

**Tuesday Musical:****Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra *Tour of Peace***

by Mike Telin



This week the Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra will embark on its first North American tour. Under the direction of Dmitry Yablonsky, the “*Tour of Peace*” will stop in Akron for a performance at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, March 12 at E.J. Thomas Hall. Presented by Tuesday Musical, the

program will include music by Myroslav Skoryk, Ignaz Moscheles, Felix Mendelssohn, Baruch Berliner, and Ludwig van Beethoven. Tickets are available [online](#).

Born in Moscow to a musical family, Dmitry Yablonsky was accepted into the Central Music School for gifted children at the age of six, where the cello became his instrument of choice. “I have to thank my mother, who took me out of the Soviet Union in the 70s,” Yablonsky said during an interview. Growing up in New York City, he went on to study cello at the Juilliard School of Music. During graduate school at Yale University he studied conducting with Otto Werner Muller.

As a cellist, Yablonsky has performed in many concert halls including Carnegie Hall, La Scala, Moscow’s Great Hall, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Hall, and has collaborated with Victor Tretyakov, Leif Ove Andsnes, and Yuri Bashmet, to name a few.

As a conductor, in addition to the Kyiv Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra, he has led the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Moscow Virtuosi, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, OFUNAM Orchestra in Mexico, and has led tours to the U.S. and Japan with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra.

I caught up with Dmitry Yablonsky over Zoom at his home in Tel Aviv.

*Mike Telin: Congratulations on the success of the orchestra. This will be its first North American tour?*

Dmitry Yablonsky: It is the first. We've played many concerts in Kiev and toured all over Ukraine before the war. But this tour is exciting for me because we have the concert in Carnegie Hall on the 14th of March — I grew up about 10 blocks from there.

*MT: Tell me about the history of the orchestra.*



DY: About 10 years ago I was asked to play a concert with the Kyiv soloists — they were the chamber orchestra started by the legendary violinist Bogodar Kotorovich. We did many projects together and made some recordings for Naxos.

After a little misunderstanding with the government I left, and most of the core members of the Kyiv soloists said, let's start our own thing. So in 2016 we started Kyiv Virtuosi.

But the breakout of the war was a total shock for everybody. And it was the composer Alexei Shor who helped us relocate to Chieti, Italy. That was in May, 2022, so two or three months after the war started.

*MT: Tell me about the program — it's quite interesting.*

DY: We'll start with Myroslav Skoryk's *Melody*. After that will come Felix Mendelssohn and Ignaz Moscheles' *Fantasie Brilliante & Variations*, and Moscheles' *Les Contrastes Grand Duo*. Both of those pieces are for two pianos and Orchestra and will be played by members of the MultiPiano Ensemble from Israel. They're wonderful students of Tomer Lev, one of the founders of the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, which is a joint institute of Tel-Aviv University and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

*MT: You're also playing Mendelssohn's first Piano Concerto.*

DY: Yes. The soloist, [Alon Kariv](#) is a wonderful young Israeli pianist who has played all over the world.

The second half will be an absolutely phenomenal cello concerto by Baruch Berliner called [Jacob's Dream](#). And for dessert we'll play Beethoven's *Symphony No. 8*. It's an

unusual program — you have the piano concertos and the soloists plus a cello concerto and a symphony.

*MT: You are going to be the soloist for Jacob's Dream.*

DY: Yes, I'll play the cello concerto. I was a principal cello in Barcelona for a couple of seasons, and I was principal cello in Bergen. When I conduct, people say that I'm actually a cellist and when I play the cello they say that I'm a conductor. But I can say the more I conduct, the more I love the cello. I can be more independent. I can take it out in my room and practice.

*MT: When does the tour begin?*

DY: On March 10 we're flying to Chicago and then we take a bus to Cedar Falls, Iowa. Our second concert is in Akron and on the 13th we go to the New York area. On the 14th we're at Carnegie Hall and on the 15th we're in Amherst, Massachusetts. On the 17th we'll play at Rutgers University and then we fly to Fort Myers — the rest of the tour is in Florida. I'm very excited because I feel so at home in the United States.

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