OMAHA SYMPHONY

Program Notes

2026/27 SEASON

Dvořák's Seventh

October 30–31, 2026 | 7:30 PM

Holland Performing Arts Center

Anna Rakitina, Conductor | Jaemin Han, Cello

ANNA CLYNE — *This Midnight Hour*

ROBERT SCHUMANN — Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

I. Nicht zu schnell

II. Langsam

III. Sehr lebhaft

Jaemin Han, Cello

Intermission

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK — Symphony No.7 in D Minor, Op.70

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Poco adagio

III. Scherzo: Vivace

IV. Finale: Allegro

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Featured Artists



ANNA RAKITINA

Anna Rakitina has been in high demand with international orchestras since her major debuts in the 2021/22 season. Praised for the emotional depth of her interpretation and a quiet authority, she excels at the big symphonic works of the 20th century, in particular of the Russian composers. She has conducted the Boston, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago, Baltimore, Utah, North Carolina, Jacksonville, and Vancouver symphony orchestras, as well as the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the New York Philharmonic, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the US, and the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Staatskapelle Dresden, BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, and SWR Symphonieorchester in Europe. Further afield she had her Japan debut with Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in 2023. In 2025, she received the prestigious European Cultural Award in recognition of her extraordinary talent and remarkable contributions to the world of classical music.

Rakitina opens the 2026/27 season at the Brucknerfest Linz performing Bernd Alois Zimmermann's trumpet concerto "Nobody knows de trouble I see" with Hakan Hardenberger, followed by the season opening of Grazer Musikverein conducting the Grazer Philharmoniker with pianist Rudolf Buchbinder. Further highlights of the season include debuts with the Spanish National Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester and Hamburger Symphoniker, as well as Nashville, Omaha and San Jose Symphony Orchestras. She returns to North Carolina Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra Ireland following her successful debuts in 2025. She enjoys working with the new generation of musicians and appears with the Bundesjugendorchester and the Bergen Youth Orchestra. Conducting the Konzerthausorchester Berlin at the Opus Klassik 2026 Gala is another highlight of the season.
An advocate of new music and female composers, her repertoire includes Anna Clyne, Elena Langer, Ellen Reid, Jessie Montgomery and Caroline Shaw. She regularly collaborates with soloists such as Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Lucas & Arthur Jussen, Joshua Bell, Augustin Hadelich, Gil Shaham, Christian Tetzlaff, Gautier Capucon, Alisa Weilerstein and Xavier de Mestre.

Rakitina was Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 2019 to 2023, and Dudamel Fellow of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the 2019/20 season. Her talents have been recognized through multiple awards, including second prize at the Malko Competition 2018, and prizes at the Deutscher Dirigentenpreis 2017 and the TCO International Conducting Competition Taipei 2015.

Born in Moscow to a Ukrainian father and a Russian mother, Rakitina grew up in a musical family and began her education as a violinist before studying conducting at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory with Stanislav Dyachenko and later in Hamburg with Prof. Ulrich Windfuhr. She was a finalist of "Das kritische Orchester" in 2018 and participated in Lucerne Festival Academy's conducting fellowship scheme led by Alan Gilbert and Bernard Haitink. She has attended masterclasses with Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Vladimir Jurowski, Johannes Schlaefli, and the 2022 Ammodo Masterclass of the Concertgebouworkest led by Fabio Luisi. She lives in Berlin with her family.



JAEMIN HAN

Cellist Jaemin Han, born in 2006 in South Korea, gained international recognition in 2021 as the youngest-ever winner of the Grand Prix at the George Enescu International Competition. Additional accolades, including prizes at the Geneva International Music Competition and ISANGYUN Competition, as well as major debuts and tours over the last years have firmly established him on the international stage.

Han has performed with prestigious orchestras worldwide, including the Seoul Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, the Rotterdam, Tokyo and Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Tonkünstler-Orchester Vienna, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne. Among his career milestones are the inauguration of BBC Proms in Korea with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, as well as debuts at Carnegie Hall and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and appearances at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

Collaborating with renowned conductors such as Myung-Whun Chung, Jaap van Zweden, Gustavo Gimeno, Andris Poga, Ryan Wigglesworth, Alexandre Bloch, Pietari Inkinen, and David Reiland, Han's repertoire is extensive, from concerti by Shostakovich, Dvořák, Elgar, Tchaikovsky, and Haydn, to works by Isang Yun, Friedrich Gulda, Richard Strauss, and George Enescu. Han is also passionate about chamber music. His recital partners include Yunchan Lim, Alexander Malofeev and Janice Carissa, and he has also performed chamber music with Renaud Capuçon, Leonidas Kavakos, Janine Jansen, and Sunwook Kim.

Jaemin Han, continued

Recent appearances with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Michael Sanderling in Switzerland and in Korea once again highlight Jaemin Han as one of the most sought-after young soloists. In the 2026/27 season, he makes a series of debut recitals in several German venues, including Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, with pianist Roman Borisov. In North America, he appears with the Omaha Symphony and returns to La Jolla Music Society as part of a West Coast recital tour with David Fung that also includes performances at The Colburn School in Los Angeles, Stanford Live, and at Vancouver's Chan Centre for the Performing Arts. He also returns to the Seoul Philharmonic to perform *Don Quixote* under the baton of Hannu Lintu and reunites with Anna Handler for his debut with the Ulster Orchestra.

In 2022, Han was featured on the *Rising Stars* series on Stage+ with a showcase recital. A selection of works from this recital are available on Deutsche Grammophon's "Musical Moments" series. His recording of Isang Yun's Cello Concerto with the Korean National Symphony Orchestra and David Reiland was released by Decca Records in autumn 2024.

Jaemin Han began playing the cello at the age of five and three years later made his orchestral debut. Han is currently studying at the Kronberg Academy under Wolfgang-Emanuel Schmidt, and his previous teachers include Myung-Wha Chung, Kangho Lee, and Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi at the Korea National Institute for the Gifted in Arts. He was a recipient of the 2020 Shinhan Music Award and is currently supported by a scholarship from the Hyundai Motor Chung Mong-Koo Foundation. He plays a Domenico Montagnana Cello, Venice, 'Ex Hekking', c.1738-42, generously loaned by the Samsung Foundation of Culture.

Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst

This Midnight Hour

Anna Clyne

Born: March 9, 1980 – London, England

Piece Length: Approximately 12 minutes.

Program Notes by the composer.

The opening to *This Midnight Hour* is inspired by the character and power of the lower strings of L'Orchestre national d'Île de France. From here, it draws inspiration from two poems – one by Charles Baudelaire and another by Juan Ramón Jiménez. Whilst it is not intended to depict a specific narrative, my intention is that it will evoke a visual journey for the listener.

Jiménez's poem *La musica* is very short and concise (translated by Robert Bly):

> Music –
> a naked woman
> running mad through the pure night

This immediately struck me as a strong image and one that I chose to interpret with outbursts of frenetic energy – for example, dividing the strings into sub-groups that play fortissimo staggered descending cascade figures from left to right in stereo effect. This stems from my early explorations of electroacoustic music.

There is also a lot of evocative sensory imagery in Baudelaire's *Harmonie du Soir*, the first stanza of which reads as follows (translated by William Aggeler):

> *The season is at hand when swaying on its stem*
> *Every flower exhales perfume like a censer;*
> *Sounds and perfumes turn in the evening air;*
> *Melancholy waltz and languid vertigo!*

I riffed on the idea of the melancholic waltz about halfway into *This Midnight Hour* - I split the viola section in two and have one half playing at written pitch and the other half playing 1/4 tone sharp to emulate the sonority of an accordion playing a Parisian-esque waltz.

Program Notes

Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810 – Zwickau, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856 – Endenich, Bonn, Germany

Piece Length: Approximately 25 minutes.

The Cello Concerto in A Minor has had a difficult performance history. Schumann wrote the piece in two weeks in October 1850, hoping the cellist Robert Emil Bockmühl would perform the premiere. Upon going over the concerto, Bockmühl praised the work… but also requested numerous edits to the score. The most dramatic of these suggested edits was a complete rewrite of the Finale.

Thankfully, Schumann ignored most of these suggestions, and a performance in Frankfurt was scheduled with Bockmühl as soloist. Unfortunately, Bockmühl became ill, and the premiere was cancelled. The second attempt was scheduled to take place in Düsseldorf, but once again Bockmühl seems to have backed out. While this may suggest that Bockmühl was trying to avoid playing the work, in fact he gave a private performance of it on December 20, 1852, with Clara Schumann playing the orchestral reduction on piano. A third attempted premiere with orchestra was set for March 31, 1853, and yet again it came to naught: Bockmühl's children had damaged his cello, rendering the instrument unplayable. It is no wonder that Schumann eventually gave up on Bockmühl, stating that he would "never be ready for anything."

Sadly, Schumann would never hear the concerto with orchestra. The premiere finally took place four years after his death, with Ludwig Ebert as soloist. Reactions to the concerto were mixed at best. Some reviewers were critical of the work due to Schumann's intent to avoid composing for the sake of pure virtuosity. Others had difficulty with the way Schumann deviated from the standard structure of concertos of the time. Regardless of its historical obstacles, cellists have embraced the Schumann and turned it into a firm favorite for the performer and their audience.

Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, Op. 70

Antonín Dvořák

Born: September 8, 1841 – Nelahozeves, Czechia, Austrian Empire

Died: May 1, 1904 – Prague, Czechia, Austria-Hungary

Piece Length: Approximately 40 minutes.

Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 stands out from the rest of his symphonic output for several reasons. First, unlike much of his music, there are very few references to Slavonic folk music. Dvořák's experiences with his Symphony No. 6, along with his ambition for a larger international career, perhaps played a large role in this decision. Specifically, No. 6, commissioned by the Vienna Philharmonic, had numerous planned performances postponed. While Dvořák was given many reasons for the postponements, he suspected anti-Czech sentiments played a role. While No. 6 would eventually have its premiere in Prague, it would not be performed in Vienna until 1942.

The other distinctive feature of No. 7 is the mood of the work. It is the darkest of Dvořák's symphonies, and there has been much speculation as to the cause. The answer might be simple. Dvořák had just heard his friend Brahms' own stormy Symphony No. 3, and when the Philharmonic Society approached him for a commission, he was undoubtedly aware that the same society had commissioned Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor back in 1817. Perhaps as a nod to Brahms and Beethoven, Dvořák chose the key of D Minor for his new symphony. Ultimately, No. 7 established itself as "among the greatest and purest examples in this art-form since Beethoven." (Donald Tovey.)

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