

2023–2024

Staatskapelle Berlin

Sunday, December 3, at 7:30

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Brahms Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

I. Allegro con brio

II. Andante

III. Poco allegretto

IV. Allegro—Un poco sostenuto

Intermission

Brahms Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante moderato

III. Allegro giocoso—Poco meno presto—Tempo I

IV. Allegro energico e passionato—Più allegro

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes.

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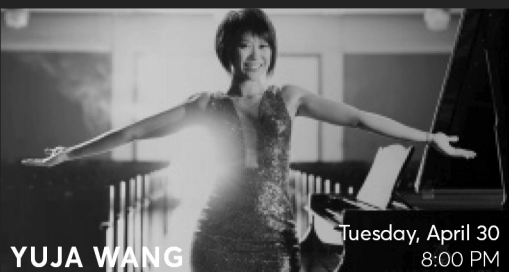
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Staatskapelle Berlin

With a tradition of more than 450 years, the **Staatskapelle Berlin** is one of the oldest orchestras in the world. Originally founded as a court orchestra by Prince-Elector Joachim II of Brandenburg in 1570, the ensemble expanded its activities with the founding of the Royal Court Opera in 1742 by Frederick the Great. The orchestra has been closely tied to the Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Berlin State Opera) ever since. Many important musicians have conducted the orchestra, both in opera and the regular concert series that have been held since 1842, including Gaspare Spontini, Felix Mendelssohn, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Felix Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Erich Kleiber, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan, Franz Konwitschny, and Otmar Suitner. From the end of 1991 until January 2023 Daniel Barenboim served as the orchestra's general music director and in 2000 was voted chief conductor for life.

Performance highlights include all of Beethoven's symphonies and piano concertos in Vienna, Paris, London, New York, and Tokyo; cycles of symphonies by Schumann and Brahms; a 10-part cycle of important stage works by Wagner, including the *Ring Cycle* in Japan and at the London Proms; and a Bruckner cycle in Vienna, Paris, Tokyo, and at Carnegie Hall. During the 2022–23 season, the Staatskapelle

Berlin appeared in Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Vienna, and Paris. The Asia tour was under the direction of Christian Thielemann, who also conducted a new production of the *Ring Cycle* in 2022 at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. In September Mr. Thielemann was appointed general music director beginning with the 2024–25 season.

A constantly growing number of recordings in both the operatic and symphonic repertoires documents the work of the Staatskapelle Berlin. Recent recordings include all nine Bruckner symphonies; piano concertos by Chopin, Liszt, and Brahms; and large symphonic works by Strauss and Elgar. Opera recordings include Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal*, and *Tristan and Isolde*; Verdi's *Il trovatore* and *Falstaff*; Berg's *Lulu*; Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*; Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* (all under the baton of Mr. Barenboim); and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (with Zubin Mehta conducting). On the occasion of the 450th birthday of the Staatskapelle Berlin, a CD boxed-set of *Great Recordings* under the batons of important conductors was published on the Deutsche Grammophon label along with a book and an exhibition promoting the orchestra's long and rich history. For more information, please visit staatskapelle-berlin.de.

Music and Artistic Director

London Nordeman



Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty "Philadelphia Sound" in new ways. His 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 and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as 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 has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers and by performing the music of under-appreciated composers of the past. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 13 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

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; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *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 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, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Staatskapelle Berlin

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Jiyoon Lee,
Concertmaster
Yuki Manuela Janke
Petra Schwieger
Susanne Schergaut
Ulrike Eschenburg
Susanne Dabels
Michael Engel
André Witzmann
Eva Römisch
Andreas Jentsch
Serge Verheylewegen
Martha Cohen
Darya Varlamova
Jueyoung Yang
Rachel Buquet

Second Violins

Krzysztof Specjal,
Concertmaster
Lifan Zhu, Concertmaster
Mathis Fischer
Sanghee Ji
André Freudenberger
Franziska Dykta
Milan Ritsch
Barbara Glücksmann
Yunna Weber
Nora Hapca
Asaf Levy
Philipp Schell
Lena Bozzetti
Valentina Paetsch

Violas

Yulia Deyneka, Principal
Volker Sprenger,
Principal
Holger Espig
Joost Keizer
Katrin Schneider
Sophia Reuter
Wolfgang Hinzpeter
Helene Wilke

Stanislava Stoykova
Anna-Maria Wünsch
Maria Körner
Lotus de Vries

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Claudius Popp, Principal
Nikolaus Popa
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Sebastian Posch
Ignacio Garcia
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Mathias Müller, Principal
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Trombones

Filipe Alves, Principal
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Ruben Rodrigues Tomé

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None of Johannes Brahms's four symphonies has programmatic titles or tells overt stories, although there are often elements that suggest personal significance. His Third Symphony is saturated with the notes F—A-flat—F, a musical motif he used in various pieces representing his personal motto "Frei aber Froh" (free but happy). The opening theme of the first movement, as well as other moments in the piece, seems to allude to the Third Symphony (the "Rhenish") of his mentor Robert Schumann. Brahms composed the Symphony during the summer of 1883, while staying on the Rhine, just after the death of Richard Wagner, the other leading figure in German music at the time.

Brahms was undoubtedly the most historically aware of the leading 19th-century composers. This is reflected in older pieces that he collected, edited, or transformed into new music. For the last movement of his final Fourth Symphony he used the Baroque procedure of the passacaglia in which a musical pattern is constantly repeated, in this instance transforming a brief passage from Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata No. 150.

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The Music

Symphony No. 3

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833

Died in Vienna, April 3, 1897



The meaning of Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 3 in F major has stumped connoisseurs for years. Hans Richter, who conducted the premiere in Vienna on December 2, 1883, called it Brahms's "Heroic" Symphony because of the big Beethovenian brass opening. Clara Schumann, Brahms's muse and editor, focused instead on the pastoral qualities, likening it to a forest idyll. Joseph Joachim, Brahms's virtuoso violin friend, said the final movement represented the myth of Hero and Leander,

lovers who meet a tragic end after their light goes out and Leander drowns in a dark sea. Modern scholars have written about the Symphony's Wagnerian chromaticism, suggesting that the piece is an homage to Brahms's rival who had died earlier that year. Some argue that the sweet middle movements represent Brahms's passion for the soprano Hermine Spies, who was with him in Wiesbaden, Germany, in the summer of 1883 when he composed the work. Even Frank Sinatra found love in the Symphony, co-writing lyrics to the third movement melody for his 1950 hit "Take My Love."

A clue to the Symphony's clashes of emotions is found in a letter from the Herzogenbergs, Brahms's friends who took a special interest in the work's completion. Their letter, dated October 1, 1883, to the composer reads: "I can't believe—until I hear it from your own lips—that your enthusiasm for the Niedervald monument is leading you to settle in Wiesbaden for good, in spite of the fact that you are not the composer of 'Die Wacht am Rhein.'" It seems that his friends were concerned that Brahms would not return to Vienna because of the political and artistic climate that appeared to favor Dvořák and Liszt. The letter continues, "Is the great Croatian monarchy too much for you, with its leanings to Dvořák rather than to yourself, or—ambition makes me giddy!—do you aspire to the dictatorship of the Wiesbaden Court Orchestra?"

Comparison to a Famous Monument Brahms's biographer Max Kalbeck first suggested that the last movement of the Third Symphony represented the Niedervald monument, the work mentioned in the Herzogenbergs's letter. A kind of German statue of liberty, the behemoth *Germania* was sculpted by Johannes Schilling beginning in 1871 to celebrate the formation of Germany. It was unveiled in September 1883 to musical fanfare, including four military bands playing the

chorale "Nun danket alle Gott" (Now Thank We All Our God). It sits overlooking the Rhine valley and has inscribed on it the words of the patriotic fight song "Die Wacht am Rhein" (The Guardian of the Rhine).

It is tantalizing to compare the monument to Brahms's Third Symphony. The work's four movements stand firmly like *Germania's* enormous four-sided platform decorated with four bas-reliefs. Beside the primary figure of *Germania* are two contrasting bronze statues, *War* and *Peace*. *War* holds a trumpet in its hand, and those trumpets blaze at the beginning of Brahms's first movement. What Richter hears as heroic, one can hear as war and Clara's pastoral as peace. One bas-relief represents the picturesque Rhine and Meuse rivers. A second bas-relief captures the King of Prussia being proclaimed Emperor of Germany—probably what Kalbeck referred to as representing Brahms's last movement. The two remaining reliefs are scenes of soldiers going to, and returning from, war. In the Third Symphony, we hear conflict and resolution, the final movement quietly concluding in peace and prosperity.

The Symphony enjoyed a triumphant premiere in Vienna and was equally well received in Berlin, with some critics calling it the best thing Brahms had ever produced. He was quite enthusiastic about the work, promising the Herzogenbergs a copy of it: "In about a week I hope to send you the too, too famous F major, in a two-piano arrangement, from Wiesbaden. The reputation it has acquired makes me want to cancel all my engagements." Clara Schumann said in 1884 that "all the movements seem to be of one piece, one beat of a heart," a monument to a united Germany from one of its most famous expatriates.

A Closer Look The shortest of Brahms's four symphonies, the Third lasts about 35 minutes, brief by late-19th-century orchestral standards. The straightforward and compact movements, however, are saturated with his exhausting syncopations. He chose the limpid key of F major for the outer movements (**Allegro con brio** and **Allegro—Un poco sostenuto**), while the middle movements (**Andante** and **Poco allegro**) are in simple C major and curmudgeonly C minor, respectively. He included the motto F—A-flat—F in the opening notes of the first-movement sonata form, making the Symphony "cyclic" because all movements employ that motif. The middle sections are translucent and shimmering. A fiery Finale (**Allegro**) ensues, which Karl Geiringer called a "tremendous conflict of elemental forces," before concluding with a calm coda.

—Aaron Beck

Brahms composed his Symphony No. 3 in 1883.

The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, three bassoons (III doubling contrabassoon), four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

The Symphony runs approximately 35 minutes in performance.



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The Music

Symphony No. 4

Johannes Brahms



Haydn composed over 100 symphonies, Mozart some 50, but the most celebrated 19th-century composers dramatically scaled back on such quantity. Beethoven's formidable nine upped the stakes. The Romantic celebration of originality meant that each new work now carried extraordinary weight. While Mozart had written his first symphony at the age of eight, Beethoven held off until age 29. Many subsequent 19th-century composers waited well into their careers to

produce a symphony.

After Robert Schumann more or less discovered the 20-year-old Johannes Brahms in 1853, writing a glowing review that praised him as the new musical messiah, all eyes and ears were on the young composer. Brahms felt under phenomenal pressure to produce an impressive first symphony. He made various false starts and it ultimately took him until age 43 to complete the Symphony No. 1 in C minor. Following the premiere of that glorious work in 1876 the celebrated conductor Hans von Bülow hailed it as "Beethoven's Tenth." Brahms's next symphony, a quite different work in a sunny D major, came quickly the next year. The Symphony No. 3 in F major dates from 1883 and he began the Fourth the following summer.

A Final Symphony Brahms composed the Symphony over the course of two summers in the resort of Mürzzuschlag, not far southwest from Vienna. From the outset he had the idea of ending the work with a passacaglia, a Baroque procedure in which a musical pattern is constantly repeated; specifically he wanted to use as its basis the theme of the last movement from Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata No. 150. Brahms composed the first two movements of the Symphony in 1884 and then the fourth and third (apparently in that order) the following summer.

Brahms was acutely aware that the Fourth Symphony was different from his earlier efforts. With his typical self-deprecating humor, he compared the work to the sour cherries found in the Alpine region in which he was composing. He wrote to Bülow, with whose formidable court orchestra in Meiningen he often performed, that "a few entr'actes are lying here—what [taken] together is usually

called a symphony." But Brahms worried "about whether it will reach a wider public! That is to say, I fear that it tastes of the native climate—the cherries here do not get sweet, you would not eat them!"

Initial Reactions As was often his practice, Brahms sought the opinion of trusted colleagues to whom he sent the score and eventually played through the piece with composer Ignaz Brüll in a version for two pianos. In early October 1885 he assembled a group of friends, among them the powerful critic Eduard Hanslick, conductor Hans Richter, and his future biographer Max Kalbeck. After the first movement concluded there was no reaction—Hanslick remarked that the experience was like being beaten "by two terribly clever people," which dissipated some of the tension. The next day Kalbeck suggested scrapping the third movement entirely and publishing the finale as a separate piece.

Despite some polite praise Brahms realized that most of his friends were lukewarm on the piece; he may well have felt that until it was played by an orchestra its true effect could not really be judged. Bülow put the Meiningen ensemble at the composer's disposal: "We are yours to command." Brahms could test out the piece, see what he might want to change, and then present the premiere. The event on October 25, 1885, turned out to be a triumph—each movement received enthusiastic applause and the audience attempted, unsuccessfully, to have the brief third-movement scherzo repeated. Over the next month the new work was presented on tour in various cities in Germany and the Netherlands.

The first performance in Brahms's adopted hometown of Vienna took place in January 1886 with Richter conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. Hanslick was now enthusiastic and compared the work to a "dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back." On the opposing side, Hugo Wolf, who took time off from composing great songs to write scathing reviews, lambasted the "musical impotence" of the Symphony and declared that "the art of composing without ideas has decidedly found in Brahms its worthiest representative." Another notable Viennese performance came a decade later, with Richter again at the helm, in what proved to be the 63-year-old Brahms's last public appearance; he died of liver cancer a month later. As Florence May, an English pianist who wrote a biography of Brahms, recalled:

A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the "artists" box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. The demonstration was renewed after the second and the third movements, and an extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting audience, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar and yet in present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go. Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there shrunken in form, with lined

countenance, strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that they were saying farewell.

A Closer Look Although Brahms thought of beginning the first movement (**Allegro non troppo**) with a brief chordal introduction, he ultimately decided to cut these measures and launch directly into the opening theme, a series of limpid two-note sighs consisting of descending thirds and ascending sixths that bind the movement together. The following **Andante moderato** opens with a noble horn theme that yields to a magnificently adorned theme for the strings. The tempo picks up in the sparkling third movement (**Allegro giocoso**), a scherzo in sonata form that gives the triangle a workout.

As mentioned, Brahms initially had the idea of the final movement (**Allegro energico e passionato**) using the Baroque technique of a passacaglia or chaconne (the terms are often used interchangeably). He slightly altered a ground bass progression from the final chorus of Bach's Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" (For You, Lord, Is My Longing) over which he built a mighty set of 30 variations and coda. In 1877 Brahms had made a piano transcription for left hand alone of Bach's D-minor Chaconne for solo violin, which provided a model here, as did the last movement of Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. The variations, often presented in pairs, begin with a bold statement based on Bach's theme. Despite a section in major, the movement gradually builds in its tragic force to a thrilling conclusion.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Brahms composed his Symphony No. 4 from 1884 to 1885.

Brahms scored the Symphony for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 40 minutes.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

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

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

Ground bass: A continually repeated bass phrase of four or eight measures

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.

Passacaglia: An instrumental musical composition consisting of variations usually on a ground bass in moderately slow triple time

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

Sixth: An interval of six diatonic degrees

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.

Syncopation: A shift of rhythmic emphasis off the beat

Third: An interval of three diatonic degrees

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

Trio: 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)

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Con brio: Vigorously, with fire

Energico: With vigor, powerfully

Giocoso: Humorous

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Passionato: Very expressive

Presto: Very fast

Sostenuto: Sustained

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Meno: Less

Non troppo: Not too much

Più: More

Poco: Little, a bit

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