

You'd think it'd be easy to give away a ticket to the symphony

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I'm sort of the ringleader of a group of friends who go in together on a block of tickets to the Seattle Symphony. I bought a pair of tickets in the block, one for myself, and one for a rotating guest. And for some reason, I had a hard time finding a guest for last weekend's concert. Of course, six of my friends have already been ruled out as guests because they're already coming! I asked a dozen other friends; they were all enthusiastic for the opportunity but had to decline for one reason or another. Such busy social calendars.

- "I will be out of town { on a business trip (2x) | to visit my parents/in-laws (1x × 2) | for a chess tournament }."
- "My parents/in-laws are visiting from out of town (2x × 2 + 1x)."
- "I'm attending/organizing a birthday party (2x)."
- "I'm going to a dinner party thrown by my girlfriend."
- "I'd just fall asleep." At least this one was honest.

I did eventually find a taker for my ticket, and all the people who couldn't make it can go eat their hearts out. I hadn't seen Mstislav Rostropovich conduct in a long time. He's older now (duh) and appears to have lost some weight, turning him into a somewhat more frail old man. Being nearly eighty years old may also be a factor... His musical stature, on the other hand, has not diminished in the least. (And he still conducts with his mouth open. Some things never change.) After I read the story behind the composition of the *Festive Overture*, I found the piece even more impressive. Shostakovich's First Symphony was significantly harder to grasp—his language has always eluded me—and it wasn't helped by the audience's mistaking the grand pause near at the end of the second movement for its conclusion, or its laughter when the piece resumed. (Maestro Rostropovich seemed kind of annoyed by that.) The Prokofiev was wonderfully done, and the normally expressionless Assistant Principal Second Violin Michael Miropolsky got to show off some of his wit while acting as an interpreter when Maestro Rostropovich introduced the encore. The ovation was so resounding that the conductor had to take the concertmaster off the stage with him to tell everybody, "The show's over."

(One of the people in our symphony group has a friend who performs in the Cascade Symphony Orchestra, which Mr. Miropolsky conducts. Apparently, when he gets a microphone in his hand, Mr. Miropolsky is quite a funny guy.)

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