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ASO to host young violinists Gluzman and Frang

By James L. Paulk

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Headlining the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's concerts for the next couple of weeks will be two important violinists, both appearing here for the first time. Vadim Gluzman will perform on Jan. 24 and 26, followed by Vilde Frang on Jan. 31 and Feb. 2.



Gluzman, 40, grew up in the Soviet Union. At 16, he moved to Israel, where Isaac Stern became a teacher and friend. He now lives in the Chicago area. Never a flashy performer, he is often compared to legendary violinists like Jascha Heifetz. And, in fact, his Stradivarius once belonged to the great Leopold Auer, Heifetz's teacher. Gluzman came into the instrument by way of the Stradivari Society of Chicago,

which loans great instruments to great musicians.

"I play better with this violin," he said. "It's my alter ego." When he first played it, he said, "after a couple of notes, I am no longer Vadim, who was playing three minutes ago."

Gluzman is known as a champion of new music and of "music that is not Bruch, Tchaikovsky, or Mendelssohn," the warhorses of the violin concerto repertoire. In 2009, as part of the season-opener for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, he performed Leonard Bernstein's "Serenade, after Plato's Symposium," an extraordinary work that is, nevertheless, so rarely performed that David Axelrod took a "music break" from the White House and flew in for the concert.

Still, in Atlanta he'll be performing Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, by far the composer's most popular work. Asked whether he was disappointed, he quickly responded that he was not. "I adore it like everyone else. It's amazing. It's such an incredible love story." It should be added that Gluzman recorded it two years ago with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. Reviewing this recording, Anne Midgette of the Washington Post referred to Gluzman's "big, golden, romantically singing tone." It's available as an MP3 download at Amazon.

These concerts, conducted by Kazushi Ono, will also include the Overture to the opera "Euryanthe," by Carl Maria von Weber, and Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3, the "Scottish" symphony. In honor of the latter, there will be a complimentary Scotch tasting at 7 p.m., for ticket holders.



This is a tough time for young violinists to stand out. The talent around the world is just insane. Few have caught on quite as fast as Vilde Frang, a 25-year-old Norwegian. A protégé of Anne-Sophie Mutter, she began performing with professional orchestras at age 12. Since then, she has steadily moved into the top ranks of soloists.

Frang is especially known for her fresh accounts of works by fellow Scandinavians Sibelius and Nielsen, as well as those of Sergei Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky. She's already recorded concerti by all four. Each of these accounts has been warmly praised for the combination of "striking imagination and fastidious care" in her playing.

It probably should be noted that there is a show business aspect to classical music, and Frang's Danish good looks and onstage charm certainly don't hurt her career. But this is not an era that forgives less than immaculate technique, and there is no doubt about hers.

Frang will perform Korngold's Violin Concerto No. 3, completed in 1945 after he escaped Austria and established a successful career as a screenwriter in Hollywood. Some of the themes from his movie scores are heard in the concerto, which manages to suggest the whole sweep of his fascinating biography, both European and American, and classical with popular elements.

The fine Hungarian conductor Gilbert Varga will conduct these concerts, which will also include Edvard Grieg's "Two Elegiac Melodies" and Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 3 in E flat Major, called the "Rhenish" symphony.

Concert Previews

The Gluzman concerts are Jan. 24 and 26 at 8 p.m. The Frang concerts are Jan. 31 and Feb. 2 at 8 p.m. Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree Street, Atlanta. 404-733-5000. www.atlantasympphony.org.