

Viktoria Mullova, David Greilsammer to bring rich musical diversity

Internationally acclaimed violinist Viktoria Mullova and rising conductor David Greilsammer's chamber music orchestra Geneva Camerata will introduce an unusual classical music program on Friday at Seoul Arts Center Concert Hall.

From Beethoven Symphony No. 8 to Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," the audience will be provided a chance to listen to pieces that are rarely performed in the local classical music scene.

The program was created by conductor and pianist Greilsammer, who has been the music and artistic director of the Geneva Camerata since 2013 and who is also renowned for his unique interpretation of Baroque and contemporary music.

US composer Charles Ives' seminal work "The Unanswered Question," performed by the Geneva Camerata, will start off the evening. Given the unfamiliarity of the piece here, Greilsammer's choice of an enigmatic piece by Ives is a bold move.

Greilsammer's inclusion of the Ives' piece is perhaps a tribute to late composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, whose centenary is marked this year. Widely known for canonizing American classical music, Bernstein helped to establish the importance of US-born composer Ives' works. Bernstein's lecture series given in the fall of 1973 is titled "The Unanswered Question" as well.

Following the Ives' piece is celebrated violinist Mullova's performance of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, one of the pieces included in her popular album "Beethoven & Mendelssohn" released in 2012.

Mullova earned international recognition when she won first prize at the 1980 Sibelius Competition in Helsinki and the gold medal at the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1982. The Soviet Union-born violinist defected to the West in 1983.

Highly praised for her magnificent performance of Bach's Partitas, Mullova has been expanding her repertoire since her 2000 album "Through the Looking Glass," which featured world, jazz and pop music arranged for her by Matthew Barley -- her cellist husband. Mullova's latest project "Stradivarius in Rio" is also an example of efforts to enrich her musical diversity.

Mullova has said that she became interested in collaborating with Greilsammer after listening to the conductor's "Scarlatti & Cage Sonatas" -- an album that features the conductor's own juxtaposition of pieces by Baroque composer Domenico Scarlatti and modern and contemporary composer John Cage.

The Geneva Camerata will also present the Jonathan Keren arrangement of Gershwin's "Variations on Themes from Porgy and Bess," an English-language opera by the American composer before closing the evening with Beethoven Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93.

Friday's concert at Seoul Arts Center will mark Mullova's seventh visit and Greilsammer's first visit to South Korea.