Clef Notes:

**Torke — Javelin**
Penned in 1994 for the Olympic Games Cultural Olympiad, this modern American classic exemplifies Torke’s harmonically simple, pulsating “post-minimalist” style of composition.

**Sibelius — Violin Concerto**
Written in 1904, Sibelius’ only violin concerto showcases his
expansive, pictorial compositional style, evoking the Finnish landscape from the music’s first, icy notes to its romping finale.

**Dvořák — Symphony No. 8**

With its reliance on folk melodies and dances, Dvořák’s penultimate symphony paints an evocative portrait of the composer’s Bohemian homeland.
Program Notes:

Michael Torke (1961 - ) — *Javelin*

Born in 1961, Michael Torke has emerged as one of the most acclaimed American orchestral composers of his generation. Working in a style roughly dubbed "post-minimalist," Torke's work is fairly comparable to that of fellow contemporary American
composer John Adams. Both utilize the pulsing, harmonically simple yet rhythmically complex textures of minimalism; but neither allows this stylistic device to limit his personal expressive range.

In Torke's case, hints of contemporary pop music as well as classical and even medieval idioms give his works a distinctly modern American spirit that is deeply informed by
the musical traditions that have brought us to the 21st Century.

Torke describes *Javelin* in his own words:

“I had three goals in mind when I began this piece for the Atlanta Symphony's anniversary: I wanted to use the orchestra as a virtuosic instrument; I wanted to use triads (three-note tonal chords); and I wanted the
music to be thematic. I knew I would welcome swifter changes of mood than what is found in my earlier works. What came out, somewhat unexpectedly, was a sense of valor among short flashes and sweeps that reminded me of something in flight: a light spear thrown, perhaps, but not in the sense of a weapon, more in the spirit of a competition. When the word ‘javelin’ suddenly suggested itself, I
couldn't help recall the 1970s model of sports car that my dad had owned, identified by that name, but I concluded, why not? Even that association isn't so far off from the general feeling of the piece. Its fast tempo calls for 591 measures to evoke the generally uplifting, sometimes courageous, yet playful spirit."

The work's title has an extrinsic significance as well: *Javelin* was
commissioned by the Atlanta Symphony for the Olympic Games Cultural Olympiad in celebration of the Atlanta Symphony's 50th Anniversary season.

Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957) — Violin Concerto

The music of Jean Sibelius is the music of nature. He was a man keenly attuned to the cycles
and natural processes of the earth and its inhabitants. That predilection is evident throughout his music, which tends to follow organic rather than formal structures and to highlight atmosphere over spotlit melodies.

It is not just the atmospheric or structural elements of his music that lend this connection to nature. By growing his musical ideas from seeds — rather than
stating them as a kind of thesis for discussion, as was the traditional classical method — Sibelius mimics the cycles of nature that are so familiar to those of us who choose a life framed by wilderness. For us Montanans, this is music we seem to know by heart, even if we’ve never heard it before.

In that sense, we can understand why Jean Sibelius was viewed, in his time and
still, as the seminal figure in Finnish arts. It is fitting that Sibelius would be so sanctified in his native country; for he was both a devoted nationalist and an artist who attempted to address the fundamental nature of cultural identity. His short work from 1900, *Finlandia*, soon became his best-known work — and a virtual national anthem for his country.
Sibelius was widely respected for his tremendous mastery of string instrument writing. It is therefore somewhat surprising that he composed just a handful of works for solo or chamber violin. The Violin Concerto proved exceptionally daunting to Sibelius, who spent years polishing the work before he was finally satisfied.

The impetus for the Concerto came from the great violinist
Willy Burmester, who pressured Sibelius to complete the work during a time when the composer was deeply frustrated and prone to heavy drinking. The completed concerto, premiered in 1904, showed little of this darkness; indeed, the Concerto's finale is imbued with an exuberance not seen in many of Sibelius' other works.
The Concerto establishes its character from the first, unforgettable notes. Shimmering, icy purity almost immediately gives way to a fiery, severe character. This contrast carries forward throughout the work. The expansive, symphonic first movement gives way to a slow, brooding second movement; and the concerto closes with a romping, sharply syncopated finale, which English music
critic Donald Francis Tovey famously described as a kind of “polonaise for polar bears.”

Antonin Dvořák (1841 – 1904) — Symphony No. 8

Throughout the 17th and 18th Centuries, Bohemian artists endured a painful period of obscurity. Those Czech composers who sought fame beyond the borders of Bohemia
were forced to leave the country and join the artistic circles of Vienna or Germany. Though, according to the historian Alec Robertson, Czech musicians were known across Europe for their technical ability, no significant composers emerged from Bohemia until Bedrich Smetana was born in 1824. But, with Smetana’s rise, the fate of Czech music forever changed;
the world was finally ready for Antonin Dvořák.

Born in September of 1841 in a small village on the banks of the Moldau River, Dvořák grew up immersed in Bohemian folk music and culture. He earned his first notoriety for the patriotic cantata, “The Heirs of the White Mountain,” composed when he was 31. After this relatively late start, Dvořák’s fame quickly grew. He
became a close (and lifelong) friend of Johannes Brahms, who helped Dvořák secure his first publication. His symphonies and operas swept the continent. By the time of his death in 1904, Dvořák was revered around the world; he was given a national funeral at the Vysehrad cemetery, where the Czech nation’s leading men are laid to rest.
In 1889, Dvořák was elected to the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences. To mark the honor, he dove into composing a new symphony. The composer at the time stated that he wanted to produce “a work which is different from the other symphonies, with individual ideas worked out in a new way.”

For him, finding that path meant backing away from some
of the traditional formal elements of a symphony. Instead, he developed the music in a much more free-form, flowing fashion, building on elements of Czech folk music in a method that aimed to be pictorial and narrative. The result was an immediate hit both at home and abroad; it also presaged, both in tone and technique, the brilliance of Dvořák’s Ninth Symphony,
“From the New World,” which many of us know and love well.

The first movement of the Eighth Symphony begins prayerfully, with a lovely horn melody that segues to a bright and exhilarating crescendo. From there, the orchestra rolls forward sunnily until the return of the horns return to restate their prayerful melody. This time it segues to a more excited and nervous passage
that rises in intensity for several minutes. Its resolution once again brings more sunlight.

This shifting play between somber and lighthearted, atmospheric and energetic carries out through the rest of the first movement, resolving ultimately in an exciting sprint to the finish.
In a notable split from tradition, the lush, Dvořák’s second movement is actually the longest of his symphony’s four movements. (While there is no set formula, typically the inner movements of a symphony are shorter than the outer movements—often by a significant margin.) Where Dvořák does follow tradition is in providing a marked contrast to what came before. Where his first movement rolled ever
forward, the second is pensive, at times hesitant, pausing and collecting itself, at times stewing on an idea, before finally relaxing into a sweet reverie that closes out the movement.

Then comes the third movement, a lovely, swaying dance in softly pulsating triple meter. This is probably Dvořák’s most famous symphonic movement that isn’t
part of his beloved Ninth Symphony, and justly so: its melody is instantly infectious, its supple flow lifting the spirit ever higher.

The fourth movement begins with a clarion call from the trumpet, calling us once again to a dance—though this time, it’s mostly a romping affair, sprinting ever faster, leaping ever higher, an expression of exuberance punctuated by
thrilling trills from the horns. After a brief rest in the middle, the music takes off again, this time unbridled, driving quickly to the music’s thrilling conclusion.