

2021–2022 | 122nd Season

# The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, November 5, at 2:00

Sunday, November 7, at 2:00

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Conductor  
**Davóne Tines** Speaker and Bass-baritone

**Beethoven** Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93  
I. Allegro vivace e con brio  
II. Allegretto scherzando  
III. Tempo di menuetto  
IV. Allegro vivace

**Various** *Sermon*

Excerpt from *The Fire Next Time*, by James Baldwin

I. "Shake the Heavens," from *El Niño* (A Nativity Oratorio), by John Adams

"Hope," by Langston Hughes

II. "Vigil," by Igee Dieudonné and Davóne Tines (arranged by Matthew Aucoin)

"We Saw Beyond Our Seeming," by Maya Angelou

III. "You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know," from *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, by Anthony Davis

**Beethoven** Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36  
I. Adagio molto—Allegro con brio  
II. Larghetto  
III. Scherzo (Allegro) and Trio  
IV. Allegro molto

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

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.



# Forward

2021–22 Season

## **Mozart Thanksgiving Weekend**

November 27–28

## **Marsalis Tuba Concerto**

December 9, 10, 12

## **New Year's Celebration**

## **Beethoven Symphony No. 9**

December 31, January 2

## **Bugs Bunny @ the Symphony**

January 7–9



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**The  
Philadelphia  
Orchestra**

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Music Director

Photos: Jessica Griffin, Clay McBride, Rob Shanahan



## The Philadelphia Orchestra

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the world's preeminent orchestras. It strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust educational initiatives, and an ongoing commitment to the communities that it serves, the ensemble is on a path to create an expansive future for classical music, and to further the place of the arts in an open and democratic society.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 10th season as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

*Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, from Verizon Hall to community centers, the Mann Center to Penn's Landing, classrooms to hospitals, and over the airwaves and online.*

In March 2020, in response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Virtual Philadelphia Orchestra, a portal hosting video and audio of performances, free, on its website and social media platforms. In September 2020 the Orchestra announced *Our World NOW*, its reimaged season of concerts filmed without audiences and presented on its Digital Stage. The Orchestra also inaugurated free offerings:

HearTOGETHER, a series on racial and social justice; educational activities; and *Our City, Your Orchestra*, small ensemble performances from locations throughout the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's award-winning educational and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, Free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program, and All City Orchestra Fellowships.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

The Orchestra also makes live recordings available on popular digital music services and as part of the Listen On Demand section of its website. Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording, with 10 celebrated releases on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Music Director

George Etheredge



**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is currently in his 10th season as music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. Additionally, he became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. 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 have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "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 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 at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon (DG) in 2018. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 10 releases 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; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Virginia Parker Prize; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, and Laval University.

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

# Soloist

Bowie Verschuren



American bass-baritone **Davone Tines** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut on the Digital Stage in May 2021 and makes his Orchestra public and subscription debuts with these performances. His work encompasses a diverse repertoire and explores the social issues of today. As a Black, gay, classically trained performer at the intersection of many histories, cultures, and aesthetics, his work blends opera, art song, contemporary classical, spirituals, gospel, and songs of protest to tell a

deeply personal story of perseverance that connects to all of humanity.

During the 2021–22 season Mr. Tines will be artist-in-residence at Michigan Opera Theatre, culminating in his performance in the title role of the company's new production of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, directed by Robert O'Hara. He has also been named the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale's first-ever creative partner, a role that will see him closely involved in developing new programs and ideas for the organization throughout the season. His ongoing projects include Recital No. 1: MASS, a program exploring the Mass woven through Western European, African-American, and 21st-century traditions, with performances this season at the Ravinia Festival; in Washington, D.C., presented by Washington Performing Arts; and at the Barbican in London. He also performs *Sermon* with the BBC Symphony. Other engagements include concerts with the Dover Quartet presented by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music and the 2022 Ojai Music Festival, where he performs and—as a founding, core member of the American Modern Opera Company—collaborates in the company's music directorship of the 2022 Festival.

Mr. Tines is co-creator of *The Black Clown*, a music-theater experience inspired by Langston Hughes's poem of the same name, commissioned and premiered by the American Repertory Theater and presented at Lincoln Center. He has premiered works by today's leading composers, including Mr. Adams, Terence Blanchard, and Matthew Aucoin, and his concert appearances include performances of works ranging from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony to Kaija Saariaho's *True Fire* with the Orchestre National de France. He is a winner of the 2020 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, recognizing extraordinary classical musicians of color, and the recipient of the 2018 Emerging Artists Award from Lincoln Center. In addition, he was just named *Musical America's* 2022 Vocalist of the Year. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School and Harvard University, where he also serves as guest lecturer.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

1801

**Beethoven**

Symphony  
No. 2

**Music**

Haydn  
*The Seasons*

**Literature**

Chateaubriand  
*Atala*

**Art**

Goya  
*The Two Majas*

**History**

Fulton  
produces first  
submarine

1812

**Beethoven**

Symphony  
No. 8

**Music**

Rossini  
*La scala di seta*

**Literature**

Brothers  
Grimm  
*Fairy Tales*

**Art**

Géricault  
*The Charging  
Chasseur*

**History**

Louisiana  
becomes a  
state

The Philadelphia Orchestra continues its belated 250th Beethoven birthday celebration with two of his lighter, more carefree symphonies. The Eighth is his shortest, looking back to his teacher Joseph Haydn, a delightful work brimming with witty touches. The Second has long been overshadowed by its successor, the revolutionary "Eroica," composed shortly afterward. Beethoven wrote both the Second and Third symphonies around a time of acute personal crisis as he was first confronting his loss of hearing.

These Beethoven symphonies frame the central offering of the concert, a group of readings and musical selections that the bass-baritone singer and activist Davóne Tines has fashioned into an exegetic sermon.

The words of James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou alternate with three vocal numbers, beginning with the fiery aria "Shake the Heavens" from John Adams's "Nativity Oratorio" *El Niño*. "Vigil" is a meditative reflection that Tines wrote with his friend Igee Dieudonné and is dedicated to the memory of Breonna Taylor, who was murdered by Louisville police in her apartment last year. Finally, we hear the aria "You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know" from Anthony Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which concludes the opera's first act as Malcolm X is interrogated by the police.

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 4 PM.

# The Music

## Symphony No. 8

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, probably December 16, 1770

Died in Vienna, March 26, 1827



Composers writing symphonies in Beethoven's wake often found themselves privately intimidated as they worked and then publicly subjected to unfavorable critical comparisons once they finished. The Eighth Symphony shows that even Beethoven could find himself in a similar situation: His own new compositions sometimes suffered in comparison with more famous earlier works. Robert Schumann remarked that the Fourth Symphony was like a "slender Grecian maiden

between two Nordic giants." So, too, the Eighth is a shorter, lighter, and far more good-humored work than its imposing neighbors, the celebratory Seventh and the towering Ninth. According to Beethoven's student Carl Czerny, the extraordinary enthusiasm that greeted the Seventh Symphony was in stark contrast to the puzzled reaction to the Eighth: "That's because it is so much better" was Beethoven's alleged response.

Beethoven was given to writing and performing symphonies in pairs. He composed the Fifth and Sixth symphonies—so different in many respects—around the same time and they were premiered on the same concert. The gestation of his next two symphonies, the Seventh and Eighth, was likewise joined, as were some of their early performances.

Both these pairs of unidentical twins raise the issue of Beethoven's odd and even numbered symphonies—of the common perception of advance in the odd-numbered ones and retreat in the even. Certainly the former are the more popular, praised, performed, and recorded. And as with Schumann's observation about the Fourth being overshadowed by its towering neighbors, the Eighth also tends to get lost in the crowd. Beethoven referred to it as "my little Symphony in F," so as to distinguish it from the Seventh, as well as from the longer and more substantial Sixth Symphony, also in F major.

**A Notable Summer** Beethoven composed his Seventh and Eighth symphonies during a critical period in his life and concentrated on the latter during the summer of 1812. He found it advisable for health reasons to leave Vienna during the hot summers, which had the added benefit of getting him closer to the nature that he loved so much. In 1812 he traveled to spas in Bohemia. Meeting for the

first and only time the great poet Goethe was not the only event of biographical interest that summer. It was at this time that Beethoven penned his famous letter to the "Immortal Beloved," which reveals a reciprocated love, but one whose future course was in serious doubt. Beethoven probably never sent the letter and nowhere indicated the identity of the woman to whom it was written. The mystery surrounding this legendary relationship has inspired a vast scholarly (and pseudo-scholarly) literature, as well as novels, plays, and movies.

Beethoven completed the Eighth Symphony in October while in Linz, where he had gone to visit his brother Johann. His health was poor and one can only speculate at the repercussions of the disappointing termination of his relationship with the mystery woman. Despite what appear to be trying circumstances, this Symphony is one of the composer's most delightful and humorous works.

The Eighth premiered in Vienna on February 27, 1814, on a concert that also included the Seventh Symphony and Beethoven's popular *Wellington's Victory*. The leading periodical of the time, the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, remarked that the audience was extremely interested in hearing his latest symphony but that a single hearing was not enough:

The applause that it received was not accompanied by the enthusiasm which distinguishes a work that gives universal delight. ... The reviewer is of the opinion that the reason does not lie by any means in weaker or less artistic workmanship (for here as in all of Beethoven's work of this kind there breathes that peculiar spirit by which his originality always asserts itself); but partly in the faulty judgment which permitted this symphony to follow the [Seventh in] A major. ... If this symphony should be performed alone hereafter, we have no doubt of its success.

**A Closer Look** The first movement (**Allegro vivace e con brio**) is dominated by a buoyant opening theme, from which a related second theme emerges. One of Beethoven's witty touches is that the first and last measures of the movement are the same—it is the sort of thing his teacher Haydn might have done, and indeed the older master's spirit is often evident in this work. The Symphony has no slow movement, in fact, there is no heaviness anywhere in the piece. In the second movement (**Allegretto scherzando**), Beethoven delights in the recent invention of the "chronometer" (an early version of the metronome) made available to him by his colleague Johann Nepomuk Maelzel, who also fashioned various hearing aids for his use. The incessant ticking of wind instruments sets the pace.

Beethoven must have felt it would be unwise to follow the already humorous Allegretto with a scherzo (literally, joke) and therefore reverted to the more Classical minuet and trio (**Tempo di menuetto**). Yet the amusing touches do not entirely disappear. Just try dancing to this minuet and you may find yourself tripping over the false downbeats. In the finale (**Allegro vivace**), Beethoven

once again seems more intent on playful display than on the weighty issues he explores in his neighboring symphonies. In this extended rondo, he experiments with dynamics, instrumentation, and concludes with a long, spirited coda.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

*Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 8 in 1812.*

*Fritz Scheel led the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Beethoven's Eighth, in November 1902. The work's last appearance on subscription concerts was in February 2018, with Cristian Măcelaru.*

*The Philadelphians have recorded the Symphony twice: with Eugene Ormandy in 1961 for CBS and with Riccardo Muti in 1987 for EMI. The second movement alone was recorded in 1920 for RCA, with Leopold Stokowski. A live recording from 2006 with Christoph Eschenbach is also available as a digital download.*

*The score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, timpani, and strings.*

*The Symphony runs approximately 27 minutes in performance.*

# The Music

## **Sermon**

### **"Shake the Heavens," from *El Niño* (A Nativity Oratorio)**

**John Adams**

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, February 15, 1947

Now living in Berkeley, California

### **"Vigil" (arranged by Matthew Aucoin)**

**Igee Dieudonné**

Born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, May 24, 1991

Now living in Amsterdam

**Davóne Tines**

Born in Portsmouth, Virginia, December 20, 1986

Now living in Raleigh, North Carolina

### **"You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know," from *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X***

**Anthony Davis**

Born in Paterson, New Jersey, February 20, 1951

Now living in San Diego, California

The readings and music that make up *Sermon* offer socially relevant calls to action in the face of horrific violence against marginalized peoples. The bass-baritone singer and activist Davóne Tines lifts his voice, both physical and spiritual, to fashion this experience in the form of an exegetic sermon. He traces the story of a person moving into humanity, then expressing emotion (here hope), and finally presents an interrogation, challenging the audience to think about why someone would in the first place even need to defend their humanity, here expressed through the example of Malcolm X. *Sermon* consists of three vocal pieces juxtaposed with three readings, beginning with a passage from James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* about how Blacks are not seen as fully human.

#### **John Adams's "Shake the Heavens"**

The first musical offering is by John Adams, one of the leading composers of our time. He has enjoyed particular success with his operas exploring modern events, including *Nixon in China* (1987), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), and *Doctor Atomic*



(2005). We hear an aria from his "Nativity Oratorio" *El Niño*, which premiered in Paris in 2000 and has since been presented both in fully staged and concert performances. Conceived with director Peter Sellars, his long-time collaborator, it uses texts from the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha, and other sources, notably poems by prominent Latin-American women. The fiery aria "Shake the Heavens" looks back to Handel's setting of the same prophetic words from the Old

Testament Book of Haggai in *Messiah* (1742), Adams's acknowledged model. As in Handel's accompanied recitative, Adams's thrilling aria features coloratura passages requiring great vocal virtuosity amid an intense orchestral accompaniment that projects enormous rhythmic drive interspersed with dramatic silences.



### **"Vigil," Dedicated to the Memory of Breonna Taylor**

After a reading of Langston Hughes's very short poem "Hope," the musical pace slows down for the meditative "Vigil" for Breonna Taylor, which Tines created with Igee Dieudonné and that we hear in an arrangement by Matthew Aucoin. This song grew out of a joint improvisation session during which, as Tines recalls, he started to sing over a simple chord progression "and what happened was kind of unique in that the song came out fully formed in the first try." The Louisville Orchestra, the city where Breonna Taylor was killed in her apartment by police in March 2020, gave the first performance of the orchestral arrangement of "Vigil" in a concert dedicated to her memory. This musical selection, which Tines calls "an exercise in empathy," might be likened to a calm slow movement in a symphony or concerto. Accompanied by strings and piano, Tines repeats three times the words

"where there is darkness, we'll bring light," eventually raising his voice to the very highest note, softly singing "Hallelujah."



### **Anthony Davis's "You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know"**

Maya Angelou's poem "We Saw Beyond Our Seeming" precedes an aria from Anthony Davis's opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. After graduating from Yale University, Davis first came to prominence as a virtuoso pianist and improviser. He has taught at Harvard, Cornell, and Yale, and for the past quarter century at the University of California at San Diego. His

music masterfully encompasses an eclectic range of traditions and styles. Like Adams, he has been drawn to contemporary topics for his acclaimed operas. This began with his first one from which we hear an excerpt today and continued with, among others, *Under the Double Moon* (1989), a science-fiction adaptation of the Undine tale; *Tania* (1992), based on the kidnapping of heiress Patty Hearst; *Amistad* (1997), about events in 1839 aboard the slave ship of the same name; and *The Central Park Five* (2019), a retelling of the Central Park jogger case, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize.

Tines concludes his spoken and sung sermon with the powerful aria "You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know." *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* was developed at the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia in 1985 before a revised and expanded version officially premiered at the New York City Opera in September 1986. Set to a libretto by Thulani Davis, the composer's cousin, it treats "Malcolm X as a tragic hero who negotiates profound changes of identity from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X and El Hajj Malik el Shabazz." The aria we hear ends the opera's first act, when Malcolm Little is being interrogated by the police for robbery as he sits in a chair with a spotlight on him. As Davis explains, "There are no questions as he tells his story. ... [The aria] is an expression of rage against racism that is inescapable, recurring through generations." After an extended instrumental introduction, slow and somewhat mysterious, the speed quickens and becomes jazzy. The vocalist enters with the lines "I would not tell you what I know, you wouldn't hear my truth" and eventually builds to the climatic words that give the aria its title.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

*El Niño* was composed from 1999 to 2000; "Vigil" was composed in 2020; and *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* was composed in 1985.

The Philadelphia Orchestra first performed *Sermon on the Digital Stage* in May 2021.

"*Shake the Heavens*" is scored for two oboes, two clarinets, bassoon, contrabassoon, three horns, three trombones, chimes, harp, piano, sampler, strings, and solo baritone; "Vigil" in the arrangement by Matthew Aucoin is scored for piano, strings, and solo baritone; and "You Want the Truth, but You Don't Want to Know" is scored for two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, trumpet, two trombones, timpani, percussion (drum set, marimba, vibraphone), piano, strings, and solo baritone.

Performance time of the Adams is approximately four minutes; the Dieudonné/Tines is approximately three minutes; and the Davis is approximately nine minutes.

# The Music

## Symphony No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven



In the summer of 1801, while composing his Second Symphony, Beethoven disclosed the secret of his deteriorating hearing in a long letter to a childhood friend, Franz Wegeler. After recounting assorted professional successes, the 30-year-old composer went on to relate that “that jealous demon, my wretched health, has put a nasty spoke in my wheel; and it amounts to this, that for the past three years my hearing has become weaker and weaker.” Since Wegeler was a

physician who lived in the composer’s native Bonn, he provided a detailed account of symptoms and lamented the constraints placed on his personal life (“I have ceased to attend any social functions just because I find it impossible to say to people: I am deaf”) and professional situation (“... if my enemies, of whom I have a fair number, were to hear about it, what would they say?”).

A little more than a year later, just as he was completing the Second Symphony, Beethoven penned his “Heiligenstadt Testament,” the famous unsent letter to his brothers in which he expressed utter despair over his loss of hearing. In this revealing confession he stated that on account of his torments, “I would have ended my life. Only my art held me back. It seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt was within me.” What if Beethoven had killed himself in the fall of 1802, at age 31? What had he accomplished at this point in his career and how would he have been remembered? The question assumes a special poignancy when one considers that Schubert died at the same point in his life. Mozart had not lived much longer. Beethoven, fortunately, had another 25 years.

**A “Smiling” Symphony in Difficult Times** The Beethoven who contemplated killing himself at 31 ultimately became the legendary figure who redefined music and whose life in so many ways epitomizes that of the Romantic artist. During his 20s he was better known as a performer—a brilliant pianist and improviser—than as a composer. He had written a good many works in various genres, but nowhere near what Mozart, Schubert, and other masters accomplished by the age of 30. He was about to embark on a “new path,” as he told his student Carl Czerny.

The genre of the symphony, of which his idol Mozart had written some 50, and his teacher Haydn more than twice that, offered new challenges. Beethoven had

ventured to write one during his teenage years in Bonn, but did not get very far. A later attempt in Vienna, during the mid-1790s, likewise proved unsuccessful, although some of the musical ideas in it eventually made their way into his First Symphony. He began sketching the Second Symphony as early as 1800, but most of the work took place during the summer and early fall of 1802—exactly at the time he confronted the crisis explained in the “Heiligenstadt Testament.”

The boundless humor and vitality of the Second Symphony—French composer Hector Berlioz later remarked that “this Symphony is smiling throughout”—challenge the simplistic connections so often made between the immediate events at a given time in Beethoven’s life and the music he then created. Indeed, as with his witty Eighth Symphony (1812), also written during a period of considerable personal distress (in the aftermath of his affair with the “Immortal Beloved”), Beethoven may have sought refuge in musical “comedy” at times of personal “tragedy.”

**First Reactions** Despite its good cheer, the Second Symphony initially challenged listeners. One critic remarked in 1804:

It is a noteworthy, colossal work, of a depth, power, and artistic knowledge like *very few*. It has a level of difficulty, both from the point of view of the composer and in regard to its performance by a large orchestra (which it certainly demands), quite certainly unlike *any* symphony that has ever been made known. It demands to be played again and yet again by even the most accomplished orchestra, until the astonishing number of original and sometimes very strangely arranged ideas becomes closely enough connected, rounded out, and emerges like a great unity, just as the composer had in mind.

Today we might assume such an observation would be about the monumental Third Symphony. Yet this early reaction is echoed by other contemporaries, who also initially found the Second Symphony difficult, imposing, and puzzling.

Early-19th-century listeners, of course, were hearing it in the context of the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, and of Beethoven’s own initial one. In fact, Beethoven premiered the Second Symphony at a concert in Vienna on April 5, 1803, that also featured the First Symphony, as well as the premieres of the Third Piano Concerto and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. Comparisons were therefore inevitable—and his First Symphony won, in part because “it was performed with unforced ease, while in the Second a striving for novel and striking effects is more visible.” The “striking effects” begin with the slow introduction to the first movement. Other sections that follow, especially in the third-movement scherzo and in the humorous finale, elicited the word perhaps used most often to describe Beethoven’s music at the time: “bizarre.”

**A Closer Look** Beethoven’s teacher Haydn typically began his symphonies with a slow introduction. Mozart generally did not, and Beethoven was nearly evenly

split in his nine symphonies. The lengthy **Adagio molto** he wrote for the Second Symphony is far more imposing than that for his First and leads to an **Allegro con brio** theme in the lower strings and somewhat military march-like second theme for clarinets, bassoons, and horns.

Berlioz called the following **Larghetto** "a delineation of innocent happiness hardly clouded by a few melancholy accents." The **Scherzo: Allegro** eschews the polite dance forms typical of Haydn and Mozart or the composer's earlier symphony for a faster and more manic romp with a slower trio section in the middle.

Berlioz called the finale (**Allegro molto**) "a second scherzo in duple meter, and its playfulness has perhaps something still more delicate, more piquant." Beethoven's sense of humor may be gruffer than the wit of Haydn but nevertheless is ingeniously comic.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

*Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 was composed from 1801 to 1802.*

*The Second Symphony was first performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra in March 1903, with Fritz Scheel on the podium, as part of the Orchestra's first Beethoven symphony cycle. It was most recently performed on subscription concerts in December 2016 with Cristian Măcelaru conducting, and the work also appeared on the Digital Stage this past June and again in September.*

*The Philadelphians have recorded Beethoven's Second Symphony twice: in 1962 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy and in 1987 for EMI with Riccardo Muti. A live recording from 2005 with Christoph Eschenbach is also available as a digital download.*

*Beethoven scored the work for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.*

*The Second Symphony runs approximately 35 minutes in performance.*

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# Musical Terms

## GENERAL TERMS

**Aria:** An accompanied solo song (often in ternary form), usually in an opera or oratorio

**Chord:** The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

**Coloratura:** Florid figuration or ornamentation, particularly in vocal music

**Legato:** Smooth, even, without any break between notes

**Meter:** The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

**Minuet:** A dance in triple time commonly used up to the beginning of the 19th century as the lightest movement of a symphony

**Op.:** Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

**Oratorio:** Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.

**Recitative:** Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

**Rondo:** A form frequently used in symphonies and concertos for the final movement. It consists of a main section that alternates with a variety of contrasting sections (A-B-A-C-A etc.).

**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. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

**Ternary:** A musical form in three sections, ABA, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

**Timbre:** Tone color or tone quality

**Trio:** (1) See scherzo. (2) A division set between the first section of a minuet or scherzo and its repetition, and contrasting with it by a more tranquil movement and style.

## THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

**Adagio:** Leisurely, slow

**Allegretto:** A tempo between walking speed and fast

**Allegro:** Bright, fast

**Con brio:** Vigorously, with fire

**Larghetto:** A slow tempo

**Scherzando:** Playfully

**Vivace:** Lively

## TEMPO MODIFIERS

**Molto:** Very

# Tickets & Patron Services

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Please don't hesitate to contact us via phone at 215.893.1999, in person in the lobby, or at [patronservices@philorch.org](mailto:patronservices@philorch.org).

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