

Season 1992-1993

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Monday, May 24, at 7:30
Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China

Wolfgang Sawallisch Conductor

Schubert Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759 (“Unfinished”)
I. Allegro moderato
II. Andante con moto

Strauss *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, Op. 28

Intermission

Dvořák Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 (“From the New World”)
I. Adagio—Allegro molto
II. Largo
III. Scherzo: Molto vivace
IV. Allegro con fuoco—Meno mosso e maestoso—Un poco meno mosso—Allegro con fuoco

Music Director Designate

Wolfgang Sawallisch becomes music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra with the 1993–94 season. Born in Munich, he graduated from that city's Academy of Music. He began his conducting career in 1947 at the Opera Theater of Augsburg, where he served as vocal coach, chorus master, and conductor of ballet, opera, and concert music. In 1953 he became the youngest conductor ever to lead the Berlin Philharmonic, an orchestra with which he is associated to this day. Beginning that year he also held successive music directorships in Aachen, Wiesbaden, and Cologne, and from 1957 to 1962 he was on the podium at Bayreuth. During the 1960s, he was music director of both the Hamburg Philharmonic and the Vienna Symphony; both orchestras have recognized his contribution by making him an honorary member and honorary conductor. He was artistic director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva from 1973 to 1980. For more than 21 years he led the Bavarian State Opera in Munich as music director, serving during the last decade of his tenure also as the company's general manager.

Many awards and honors testify to Mr. Sawallisch's artistic caliber and to the high esteem in which he is held throughout the world. Among them is the "Toscanini Gold Baton" award, which he received in recognition of his 35-year association with La Scala in Milan. He is the only "honorary conductor laureate" of the NHK Orchestra in Tokyo, where he has appeared as guest conductor every year since 1964; he is also honorary conductor of Santa Cecilia in Rome. A gifted pianist, Maestro Sawallisch is highly regarded as a chamber musician and as an accompanist of many of the leading singers of our time.

The Music

Symphony No. 8 (“Unfinished”)

Franz Schubert

Born in Vienna, January 31, 1797

Died there, November 19, 1828

For nearly 40 years after Schubert’s death an unfinished symphony in B minor lay forgotten in the possession of the Hüttenbrenner family in Graz, completely unknown to the rest of the world and only dimly remembered by a few of the composer’s friends. “Anselm possesses a treasure, in the form of Schubert’s B-minor Symphony,” wrote Schubert’s friend Josef Hüttenbrenner after the composer’s death, “which we rank with his great C-major Symphony ... and with all the symphonies of Beethoven—except that it is unfinished. Schubert gave it to me for Anselm to thank him for having sent the diploma of the Graz Music Society through me.” Schubert had sent the manuscript in 1823, not long after its composition, to Josef, who had passed the work on to his older brother Anselm.

The brothers understood the importance of the piece (Anselm even made a four-hand piano arrangement), although they may have believed that its incomplete state limited its value to the world. The conductor Johann Herbeck paid Anselm a visit in 1865 to see the treasure for himself (of which rumors had already been circulating for years), and diplomatically secured the work from Anselm for performance. (The diplomacy involved performing an overture composed by Hüttenbrenner on the same program.)

The belated premiere of the two completed symphonic movements later that year astonished and delighted Viennese audiences. Eduard Hanslick, the city’s leading critic, had previously warned of “over-zealous Schubert worship and adulation of Schubert relics,” but he hailed this work and its performance, which “excited extraordinary enthusiasm” and “brought new life into our concert halls.” According to Hanslick, after hearing only a few measures “every child recognized the composer, and a muffled ‘Schubert’ was whispered in the audience ... every heart rejoiced, as if, after a long separation, the composer himself were among us in person. The whole movement is a melodic stream so crystal clear, despite its force and genius, that one can see every pebble on the bottom. And everywhere the same warmth, the same bright, life-giving sunshine.”

Why “Unfinished”? The inception of the “Unfinished” Symphony goes back to the early 1820s, a period in which Schubert was spending much of his energy on opera projects. He and the poet Franz von Schober had placed great hopes in their collaboration on *Alfonso and Estrella*, hopes that would be dashed when the work failed to achieve a Viennese performance due to a new wave of Rossinimania that eclipsed German operas. Shortly after completing the music for *Alfonso*, Schubert sketched two movements and part of a third for a B-minor symphony; in the autumn of 1822 he orchestrated what he had written, despite not having finished the sketch.

The B-minor Symphony is not Schubert’s only “unfinished” symphony. In addition to the “Seventh” in E major (D. 729)—the sketches of which reveal what might have become

an impressive work—the composer left several other orchestral fragments and drafts. This has led to some confusion in the numbering of his symphonies, with the B-minor “Unfinished” variously called the Seventh or Eighth. Schubert was composing a remarkable “Tenth” Symphony (D. 936A) at the time of his death; reconstructions by various composers, and an imaginative fantasy on its themes by Luciano Berio, give some idea of Schubert’s very last musical thoughts.

Why didn’t Schubert complete the B-minor Symphony? First, the sheer size of the first two movements must have seemed daunting, for he probably felt that only a scherzo and finale of similar proportions would have served to balance the work. A proposed theory that it was intended as a two-movement symphony—that it is, in fact complete—is disproved by the existence of the beginning of the third movement. A simple biographical fact may be significant in understanding the events of 1822: Schubert fell ill, almost certainly with syphilis, and for the first time his life appeared in danger. Some scholars have speculated that he associated the B-minor Symphony with the disease, and thus wanted nothing more to do with it.

A Closer Look The two completed movements herald a new Romantic sound in their use of the orchestra, provide an unparalleled example of Schubert’s lyrical instrumental writing, show yet again his harmonic daring, and project a haunting quality that conveys a remarkable range of emotions. He begins the **Allegro moderato** on an epic scale, with a melody in the cellos and basses that strikes the ear as neither theme nor introduction. The opening theme, in B minor, is played by oboe and clarinet, which are joined by the rest of the winds; strings accompany. But this section cadences in B minor, with no transition to the second theme—and in retrospect, it has the character of an introduction, with the G-major second theme sounding like the “real” first theme. This confusion over the main key is resolved in the recapitulation, when this G-major “second” theme is finally reiterated in B major, leading to a coda based on the ominous bass line heard at the opening.

The **Andante con moto** shows Schubert’s debt to the spirit of Beethoven’s slow movements. The tuneful atmosphere of the first theme is clouded by the second theme, begun by solo clarinet, and by a vigorous shift to C-sharp minor. The movement closes inconclusively, with little fanfare, making it fairly certain that the Symphony was, from the composer’s standpoint, “unfinished.”

—Paul J. Horsley/Christopher H. Gibbs

Schubert composed his B-minor Symphony in 1822.

The Philadelphia Orchestra’s initial performance of Schubert’s “Unfinished” was in November 1904, under Fritz Scheel’s baton.

The “Unfinished” has been recorded five times by the Orchestra: in 1924 and 1927 with Leopold Stokowski for RCA; in 1947 with Bruno Walter for CBS; in 1956 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS; and in 1968 with Ormandy for RCA.

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

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

The Music

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks

Richard Strauss

Born in Munich, June 11, 1864

Died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, September 8, 1949

Like most young composers honing their art, Richard Strauss began his long career writing relatively conventional music. Raised in a musical household—his father played principal French horn in the Munich Court Orchestra—Strauss's early compositions were firmly anchored in traditional forms. As a precocious teenager he wrote two symphonies that were allied, according to his father's arch-conservative tastes, with such "Classical Romantics" as Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Within the fraught musical politics of the time the allegiances of the Strauss family were clear, as was the enemy: the program music of the New German School, epitomized by Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner.

Then came his "conversion," as Strauss would later call it. The composer and musician Alexander Ritter, 31 years Strauss's senior and someone who had known both Liszt and Wagner, became like a second father, as well as an artistic mentor. Largely under Ritter's influence, Strauss turned to the Lisztian domain of the "Symphonic Poem," or what he would call "Tone Poems." In certain respects these program works, usually in one extended orchestral movement, are descendants of the concert overtures of Beethoven and Mendelssohn. The common starting point is an extra-musical source—a poem, novel, play, legend, historical event, natural phenomenon, philosophical idea, or some other inspiration—that is used as the basis for musical illustration or reflection.

The Path to *Till Eulenspiegel* Strauss cautiously moved in the direction of program music with a four-movement descriptive symphony called *Aus Italien* (Out of Italy; 1886). For his first tone poem, the 23-year-old composer turned to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and next wrote *Don Juan* (1887) and *Death and Transfiguration* (1889). With these works he had found his mature voice and they marked an important stage in early musical Modernism.

Strauss next turned his attention to opera, writing the neo-Wagnerian *Guntram*, which proved an utter failure at its premiere in May 1894. This experience most likely discouraged him from continuing work on another dramatic project for which he had been writing a libretto, namely a "folk opera" about the popular 14th-century character Till Eulenspiegel. "I have already put together a very nice scenario," Strauss wrote in a letter, "although the figure of Master Till Eulenspiegel does not quite appear before my eyes. The book of folk tales outlines only a rogue, with too superficial a dramatic personality. The developing of his character along lines more profound than his trait of contempt for humanity also presents considerable difficulties." Strauss decided to use the character instead for his fourth tone poem, which he began composing in 1894 and finished in May of the next year. Franz Wüllner conducted the premiere in Cologne in November 1895. The work immediately became a popular favorite, displaying a humorous side of the composer not always apparent in his other orchestral works.

A Closer Look Strauss was reluctant to spell out the program in detail—he wrote a brief telegram to Wüllner, who had asked for background about the piece: “Analysis impossible for me. All wit spent in notes.” But over time he divulged more information, identifying two prominent themes associated with the title character “that run through the whole piece in the most varied disguises and moods and situations until the catastrophe where he is hanged after the death sentence has been spoken over him.” The full title of the work is *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, After the Old Rogue's Tale, Set in Rondeau Form for Large Orchestra*.

The opening two ideas come in parts—first a lilting string theme that Strauss said was meant to convey “Once upon a time there was a roguish jester,” followed by a horn solo, one of the most famous themes in all orchestral music, that identifies the prankster “whose name was Till Eulenspiegel.” A third theme associated with Till is mockingly put forth by the clarinet (“He is a wicked goblin”). Till goes through various adventures, some of which Strauss specifically identified: He rides on horseback through a market crowded with women (represented by clarinets sweeping up); disguises himself as a minister and “oozes unction and morality,” but because of his mockery “feels a sudden horror of his end.” The gallant hero comes across a group of pretty girls and woos them (with a lilting version of the initial horn call); he debates with pompous philistine philosophers (four bassoons and bass clarinet). At the climax of the piece he is put on trial—the death sentence is pronounced, he “nonchalantly whistles” (the clarinet theme again), and is executed. The opening “once upon a time” music returns to conclude this “old rogue’s tale.”

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Richard Strauss composed Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks from 1894 to 1895.

Strauss conducted The Philadelphia Orchestra in its first performance of Till Eulenspiegel, in March 1904.

The Orchestra recorded the work four times: with Eugene Ormandy in 1952 and 1963 for CBS; with Ormandy in 1974 for RCA; and with Wolfgang Sawallisch in 1993 for EMI.

The work is scored for piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, ratchet, snare drum, triangle), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.

The Music

Symphony No. 9 (“From the New World”)

Antonín Dvořák

Born in Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841

Died in Prague, May 1, 1904

The moving Czech national anthem opens with a question: “Kde domov můj?” (Where is my Home?). Antonín Dvořák, the most famous of all Czech composers, might well have asked the same thing given the course of his career. Born in the provincial town of Nelahozeves, he was initially educated in Zlonice, a town not much bigger, before moving to Prague to complete his studies. His professional career began there as violist at the Provisional Theater, eventually playing under the direction of Bedřich Smetana, the country’s leading composer. Soon his own compositions started to pour forth and get noticed. Powerful figures from Vienna repeatedly awarded him a state stipendium and Johannes Brahms arranged a crucial introduction to his own German publisher.

Within two decades Dvořák’s fame and popularity extended far beyond his homeland. The English became particularly enamored of his music. Dvořák made eight trips there, was awarded an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University, and basked in the adulation of enormous audiences. His longest time abroad was the two and a half years he spent in America beginning in September 1892. He came at the invitation of a visionary music patron, Jeannette Thurber, who made such a lucrative offer to become director of the National Conservatory of Music of America that Dvořák felt he could not turn it down. He spent the academic year in New York City, living with his family in a brownstone at 327 East 17th Street. During the summer of 1893 he traveled to Spillville, Iowa, which boasted a large Czech community.

Creating American Music The Symphony in E minor was the first in a series of important works Dvořák wrote in America, which also included the String Quartet in F major (the “American”), the String Quintet in E-flat major, the Violin Sonatina in G major, and the magnificent Cello Concerto. Composing such substantial music was one of the reasons Thurber sought out Dvořák in the first place. She was interested not only in finding someone to lead the National Conservatory, but also in a figure who could make a lasting contribution to the enhancement of American musical life. As Dvořák wrote in a letter to a friend back home: “The Americans expect great things of me. Above all, I am to show them the way into the Promised Land, into the realms of a new independent art—in short, to create a national music.” Thurber provided him with American poems and other materials, and even took him to see Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show.

Dvořák began writing a new symphony less than four months after his arrival and made rapid progress. By mid-April he reported in a letter: “I have not much work at school now, so that I have enough time for my own work and am now just finishing my E-minor Symphony. I take pleasure in it, and it will differ very considerably from my others. Indeed, the influence of America in it must be felt by everyone who has any ‘nose’ at all.” In another letter two days later he repeated how pleased he was with the piece and how different this symphony was from his earlier ones, adding “It is perhaps turning out rather American!!!” Shortly before the premiere Dvořák gave the Symphony the subtitle “Z

nového světa” (From the New World), by which he explained he meant “Impressions and Greetings from the New World.”

The eminent Wagnerian conductor Anton Seidl led the premiere performances with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall on December 15 and 16, 1893. Dvořák recounted that “the newspapers are saying that no composer has ever had such a triumph. I was in a box, the hall was filled with the highest New York society, the people clapped so much that I had to acknowledge the applause like a king!” One prominent critic declared it “the greatest symphony ever composed in this country.” Some of the reviewers raised the issue of writing a distinctively American symphony, commented on the mood of the work, and noted its use of indigenous sources.

A Story Within? Dvořák had indeed been influenced by his surroundings and his exposure to a new culture and its music. He noted that the second movement Largo “is in reality a study or a sketch for a longer work, whether a cantata or an opera which I propose writing, and which will be based upon Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*.” It seems that among the materials Thurber had given him was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, first published in 1855, which Dvořák had earlier known in a Czech translation. Although he never wrote a cantata or opera on this story, he acknowledged that at least two of the Symphony’s movements, the middle ones, are based on parts of it. The fascinating detective work of musicologist Michael Beckerman has revealed some of the many unknown layers and influences that helped form this remarkable symphony.

Dvořák also called upon American musical resources. He read an article that included musical examples of spirituals and heard some sung by an African-American student at the National Conservatory, Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949). In an interview he gave to the *New York Herald* Dvořák discussed the influence of music by Native Americans:

I therefore carefully studied a certain number of Indian melodies which a friend gave me, and became thoroughly imbued with their characteristics—with their spirit, in fact. It is this spirit which I have tried to reproduce in my Symphony. I have not actually used any of the melodies. I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of Indian music, and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestral color.

Listeners have long been fascinated by Dvořák’s references to these American sources, presented with a heavy Czech accent. That Czech musical accent is, of course, just as much a construction as the American idiom. In his Czech pieces Dvořák also invented his own tunes and resented insinuations that he was calling upon actual folk material. In its formal construction and ambition, the “New World” Symphony calls on a Germanic heritage drawn both from the symphonies of Brahms and the symphonic poems of Liszt—there is even a brief allusion in the last movement to Wagner’s opera *Tannhäuser*.

A Closer Look The four-movement Symphony begins with a mournful **Adagio** introduction that builds to an **Allegro molto** initiated by a prominent horn theme. One of the “Germanic” features of the Symphony is the recycling of themes between and among movements, leading to a parade of them in the fourth movement finale. The second theme

is given by the flute and bears some resemblance to the spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

The famous **Largo** second movement relates to *Hiawatha*, although there is some debate about exactly which part of the story; a lamenting section in the middle seems to allude to the funeral of Minnehaha. The well-known English horn solo that opens the movement is not an actual spiritual, although through Dvořák’s invention it has in some ways become one—a student of his, William Arms Fisher, provided words for it in the 1920s as “Goin’ Home.”

The **Molto vivace** scherzo opens with a passage that harkens back to the scherzo of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Dvořák again acknowledged the influence of Longfellow: “It was suggested by the scene at the feast in *Hiawatha* where the Indians dance, and is also an essay I made in the direction of imparting the local color of Indian character to music.” The finale (**Allegro con fuoco**) provides a grand conclusion in its propulsive energy and review of themes from the previous movements.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony was composed in 1893.

Fritz Scheel conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work, in November 1902.

The Philadelphians have recorded the complete Ninth Symphony seven times: in 1925, 1927, and 1934 with Leopold Stokowski for RCA; in 1944 and 1956 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS; in 1976 with Ormandy for RCA; and in 1988 with Wolfgang Sawallisch for EMI. The Orchestra also recorded the famous “Largo” second movement in 1919, with Stokowski for RCA.

The score calls for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals and triangle), and strings.

The “New World” Symphony runs approximately 40 minutes in performance.

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