

MSO

Program NOTES

Concerto for Jazz Violin and Orchestra

(2007)

“The Jazz Violin Concerto, by Scott Routenberg, has all the seriousness of a classical work—three movements, sophisticated orchestration, great development—but it also has the appeal of idiomatic fiddle writing, evoking wide open skies, sort of along the lines of Aaron Copland. Finally, it’s got the ‘it factor’ of a jazz piece, and it allows the solo voice to really shine through, taking risks.”

— Christian Howes, jazz violin soloist

Commissioned by Chien Tan (Oregon Symphony Principal Second Violin), the *Concerto for Jazz Violin and Orchestra* unites classical concerto form, jazz harmonies, fiddle rhythms, and a solo part that seamlessly navigates between written music and improvisation.

The first movement, *Blue Reel*, follows a modified sonata form in the fiddle-friendly key of D Major. Like the tuning of the violin strings, the main melody is built in stacked intervals of fifths. Whereas the development section is largely written out for the soloist, the recapitulation explores improvisation over the harmonies of the exposition.

Ballad begins with a relaxed reharmonization of the primary melody played by muted strings. Lush, romantic orchestration then leads into an intimate jazz piano trio solo section. An improvised cadenza connects the second and third movements.

The third movement, *Step Dance*, kicks off with a fiddle-style repeated note motive, accompanied by syncopated rhythms in the orchestra. This rhythmic dance is interrupted by a slower passage reminiscent of the second movement before building up into climatic tutti statements and flights of exhilarating improvisation.