Festival Partner
BARRY SHIFFMAN, artistic director

A Far Cry
CIRCLE OF LIFE
EXCERPTS FROM FOR CHILDREN, SZ. 42 [1908-9, REV. 1943]
Béla Bartók (1881-1945), arr. Leo Weiner
AND TRADITIONAL LULLABIES
1. For Children, I. Andante grazioso, arr. Leo Weiner
2. For Children, II. Vivace, arr. Leo Weiner
3. Arrorro: traditional lullaby (Berber / Canary Islands / Latin America), arr. Alex Fortes
4. For Children, IV. Allegro robusto, arr. Leo Weiner
5. For Children, III. Moderato sostenuto, arr. Leo Weiner
6. My Darling Isabelle, by Emily Irons, arr. Alex Fortes
7. For Children, V. Allegretto, arr. Leo Weiner
8. For Children, VI. Kánon: Vivace risoluto, arr. Leo Weiner
10. For Children, VIII. Allegro giocoso, arr. Leo Weiner

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh (b. 1947)

STRING QUARTET NO. 16, IN F MAJOR, OP. 135 (1826)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), arr. A Far Cry
III. Lento assai: cantante e tranquillo

:: INTERMISSION ::

SERENADE IN E MAJOR, FOR STRING ORCHESTRA, OP. 22, B.52 [1875]
Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
Moderato
Tempo di valse
Scherzo: Vivace
Larghetto
Finale: Allegro vivace

CASTLES
Karl Doty (b. 1985)

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY NINA AND GENE DOGGETT
CIRCLE OF LIFE embodies the infinite cycles of our humanity as connected beings. Traditional lullabies and selections from Bartók’s For Children open the program with a rustic, characterful nod to childhood curiosities, tenderness and wonderment.

In Shyshtar, the spectacular clash of contrasting musical languages—from Azerbaijani mugham to traditional music to the dissonance of modernism—speaks to Ali-Zadeh’s efforts to define herself within the wider world and to the universal human experience. We then shift to the third movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 135 for a moment of quiet introspection.

Dvořák’s iconic Serenade for Strings is the heart of the program, having been written at a happy time in his life when Dvořák was basking in his young marriage with a new baby boy and a well-established career.

A Far Cry double bassist Karl Doty’s Castles is based on Karl’s experience returning to his childhood home for the first time following the birth of his son. We close with this short, fiddle-inflected tune, which is sure to fill audiences with joy for all the gifts that new life brings.

EXCERPTS FROM FOR CHILDREN, SZ. 42
Béla Bartók (b. Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary [now Suceava, Romania], March 25, 1881; d. New York, September 26, 1945), arr. Leo Weiner
Composed 1908-9, rev. 1943/1952
AND TRADITIONAL LULLABIES
arr. Alex Fortes
1. For Children, I. Andante grazioso
2. For Children, II. Vivace
3. Arrorró: traditional lullaby (Berber / Canary Islands / Latin America)
4. For Children, IV. Allegro robusto
5. For Children, III. Moderato sostenuto
6. My Darling Isabelle, by Emily Irons
7. For Children, V. Allegretto
8. For Children, VI. Kánon: Vivace risoluto
10. For Children, VIII. Allegro giocoso

Besides his work as a composer and cataloguer of folksongs, Bartók was a remarkable pianist and educator. It was his experience as a teacher that inspired him to write music for beginners: For Children (1908-11) and Mikrokosmos (1922-39). After relocating permanently to the United States in 1940 to escape the Second World War, Bartók reissued his music in American editions. He reflected on For Children around that time:

Already at the very beginning of my career as a composer I had the idea of writing some easy works for piano students. This idea originated in my experience as a piano teacher; I had always the feeling that the available material, especially for beginners, has no real musical value, with the exception of very few works—for instance, Bach’s easiest pieces and Schumann’s Jugenddämmerung. I thought these works to be insufficient, and so, more than 30 years ago, I tried to write some easy piano pieces. At that time the best thing to do would be to use folk tunes. Folk melodies, in general, have great musical value.

So great was their musical value that Bartók would sometimes perform selections from For Children in his concert programs, including a radio broadcast in 1945, one of his final public appearances.

Interspersed with For Children on this program are three lullabies, which are an essential sub-type of folk tune. Melodies are passed down from generation to generation by heart, becoming both part of a large collective memory and a very personal remembrance. It is these memories in musical form that bind us together as humans across time and culture.

A prime illustration of this cross-cultural occurrence is Arrorró mi niño (Hush, my child). Alex Fortes, who arranged this tune, notes:

As I was thinking of lullabies that had been sung to me as a kid, I remembered one that started with the words ‘Arrorró’ or ‘Arrorré,’ as did my sister, but neither of us could remember the exact tune or the exact words. It was a very blurry memory. I did research trying to figure out what song this could possibly be and I found many different variations on this tune, most of which were extremely familiar. I think many of these versions were sung to me by my family from Mexico, Colombia, Spain and the Canary Islands, as well as close family friends from El Salvador, Venezuela, Argentina and other parts of Latin America. I found an article by a musical historian theorizing that Arrorró originated among North African Berbers, became popular in Spain and the Canary Islands a thousand years ago, and then found its way to Spanish colonies across the Americas, where each continued to evolve with local melodies and lyrics. My arrangement tries to get many of these cousin lullabies talking to each other in a mini-quodlibet.

Emily and Jesse Irons note of their family’s uniquely personalized lullaby: “My Darling Isabelle is a classic please-go-to-sleep lullaby, one of dozens improvised in the first year of our daughter’s life. We didn’t initially understand when Isabelle started requesting that we ‘sing Isabelle’, but once we figured it out we knew we had a keeper.”

Finally, Nen nen korori (Hush/sleep baby) is also known as the Edo Lullaby, the former name of modern-day Tokyo. Given its nickname, the written version of the song likely came from the Edo period (17th–19th centuries). This third and final lullaby was programmed at the suggestion of A Far Cry violinist Megumi Stohs Lewis, who describes her personal connection to the song:

My great-grandmother in Japan, Bahchan, sang Nen nen Korori to my mom when she would spend the summers at Bahchan’s house in a small village in the mountains. My mother sang it to me and I sing it to my daughter and son now. I loved feeling my mom’s hand smoothing my hair back while she sang it and hearing it always brings a sense of comfort and safety for me.

SHYSHTAR: METAMORPHOSES FOR STRING ORCHESTRA
Composed 2004; 14 minutes

Franghiz Ali-Zadeh began studying from a young age in her native Azerbaijan and started composing at eight. She enrolled in the State Conservatory and studied with Kara Karayev, one of the foremost musicians of Azerbaijan during its Soviet era, and a former composition student of Dmitri Shostakovich at the Moscow Conservatory.

As a pianist, she gave the first performances in Azerbaijan of then contemporary composers like Cage, Crumb, Messiaen, Schoenberg, Berg and Webern. As a composer, Ali-Zadeh’s references span the standard repertoire of Bach and Mahler, to her love of modernism and the revered musical tradition of her homeland, called Mugham. A deeply passionate and intricate artform, Mugham encompasses both the modal tonalities and melodic phrase structures used as the foundation for improvisation, and is culturally esteemed as a combination of poetry.
The young Antonín Dvořák
Composed 1875; 31 minutes

Antonín Dvořák
Lento assai: cantante e tranquillo
third movement with the expressive marking
(very slow and singing peacefully) and an
by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller

Beethoven in 1823

by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller

LENTO ASSAI: CANTANTE E TRANQUILLO FROM STRING QUARTET NO. 16, IN F MAJOR, OP. 135
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), arr. A Far Cry
Composed 1826; 7 minutes

Last works of composers are often met with a sense of wonder and reverence mixed with curiosity. It is as if they are whispering to us from their death beds. We lean in, desperately wanting to know what it is they mean to say. In the case of Beethoven’s Op. 135, he ‘speaks’ directly to us. The communication is through the subtitle of the last movement, Der schwer gefasste Entschluss (The difficult decision) and two brief sentences written in the score that he emphasized musically using syllabic rhythm, Muss es sein? Es muss sein! (Must it be? It must be!). Explanations for this puzzle span the comic (a friend who owed him money) to the poignant (Beethoven knew this would be the last quartet of his life).

Whatever the reason for the inscription, the Op. 135 quartet does seem to be tinged with an air of reminiscence. It has been described as “a brilliant study in Classical nostalgia.” In other words, at the end, Beethoven was thinking back to his beginning. Indeed, by the standards of the adventurous musical terrain covered by Beethoven’s other last quartets and piano sonatas, Op. 135 seems almost conservative, though still punctuated with unmistakably defiant Beethovenian gestures (and the seemingly ever-present suggestion of a fugue that crops up again and again in the later works). The exquisite centerpiece is the third movement with the expressive marking Lento assai: cantante e tranquillo (very slow and singing peacefully) and an essence halfway between a lullaby and a hymn.

—Bartók, Lullabies, Ali-Zadeh and Beethoven program notes © Kathryn J Allwine Bacасmot 2022

SERENADE IN E MAJOR, FOR STRING ORCHESTRA, OP. 22, B.52
Antonín Dvořák (b. Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841; d. Prague, May 1, 1904)
Composed 1875; 31 minutes

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák drew the spirit of his Serenade for string orchestra from the amiable serenade tradition of Mozart and fellow composers from the classical period. Brahms had done a similar thing in the symphonic path he saw opening up before him. By 1875, when Dvořák came to write the first of his two Serenades, he could already count four symphonies in his portfolio. Indeed, a Fifth would soon be in the works following the good news that his first Austrian State stipend was about to come his way, following his application and a certificate from the Prague municipal clerk declaring his poverty as a young artist. Dvořák was also about to become a father for the second time and unable even to afford a piano, according to the government report confirming the stipend, which makes for rather depressing reading. The resulting freedom from poverty led to a remarkable flood of compositions, which, in the year 1875 alone, included three major chamber works, the Fifth symphony, the Op. 20 Moravian Duets, much of an ambitious five-act opera Vanda and the lovely E major Serenade, Op. 22.

Composition of the Serenade came fluently to the 33-year-old composer, and he completed the score in less than two weeks, between May 3 and 14, 1875. Four of its five movements follow the simple, three-part A-B-A song form of the opening movement, but each has its own distinctive character. Although its gentle main theme has a range of just four notes, Dvořák’s skill and invention make much of it. The texture is divided at times in up to seven parts. There’s a folk-like melancholy to the theme of the waltz that follows. Its central section adds to the yearning quality of the melodic writing. Throughout, Dvořák draws on an insider’s knowledge of string technique, being a seasoned player of both violin and viola.

The scherzo is more mercurial, balancing a whimsical main theme, presented canonically, with a more nostalgic second theme, both themes being neatly tied with a bow in the coda. The slow movement which follows further develops the yearning theme of the waltz movement into extended paragraphs of unbroken lyricism, again balanced by a more active central section. The finale is built into the most complex structure of the Serenade. It’s an exhilarating movement with the outgoing spirit of a Bohemian folk dance, but amid its exuberant and often humorous pages, Dvořák recalls the theme from the slow movement. He then follows it with a reprise of the theme with which this favorite Serenade began.

—Dvořák program note © 2022 Keith Harner.

CASTLES
Karl Doty (b. Duluth, MN, 1985)
8 minutes

Castles was written during a trip to my parents’ house in Minnesota after the birth of our first son, Pekka. During the trip, I was struck by feelings of experiencing old familiar things but within a new context. I was wanting to write a tune, but it wasn’t until a snowstorm hit on our last day that I found myself outside shoveling the driveway and running back inside time after time to write down melodic fragments which would later become the main melody. Originally written for violin and bass and played by myself and my wife Liesl, this brand-new version for A Far Cry carries on the spirit of experiencing familiar things within a new context. I hope that you enjoy!

—Note by Karl Doty

A FAR CRY

Named by The New Yorker as one of the “Imagination-Grabbing, Trailblazing Artists of 2014,” the Grammy-nominated ensemble stands at the forefront of an exciting new generation in classical music. A Far Cry has nurtured a distinct approach to music-making since its founding in 2007. The self-conducted orchestra is a democracy in which decisions are made collectively and leadership rotates among the players. A Far Cry’s stimmenrous approach has led to collaborations with such artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Simone Dinnerstein, Roomful of Teeth, the Silk Road Ensemble, Vijay Iyer and David Krakauer. Tour highlights include two new commissioning projects: Philip Glass’ third piano concerto with soloist Simone Dinnerstein, and The Blue Hour, written by a collaborative of five leading female composers – Rachel Grimes, Angelica Negron, Shara Nova, Caroline Shaw and Sarah Kirkland Snider; and featuring Grammy-winning singer Luciana Souza. A Far Cry’s Crier Records launched auspiciously in 2014 with the Grammy-nominated album Dreams and Prayers, followed by 2018’s Grammy-nominated Visions and Variations. The eighteen Criers are proud to call Boston home, and maintain strong roots in the city, rehearsing at their storefront music center in Jamaica Plain and recently concluding their 10-year residency at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Collaborating with local students through an educational partnership with the New England Conservatory, the Longy School of Music and Project STEP, A Far Cry aims to pass on the spirit of collaboratively-inspired music to the next generation.

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—Note by Karl Doty

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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