

# Season 2018-2019

**Thursday, April 25, at 7:30**

**Friday, April 26, at 2:00**

**Saturday, April 27, at 8:00**

## The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Conductor (Thursday  
and Saturday)

**Kensho Watanabe** Conductor (Friday)

**Jonathan Biss** Piano

**Weber** Overture to *Der Freischütz*


**Schumann** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

I. Allegro affettuoso

II. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso—

III. Allegro vivace

### Intermission

**Beethoven** Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55  
("Eroica") 


I. Allegro con brio

II. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai

III. Scherzo (Allegro vivace) and Trio

IV. Finale: Allegro molto—Andante—Presto

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 55 minutes.

 LiveNote® 2.0, the Orchestra's interactive concert guide for mobile devices, will be enabled for these performances.

The April 26 concert is sponsored by the  
**Red Moose Charitable Trust.**

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit [www.wrti.org](http://www.wrti.org) to listen live or for more details.

Please join us following the April 26 concert for a free Chamber Postlude featuring members of The Philadelphia Orchestra and special guest Jonathan Biss.

**Brahms** Piano Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 26

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Poco adagio
- III. Scherzo: Poco allegro—Trio—Scherzo da capo senza replica
- IV. Finale: Allegro—Animato

**Jonathan Biss** Piano

**Julia Li** Violin

**Burchard Tang** Viola

**Priscilla Lee** Cello

The Postlude runs approximately 50 minutes.

# The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Music Director



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# The Philadelphia Orchestra

Jesse Griffin



The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of imagination and innovation on and off the concert stage. The Orchestra is inspiring the future and transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—and exceeding—that level, by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world.

Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin’s connection to the Orchestra’s musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics since his inaugural season in 2012. Under his leadership the Orchestra returned to recording, with four celebrated CDs on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label, continuing its history of recording success. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of listeners on the radio with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM.

Philadelphia is home and the Orchestra continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with its loyal patrons at its home in the Kimmel Center, and also with those who enjoy the Orchestra’s area performances at the Mann Center, Penn’s Landing, and other cultural, civic, and learning venues. The Orchestra maintains a strong commitment to collaborations with cultural and community organizations on a regional and national level, all of which create greater access and engagement with classical music as an art form.

The Philadelphia Orchestra serves as a catalyst for cultural activity across Philadelphia’s many communities, building an offstage presence as strong as its onstage one. With Nézet-Séguin, a dedicated body of musicians, and one of the nation’s richest arts ecosystems, the Orchestra has launched its **HEAR** initiative, a portfolio of integrated initiatives that promotes **H**ealth, champions music **E**ducation, eliminates barriers to **A**ccessing the

orchestra, and maximizes impact through **R**esearch. The Orchestra’s award-winning Collaborative Learning programs engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global cultural ambassador for Philadelphia and for the US. Having been the first American orchestra to perform in the People’s Republic of China, in 1973 at the request of President Nixon, the ensemble today boasts five-year partnerships with Beijing’s National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Shanghai Media Group. In 2018 the Orchestra traveled to Europe and Israel. The Orchestra annually performs at Carnegie Hall while also enjoying summer residencies in Saratoga Springs and Vail. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Music Director

Chris Lee



Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** will lead The Philadelphia Orchestra through at least the 2025-26 season, an extraordinary and significant long-term commitment. Additionally, he became the third music director of the Metropolitan Opera, beginning with the 2018-19 season. Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His intensely collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm, paired with a fresh approach to orchestral programming, have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him “phenomenal,” adding that under his baton, “the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better.”

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling talents of his generation. He has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000, and in summer 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He was music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world’s most revered ensembles and has conducted critically acclaimed performances at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon (DG) in May 2018. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with four CDs on that label. His upcoming recordings will include projects with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and the Orchestre Métropolitain, with which he will also continue to record for ATMA Classique. Additionally, he has recorded with the Rotterdam Philharmonic on DG, EMI Classics, and BIS Records, and the London Philharmonic for the LPO label.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal’s Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick’s honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; *Musical America’s* 2016 Artist of the Year; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec in Montreal, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

To read Yannick’s full bio, please visit [philorch.org/conductor](http://philorch.org/conductor).

# Conductor



Andrew Bogard

**Kensho Watanabe** has been assistant conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra since the 2016-17 season and was the inaugural conducting fellow of the Curtis Institute of Music from 2013 to 2015, under the mentorship of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. In April 2017 he made his critically acclaimed subscription debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra and pianist Daniil Trifonov, and recently he conducted the Orchestra for his debut at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival and concerts at the Mann Center and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. His 2018-19 season with the Orchestra includes subscription concerts, the annual Free College Concert, three Family Concerts, and numerous School Concerts.

Mr. Watanabe's recent highlights have included debuts with the Houston Symphony and the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and his Japanese debut at the Matsumoto Festival. Highlights of the 2018-19 season include debuts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, in addition to a return visit to the Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal. Equally at home in both symphonic and operatic repertoire, Mr. Watanabe has led numerous operas with the Curtis Opera Theatre, most recently Puccini's *La rondine* in 2017 and *La bohème* in 2015. Additionally, he served as assistant conductor to Mr. Nézet-Séguin on a new production of Strauss's *Elektra* at Montreal Opera.

An accomplished violinist, Mr. Watanabe received his Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music and served as a substitute violinist in The Philadelphia Orchestra from 2012 to 2016. Cognizant of the importance of the training and development of young musicians, he has served on the staff of the Greenwood Music Camp since 2007, currently serving as the orchestra conductor.

Mr. Watanabe is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with distinguished conducting pedagogue Otto-Werner Mueller. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Yale College, where he studied molecular, cellular, and developmental biology.

# Soloist



Benjamin Edouega

Pianist **Jonathan Biss** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2004. He was recently named co-artistic director, alongside pianist Mitsuko Uchida, of the Marlboro Music Festival, where he has spent 12 summers. He has written extensively about his relationships with the composers with whom he shares a stage. A member of the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music, his alma mater, since 2010, he led the first massive open online course (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory. Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas has reached more than 150,000 people in 185 countries. As 2020, the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, approaches, Mr. Biss continues to add lectures to his online course and will cover all of the sonatas by the anniversary year. At the same time, he progresses in his nine-year, nine-disc recording cycle of Beethoven's complete piano sonatas, which will also be completed in 2020. His bestselling eBook, *Beethoven's Shadow*, describes the process of recording the sonatas. It was published by RosettaBooks in 2011 and was the first Kindle Single written by a classical musician. These projects represent his complete approach to connecting his audience to his own passion for the music.

Mr. Biss also conceived the Beethoven/5 project, for which the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra has co-commissioned Timo Andres, Sally Beamish, Salvatore Sciarrino, Caroline Shaw, and Brett Dean to write piano concertos, each inspired by one of Beethoven's. Committed to making the concertos part of the repertoire, he has performed the commissions globally beyond their premieres. He also has long-standing relationships with the New York Philharmonic; the Cleveland, Philharmonia, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival, and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras; and the Boston, Chicago, and Swedish Radio symphonies, among many others.

Mr. Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother, cellist Raya Garbousova, and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, he began piano lessons at age six and studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute with Leon Fleisher. For more information, please visit [www.jonathanbiss.com](http://www.jonathanbiss.com).

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1803**

**Beethoven**

Symphony  
No. 3

**Music**

Spohr  
Violin Concerto  
No. 1

**Literature**

Schiller  
*Die Braut von  
Messina*

**Art**

West  
*Christ Healing  
the Sick*

**History**

Louisiana  
Purchase

**1821**

**Weber**

Overture to  
*Der Freischütz*

**Music**

Mendelssohn  
Sinfonia No. 7

**Literature**

Scott  
*Kenilworth*

**Art**

Constable  
*Hay Wain*

**History**

Bolívar defeats  
Spanish

**1841**

**Schumann**

Piano  
Concerto

**Music**

Rossini  
Stabat Mater

**Literature**

Browning  
*Pippa Passes*

**Art**

Courbet  
*The Forest in  
Autumn*

**History**

Braid discovers  
hypnosis

Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* was a signal work of early German musical Romanticism and its celebrated Overture provides a marvelous distillation of the opera's varied moods and themes. Weber evokes country folk life through his use of horns and employs other effects to convey the eerie supernatural world in which Max, the opera's hero, forges magic bullets with which he hopes to win a shooting contest to gain the hand of his beloved.

Robert Schumann made several attempts in his late teens to write a piano concerto, but he kept getting sidetracked by other projects. In 1841 he composed a one-movement Fantasy for piano and orchestra. He had recently married the brilliant piano virtuoso Clara Wieck, who urged him to expand the piece to a full three-movement concerto. She premiered the Piano Concerto in A minor in 1845 and remarked that it gives "the greatest pleasure to those who hear it. The piano is most skillfully interwoven with the orchestra. It is impossible to think of the one without the other."

Beethoven's Third Symphony, the monumental "Eroica," proved to be a turning point not only in the composer's career, but also in the history of orchestral music. It ushered in his "heroic" middle period and broke with audience expectations of what a symphony should be. The piece initially baffled many listeners because of its length, complexity, and unusual form—an imposing first movement, a gigantic funeral march, a lively scherzo with playful horn trio, and a formidable concluding set of variations. Although originally inspired by the figure of Napoleon, the heroic nature of this Symphony is deeply connected to Beethoven's own personal struggles at the time as, only in his early 30s, he realized that he was losing his hearing.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 6 PM.



# The Music

## Overture to *Der Freischütz*



**Carl Maria von Weber**  
**Born in Eutin, near Lübeck,**  
**November 18, 1786**  
**Died in London, June 5,**  
**1826**

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* was written (perhaps created is the better word) in 1818 and is just one famous manifestation of the burgeoning Romantic interest in the Gothic, grotesque, and supernatural so often evident in the literature, art, and music of the time. Opera, with its combination of story, staging, and sound, provided the perfect medium to explore these themes in the performing arts. This is no doubt one reason Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (The Freeshooter) immediately captured the imagination of audiences in Europe and beyond, beginning with its premiere in June 1821 at the newly built Schauspielhaus in Berlin. Weber did not have a comparable success in the remaining five years of his life, although the overtures to his later *Euryanthe* and *Oberon* became repertory standards. In these operas, and in less familiar compositions, his masterful orchestration and compelling evocation of mood helped to usher in a new Romantic sensibility in music.

**Romantic Gothic** Weber was born after, but died before, Beethoven (like Mozart, he died in his 30s), and his music looks both backward and forward. *Der Freischütz* profoundly influenced Berlioz, Wagner, and other later Romantics; indeed, Berlioz made a performing version of the opera in the late 1830s, with newly composed recitatives replacing the original dialogue. Weber, of course, was himself subject to influences. The supernatural had been a part of opera ever since its invention in the early 17th century, where a *deus ex machina* saved many an ending. *Zauberoper* (magic opera) was all the rage in Mozart's time, with his about the enchanted flute being the only one that remains regularly performed today.

The early Romantics added darker, more sinister elements in their Gothic stories, which had musical consequences for what audiences heard at the opera. Louis Spohr's *Faust* (1813) and E.T.A Hoffmann's *Undine* (1816) provided operatic models for Weber, who had his librettist Friedrich Kind adapt a ghost story from a recent collection by Johann Apel and Friedrich Laun for *Freischütz*. His opera effectively evoked the weirdly supernatural, especially in the famous Wolf's Glen Scene that ends the second act. At

Weber composed *Der Freischütz from 1817 to 1821*.

*The first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Overture to Der Freischütz were in November 1902; Fritz Scheel conducted. The most recent subscription performances were in February 2018, with Christoph Eschenbach on the podium.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra recorded the Freischütz Overture with Eugene Ormandy in 1946 for CBS.*

*The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.*

*The Overture runs approximately 10 minutes in performance.*

the urging of the evil Kaspar, Max, the opera's protagonist, goes to a scary woods at midnight to forge magic bullets that make the "freeshooter" hit any mark. Max hopes they will enable him to win a shooting contest the next day and with it the hand of his beloved, Agathe. The demon Samiel appears and Max makes a pact with the devil.

**A Closer Look** The Overture is a study in contrasts, between the natural and supernatural, light and dark, slow and fast, major and minor. It begins with a slow introduction that is initially mysterious and then evokes a natural scene with hunting horns before turning to Samiel's darker realm—throughout the opera he is associated with the sound of a diminished seventh chord, typically punctuated with funeral drum strokes. The following *molto vivace* draws upon two of the main arias in the work, one by Max that exclaims the "powers of darkness are weaving around me!" and the other from the end of Agathe's great scene in Act II where she proclaims, "All my pulses are beating, and my heart pants wildly, full of sweet enchantment at [Max's] approach!" The rousing coda anticipates the final moments of the opera with its great choral conclusion: "Whoever is pure of heart and guiltless in life may, childlike, trust in the gentleness of the Father!"

Weber described at length the distinctive mood he intended for the work:

There are in *Der Freischütz* two principal elements that can be recognized at first sight—hunting life and the rule of demonic powers as personified by Samiel. So when composing the opera I had to look for suitable tone colors to characterize those elements. . . . The tone color of the scoring for the forest and hunting life was easy to find: the horns provided it. . . . The most important part, to my mind, is in Max's words "the powers of darkness are weaving around me!" for they showed me what chief characteristic to give to the opera. I had to remind the hearer of those "dark powers" by means of tone color and melody as often as possible. . . . I gave a great deal of thought to the question of what was the right principal coloring for this sinister element. Naturally it had to be a dark, gloomy color—the lowest register of the violins, violas, and basses, particularly the lowest register of the clarinets, which seem especially suitable for depicting the sinister, then the mournful sound of the bassoon, the lowest notes of the horns, the hollow roll of drums or single hollow strokes on them.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

# The Music

## Piano Concerto



**Robert Schumann**  
**Born in Zwickau, Saxony,**  
**June 8, 1810**  
**Died in Endenich (near**  
**Bonn), July 29, 1856**

Writing in 1839 as the editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Robert Schumann complained of the relative dearth of recently composed works for piano and orchestra: "Since the founding of this journal, we have reported on nearly every new piano concerto; in the past six years, hardly 16 or 17 have appeared, a tiny number in comparison with earlier times." Observing that recent advances in piano construction and technique had opened new vistas for composers and performers alike, Schumann summed up the attitude of many of his contemporaries as follows: "We pianists don't need help from anyone else; our instrument is most effective when it's heard alone." Still, he looked forward to the arrival on the musical scene of "a genius who will show us in a new and brilliant way how to combine the orchestra with the piano such that pianists, taking the lead, can display the riches of their instrument while the orchestra is allowed to act as more than a mere bystander." Within a few years, Schumann himself would prove to be one of those geniuses who managed to unite piano and orchestra in a genuinely novel way.

**False Starts** Well before bemoaning the fate of the piano concerto, Schumann had already tried his hand several times at the genre, going back to his teenage years in the late 1820s. The surviving materials for an unfinished concerto in F major are rather more extensive and came at a crucial divide in his musical career: Having drafted portions of the concerto in 1830, the year in which he firmly decided to become a concert pianist, he apparently lost interest sometime in 1832, when an incurable weakness in the middle finger of his right hand forced him to abandon his plans for a life as a performing artist.

Schumann's next attempt at writing a piano concerto dates from 1839 during a sojourn in Vienna, where he had temporarily settled in hopes of finding a new base of operation for his journal and a broader market for his solo piano compositions. There he drafted a first movement for a piano concerto in D minor.

Obviously dissatisfied with the piece, he required another two years before finally arriving at the ideal balance between pianistic display and musical integrity. This

brings us to 1841, his so-called symphonic year, which saw the creation of two symphonies, in B-flat major (Op. 38) and D minor (published in a thoroughly revised version as Op. 120); the Overture, Scherzo, and Finale (Op. 52); and a single-movement *Phantasie* in A minor for piano and orchestra. Four years later Schumann revised the *Phantasie*, and, probably acting on the advice of his publisher Breitkopf and Härtel, added a slow movement and finale. The result was what we now know as the Piano Concerto in A minor.

Like so many of Schumann's piano works, the Concerto was conceived for his wife, Clara Wieck-Schumann, the soloist for its warmly applauded, though sparsely attended premiere on December 4, 1845, in Dresden. Clara was both interpreter and, even more important, muse, a role she had assumed for over a decade by the time Schumann completed his Piano Concerto. Indeed, in some ways, the work hearkens back to the very beginnings of their relationship. Aficionados of Clara's own compositions will hear echoes of *her* youthful Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 7)—completed in 1835 under the watchful eyes of both Schumann and her father—in the much later work of her husband.

**A Closer Look** According to the critic who reviewed the premiere of Schumann's Piano Concerto for a leading journal, the piece was governed by a unifying *Grundidee*, or basic idea. In fact the work features a number of "basic ideas," the most elemental of which is surely the orchestra's opening hammer stroke, which finds a complement in the four hammer strokes that bring the first movement to a close. What the critic had in mind, however, was probably what happens just after the soloist's pointed response to the initial gesture in the orchestra: a plaintive melody in the oboe supported by the other winds. Dispensing with the customary preview in the form of a long orchestral introduction, Schumann immediately passes the idea to the pianist, who soon proceeds to refract it through a shifting kaleidoscope of musical moods. In the course of the movement (**Allegro affettuoso**), we hear the melody in a variety of guises: as a noble hymn, a dreamy nocturne for piano in dialogue with the winds, and then as a passionate rhapsody. In the cadenza—which Schumann wrote out note-for-note rather than entrusting it to the soloist's improvisational skills—the melody emerges with some urgency from a haze of trills. And finally, at the very end of the movement, Schumann restores the tune to the winds, transforming it into an impish march. Thus in Schumann's hands, the conventional

Schumann composed his *Piano Concerto from 1841 to 1845*.

*Raoul Pugno, the French composer, pianist, and friend of Debussy and Franck, was soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the Schumann Concerto, in January 1903; Fritz Scheel conducted. The most recent subscription performances by the Orchestra were in January 2016 with pianist Leif Ove Andsnes and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra recorded Schumann's Piano Concerto in 1956 and 1964, both for CBS and both with Rudolf Serkin and Eugene Ormandy.*

*In addition to the solo piano, Schumann scored the work for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.*

*The Concerto runs approximately 30 minutes in performance.*

concerto form is replaced by a more integrated conception based on a succession of thematically related character portraits.

The second movement **Intermezzo (Andantino grazioso)**, opens with an intimate dialogue for piano and strings, evoking a world of innocence and wide-eyed wonder not too far distant from that of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. With the entrance of an expansive melody in the cellos, however, naiveté gives way to heartfelt expression. The piano and orchestra eventually resume their earlier dialogue, which soon dissolves into distant echoes of the plaintive melody from the first movement. Then, with an irresistible surge, the music plunges headlong into the dance-like finale. (Schumann's sketches indicate how long and hard he labored on this transitional passage, even though it only lasts a dozen bars or so.)

One of Schumann's most high-spirited creations, the last movement (**Allegro vivace**) is pervaded by sparkling humor from beginning to end. Both of its main themes—the first muscular and acrobatic, the second playful but elegant—enact a kind of rhythmic tug-of-war between quick triple time and a pattern moving precisely half as fast: a feature that the early reviewer who advised against trying to perform the Concerto without a conductor must surely have had in mind. Another humorous touch comes about midway through the movement, where Schumann interrupts a school-bookish fugue with a new dance tune shared by winds and piano.

First championed by Clara Schumann in the 1850s and '60s, her husband's Piano Concerto soon became a staple of every leading pianist's repertoire. Its impact on the future direction of concerto composition was equally profound. Edvard Grieg's enthusiasm for Schumann's songs (he once put them on a par with "world literature") was equaled only by his high regard for the Piano Concerto, which he chose as the model for his own concerto in the same key. Nor was Grieg alone. Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky are just some of the many composers who fell under the spell of the impassioned and eloquent reverie of Schumann's Piano Concerto.

—John Daverio

# The Music

## Symphony No. 3 (“Eroica”)



**Ludwig van Beethoven**  
**Born in Bonn, probably**  
**December 16, 1770**  
**Died in Vienna, March 26,**  
**1827**

“In his own opinion it is the greatest work that he has yet written. Beethoven played it for me recently, and I believe that heaven and earth will tremble when it is performed.” Beethoven’s pupil Ferdinand Ries wrote this prescient statement in a letter to the publisher Nikolaus Simrock dated October 22, 1803. Ries also mentioned that his teacher was planning to name the new symphony “Bonaparte” in homage to Napoleon. As Beethoven scholar Lewis Lockwood has noted, “The story of Beethoven’s original plan to dedicate the symphony to Napoleon, or name it for him, and his angry decision to tear up this tribute on hearing of Napoleon’s coronation as Emperor, is not a myth.” When Ries brought the news of Bonaparte’s coronation to Beethoven, his teacher cried out in fury, “Is he then, too, nothing more than an ordinary man! Now he will trample on all the rights of man and indulge only his ambition. He will exalt himself above all others and become a tyrant!” Disillusioned, Beethoven changed the title of his work from “Bonaparte” to *Sinfonia Eroica composta per festeggiare il sovvenire di un grand Uomo* (Heroic Symphony composed to celebrate the memory of a great man).

Quite apart from Beethoven’s changing opinion of Napoleon, the story of the Symphony’s creation provides insight into the composer’s tenacious and economical creative process. During the winter of 1801, he composed a contredanse for use in Viennese ballrooms. Obviously pleased by this little piece, he reused it in his ballet, *The Creatures of Prometheus*, which premiered in March 1801. In late 1802 Beethoven came back to the contredanse melody, making it the basis of his Fifteen Variations and Fugue for piano, Op. 35, now known as the “Eroica” Variations. Finally, he used the theme and part of the piano variations in the variations that comprise the finale of the “Eroica” Symphony, Op. 55. This unpretentious dance tune thus provided the point of departure for one of the grandest symphonies ever written.

By the winter of 1803 Beethoven was working obsessively on the new symphony, which grew ever longer and denser. After the premiere the following year, the Viennese audience was stunned by the score’s power, length, and difficulty. By the time of its publication in 1806, however, it was celebrated as one of Beethoven’s finest achievements.

Beethoven composed his *Symphony No. 3 from 1802 to 1803*.

Fritz Scheel conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the “Eroica,” in January 1903. Its most recent appearance on a subscription series was in March 2017, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. The work has become one of the most frequently performed pieces by the Orchestra, appearing almost every season, and it was chosen to be performed in memory of both Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy. Among the distinguished conductors who have led the Symphony with the Philadelphians are Leopold Stokowski, Willem Mengelberg, Clemens Krauss, Eugene Ormandy, Otto Klemperer, Fritz Reiner, Bruno Walter, Georg Solti, Daniel Barenboim, Claudio Abbado, Klaus Tennstedt, Riccardo Muti, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christoph Eschenbach, Simon Rattle, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Orchestra has recorded the “Eroica” three times: in 1961 with Ormandy for CBS; in 1980 with Ormandy for RCA; and in 1987 with Muti for EMI. A live performance from 2005 with Eschenbach is also currently available as a digital download.

The work is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 50 minutes.

**A Closer Look** The “Eroica” Symphony begins (**Allegro con brio**) with two explosive and defiant chords. These two root-position triads in the main key of E-flat major contain within their structure the basis for the entire Symphony’s thematic material. The forward trajectory set in motion by these powerful opening salvos is sustained throughout the rest of this movement. All of the subsidiary themes are either obviously or subtly related to the first theme. This first movement represents a vast expansion of sonata form; its development section is remarkably protracted, complex, and highly dramatic. Even the movement’s coda—far from being a perfunctory closing “tail”—is so extended as to function as a second developmental section.

The Symphony’s second movement, the *Marcia funebre* (**Adagio assai**), caused the French composer Hector Berlioz to observe, “I know of no other example in music of a style wherein grief is so able to sustain itself consistently in forms of such purity and nobility of expression.” Beethoven cast this funeral march in a broad three-part formal design in which the opening theme returns as a refrain, similar to a rondo. The final passage of the second movement is harrowing in its pathos, as Berlioz stated, “When these shreds of lugubrious melody are bare, alone, broken, and have passed one by one to the tonic, the wind instruments cry out as if it was the last farewell of the warriors to their companions in arms.”

While the third movement Scherzo (**Allegro vivace**) begins quietly, the music builds volume inexorably as it hurtles forward. The accompanying Trio, by contrast, with its prominently featured three horns, is stately and heroic. The last movement (**Allegro molto**) features the theme and variations mentioned above. The finale begins with a precipitous onrush of energy. Immediately afterward, pizzicato strings quietly play the bass line of the main theme—itsself obviously related to first movement’s opening theme. From this point onward, a series of ingenious variations appear in succession until an exuberant coda brings the “Eroica” to an exultant close.

In 1817, with all but the Ninth composed, Beethoven was asked by a friend to name the favorite among his eight symphonies. With “great good humor,” he replied, “Eh! Eh! The ‘Eroica.’”

—Byron Adams

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# Musical Terms

## GENERAL TERMS

**Chromatic:** Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

**Coda:** A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

**Da capo:** Repeated from the beginning

**Diatonic:** Melody or harmony drawn primarily from the tones of the major or minor scale

**Diminished interval:** A perfect or minor interval contracted by a chromatic semitone

**Diminished seventh chord:** A chord formed from a diminished triad with added diminished seventh, for example B—D—F—A-flat

**Fugue:** A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

**Intermezzo:** The name given to an independent piece, predominantly lyrical in character

**Octave:** The interval between any two notes that are seven diatonic (non-chromatic) scale degrees apart

**Op.:** Abbreviation for opus, a term used to

indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output

**Pizzicato:** Plucked

**Recitative:** Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm

**Scale:** The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

**Scherzo:** Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated.

**Semitone:** The smallest interval of the modern Western tone system, or 1/12 of an octave

**Sonata form:** The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development, and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda. The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated

with modifications.

**Tonic:** The keynote of a scale

**Triad:** A three-tone chord composed of a given tone (the "root") with its third and fifth in ascending order in the scale

**Trill:** A type of embellishment that consists, in a more or less rapid alternation, of the main note with the one a tone or half-tone above it

**Trio:** See scherzo

## THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

**Adagio:** Leisurely, slow

**Affettuoso:** Tenderly, with feeling

**Allegro:** Bright, fast

**Andante:** Walking speed

**Andantino:** Slightly quicker than walking speed

**Animato:** Animated

**Con brio:** Vigorously, with fire

**Grazioso:** Graceful and easy

**Presto:** Very fast

**Senza replica:** Play from the beginning but without observing repeats

**Vivace:** Lively

## TEMPO MODIFIERS

**Assai:** Much

**Molto:** Very

**Non troppo:** Not too much

**Poco:** Little, a bit



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