



VICTORIA  
SYMPHONY

Christian Kluxen, Music Director

**2023**

**Saturday, March 18**

**7:30pm**

**Farquhar Auditorium  
Uvic**



MAESTRO GIORDANO BELLINCAMPI

GIORDANO  
BELLINCAMPI  
Conductor

BEDE HANLEY  
Oboe

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*Sandra  
Lackenbauer*

**GIORDANO  
BELLINCAMPI:  
Dvořák  
Symphony No. 8**

*Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)*

**Suite No. 2 for small orchestra**

Marche  
Valse  
Polka  
Galop

*Gary Kulesha (1954–)*

**Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra**

Movement I – Moderately fast  
Movement 2 – Slow, rubato – Fast  
– Slow  
Movement 3 – Allegro

INTERMISSION

*Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)*

**Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88**

Allegro con brio  
Adagio  
Allegretto grazioso  
Allegro ma no troppo

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## Giordano Bellincampi: Dvořák Symphony No. 8

Two genial and generally lighthearted works bookend this program. During World War I, Stravinsky, his first wife Katya and their two small children, Fyodor and Ludmilla, were living in exile in Switzerland. He composed a series of charming piano duets, built around an “easy right hand” suited for the children, and a more fulsome accompaniment that he played himself. Living in France in the early 1920s, he returned to these comical miniatures, and orchestrated two suites for small orchestra. Following a bright fanfare, the *Marche* presents an unhurried parade of musical voices in opposing phrases and keys. The slightly staggering *Valse* is something of a tribute to Erik Satie and his hypnotic *Gymnopédies* for piano. Stravinsky said the *Polka* that follows “...is a caricature of Diaghilev, whom I had seen as a circus trainer cracking a long whip.” The final *Galop* is a romp in itself with echoes of Offenbach, a “caricature of the Folies-Bergères in St. Petersburg.”

In terms of popularity among his nine symphonies, Dvořák's Eighth is rivalled only by his Ninth—the “New World.” It is easy to understand why, as it has been referred to as the Bohemian equivalent of Beethoven's “Pastoral” Symphony. A bright and optimistic tone, bird sounds, folk-like melodies, and dancing rhythms are all present. The key of G major provides plenty of sunlight, and it is only enhanced by the contrasting shadows provided by frequent shifts between major and minor. In his biography of Dvořák, musicologist Hans-Hubert Schönzeler

suggested “it is surprising that people who love giving works descriptive tags have not called [it] the “Idyllic.” ... When one walks in those forests surrounding Dvořák's country home on a sunny summer's day, with the birds singing and the leaves of trees rustling in a gentle breeze, one can virtually hear the music. ... [The] last movement just blossoms out, and I shall never forget [the conductor] Rafael Kubelík in a rehearsal when it came to the opening trumpet fanfare, say to the orchestra: “Gentlemen, in Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle—they always call to the dance!”



The consensus about Toronto composer Gary Kulesha's Oboe Concerto, which was premiered in Auckland, New Zealand on October 22, 2020, is that it is an unqualified success. And while the score is both exceptionally challenging and beautifully accessible, much credit has to go to the musicians of the Auckland Philharmonia under the direction of conductor Giordano Bellincampi, and to Canadian-born soloist Bede Hanley.

But our local orchestra deserves a share of the accolades, too. The Oboe Concerto was co-commissioned for Hanley by the Auckland ensemble and the Victoria Symphony, and when our local orchestra performs the work it will mark the first time it will have been attempted outside of the remote South Pacific archipelago. We will also have the pleasure of hearing both Hanley and Bellincampi, whose flawless execution of the work can be readily viewed on-line. Beyond that,

however, this will also be a chance for Victoria Symphony music director Christian Kluxen to loan his podium to the teacher who, more than anyone else, is responsible for his own baton-wielding career.

“Giordano was my first real conducting teacher,” Kluxen recalls, noting that Bellincampi was then music director of the Danish National Opera. “I called him and said ‘Can I show you some video of me conducting?’ And he said ‘Yes, but I don’t have time to teach you.’ I said ‘Fine. What should I pay you for this?’ and he said ‘Just bring croissants. I’ll make coffee.’

“He was incredibly ruthless with me,” he adds, laughing. “He’d say ‘Oh this is terrible. Why are you doing this?’ But the crucial thing was that he always asked me the question of ‘Why?’ Then, when the lesson ended he said ‘So, see you next Wednesday?’ And I never paid him a single dime, except for the croissants. If I forgot the croissants, I knew I would be butchered. But, then again, maybe I deserved it.”

Bellincampi was clearly taken with the aspiring musician, who had set aside his flute to pursue the conductor’s art.

“There is a part of being a conductor that is linked to the personality—or, to be more precise, that is a link between the personality and the way it expresses itself,” the Italian maestro points out. “So are there signals in the way a person is that will be very clear to 80 or 150 people, even without saying anything. And with Christian, as with other conductors I’ve taken on as students, those elements

were very, very clear already from the very first time I saw him conducting some school kids. That factor is a good start, and then the rest is super-hard work, and Christian has done a fantastic job.”

A similarly elevated level of mutual respect also exists between composer Kulesha and soloist Hanley, who first collaborated when the former wrote a piece for the latter’s Canadian Oboe Trio in 2011.

“It’s a very unusual ensemble: two oboes and English horn,” Kulesha says. “They approached me about a commission, and I knew they were all great players, so I wrote it. Now, oboe players are a breed apart: they’re incredibly focused on their instrument, and they’re very, very fussy and precise people—as they have to be to play the oboe. It’s a very difficult instrument to play. And I noticed during the rehearsal process that Bede was saying amazingly accurate things.

“His musical comments were really right on the money,” the Toronto-based composer continues. “When you work with soloists, sometimes they’ll say ‘Well, slower or faster?’ But Bede was really getting into the atomic structure of the music, and so I made a little mental note that this was somebody I wanted to work with.”

Hanley felt the same, in part because Kulesha had himself played oboe in high school and thus understood all of the limitations and possibilities of the instrument. When the idea of an Auckland/Victoria collaboration came up, he says, “I just thought ‘Who’s living who could do something that would be a major

contribution to the repertoire?’ And I thought of Gary, and when I got in touch with him his response was immediate and enthusiastic, which made me so happy. I had no idea if he would be interested or not.

“Things moved really quickly,” Hanley continues. “The brief was something big, something that was going to explore the whole range of the 21st-century oboe, and also the 21st-century orchestra. And then he was off, and just wrote music.”

Extraordinary music, in fact. Kulesha’s Oboe Concerto follows standard concerto form, and hews to the orthodox conception of the soloist’s role as a kind of hero’s journey. But there are also demanding quarter-tone passages that bring to mind an Armenian *duduk* or a North Indian *shenai*, and a magnificent, birdsong-inflected cadenza that suggests a more muscular Olivier Messiaen, one of Kulesha’s early idols.

“Honestly, any time you’re doing something like this you have no idea what is going to arrive,” Hanley says. “I

mean, there was no doubt in my mind that Gary would deliver something good. But there was no way to anticipate how emotionally charged it is in certain moments. This big bloom of intense sound coming from the orchestra in some of the tuttis... There was no way to anticipate that he would deliver something that meaningful.

“I was incredibly moved,” he adds. “And what is really special about this piece is not just the oboe part. It’s the fact that he has written this extraordinary music for every musician in the orchestra. I’m thinking now of [Giacomo] Puccini—of playing a Puccini opera where every single part is beautiful and pushes you to do something special with it, so that when you mix them all together you get this incredible result. That’s really one of Gary’s great strengths.”

In this program, the Oboe Concerto will be paired with Igor Stravinsky’s Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra and Antonin Dvořák’s Symphony No. 8 in G major. The new work might make the strongest case yet that Kulesha can truly be ranked with those greats.

NOTES BY MATTHEW BAIRD  
& ALEX VARTY

### **Giordano Bellincampi, conductor**

Giordano Bellincampi is the Music Director of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. Born in Italy and moving to Copenhagen at a young age, Bellincampi began his career as a trombonist with the Royal Danish Orchestra before making his professional conducting debut in 1994. Previously, he was the Principal





Conductor of I Pomeriggi Musicali, Milan, Chief Conductor of the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra from 2013–2018, General Music Director of the Duisburg Philharmonic from 2012–2017, General Music Director of the Danish National Opera, Aarhus from 2005–2013, Music Director of the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra from 2000–2006 and, between 1997–2000, he was also Chief Conductor of the Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen, the leading contemporary ensemble in Denmark.

Highlights of recent seasons have included concert performances of Verdi's *Aida* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Auckland Philharmonia, and gala performances of Wagner's operatic and orchestral music with the Duisburg Philharmonic to mark the re-opening of the orchestra's home in Duisburg's Mercatorhalle, as well as a strongly-acclaimed visit to Amsterdam's legendary Concertgebouw Hall, in repertoire by Nielsen, Sibelius and Beethoven.

As Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy Giordano Bellincampi is dedicated to the work of educating coming generations of orchestra musicians and conductors, and he also regularly gives masterclasses and serves as a jury member for a number of international conducting competitions. In 2010, he was created a Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog, an award bestowed by the Danish Royal Family for services to Danish culture, and he also holds the title of Cavaliere from the President of Italy.



#### **Bede Hanley, oboe**

Born in Saskatoon, Canada, Bede Hanley began learning the oboe at ten, eventually going on to earn his Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Following several seasons with Spain's Orquesta Sinfonica de Galicia, Mr. Hanley, admired for his "gorgeous tone and buoyant phrasing," first joined the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra as Principal Oboe for the 2008 and 2009 seasons. He was then appointed Principal Oboe of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, a position he held for four years, before rejoining the APO in 2013 as Section Principal Oboe.

A frequent soloist, Mr. Hanley has an extensive concerto repertoire. His performance of Christopher Rouse's Oboe Concerto, a premier outside the US, was praised by the composer for its "beauty and aplomb." In October, 2020, Mr. Hanley performed the world premiere of Gary Kulesha's Concerto

for Oboe and Orchestra with Giordano Bellincampi and his colleagues in the APO. John Daly-Peoples of the *New Zealand Arts Review* wrote "Bede Hanley gave a thrilling performance. In his long faultless solo he managed to span the full range of the instrument, both musically and emotionally." This tour-de-force concerto was written for Mr. Hanley.

Mr. Hanley has performed with many symphony and opera orchestras internationally. He is a busy soloist, recitalist, chamber musician and teacher, and a Yamaha Artist. Mr. Hanley is married to Canadian violinist Rachel Moody, who is also a member of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra.



VICTORIA SYMPHONY  
Christian Kluxen, Music Director



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