ACADEMY OF ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS
WITH JEREMY DENK, PIANO

MARCH 24 | 7:30PM | ELLIOTT HALL
Academy of St Martin in the Fields
Jeremy Denk, Director & Piano

March 24, 2015 / 7:30 PM / Elliott Hall of Music

Josef Suk  
Serenade for Strings in E-flat major, Op.6  
(1874-1935)  
Andante con moto  
Allegro ma non troppo e grazioso  
Adagio  
Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo presto  

J.S. Bach  
Keyboard Concerto No.2 in E major, BWV 1053  
(1685-1750)  
Allegro  
Siciliano  
Allegro  

Jeremy Denk, Piano

INTERMISSION

J.S. Bach  
Keyboard Concerto No.4 in A major, BWV 1055  
(1685-1750)  
Allegro  
Larghetto  
Allegro ma non tanto  

Jeremy Denk, Piano

Antonín Dvořák  
Serenade for Strings in E major, Op.22  
(1841-1904)  
Moderato  
Tempo di valse  
Scherzo: Vivace  
Larghetto  
Finale: Allegro vivace  

With respect to the musician and your fellow patrons, we request your participation in the tradition of withholding applause between movements of a selection. To the same end, we also ask that you silence and discontinue use of all electronic devices.
PROGRAM NOTES

Serenade in E-flat major, Op. 6 (1892)
by Josef Suk (Křečovice, Bohemia, 1874 – Benešov, 1935)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as orchestras got larger and larger and symphonies longer and longer, composers sometimes felt the need to go in the opposite direction and reduce performing forces as well as work durations. The string orchestra represented a welcome change from the full symphonic ensemble, and inspired a revival of the classical serenade-divertimento tradition, which had largely fallen into neglect during the first half of the 19th century.

That was the tradition the eighteen-year-old Josef Suk, Dvořák’s favorite student and future son-in-law, claimed as his own in his Serenade, Op. 6 (1892) which launched his career. (Dvořák’s own popular Serenade for Strings, Op. 22, which will close tonight’s concert, was written in 1875, when Suk was one year old.) Suk went on to have a distinguished career as a composer, violinist and teacher. He was a founding member of the Bohemian String Quartet and served as the director of the Prague Conservatory. One of his greatest works, his Symphony No. 2 (“Asrael”), was written after the premature death of his wife Otilie (Dvořák’s daughter). Their young son, also named Josef, became the father of the famous violinist Josef Suk III (1929-2011).

Dvořák’s influence on Josef Suk I’s Serenade is evident at every turn; yet the young man had a different temperament, and was drawn to darker emotions. Dvořák sensed this when he told Suk to write “something cheerful for a change.” This Serenade is certainly not cheerful all the way; its longest movement is an Adagio, standing in third place, whose lyrical opening cello melody soon develops an emotional intensity not often encountered in serenades. Then this movement is preceded by a nostalgic Andante con moto, not an Allegro as one might expect and a second movement that begins as a gentle waltz yet contains an unexpected, if brief, dramatic outburst in the middle. Even the closing Allegro giocoso has its serious moments, recalling the nostalgic opening theme of the first movement before finally settling into the happy mood Dr. Dvořák had ordered.
Keyboard Concerto No. 2 in E major, BWV 1053
Keyboard Concerto No. 4 in A major, BWV 1055
by Johann Sebastian Bach (Eisenach, 1685 – Leipzig, 1750)

As far as we know, J. S. Bach was the first composer to write concertos for a keyboard instrument. Before him, many concertos were written for strings or winds, but the harpsichord had been relegated to the role of Cinderella: always present, its role was merely to provide harmonic support as a member of the continuo group. All that changed in the 1730s, when Bach took over the direction of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, a concert series started many years earlier by his colleague Georg Philipp Telemann. At these concerts, which took place at Zimmermann’s coffee house in Leipzig, Bach performed as keyboard soloist and also wished to feature his two grown sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, both were accomplished harpsichordists. In addition to seven concertos for one harpsichord, there are also three for two harpsichords, two for three harpsichords, and even one for four harpsichords (the latter based on a work by Vivaldi). The solo concertos are all arrangements of works originally written for other instruments, although the originals are known for only three out of seven—the early versions of the other concertos are lost.

The Concerto in E major (BWV 1053) is thought to be the transcription of a now-lost oboe concerto. Bach also recycled the same music in two of his church cantatas: the first two movements in No. 169 and third in No. 49 (both written in 1731). It is the longest of the concertos, and structurally the most forward-looking one. The most adventurous modulations and motivic transformations occur towards the middle of the movement, and the return to the home key is set off by a single measure of Adagio. These features create the impression of what would later evolve into a development section and a recapitulation, foreshadowing the sonata forms of the classical era.

The slow movement is an almost romantically lyrical siciliano (a favorite Baroque aria type) in the rarely used key of C-sharp minor. The string orchestra begins the melody as the soloist plays an accompaniment made up of broken chords—a truly “proto-Romantic” feature. The soloist then takes over the melody, only to return it to the orchestra at the end of the movement. The final Allegro is one of Bach’s most virtuosic concerto movements, with a solo part that
frequently and unpredictably alternates between fast sixteenth-notes and even faster sixteenth-triplets. Once again, the musical material is developed at considerable length and is subjected to rather subtle transformations.

A thorough examination of the **Concerto in A major (BWV 1055)** led scholars to the assumption that this work was originally a concerto for the oboe d’amore, the lower-pitched cousin of the oboe. It is a relatively brief and compact work. The first movement is based on a single rhythmic motive that is heard almost without interruption. The second movement is a lavishly ornamented aria, in siciliano rhythm as in the previous concerto, over a chromatically descending bass line that served as the basis of countless sets of variations during the Baroque era. Finally, the third movement surprises us with a cascade of thirty-second notes in the solo keyboard while the accompaniment maintains a steady dance rhythm. The thirty-seconds later alternate with slightly slower sixteenth-triplets; thus, the music moves back and forth between two different speeds, constantly challenging the performer and delighting the listener.

**Serenade for Strings in E major, Op. 22 (1875)**
by Antonín Dvořák (Nelahozeves, Bohemia, 1841 – Prague, 1904)

Like most composers in the early stages of their careers, the young Antonín Dvořák was struggling to make ends meet. From 1862 to 1871, he was principal violist at the new Provisional Theatre in Prague; he also taught music privately. In 1874, when he applied for the newly instituted Austrian State Stipendium for young artists, his file read: “Anton DWORAK of Prague, 33 years old, music teacher, completely without means.”

By this time, Dvořák was already married and the father of an infant boy; thus he had much at stake in this competition. Fortunately for him, the selection committee, whose members were conductor Johann Herbeck, music critic Eduard Hanslick, and Brahms, decided in his favor. As the report stated:

He has submitted 15 compositions, among them symphonies and overtures for full orchestra which display an undoubted talent, but in a way which as yet remains formless and
unbridled....The fact that Dvořák’s choral and orchestral compositions have been performed frequently at big public concerts made a favorable impression. The applicant, who has never yet been able to acquire a piano of his own, deserves a grant to ease his straitened circumstances and free him from anxiety in his creative work.

Dvořák won an award of 400 gulden; in addition, he had attracted the attention of some of the greatest musical luminaries in the Monarchy’s capital. The young composer had made his first step towards fame and recognition.

Buoyed by his success, Dvořák launched into a series of new projects. During the spring and summer of 1875, he finished three chamber works, a song cycle, a symphony (No. 5), and the Serenade for Strings, an impressive output that reflects the composer’s new-found confidence.

In the five-movement Serenade, Dvořák demonstrated the high level of compositional virtuosity he had attained by his early thirties. Using simple forms (four of the five movements follow plain A-B-A structures with contrasting middle sections followed by a return of the opening material), he nevertheless achieved considerable melodic and harmonic variety.

The *Moderato* first movement has a short legato theme with a range of only four notes, using imitation, followed by a second theme that has no imitation, and is introduced by a very audible jump into a new and not closely related, key.

The charming opening theme of the second-movement *Tempo di Valse* is built of asymmetrical five-bar phrases, but is fairly simple harmonically. Conversely, the movement’s *Trio*, which is no less attractive melodically, has regular four-bar phrases but contains some highly unusual modulations.

Imitative techniques reappear in the lively *Scherzo*; the central *Trio* section has broader phrases and slower note-values, though the composer insisted that it must be played “in tempo” (that is, the beat remains the same). The ending of this movement is especially beautiful as both the *Scherzo* and the *Trio* themes are recalled as if
in a dream, cut short by a sudden return to the more agitated tone of the beginning.

The fourth-movement *Larghetto* presents a lyrical, harmonically stable opening melody and a more rhythmical and constantly modulating middle section. The concluding movement, the only one in sonata form, is the most complex of the five. Starting “off-key” (not in the main tonality which it only reaches later on), it has a normal exposition with three themes and a regular recapitulation, but no real development. Instead, there is a short and quite unusual middle section. After a few measure of suspense in which the first violins repeat two notes in highly unpredictable rhythmic patterns, the cellos surprise us with a replay of the *Larghetto* melody (fourth movement). The recapitulation is followed by a return of the first movement’s opening. A brief Presto coda, combining the first and third themes of the *Finale*, closes this remarkable work.

*Notes by Peter Laki*
*Visiting Associate Professor, Bard College*
ABOUT

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields is renowned for its polished and refined sound, rooted in outstanding musicianship. Formed by Sir Neville Marriner in 1958 from a group of leading London musicians, and working without a conductor, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church on 13th November 1959. Originally directed by Sir Neville from the leader’s chair, the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductor-less ensemble remains an Academy hallmark. This tradition continues today with virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell as its Music Director. The Academy performs some 100 concerts around the world each year, with as many as 15 tours in a season. The Academy and Academy Chamber Ensemble visit venues across the UK, Europe, Asia and USA.

In tandem with its concerts and tours, the Academy continues to present a variety of pre-show talks, events and open rehearsals. Outward Sound, the Academy’s community and learning program, brings innovative, music-making opportunities to participants of all ages, backgrounds and abilities who otherwise may not have access to music.

With over 500 recordings to date, the Academy is one of the most recorded chamber orchestras in the world. The orchestra received their first gold disc for their recording of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons in 1969 with the 2007 recording with Joshua Bell reaching No.1 on the Billboard Classical Chart. Their soundtrack for the film Amadeus won 13 gold discs alone, while in 1996 The English Patient picked up an Academy Award© for Best Music, with a soundtrack performed by the Academy. In March 2013 the orchestra and Joshua Bell released their first recording on Sony Classical under his leadership, Beethoven’s Symphonies 4 and 7.

The Academy’s US tours are supported by the American Friends of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. If you would like to join our American Friends, please send an email to afasmf@gmail.com for more details.

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JEREMY DENK, Piano

One of America’s most thought-provoking, multi-faceted, and compelling artists, pianist Jeremy Denk is the winner of a 2013 MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, the 2014 Avery Fisher Prize, and Musical America’s 2014 Instrumentalist of the Year award. He has appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and London, and regularly gives recitals in New York, Washington, Boston, Philadelphia, and throughout the United States. In 2014-2015, he launches a four-season tenure as an Artistic Partner of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; makes debuts with the Cleveland Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic; appears as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony; and performs Bach concertos on tour with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Denk is known for his original and insightful writing on music, which Alex Ross praises for its “arresting sensitivity and wit.” His blog, Think Denk, was selected for inclusion in the Library of Congress web archives, and he has written pieces for the New Yorker, the New York Times, and the New York Review of Books. One of his New Yorker contributions, “Every Good Boy Does Fine,” forms the basis of a memoir for future publication by Random House. In 2014 he served as Music Director of the Ojai Music Festival, for which, besides performing and curating, he wrote the libretto for a comic opera. The opera will be presented by Carnegie Hall in the 2014-15 season.

Denk’s debut recording for Nonesuch Records juxtaposed Ligeti’s Études with Beethoven’s final sonata, and was included on many “Best of 2012” lists, including those of the New Yorker, Washington Post, and NPR Music. His second recording for the label, Bach: Goldberg Variations, was released in September 2013. It reached number one on Billboard’s “Classical Albums” chart.
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Large print programs are available upon request. See an usher for a copy.

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Children While we encourage early introduction to the arts, we also wish to provide the best environment for all of our patrons. Our child policy is as follows:

• We request that children under 6 years of age not be brought to performances, except those labeled “Family” in our brochure or web site.

• Infants on laps are only permitted at family shows. All patrons, including infants on laps, must have a ticket due to fire marshal requirements.

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