Thousands gather yearly for the Kansas City Symphony's Celebration at the Station on Memorial Day weekend. This year the Symphony expects 50,000 people. **Mark McDonald**

PERFORMING ARTS

KC Symphony's Celebration at the Station starts off summer with a boom

BY PATRICK NEAS
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Every year on the Sunday before Memorial Day, the grounds of Union Station and Liberty Memorial explode with fireworks and patriotic music to usher in summer. It's the Kansas City Symphony's Celebration at the Station, and it brings together the city like no other event of the year

Union Station and Liberty Memorial, which honors those who gave their lives in World War I, are the perfect setting for a Memorial Day concert, happening this year on Sunday, May 27. The Symphony is expecting 50,000 people to attend, so you are well-advised to arrive early, bring your blanket and stake out your territory. The event site opens at 3 p.m., and there will be plenty of pre-concert entertainment to keep you occupied until the main event at 8 p.m.

The Heartland Men's Chorus will perform at 4 p.m., and the United States Air Force Hot Brass will heat things up at 5 p.m. Family activities throughout the day include an instrument petting zoo, face painting and exhibits from Science City. A wide variety of food trucks will be available to assuage hunger with everything from Cajun to Brazilian food and down-home favorites like hamburgers and lemonade.

Among the day's activities is an instrument petting zoo.
Eric Williams

At 8 p.m., Michael Stern will take the podium to conduct a program of patriotic crowd-pleasers and lesser-known gems of Americana. Stern always chooses works that are by turns rousing, thoughtful and touching. This year's concert will celebrate three big centennials: the 100th anniversary of the birth of Leonard Bernstein, the World War I armistice and Irving Berlin's composition of "God Bless America."

But the piece everyone waits for is the grand finale, Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. This year, as always, it will be accompanied by booming cannons and fireworks bursting in air. It's the only way to conclude Celebration at the Station.

Celebration at the Station and Fireworks

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3 p.m. Sunday, May 27. Union Station. Free. For more information, visit kcsymphony.org.

International Center for Music's concert season

Park University's International Center for Music is officially making the 1900 Building the home for its concert series. All six of its recently announced 2018-19 concerts will take place in the performing arts space, which is in a refurbished gem of midcentury architecture in Mission Woods.

Stanislav Ioudenitch, artistic director of Park's ICM, has put together a roster of talent for an intriguing and compelling season. ICM faculty figure prominently next season, and for good reason. These are musicians of the highest caliber, worthy of any concert series in the country.

Behzod Abduraimov, a Park alumnus and former pupil of Ioudenitch, will give a recital in January 2019 that promises to be one of the concerts of the season. The program, "Love and Death," will feature some of the most over-the-top Romantic repertoire for piano, like Liszt's transcription of the Liebestod (Love-Death) from Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde." This is the kind of virtuosic fare at which Abduraimov, winner of the 2009 London International Piano Competition, shines.

Park violin professor Ben Sayevich will be joined by his wife, pianist Lolita Lisovskaya-Sayevich, also a Park faculty member, for a recital in February. The full program has yet to be announced, but we do know the duo will perform Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata, one of the most beloved works for violin and piano and an inspiration for Tolstoy's eponymous novella.

Partners In Music: Ben Sayevich And Lo...

Daniel Veis, Park University's professor of cello, will give a recital with his wife, pianist Helena Veisova, in April. Veis received the silver medal in cello at the 1978 Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow. And he has had a very distinguished career since then. Veis and Veisova will perform music by Beethoven, Schumann, Dvorak and Bohuslav Martinu.

Ioudenitch is also bringing in some of the most talented musicians from the far-flung corners of the world. Pianist Vladimir Viardo will open the season with a recital of music by Schubert, Liszt and Debussy in September. Born in the Caucasus in 1949, Viardo went on to win a slew of awards including, like Ioudenitch, first prize in the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Ständchen (Schubert/Liszt) - Vladimir V...

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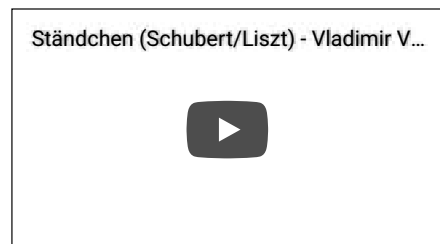
Violinist Shmuel Ashkenasi, who will give a recital in October, studied with the legendary Efram Zimbalist at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and won first prize in violin at the 1962 International Tchaikovsky Competition. He'll be joined by Lisovskaya-Sayevich for a program that includes the music of Sibelius.

In March, Vietnamese-Canadian pianist Dang Thai Son will give a recital of music by Schubert and Chopin. In 1980, Son became the first Asian pianist to win first prize at the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. He was recently appointed professor of piano at the prestigious Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

Pianist Dang Thai Son will perform in March 2019. Submitted photo

Thanks to Ioudenitch's extensive connections, Kansas City can enjoy these elusive, rarefied talents who might otherwise have never made it to our corner of the world. We owe Ioudenitch and Park University a debt of gratitude for helping bring these brilliant musicians to Kansas City.

All performances at the 1900 Building, 1900 Shawnee Mission Parkway, Mission Woods. For tickets and more information, 816-213-4355 or icm.park.edu.

• **Sept. 21:** Vladimir Viardo, piano

• **Oct. 11:** Shmuel Ashkenasi, violin, and Lolita Lisovskaya-Sayevich, piano

• **Jan. 19, 2019:** Behzod Abduraimov, piano

• **Feb. 9:** Ben Sayevich, violin, and Lolita Lisovskaya-Sayevich, piano

• **March 23:** Dang Thai Son, piano

• **April 5:** Daniel Veis, cello, and Helena Veisova, piano

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