



Ledwon Plays Shostakovich

March 15, 2026 | 2:00 p.m.

Witherspoon Concert Hall | The Joslyn

Paolo Bortolameolli, conductor | Paul Ledwon, cello

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major for Violincello & Orchestra, Op. 107

I. Allegretto

II. Moderato

III. Cadenza

IV. Allegro con moto

INTERMISSION

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Verklärte Nacht (*Transfigured Night*), Op. 4 (1943)

This printed program is a condensed version.

For more info about the orchestra, guest artists, and the full program notes, download the Omaha Symphony app or scan this QR code with your mobile device. *Para leer la información en español, utilice nuestro programa digital.*

*program subject to change



Featured Artists



Chilean-Italian conductor **Paolo Bortolameolli** is a prolific force on the podium, a talented lecturer, and advocate for the arts.

Notable debuts between 2022 and 2024 include the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Philharmonic, as well as returns to the Hollywood Bowl, Kansas City Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires, and Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Colombia. He has led ensembles and built relationships with orchestras around the world such as Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar in Caracas, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Haydn Orchestra in Bolzano, Gulbenkian Orchestra in Portugal, and the Orchestra della Toscana in Florence.

Recent opera productions include *Tosca* at the Opéra de Paris, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Madama Butterfly* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, and Golijov's *Ainadamar* at Detroit Opera, as well as performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Ópera Nacional de Chile and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional Juvenil which marked the monumental work's premiere in Chile.

His long relationship with the LA Philharmonic continues through spring 2023, leading concerts at the Hollywood Bowl and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Among his many accomplishments is the landmark production of Meredith Monk's inventive opera ATLAS, performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles in 2019. He is passionately committed to new music, including the works of Miguel Farías, Gabriela Ortiz, and Jorge Peña Hen, among others. In 2022, his commission of Miguel Farías's *Estallido* was premiered with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

A natural leader on and off the podium, Paolo is Music Director of the Ópera Nacional de Chile and Filarmónica de Santiago, Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional Juvenil in Chile. Former Artistic Director of the Sinfónica Azteca in Mexico, he led an educational residency run by the Fundación Azteca from Grupo Salinas in Mexico every year. He developed several new media initiatives with the Esperanza Azteca in Mexico, and his now legendary "Ponle Pausa," a project that sought to rethink the concept of music education through the implementation of short videos and concerts targeting social network users, received wide acclaim.

In 2018, he was a guest-lecturer for a TED Talk in New York and in 2020, he released his first book: *Rubato: Procesos musicales y una playlist personal*.



Paul Ledwon is currently principal cellist of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra, a position he has held since 1999. His frequent solo appearances with the orchestra have included works by Haydn, Schumann, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky.

Ledwon began his musical training at the age of four on the piano and violin, discovering the cello a few years later. He studied with Hans Jorgen Jensen at Northwestern University, earning his Bachelor of Music with Distinction and his Master of Music with Program Honors. While a student at NU, he performed recitals annually in Evanston and in Detroit, for the Detroit Institute of Arts' subscription concert series.

He was also a frequent soloist with Chicago area orchestras including the Northwestern and North Shore

Chamber Orchestras, and performed at the master classes of such cellists as Anner Bylisma, Harvey Shapiro, John Sharp, Paul Katz, Lynn Harrell, and Mstislav Rostropovich. At this time, Ledwon was principal cellist of both the NU Symphony and the Chicago Symphony Civic Orchestras, as well as a substitute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His summers included performing as principal with the Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) and Pacific Music Festival (Japan) orchestras.

As a recipient of the prestigious Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) fellowship, Ledwon continued his studies with Martin Ostertag at the Hochschule fuer Musik in Karlsruhe, Germany. During his three years there, Ledwon performed as a soloist with and principal of the Hochschule Orchestra and subbed frequently with the Suedwestfunk (SWF) Orchestra in Baden-Baden and the Suedwestdeutsches Kammerorchester in Pforzheim. As a chamber musician, he performed regularly in Karlsruhe, and attended summer sessions at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. An avid performer of contemporary music, he performed with the Karlsruhe contemporary music ensemble, touring Brazil and South Korea and participating in recording the works of Wolfgang Rihm with renowned conductor Peter Eotvos. Ledwon received his Artists Diploma from the Hochschule with the highest possible marks, an achievement of which he is extremely proud.

Since returning to the U.S., Ledwon has also been a member of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and has served as principal cellist for the South Bend Symphony, Elgin Symphony, and Chicago Opera Theater Orchestras. Since 1997 he has spent summers in Door County, Wisconsin, as principal cellist of the Peninsula Music Festival.

Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770 – Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827 – Vienna, Austria

Piece Length: Approximately 9 minutes.

The play *Egmont*, written by Johann Goethe in 1788, tells the story of Lamoral, Count of Egmont, who lived in the Spanish Netherlands during the 16th century. Egmont protested against the inquisition, arguing for tolerance towards non-Catholics, which angered the Spanish King Philip II. The king sent the Duke of Alba to arrest Egmont. Instead of fleeing, he fought for his ideal of liberty, eventually becoming imprisoned and sentenced to death. Egmont's dignity in the face of execution led to his martyrdom, inspiring others to protest against the Spanish king, leading to the independence of the Netherlands.

When Beethoven was approached to compose incidental music for the play in 1809, he enthusiastically accepted. Not only was Goethe an artistic hero of Beethoven's, but the concept of liberty fit perfectly within Beethoven's own worldview. While the remainder of Beethoven's incidental music is seldom performed now, the overture has become a fixture in the concert halls.

Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 107

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born: September 25, 1906 – St. Petersburg, Russia

Died: August 9, 1975 – Moscow, Soviet Union

Piece Length: Approximately 30 minutes.

The great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich had a profound impact on the musical world. Not only is he considered one of the greatest cellists in music history, but his contributions to the cello repertoire are profound. He commissioned and premiered over 100 works from such important composers as Sergei Prokofiev, Henri Dutilleux, Witold Lutosławski, and Benjamin Britten, many of which have become standard pieces. Perhaps the most famous of these works is the concerto on this afternoon's concert: Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1.

The two musicians met in 1943 when Rostropovich was a student at the Moscow Conservatory studying cello and composition. Over nearly thirty years they would collaborate, perform, and record together. Rostropovich long wanted to have Shostakovich write a concerto for him but refrained from approaching the composer directly, despite their friendship, apparently on the advice of Shostakovich's wife. She told the cellist, "If you want Dmitri Dmitrievich to write something for you, the only recipe I can give you is this - never ask him or talk to him about it." Apparently, Rostropovich's silent appeals worked. In 1959, Shostakovich invited him to the Shostakovich home to play through a newly composed concerto. The effect on Rostropovich was profound, and one can only imagine his reaction when Shostakovich asked, "If you really like it so much, then will you please permit me to dedicate it to you?" Rostropovich left Shostakovich's home with the score and, remarkably, four days later had the entire concerto memorized. He would give the premiere in Leningrad, conducted by Yevgeny Mravinsky, in October of 1959.

Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night)

Arnold Schoenberg

Born: September 13, 1874 – Vienna, Austria

Died: July 13, 1951 – Los Angeles, CA

Piece Length: Approximately 30 minutes.

One of the most controversial composers in Western Classical music history, Arnold Schoenberg's works have been met with both admiration and condemnation for generations. His atonal song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire*, premiered in 1912, is considered one of the two towering pillars – along with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* - that launched the modernist movement in music.

And yet, while today he is most famous – or infamous – for his modern approach, many are surprised to find that Schoenberg's early works have more in common with the lush, tonal worlds of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. As Schoenberg sought to find his compositional voice toward the turn of the twentieth century, the musical world was still in the midst of what some scholars termed "The War of the Romantics," which began in the mid-nineteenth century. This aesthetic battle featured two factions of musicians and composers who disagreed on the direction of Western classical music. On one side, Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, interested in writing programmatic music and making compositional decisions based on poems, stories, and events in history. On the other, the conservatives: Johannes Brahms and the Schumanns. Concerned with the destruction of absolute music – works that adhered to the tradition of the symphonic form, passed down from the Classical era – they called for composers to reject the siren call of music having to be more than just that – music.

Younger composers like Schoenberg found a path forward by blending the chromaticism and programmatic elements of Liszt's camp, with a looser use of absolute form championed by Brahms. Today's work, *Verklärte Nacht*, is a perfect example of this. Composed in just three weeks in 1899, the work was written after Schoenberg met his future wife Mathilde Zemlinsky, sister of his only composition instructor, Nicholas Zemlinsky. The inspiration of the work is from a poem of the same name by Richard Dehmel. The poem opens with an unnamed man and woman walking through the "bare, cold wood" at night. The woman confesses to the man, with whom she has recently fallen in love, that in her desire to become a mother she has become pregnant by another man prior to meeting her new love. The man seems to contemplate this as the woman keeps walking, stumbling a bit in the process and anxiously awaiting his reply. The man tells her that the warmth of their love is too strong and together they will raise the child. He puts his arm around her, and they continue to walk together "through the high, bright night." Schoenberg's setting is a masterpiece, a magical, gorgeous depiction of love, trust, and devotion freely given.

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