haunting melody sung by Katerina in *Lady Macbeth of Minsk*; hints of the *Dies Irae* Latin chant for the dead; a popular Russian folk dirge, "Tormented by Grievous Bondage," which ends, pointedly, with Shostakovich's own initials lightly etched in the music. The last movement, slow and desolate, yet filled with intimate asides, is too numb for there are no personal musical quotations here, just the hollow sound of inconsolable sorrow.

The overall feel of this quartet, arranged into a chamber symphony, has a sense of a confessional or, more appropriately, a requiem due to the nature of his attitude towards the finished quartet. According to his friend, Lev Lebedinsky, Shostakovich was so distraught after he returned from Dresden with the finished quartet in his luggage, that he bought a bottle of sleeping pills, talked about suicide, and spoke of his score as the last of his works. The day of Shostakovich's funeral, in August 1975, fifteen years after that summer, the *Eighth String Quartet* was performed to honor the memory of the composer. It was, as Shostakovich had prophesied, his farewell to life.

Notes by Phillip Huscher (Chicago Symphony Orchestra)

Sinfonietta No. 2 “Polonia”

Sinfonietta # 2 “Polonia” (2015) is a motoric piece formed from one rhythmic motive. The composer was planning the form of the piece on the bass line, which is transformed – with the harmony, by changes in the accompanying voices of the theme. A substantial part of the composition is the sphere of rhythm and its irregularity achieved by the changing of meters, the use of compound and simple grouping of notes and the cross hemiola accents. *Sinfonietta # 2* is the apotheosis of vitalism, energy and dynamism. The composition could not come into being without the composer’s admiration and fascination with the Polish film composer Wojciech Kilar and his music. With *Sinfonietta #2*, the composer is able to pay tribute to one of the most inspiring Polish composers. In imagining this piece, Balenkowski wanted to describe in music the beautiful landscapes of Poland, and its mountains, valleys, forests, rivers...

Notes by the Composer

Biographical Notes

Maciej Bałenkowski was trained at The Academy of Music in Cracow at the doctorate level under the great Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki (2017-2020), becoming his last student. In the years 2012-2017, he studied composition under Robert Kurdybacha at the Academy of Music in Warsaw (graduation with distinction and the *Primus inter pares* honorary diploma in 2017). He honed his compositional skills during studies at the Hochschule der Künste in Bern, Switzerland, as well the Conservatorio Superior de Música "Joaquín Rodrigo" in Valencia, Spain. Balenkowski is a laureate and finalist with over 25 international composition prizes. His works have been performed in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Sweden and Poland. His most significant achievements include The Respighi Prize in 2018, an award from the Chamber Orchestra of New York. Compositions of Bałenkowski have been performed by the Chamber Orchestra of New York, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Vancouver Chamber Choir, Amadeus Chamber Orchestra of Polish Radio (Poznań), Glasparlenspiel Sinfonietta (Tallinn Sinfonietta), Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra (New York City), Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra (Budapest), Sinfonietta Cracovia (Cracow), Sound Factory Orchestra (Warsaw) and many others. Until now his output has been focused primarily on music written for larger groups, such as strings, choirs, chamber orchestras and full symphony orchestras.

Glenn Block has served as the Director of Orchestras and Opera and Professor of Conducting at Illinois State University since 1990. In addition, he served as Music Director of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City from 1983-2007. Prior to his appointment at Illinois State in the fall of 1990, Dr. Block served for 15 years as Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri - Kansas City and Music Director of the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, Dr. Block was educated at the Eastman School of Music. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego.

A frequent guest conductor, he has appeared in over 42 states with all-state and professional orchestras. Foreign guest-conducting have included concerts and master classes at the Fountainebleau Conservatoire in France, and concerts in Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. He has served on the Boards of Directors for both the Conductors Guild and the Youth Orchestra Division of the American Symphony Orchestra League. The Youth Symphony of Kansas City and Dr. Block made their Carnegie Hall debut in June 1997. Dr. Block has served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen as Resident Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy as Visiting Conductor. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Summer Festival Orchestra at the Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He will be returning in the summer of 2021 to guest-conduct orchestras in Argentina (Teatro Colon, Misiones/Posadas, Mar del Plata, Mendoza), Londrina, Brazil; Antefagosta, Chile; and Guadiagrele, Italy.

ISU STRING SYMPHONY

Glenn Block, Music Director

Violin I

Maiya Favis, *concertmaster*.

Grace Bang

Rose Ortega

Jessica Pytel

Satomi Radostits

Juliette Weight

Violin II

Mark Moen, *principal*

Maddy Dunsworth

Alejandra Jaramillo

Colleen Loemker

Kathleen Miller

Antonia Tapias

Viola

Grace Eom, *principal*

Christine Aganon

Rhiannon Cosper

Shelby Fick.

Sara Johnson

Cello

Alex Hibbard-Brown, *principal*

Matthew Clarke

Brian Hershey

Julianna Nordentoft

Paris Roarke

Double Bass

Alyssa Trebat, *principal*

Hunter Thoms

Andrew Viveros

Jacob Webber

Staff

Nickolai Podvin, assistant conductor, manager/librarian

Matthew Clarke, assistant conductor, manager/librarian

Symphony personnel listed alphabetically after the principal players.

THANK YOU

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Sara Semonis, *associate dean of research and planning*
Janet Tulley, *assistant dean of academic programs and student affairs*
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Ann Haugo, *director, School of Theatre and Dance*
Michael Wille, *director, Wonsook Kim School of Art*
Rose Marshack, *director, Creative Technologies*
Kendra Paitz, *director and chief curator, University Galleries*
Stephanie Kohl Ringle, *business communications associate*
Eric Yeager, *director, CFAIT*

Illinois State University School of Music

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Debra Austin, <i>Voice</i>	Cora Swenson Lee, <i>Cello</i>
Mark Babbitt, <i>Trombone</i>	Katherine J. Lewis, <i>Viola</i>
Rueben Balboa, <i>viola</i>	Anne McNamara, <i>Trumpet</i>
Emily Beinborn, <i>Music Therapy</i>	Shawn McNamara, <i>Music Education</i>
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Benjamin De Kock, <i>String Bass</i>	Lauren Palmer, <i>Administrative Aide</i>
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Gina Dew, <i>Music Education Advisor</i>	Cindy Ropp, <i>Music Therapy</i>
Judith Dicker, <i>Oboe</i>	Andy Rummel, <i>Euphonium/Tuba</i>
Michael Dicker, <i>Bassoon</i>	Tim Schachtschneider, <i>Facilities Manager</i>
Geoffrey Duce, <i>Piano</i>	Carl Schimmel, <i>Theory and Composition</i>
Ellen Elrick, <i>Music Education</i>	Daniel Peter Schuetz, <i>Voice</i>
Tom Faux, <i>Ethnomusicology</i>	Lydia Sheehan, <i>Bands Office Administrator</i>
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Travis Hoover, <i>Jazz Studies</i>	Roger Zare, <i>Theory and Composition</i>
Martha Horst, <i>Theory and Composition</i>	
Mona Hubbard, <i>Office Manager</i>	
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