

Professor Kubínek Meets the Vermont Youth Orchestra



VYO conductor, Jeff Domoto

On Friday, February 15, visionary vaudevillian and internationally acclaimed theater artist Tomáš Kubínek visits the Flynn for an evening of grand music, madcap brilliance, and old-world panache. Performing alongside the Vermont Youth Orchestra and conductor Jeff Domoto, the hilarious symphonic performance features orchestral works by Mozart, Dvorák, Bach, and many others. We spoke with Tomáš and Jeff about their upcoming collaboration.

What's going to happen when Professor Kubínek performs with the Vermont Youth Orchestra?

Tomáš: Symphonic blasts and spontaneous laughter are going to blow the roof clear off the Flynn, leaving it dangling by a flimsy shingle. Vermonters are in for an engaging, emotional roller-coaster that captivates hipsters, cultural buffs, blue-collar heroes, and young and old from all walks of life.

Jeff: As conductor, I'm set up to be Tomáš' partner/antagonist during the show, which will be a lot of fun. Adding another full concert program to our usual schedule is challenging, but we've been able to make use of some of the music for this concert in our other performances.

Tomáš: To give you a clearer image; I get carried in like an emperor to the triumphant strains of Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra Overture*, welcome everyone, and then proceed to upend several hundred years of revered tradition. There will be mass-hypnosis, death-defying stunts, absurd inventions, and other brilliant nonsense performed to the greatest music ever written all while I keep the audience charmed and enthralled and the young orchestra hanging on for dear life.

Has the VYO done anything like this before?

Jeff: We have a solid history of exciting collaborative performances with a wide variety of innovative artists, including Trey Anastasio of Phish, violinist/composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, concert violinist Midori, and with the *Video Games Live* series; we'll also be doing a great program with opera singers Latonia Moore and Jesus Garcia this season. But this is the first time that the VYO is working with a theatrical performer in this sort of program.

Tomáš: The youthful spark and openness of the VYO and the skill, precision, and pure kindness that Jeff is passing on to them as their music director makes me very happy. If Vermonters don't fully know it yet, they need to be aware of the treasure of beautiful talent they have growing here.

How do you engage people with classical music?

Tomáš: When I perform with orchestras I work to open things up in an even bigger way—to make it very fun and full of heart.

My goal is to welcome in people who might never otherwise attend a symphony program because they're scared of it or think it's not somewhere they belong.

I want orchestra fans in the crowd but also people off the street, families, university students, farmers, factory workers, and immigrants, all of us to experience this magical thing together.

I was three years old when our family immigrated after the Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia. In large part, it was the arts that brought us in contact with people and ultimately opened my own life's path. So I'm dedicated to that aspect of the arts, bringing people together through collaborations and reaching diverse audiences.

Orchestras don't just play stuffy, trite music that prudish people enjoy. The music is a huge part of our collective cultural soul and its DNA is alive everywhere around us—film scores, advertising, pop music, even cartoons. The music in this project runs the gamut of bombastic, whimsical, raucous, tender, and eccentric. Besides supporting the theatricality of the performance, it's also a showcase for an orchestra and what they're capable of. Back when some of these works were composed they were the coolest thing going—not precious museum pieces, but full of life and passion.

Why do music and comedy go together so well?

Jeff: Music and comedy are both dependent on precise timing and on the juxtaposition of unlikely ideas and elements. When watching *Looney Tunes* or the *Three Stooges* it's obvious that, even without the use of grotesque sounds, music can heighten comic impact just as it does with dramatic or tragic elements. We love music because it has an express bypass around our brain to our most powerful emotions.

Tomáš: Laughter also gets everyone breathing together, and music gets them feeling. When those things come together, the combination is hilarious, and it also goes deep on an emotional level. Laughter is miraculous—it never gets old. Sometimes I feel like a bit of a matchmaker; it's as though I'm a village idiot who has discovered a place where laughter and emotion fall in love with each other.



Theater artist
Tomáš Kubínek