

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

JULY 17 · ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra
Vasily Petrenko *conductor*
Midori *violin*

WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

TCHAIKOVSKY: Violin Concerto in D major, op. 35
SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 8 in C minor, op. 65

LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

TCHAIKOVSKY: Violin Concerto in D major, op. 35

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's music is much-loved by audiences today, but that wasn't always the case. At the time he wrote this concerto, his music wasn't widely accepted. In order to escape his hardships, he ran away to Switzerland to write this concerto. (A concerto is a piece of music written for a solo instrument playing with an orchestra). He finished the piece quickly, but the violinist he presented it to said it was unplayable. When the piece finally premiered two years later, music critic Eduard Hanslick gave it a horrible review. He called the piece "long and pretentious" and said it "brought us face to face with the revolting thought that music can exist which stinks to the ear." These comments seem funny today, since now this piece is one of the most popular violin concertos in the world.

- Have you ever created something that other people didn't like? How did that make you feel?
- Do you think you should keep creating even when other people don't like what you make? Why or why not?
- Do you think the melodies in this concerto or beautiful? What do you think it is that makes a melody so beautiful to listen to? Does a beautiful melody make you feel emotions?
- Can you think of something you didn't like at first but grew to love?

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 8 in C minor, op. 65

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote his Eighth Symphony in 1943 in the Soviet Union (you might know it as Russia). During that time, the Soviet Union's leader Joseph Stalin tried to control how his citizens thought and felt about the country. As part of that, the government was very concerned with what kind of music famous composers were writing. Shostakovich's work was constantly questioned, including this symphony, which was not well-received. Communist critics said the piece was unappealing, especially because the last movement does not sound triumphant, which is how composers during Shostakovich's time were expected to make the final part of the piece sound. Shostakovich called the work a "poem of suffering" and an attempt to reflect the difficulty of the world war which was going on at the time. In 1948, the government banned the piece because of its "gloom." Today, it is not one of Shostakovich's most-performed symphonies, but many see it as a masterpiece of meaning and a brilliant reflection of the difficult time in which it was written.

- What emotions do you hear in the symphony?
- Many stories and musical pieces are sad. How do you feel about stories and songs that make you feel sad?
- Would you call this piece beautiful? Why or why not?

music is what feelings sound like