SPRING CONCERT
CZECH-MATES
featuring Christopher Hill, clarinet

Dance of the Comedians by Smetana
side-by-side performance with NISYO
Clarinet Concerto in A Major by Mozart
  Christopher Hill, clarinet
Symphony No. 6 in D Major by Dvořák

Christopher Stanichar
Principal Conductor

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016
7:30pm in the BJ Haan Auditorium
on the campus of Dordt College
Dear NISO friends,

We’re here at the closing concert of another wonderful musical season. The sadness of ending this season leads us to the excitement of announcing the new one! 2016-17 is the 30th anniversary of NISO and will be filled with special events, outstanding guest artists, and extraordinary music. Right before intermission, Christopher will introduce the concerts and artists. Specially-priced season tickets will also be available for purchase tonight. Season tickets make great gifts – in fact you can get an early start on Christmas or birthday presents.

We are excited that the youth orchestra members are joining NISO for one of the numbers. This collaboration has been beneficial for all involved.

Thank you to Christopher and all the performers, ringers, and guest artists in 2015-16 for making some of the most exciting and beautiful music in NW Iowa. Thank you to all the organizations, patrons, businesses, and individuals who help to financially support NISO. A thank you to all the “Friends” for their help, scholarship support, and incredible truffles sold at intermission.

To the audience, thank you for coming to “Czech-Mates.” Enjoy!!

Musically yours,
Norma Snyder Jones, Board Chairperson

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**PROGRAM NOTES**

**DANCE OF THE COMEDIANS**

from “The Bartered Bride” by Bedřich Smetana

Though lauded as the first distinctly Czech composer, Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) grew up speaking German. The son of a wealthy rural family, he had only passing familiarity with Czech, the language of commoners. Yet his involvement in the ill-fated political revolution of 1848 earned him no small measure of currency among a rising tide of nationalists. During the 1860’s, he set his sights on a prize offered by Count Jan von Harrach for the composition of a new, distinctly “Czech” opera. After (re)learning his “native” tongue at age 39, Smetana crafted *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, a dramatic telling of the 13th century invasion of Bohemia by Otto II. The opera premiered in 1866 and was followed that same year by a light comedy, *The Bartered Bride*.

The story, penned by one of Smetana’s fellow revolutionaries, makes rich mockery of arranged marriage. Secret identities and twists of family tree bring hilarity, irony, and drama at every turn. As the third act begins, young Vašek is swept into a travelling circus—Spanish temptress Esmerelda dazzles him into taking a job wearing a bear costume while men swallow swords and comedians twirl. The present “Dance of the Comedians” (along with the opera’s overture) is frequently excerpted for concert performance and figured as riotous accompaniment to the 1994 animated feature, “Chariots of Fur,” in which the Coyote attempts to catch the Roadrunner using a box of ACME lightning bolts.
Clarinet Concerto in A Major, KV.622
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“Ah, if only we had clarinets, too! You cannot imagine the glorious effect of a symphony with flutes, oboes and clarinets.”

- Mozart, letter to his father, 1778

Having been dismissed by his Salzburg employer with “a swift kick in the arse,” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) settled as a freelance musician in Vienna in 1781. There, he soon made the acquaintance of two fascinating figures: royal instrument maker Theodor Lotz (1747-1792) and woodwind virtuoso Anton Stadler (1753-1812). The intersection of builder, player, and composer proved to be a historic and fertile combination.

Stadler’s playing impressed Mozart greatly, particularly with its rich depth and agility in the lowest registers. Within two years, Mozart had penned more than a dozen works featuring clarinets and basset horns. In response, Lotz created the “basset clarinet,” a hybrid version of the soprano clarinet with a range that stretched deep into that dark chalumeau register for which Stadler was so renowned.

The present concerto dates from 1789. Mozart had just completed a quintet for clarinet and strings; Stadler requested a new concerto for his instrument. Mozart quickly drafted the outline of a concerto for bass clarinet in C but abandoned the sketch for two years. He took up the work again in 1791, writing to his wife Constanze that he “...finally orchestrated almost the whole of Stadler’s rondo.”

Sadly, we have no evidence that Mozart ever heard the work performed. Stadler took the concerto on an extended concert tour, travelling as far as St. Petersburg and Hamburg. By the time he returned, Mozart had passed away.

Mozart’s concerto was popularized in 1985 film Out of Africa featuring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep and stands today as one of the pillars of the clarinet repertoire. Mr. Hill is playing a modern basset clarinet for tonight’s performance.

Symphony No. 6 in D Major, op.60
by Antonín Dvořák

“So warm-hearted and so good-natured that every time you play it you are always in a great mood.”

- Andreas Delfs, Conductor laureate, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

By the 1870’s, the fortunes of Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) were just beginning to turn. After a modest upbringing in a small town outside Prague and after playing viola in concerts for which he never would have been able to afford tickets, he was an impoverished music teacher working a minor church job while trying to devote time to composition. Dvořák applied for an Austrian State Prize, a stipend awarded to “talented composers in need.” His application consisted of a massive stack of music (including two full symphonies) and a note that the composer did not even own a piano. The jury, which included none other than Johannes Brahms, was floored.

Hans Richter invited Dvořák to compose the present symphony, hoping that it might be played by Vienna’s Philharmonic. At this point, Dvořák had not fully realized his identity as a distinctly Czech composer, working instead in the cultivated customs of German music. His sixth symphony accordingly stands as a point of transition, with one foot in Vienna and another foot in the rural culture of Czech folk music. The first movement is graceful and polite, offering a melody that is a near twin of the traditional “Grandfather’s Dance” played at the conclusion of Viennese balls:

This contrasts tremendously with the wild abandon of the third movement. Dvořák offers the listener a wild twist on the expected minuet, replacing it instead with a Czech furiant, a reckless dance swerving violently from triple to duplex meter. Indeed, the pensive atmosphere of the second movement, when heard as a prelude to the third movement, offers a subtle nod to another Slavonic form: the dumka. Derived from a Ukrainian word meaning “thought”, a dumka is a dreamy epic that serves as a traditional foil to a furiant. With the fourth movement, Dvořák wraps the whole in a tuneful and ebullient conclusion.

Alas, in 1880 the Vienna Philharmonic balked at the symphony. The previous year, the Viennese government had implemented a new policy allowing greater autonomy in Czech lands; this engendered no small measure of anti-Czech sentiment among Vienna’s elites. Instead, Adolf Čech led the premiere performance in 1881 in Prague to great acclaim. (The audience, naturally, demanded an encore of the furiant.) The symphony was performed in London in 1882 and in New York the following year; its popularity continued to spread until it was at last performed by the Vienna Philharmonic (with grudging admission, perhaps?) in 1942.

Notes by Robert Horton © 2016
CHRISTOPHER STANICHAR is the Principal Conductor of the Northwest Iowa Symphony, an ensemble of some of the finest musicians in northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota. Stanichar was appointed to this position in 2011, following a number of guest appearances. Stanichar has conducted many fine orchestras across the United States and Europe, including the Baltimore Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, New Sousa Band, Carousel National Tour, Evita World Tour, Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, Binghamton Symphony, and the Rome Festival Orchestra. He has been a soloist with the South Dakota Symphony, Sioux Falls Municipal Band, Rome Festival Orchestra, Hunterdon Symphony, Raritan Valley Symphonic Band, and the Blawenburg Band, with which he had the honor of soloing at the White House. Mr. Hill performed the world premiere of Nathan Pawałek's Concertino in 2001, and Christopher Stanichar's Pink Ribbon for Susan in 2013. He and SDSO pianist John Walker performed at the international clarinet festival, ClarinetFest 2005, in Tokyo, Japan, and he performed at ClarinetFest 2012 as a member of the Manhattan Basset Horn Trio. He and John Walker have recorded a CD, and he is also featured on two recordings with the SDSO. He was the headline performer at the Oakland, Michigan Clarinet Day, and has performed at the Dakota Clarinet Festival and at the Dakota Sky chamber music festival. Mr. Hill is listed in Gianluca Campagnolo’s book, The Great Clarinetists.

Mr. Hill holds a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from Temple University, where he was a student of Anthony Gigliotti. In addition, he has studied with Donald Montanaro, Burt Bara, Ronald Rueben, Karl Herman, David Peck, and George Stillies. A noted mouthpiece craftsman, Mr. Hill is the designer of his own line of mouthpieces, which are used in many of the world’s finest orchestras and music schools. He is a D’Addario Artist.

CHRISTOPHER HILL is in his 29th season as the principal clarinetist of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. Paul Globus, in his review in The Clarinet magazine, calls Mr. Hill a “first rate clarinetist...whose playing is uniformly excellent.” In addition to his tenure with the SDSO, he has performed professionally and successfully throughout Europe and the United States, including the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra (Russia), Sochi Symphony Orchestra (Russia), Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil del Estado de Veracruz (Mexico), and many orchestras in the United States. Mr. Hill holds a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from Temple University, where he was a student of Anthony Gigliotti. In addition, he has studied with Donald Montanaro, Burt Bara, Ronald Rueben, Karl Herman, David Peck, and George Stillies. A noted mouthpiece craftsman, Mr. Hill is the designer of his own line of mouthpieces, which are used in many of the world’s finest orchestras and music schools. He is a D’Addario Artist.

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