

2023–2024 | 124th Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, February 15, at 7:30

Friday, February 16, at 2:00

Saturday, February 17, at 8:00

Christoph Eschenbach Conductor

Joshua Bell Violin

Chausson *Poème*, Op. 25, for violin and orchestra

Vieuxtemps Violin Concerto No. 5 in A minor, Op. 37

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio—

III. Allegro con fuoco

Intermission

Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

I. Un poco sostenuto—Allegro

II. Andante sostenuto

III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso

IV. Adagio—Più andante—Allegro non troppo, ma con brio—Più allegro

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 50 minutes.

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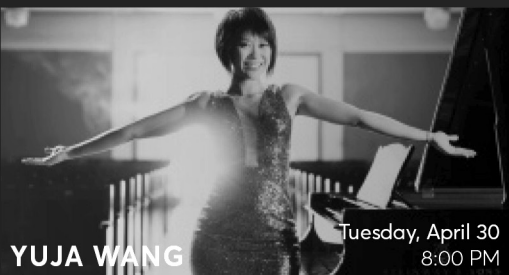
The
Philadelphia
Orchestra
Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music and Artistic Director

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The Philadelphia Orchestra

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Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. 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.

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Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 13 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor

Manu Theobald



Christoph Eschenbach is universally acclaimed as both a conductor and pianist. Renowned for the breadth of his repertoire and the depth of his interpretations, he has held directorships with many leading orchestras and gained the highest musical honors. He continues to explore new horizons and from September 2024 will be artistic director at the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic in the now Polish city of his birth. He served as music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra from 2003 to

2008. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut as a pianist in 1973 and first conducted the ensemble in 1989.

Born in 1940 in Breslau, Germany (today Wrocław), Mr. Eschenbach was a war orphan, raised in Schleswig-Holstein and Aachen by his mother's cousin, the pianist Wallydore Eschenbach. Her lessons laid the foundation for his musical career. Following studies with Eliza Hansen (piano) and Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg (conducting), he won notable piano awards such as the ARD Competition in 1962 and the Concours Clara Haskil in 1965, which helped pave the way for his growing international fame. Supported by mentors such as George Szell and Herbert von Karajan, Mr. Eschenbach increasingly focused his career on conducting. He was principal conductor and artistic director of Zürich's Tonhalle Orchestra from 1982 to 1986, music director of the Houston Symphony from 1988 to 1999, artistic director of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival from 1999 to 2002, music director of Hamburg's NDR Symphony from 1998 to 2004, music director of the Orchestre de Paris from 2000 to 2010, music director of the National Symphony in Washington, DC, from 2010 to 2017, and music director of the Konzerthausorchester Berlin from 2019 to 2023. Alongside his prestigious appointments, he has always attached great importance to his extensive activities as a guest conductor, working with orchestras such as the Vienna, Berlin, and London philharmonics; the Chicago and NHK symphonies; and the Staatskapelle Dresden.

Over the course of six decades, Mr. Eschenbach has built an impressive discography, both as a conductor and a pianist, with a repertoire ranging from J.S. Bach to contemporary music. Many of his recordings have gained benchmark status and have received numerous awards, including the German Record Critics' Prize, the MIDEM Classical Award, and a GRAMMY Award. For many years his preferred lieder partner has been the baritone Matthias Goerne, in recordings and in live performances. Mr. Eschenbach has been awarded the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and is a winner of the Leonard Bernstein Award. In 2015 he received the prestigious Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in honor of his life's dedication to music.

Soloist

Phillip Knott



With a career spanning almost four decades, GRAMMY Award-winning violinist **Joshua Bell** is one of the most celebrated artists of his era. Having performed with virtually every major orchestra in the world, he continues to maintain engagements as soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, conductor, and music director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with Riccardo Muti at age 14 and has since appeared more

than 30 times with the ensemble. In addition to these current performances, highlights of his 2023–24 season include an international tour of his newly commissioned project *The Elements*, featuring works by renowned composers representing each of the five elements: Jake Heggie (Fire), Jennifer Higdon (Air), Edgar Meyer (Water), Jessie Montgomery (Space), and Kevin Puts (Earth). He also releases his new album on Sony Classical, *Butterfly Lovers*, featuring the *Butterfly Lovers* concerto by Chen Gang and He Zhanhao, newly arranged for a traditional Chinese orchestra conducted by Tsung Yeh. Mr. Bell leads the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields on tour in Australia and throughout the United States; appears as artist-in-residence with the NDR Elbphilharmonie; and performs as guest artist with, among others, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the New Jersey, National, Atlanta, and San Francisco symphonies.

In 2011 Mr. Bell was named music director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, succeeding Neville Marriner, who formed the orchestra in 1959. His history with the Academy dates to 1986 when he first recorded the Bruch and Mendelssohn concertos with Mr. Marriner. He has since led the ensemble on several albums that include Beethoven's Fourth and Seventh symphonies; an all-Bach recording; *For the Love of Brahms*; and, most recently, *Bruch: Scottish Fantasy*, which was nominated for a 2019 GRAMMY Award. In summer 2020 PBS presented *Joshua Bell: At Home with Music*, a nationwide broadcast directed by Tony- and Emmy-Award winner Dori Berinstein and produced entirely in lockdown. The program included core classical repertoire as well as new arrangements of beloved works, including a *West Side Story* medley. In August 2020 Sony Classical released the companion album. Mr. Bell has commissioned and premiered new works by John Corigliano, Edgar Meyer, and Behzad Ranjbaran. His recording of Nicholas Maw's Violin Concerto received a GRAMMY Award.

Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Mr. Bell began the violin at age four and made his Carnegie Hall debut at age 17 with the St. Louis Symphony. At age 18 he signed with his first label and received the Avery Fisher Career Grant. In 2000 he was named an "Indiana Living Legend."

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1861

Vieuxtemps

Violin
Concerto
No. 5

Music

Verdi
La forza del
destino

Literature

Eliot
Silas Marner

Art

Manet
La Nymphé
surprise

History

American Civil
War begins

1876

Brahms

Symphony
No. 1

Music

Ponchielli
La gioconda

Literature

Mallarmé
L'Après-midi
d'un faune

Art

Renoir
In the Garden

History

World
Exhibition in
Philadelphia

1896

Chausson

Poème

Music

Strauss
Also sprach
Zarathustra

Literature

Chekhov
The Sea Gull

Art

Leighton
Clytie

History

Utah becomes
a state

Contrasting moods are offered in two works for violin and orchestra by the composers Henri Vieuxtemps and Ernest Chausson performed by Philadelphia favorite Joshua Bell, who made his debut with the Orchestra at age 14.

The Belgian violinist and composer Henri Vieuxtemps enjoyed early and long success as a virtuoso, including appearances in Philadelphia in 1844. We hear the fifth of his seven violin concertos, a concentrated work in which the three movements are played without pause. The French composer Ernest Chausson's *Poème* is effortlessly melodic and sensuous, bittersweet and reflective.

In 1853 Robert Schumann hailed the 20-year-old Johannes Brahms as the potential savior of German instrumental music. The lavish praise generated enormous expectations for the young composer, especially with regard to writing a symphony. Ever since Beethoven's death in 1827 the musical world had debated what form and style symphonies should take—Brahms's answer was eagerly awaited. At age 43 he finally completed his First Symphony, which was immediately hailed as "Beethoven's Tenth." Without programmatic titles, chorus, or obvious extramusical references, Brahms's First helped to reinvent the genre of the symphony.

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Philadelphia
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Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

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The Music

Poème

Ernest Chausson

Born in Paris, January 20, 1855

Died in Limay, June 10, 1899



Few composers of the 19th century wrote music that was as sheerly voluptuous as Ernest Chausson's, and few of his works are as effortlessly melodic and sensuous as the splendid *Poème*. Written immediately after 10 years of arduous labor on what he hoped would be his magnum opus—the opera *Le Roi Arthus* (King Arthur)—*Poème* probably did seem effortless by comparison.

Painterly Inspirations Languishing in Florence and its environs during the spring and early summer of 1896, Chausson felt inspiration afresh. "There are many things which I am tempted to write," he wrote. "Pure music this time, which has been inspired in me by the landscapes or works of art here. I had such a low opinion of my musical talents that I was surprised when I saw what ideas certain paintings awaken in me. Some of them give me the entire outline of a symphonic piece." It seems reasonable to assume that the *Poème*, composed during this spring, was one such piece. Completed in June 1896, it was first performed by its dedicatee, the virtuoso Belgian violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe, in Nancy on December 27; its success at a subsequent Parisian performance in April 1897 was an unexpected surprise to all involved.

For years Chausson had struggled for recognition in Paris, where even in the 1890s his music was found to be too "experimental." It was Chausson, whose earlier music had owed such enormous debt first to César Franck and then to Richard Wagner, who had advocated that French composers abandon the pervasive Wagnerism and create an individual Romanticism. With *Poème* he not only asserted an artistically independent style but also created a miniature jewel that combined poignant sentimentality with the declamatory lyricism that had always characterized French melody.

Chausson originally titled the piece *Le Chant de l'amour triomphant* (Song of Triumphant Love), suggesting an initial programmatic intent; one writer has pointed out that this is the title of a short story by Ivan Turgenev, and as such, attempts have been made to point out parallels between story and music. But Chausson's later suppression of the title in the printed score seems to make clear that his final intentions were to create a work free of extramusical associations.

A Closer Look *Poème* is a straightforward and plaintive dialogue between violin and orchestra, cast in a single continuous gesture. The soloist intones the deliciously bittersweet melody in the opening section; the orchestra, taking up the violinist's urgency, builds toward a nervous *animato* passage, leading toward the climactic *allegro* and a return to the opening tempo (*lento*). A reflective reiteration of the opening theme concludes the work with a hint of nostalgia.

—Paul J. Horsley

Chausson composed Poème in 1896.

Thaddeus Rich was the soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the work, in March 1915 in Princeton, New Jersey, with Leopold Stokowski on the podium. Most recently on subscription concerts it was played by Lisa Batiashvili in January 2022 with Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Violinist Zino Francescatti, Eugene Ormandy, and The Philadelphia Orchestra recorded Poème in 1950 for CBS. A live recording of a performance from 2008 with Concertmaster David Kim and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos is also available by digital download.

The score calls for solo violin; pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; four horns; two trumpets; three trombones; tuba; timpani; harp; and strings.

Poème runs approximately 16 minutes in performance.

The Music

Violin Concerto No. 5

Henri Vieuxtemps

Born in Verviers, Belgium, February 17, 1820

Died in Mustapha, Algeria, June 6, 1881



Sprinkled among the monumental concertos of the Romantic violin literature—those by Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruch, and Sibelius—are a number of lesser-known but nonetheless essential works. Thirty years ago it was much easier to encounter performances of Niccolò Paganini, Henri Vieuxtemps, Édouard Lalo, Henryk Wieniawski, and Alexander Glazunov than it is today, and our present concert life is the poorer for the lack. No picture of the 19th century is complete without

the lyrical sweep of the Glazunov Concerto, the scintillating virtuosity of Paganini's, or the rich symphonic interplay of the Vieuxtemps Fourth and Fifth.

A Violin Prodigy Born in Belgium, Henri Vieuxtemps attracted attention in Brussels early in life, as a child prodigy on the violin. At age nine he was taken to Paris, where his solo debut wowed even that difficult and jaded audience. At age 13 he moved to Vienna for further study, and at 15 to Paris; he quickly drew praise not only from Paganini himself, but also from Berlioz. In Paris he studied violin and concertized extensively, and he also learned composition from the leading composer at the Conservatory, Antonín Reicha, and established himself as more than simply a violin pyrotechnician. "There are some talents that disarm envy," wrote Berlioz later. "Vieuxtemps showed himself no less remarkable as a composer than he was as a virtuoso." As his reputation grew, Vieuxtemps traveled more; among his concert tours were three in America. At the same time, he composed prodigiously throughout his life. In his final years he retired to an asylum in Algiers, where according to legend he died as a result of head injuries sustained when a rock was thrown at him.

Paganini proved a profound influence on Vieuxtemps's developing artistic style and outlook. "Everyone willingly submitted to Paganini's art," the younger composer wrote, of the first time he heard the great violinist in concert. "I understood the enormous intensity of his playing, although I did not understand his technique. From that day on, Paganini was my model, both as violinist and as composer." Indeed, Vieuxtemps's early compositions, especially his first violin concertos, betray the great virtuoso's influence—although traces of Beethoven, Berlioz, Liszt, and others are apparent as well.

It was shortly after Vieuxtemps's second American sojourn of 1857–58 that he penned the Fifth Violin Concerto in A minor, which is the most dramatic and impassioned of the seven he completed. His aim in these later concertos, as he said, was to "combine the grand form of the Viotti concerto with the technical demands of modern times." Berlioz was highly impressed with the piece, calling it "a magnificent symphony for orchestra with principal violin." Indeed, it is one of the most successful syntheses in the repertory of the extremes represented by the Paganini concertos on the one hand (which feature perhaps more virtuosity than is good for them) and the Brahms Concerto on the other hand (which is really a sort of symphony with obbligato violin).

A Closer Look Composed in 1861 as a contest-piece for the Brussels Conservatory, the Fifth is a work of curious design. It is structured in a single, continuous movement—although discrete sections are clearly delineated. The bulk of the piece seems almost like a large concerto movement with cadenza, "supplemented" with a brief slow movement and a quick coda. But the structure is actually more complex than this. The **Allegro non troppo** begins with an initial flourish that prepares us for the melancholic, impassioned theme in A minor, presented by the soloist; the second theme, in C major, is lyrical and elegiac. These subjects are developed at length in passages alternately tuneful and dazzling; a section of hair-raising virtuosity gives way to the mournful cadenza, which seems to end the Allegro. A brief **Adagio** that follows is a sad and mournful aria that conveys some of the high tragedy of a Bellini heroine, and the final **Allegro con fuoco** is actually a bracing coda.

—Paul J. Horsley

Vieuxtemps composed his Fifth Violin Concerto in 1861.

John Witzemann was the soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Concerto, in February 1903 with Fritz Scheel on the podium. The only other subscription performances were in November/December 1997, with former Second Concertmaster William dePasquale and Hans Vonk.

The work is scored for solo violin, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 18 minutes.

The Music

Symphony No. 1

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833

Died in Vienna, April 3, 1897



As a young composer, Johannes Brahms enjoyed the close friendship and enthusiastic support of Robert and Clara Schumann, two of the most influential musical figures of their day. In 1853, when Brahms was only 20 years old (and with merely a handful of songs, piano solos, and chamber pieces under his belt), Robert proclaimed to the world that his young friend's piano sonatas were "veiled symphonies," and that this composer was the rightful heir to Beethoven's

stupendous musical legacy.

Schumann's enthusiastic promotion of Brahms was a double-edged sword. While it was flattering to be regarded as the savior of German music, Brahms was intimidated by the pressure to write symphonies worthy of the standard Beethoven had established. It would take him another 23 anxious years, and several abandoned attempts, before he could bring himself to tackle a symphony "after Beethoven," as he put it. And even then he worried it would not be good enough.

The Path to a First Symphony Brahms began sketches for a first symphony as early as 1854, though subsequent progress was slow and sporadic. In 1862 he showed the first movement of a proposed symphony in C minor to some friends. Then, six years later, he sent Clara a postcard with the alhorn melody that would eventually find its way into the finale of his Symphony No. 1 in C minor. But by the early 1870s Brahms despaired of completing the work, lamenting to a friend, "I shall never write a symphony! You have no idea how it feels for someone like me always to hear the footsteps of such a giant as Beethoven marching along behind me!"

Still, the specter of a first symphony did not prevent Brahms from writing other orchestral works in the meantime. He produced two orchestral serenades, a piano concerto, and the masterly *A German Requiem*, all of which had started out with symphonic aspirations. And in 1873 his orchestral Variations on a Theme of Haydn enjoyed enough success to convince him that perhaps a real symphony was not as impossible as it had once seemed. By 1876 Brahms had completed his Symphony No. 1 at the relatively advanced age of 43.

An Homage to Beethoven Brahms tackled the looming shadow of Beethoven by making his own symphony an homage to the master. While Wagner claimed that the only possible path after Beethoven was the music drama and the single-movement symphonic poem, Brahms attempted to show that the four-movement model of the Classical symphony was still ripe for development, and he used Beethoven's own symphonies as a springboard. Indeed, Brahms's First Symphony from the start has frequently been referred to as "Beethoven's Tenth."

A primary inspiration for Brahms's First Symphony was Beethoven's monumental Fifth. Brahms chose the same key, C minor, and used both the rhythm of its famous "fate" motif and the final apotheosis into C major at the conclusion of his own symphony. The main theme in the finale of Brahms's First bears a striking resemblance, however, to the "Ode to Joy" theme from Beethoven's Ninth. Brahms meant for these references to be overt—when it was mentioned to him that this work shared some resemblances to Beethoven, he reportedly shot back with indignation, "Well, of course! Any idiot can see that!"

A Closer Look The Symphony's first movement opens with ominous drum beats (**Un poco sostenuto**), over which chromatic lines in the strings and woodwinds weave an anxious tapestry. The drumbeat echoes continue throughout the slow introduction before giving way to the dramatically agitated **Allegro**. A gentler second theme adds the contrast that provides the musical light and shadow in this movement.

Brahms's natural gift for lyrical melody and rich harmonizations are evident in the opening of the second movement (**Andante sostenuto**), which then proceeds through a restless middle section before reprising the sumptuous melody in a new scoring for oboe, horn, and solo violin. The brief third movement (**Un poco allegretto e grazioso**) functions as a kind of intermezzo, with a rustic freshness that recalls some of Brahms's earlier orchestral serenades.

The final movement begins like the first, with a slow introduction (**Adagio**) that reintroduces the portentous timpani drumbeats and sinuous chromaticism. But the "alphorn" theme soon clears away the lingering melancholy, turning the harmony toward a triumphant C major (**Più andante**). The strings then present a stately hymn (**Allegro non troppo, ma con brio**) that, together with a majestic trombone chorale, forms the basis for a variety of thematic iterations before reaching a glorious, even euphoric coda (**Più allegro**).

—Luke Howard

Brahms composed his Symphony No. 1 from 1862 to 1876.

The first Philadelphia Orchestra performances were led by Fritz Scheel in November 1902. The most recent subscription performance was in March 2022, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin on the podium.

The Orchestra has recorded the piece five times: in 1927 and 1936 for RCA with Leopold Stokowski; in 1950 and 1959 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy; and in 1989 for Philips with Riccardo Muti. A live recording from 2006 with Rossen Milanov is currently available as a digital download.

Brahms scored the work for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 45 minutes.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

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

Cadenza: A passage or section in a style of brilliant improvisation, usually inserted near the end of a movement or composition

Chorale: A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Intermezzo: A short connecting instrumental movement in an opera or other musical work

Obligato: Literally "obligatory." An essential instrumental part that is not to be omitted

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.

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

Serenade: An instrumental composition written for a small ensemble and having characteristics of the suite and the sonata

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Suite: During the Baroque period, an instrumental genre consisting of several movements in the same key, some or all of which were based on the forms and styles of dance music. Later, a group of pieces extracted from a larger work, especially an opera or ballet.

Symphonic poem: A type of 19th-century symphonic piece in one movement, which is based upon an extramusical idea, either poetic or descriptive

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

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Animato: Lively, animated

Con brio: Vigorously, with fire

Con fuoco: With fire, passionately, excited

Grazioso: Graceful and easy

Lento: Slow

Sostenuto: Sustained

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Non troppo: Not too much

Un poco: A little

Più: More

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