

Season 2018-2019

**Thursday, January 24,
at 7:30**
**Friday, January 25,
at 2:00**

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor
Charlotte Blake Alston Speaker
Nadine Sierra Soprano
Elizabeth DeShong Mezzo-soprano
John Osborn Tenor
Krzysztof Bączyk Bass
Philadelphia Symphonic Choir
Joe Miller Director
Philadelphia Boys Choir
Jeffrey R. Smith Artistic Director

Bernstein Symphony No. 3 ("Kaddish")

- I. Invocation: Adagio—
Kaddish 1: L'istesso tempo—Allegro molto
- II. Din-Torah: Di nuovo adagio—
Kaddish 2: Andante con tenerezza—
- III. Scherzo: Presto scherzando, sempre
pianissimo—
Kaddish 3—
Finale: Adagio, come nel Din-Torah—
Allegro vivo, con gioia

Intermission

Rossini Stabat Mater

- I. Chorus and Quartet: Stabat Mater
- II. Tenor Aria: Cujus animam
- III. Soprano and Mezzo-soprano Duet: Quis est homo
- IV. Bass Aria: Pro peccatis
- V. Chorus and Bass Recitative: Eia Mater
- VI. Quartet: Sancta Mater
- VII. Mezzo-soprano Cavatina: Fac ut portem
- VIII. Soprano Air and Chorus: Inflammatus et accensus
- IX. Quartet: Quando corpus
- X. Chorus: Amen

This program runs approximately 2 hours, 10 minutes.

These concerts are sponsored by
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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 to listen live or for more details.

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Jeffrey Griffin



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

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

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

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

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

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

Music Director

Chris Lee



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

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

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

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

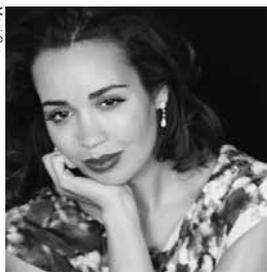
To read Yannick’s full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Soloists



Deborah Beardman Photography

Charlotte Blake Alston is an internationally acclaimed storyteller, narrator, singer, and librettist. She has appeared as host and narrator on The Philadelphia Orchestra's School and Family concerts since 1991 and is in her 25th season as host of Sound All Around, the Orchestra's preschool concert series. She has also appeared on each of the Orchestra's Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute Concerts since 2003. She was the featured host, storyteller, and narrator on Carnegie Hall's Family and School concert series from 1995 to 2016. She has made multiple appearances at the Smithsonian Institution, the Kennedy Center, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, and at the National Storytelling Festival and the National Festival of Black Storytelling, among others. She was one of two storytellers selected to present at the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. Her numerous honors include a Pew Fellowship in the Arts and the Zora Neale Hurston Award, the highest award given by the National Association of Black Storytellers. She makes her Philadelphia Orchestra subscription debut with these performances.



Megan Cyr

Soprano **Nadine Sierra** makes her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. She was the winner of the Richard Tucker Award in 2017 and the Metropolitan Opera's Beverly Sills Award in 2018, and she has made a string of successful debuts at the Met, the Teatro alla Scala, the Opéra National de Paris, and the Berlin State Opera. Her debut album, *There's a Place for Us*, was released in August on the Deutsche Grammophon label. On the opera stage this season she reprises the roles of Nannetta in Verdi's *Falstaff* at the Berlin State Opera and Gilda, one of her signature roles, in Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the Metropolitan Opera; makes her highly anticipated house and role debut in the title role of Massenet's *Manon* at the Opéra National de Bordeaux; and performs Gilda in the Berlin State Opera's new production of *Rigoletto* under the baton of Daniel Barenboim. In addition to these current performances, highlights on the concert stage include Maria in Bernstein's *West Side Story* with Antonio Pappano at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Teatro la Fenice's televised New Year Concert, the Richard Tucker Gala at Carnegie Hall, and concert debuts in Prague, Bordeaux, and Baden-Baden.

Soloists



Kristin Hoedemans

Mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong** makes her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. Other highlights on the concert stage this season include a tour of Europe and the United States with the English Concert singing the role of Juno in Handel's *Semele*; a solo recital for Vocal Arts DC at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater with pianist Mark Markham; John Adams's *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia with the composer conducting; Adalgisa in Bellini's *Norma* in concert with North Carolina Opera; and Handel's *Messiah* with the San Francisco and Houston symphonies. Operatic engagements include her first performances as Sesto in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* with Los Angeles Opera and the title role in Handel's *Rinaldo* at the Glyndebourne Festival. Last season she performed the role of Arsace in Rossini's *Semiramide* with the Metropolitan Opera, which was broadcast worldwide as part of the Met's *Live in HD* series; sang Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina* with Washington National Opera; and returned to the Glyndebourne Festival as Suzuki in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. She made her Royal Opera House debut in the 2016-17 season.



John Osborn

Tenor **John Osborn** has appeared with leading theaters around the world, including the Royal Opera House, the Opéra National de Paris, the Metropolitan Opera, the Teatro alla Scala, San Francisco Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra debut. His recent highlights include Tonio in Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment* at the Teatro de la Maestranza in Seville, the title role in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Dutch National Opera, and Nemorino in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* at the Macerata Festival in Italy. In the fall of 2016 he returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Arnold in Rossini's *William Tell*. A native of Sioux City, IA, he received his Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Simpson College in Indianola, IA. He made his professional operatic debut in 1993 at the Des Moines Metro Opera and was then invited to become a member of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. While still a member of the program, he made his European debut in 1997 in Cologne as Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff* under the baton of James Conlon.

Soloist/Chorus



Kerena S Photography

Bass **Krzysztof Bączny** was born in Poland in 1990. He received his musical training first as a member of the Poznań Boys Choir and then at the Poznań Academy of Music, from which he graduated in 2014. In 2016 he debuted at the Polish National Opera in Warsaw as Publio in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and performed in Salzburg with Marc Minkowski as Poliphemo in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. In recent seasons he debuted in Cagliari as Colline in Puccini's *La bohème*; performed the roles of the Commendatore and Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Stockholm; and sang Mozart's Requiem at the Opéra National de Lorraine. He has appeared as Masetto at the Aix-en-Provence and Beaune festivals; debuted at the Opéra Bastille in Verdi's *Don Carlos*; appeared in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and as Zuniga in Bizet's *Carmen* at Warsaw Opera; and performed Rossini's Stabat Mater with the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse. Later this season he returns to the Opéra Bastille for productions of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and Puccini's *Tosca*. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra and United States debuts.



Pete Checchia

The **Philadelphia Symphonic Choir** made its debut in December 2016, performing in three programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra that season. Consisting of talented vocalists auditioned from throughout the greater Philadelphia region, the ensemble was created to marry gifted and unique voices of Philadelphia with the legendary Philadelphia Sound. In the 2017-18 season, the choir appeared in The Philadelphia Orchestra's performances of Haydn's *The Seasons* and Puccini's *Tosca* and most recently performed with the Orchestra in December. The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by Joe Miller, director of choral activities at Westminster Choir College, where he is conductor of the Westminster Choir and the Westminster Symphonic Choir. He is also artistic director for choral activities for the Spoleto Festival USA. Dr. Miller's recent recordings with the Westminster Choir include *The Heart's Reflection: Music of Daniel Elder* and *Martin: Mass for Double Choir*, which includes Anders Öhrwall's arrangement of the Swedish folk tune *Fäbodpsalm från Dalarna* with Philadelphia Orchestra Concertmaster David Kim and Acting Associate Principal Bass Joseph Conyers.

Chorus



The Emmy-winning and Grammy-nominated **Philadelphia Boys Choir** made its Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1973. Established in 1968 by Dr. Robert G. Hamilton and currently under the baton of Jeffrey R. Smith, artistic director since 2004, the Choir is known as “America’s Ambassadors of Song,” proudly representing both the City of Philadelphia and the United States on its many concert tours across the globe. The Philadelphia Boys Choir’s achievements include recordings with internationally renowned orchestras and soloists, including Luciano Pavarotti; television appearances including *Good Morning America*, *Saturday Night Live*, and *The Today Show*; and collaborations with many ensembles including the Philly POPS, Pennsylvania Ballet, Opera Philadelphia, the Curtis Institute, the Mendelssohn Club, Pig Iron Theater, Vox Ama Deus, and the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. The Choir also maintains an illustrious international touring program, most recently with a concert tour of China in 2017, with performances in 15 concert halls over the span of 19 days; a return to Cuba for the fourth time, also in 2017; and a tour of Singapore and Vietnam in 2018. This year the boys travel to Italy.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1841

Rossini

Stabat Mater

Music

Schumann

Symphony No. 1
("Spring")

Literature

Tolstoy

The Vampire

Art

Cole

*The Voyage of
Life: Childhood*

History

Britain occupies
Hong Kong

1963

Bernstein

Symphony

No. 3

("Kaddish")

Music

Barber

Piano Concerto

Literature

Plath

The Bell Jar

Art

Hopper

Two Comedians

History

Kennedy
assassinated

We hear two spiritually inspired works on this concert for soloists, chorus, and orchestra that were written by composers who possessed extraordinary dramatic gifts.

The Philadelphia Orchestra continues its celebration of Leonard Bernstein's birth centenary with his final Symphony No. 3, subtitled "Kaddish." Bernstein rose to compositional fame—beyond his extraordinary renown as a conductor—principally with works for dance, film, and the musical theater. Among his other compositions were two symphonies, which prompted the Boston Symphony Orchestra to request a third to commemorate its 75th anniversary. Although Bernstein missed the deadline, there gradually emerged the "Kaddish" Symphony that imaginatively combines lament and celebration.

Gioachino Rossini retired from writing operas after his grand *William Tell* in 1829. He was 37 years old, enjoying the height of his popular fame, and would live for nearly 40 more years. He continued some composing, mainly songs and small piano pieces, and then began an impressive sacred work, the *Stabat Mater*, which describes Mary's suffering during Christ's crucifixion. Poor health initially prompted Rossini to enlist a friend to write some parts of the work, but he later supplied the missing movements. The result is an immediately attractive composition that brilliantly merges his lyrical and dramatic gifts with the Italian tradition of sacred music that he had absorbed in his youth.

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

The Music

Symphony No. 3 (“Kaddish”)



Leonard Bernstein
Born in Lawrence,
Massachusetts,
August 25, 1918
Died in New York City,
October 14, 1990

The Boston Symphony, which had introduced Leonard Bernstein's Second Symphony in 1949, commissioned a successor from him for its 75th anniversary season, that of 1955-56. At that time, however, Bernstein was busy with a string of cinematic and theatrical projects: *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Wonderful Town*, *On the Waterfront*, *Candide*, *West Side Story*—all, astonishingly, composed between 1952 and 1957. Somewhere in there he managed to write a concerto for Isaac Stern, his Serenade, but there was no chance of the new symphony for Boston. Then, in 1958, Bernstein became music director of the New York Philharmonic, which brought his composing activity almost to a halt. Not until the summer of 1961 did he start work on the symphony, and by then the world had changed.

Bernstein had called his Second Symphony “The Age of Anxiety,” responding, through the poem of the same name by W.H. Auden, to the uncertainties of the early Cold War. During the 12 years since then, those uncertainties had only deepened. The United States and the Soviet Union now had weaponry that could destroy all human life; the extremity of the political situation was forcibly demonstrated by events happening even while Bernstein was at work on his new symphony—not least the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. At the same time, scientific advances, especially in astronomy, microbiology, and psychology, were radically changing how the universe and the human self could be understood, and the development of automated technology was reducing the need for the skills that had helped give people a sense of role and purpose.

The Age of Atonality Change had come, too, within the sphere of music. In his own creative work of the mid-'50s, Bernstein had demonstrated how closely popular and classical styles could work together. However, the growth of rock 'n' roll, signaled by the eruption of Elvis Presley into national consciousness in 1956, opened a gulf. On the other side, among Bernstein's classical colleagues, came another. Between 1952 and 1957, Stravinsky—hitherto the great beacon for composers who, like Bernstein, could not engage with Schoenberg—gradually assimilated 12-tone principles. Moreover, Bernstein's great friend and mentor Aaron Copland did the same, as Bernstein

found himself reminded when, a month before the Cuban Missile Crisis, he conducted the first performance of the senior composer's *Connotations*. The age of anxiety was becoming also the age of atonality.

Bernstein decided to embrace it, if with trepidation rather than his customary bear hug. His new symphony, which was his first work of any size since 1957, would take the 12-tone idea on board, but, unlike Copland and Stravinsky, he would not thereby change his style. There would, rather, be various styles, as there had been in his great works of the past, but now in dramatic confrontation, creating musical metaphors for disquiet, search, struggle, and achievement. As he himself put it: "The agony expressed with the 12-tone music has to give way—this is part of the form of the piece—to tonality and even diatonicism, so that what triumphs in the end, the affirmation of faith, is tonal."

Finding a Voice In order to make his intentions clear, Bernstein decided to bring them out into the open—not by means of a sung biblical text, as in his First Symphony, nor with a poetic program, as in his Second, but through a spoken narrative. For this, he went to Robert Lowell and then, at Lowell's suggestion, to Frederick Seidel, before deciding he had to write it himself, because, for him, the narrator's voice was to be his own, asking his questions and making his demands. Of course, the voice of the music is his own, too, and though these two voices may move in parallel, they may also be in conflict.

That, indeed, is the Symphony's principal state. The work grew as a monologue for a human being addressing God, and also as a vigorous dialogue between speaker and orchestra, between spoken words and music that is sung or played—a dialogue with many levels of direct expression and subtext. We may, if we will, understand the work in its composer's own terms, as a scene of conflict resolved in affirmation. We may also feel the Symphony's battle to be unwon, feel the work to be a challenge still seeking resolution—a challenge or, more precisely, a fistful of challenges: to resituate art in the political sphere, to create an integrated culture, to bear witness, to identify permanent values, to support hope.

Like Mahler Following the example of his hero Mahler, Bernstein worked on his symphony during summer vacations, in 1961, in 1962 (at the MacDowell Colony), and in 1963, scoring it for large orchestra, soprano, speaker, chorus, and boys choir. The Boston Symphony generously waived its priority so that the first performance

could be given by the Israel Philharmonic, in Tel Aviv on December 10, 1963, with the composer conducting. Jennie Tourel was the soloist, and the narration was delivered by the great Russian-Israeli actress Hanna Rovina, then in her 70s. The performance was taking place only three weeks after the Kennedy assassination in Dallas, and Bernstein duly dedicated the work “to the beloved memory of John F. Kennedy.” A month later, the Symphony was heard in Boston, with Charles Munch conducting, Tourel again singing the solos, and the composer’s wife, Felicia Montealegre, as speaker. Tourel and Montealegre were also involved when Bernstein brought the work to the New York Philharmonic the following year and made a recording. Still finding the spoken text a problem, he rewrote it and re-recorded the Symphony in 1977.

The rediscovery of Mahler was yet another determining feature of the early 1960s. Bernstein made his first Mahler recordings in 1960: the Fourth Symphony and an album of songs, with Tourel. He recorded the Third Symphony the next year, and the Second and Fifth in 1963, while working on his own “Kaddish.” Mahler gave him the example of a composer who opened the symphony to words, a composer who also, while seeming to express himself in a very personal manner, spoke for the world. But also, for all Bernstein’s misgivings about 12-tone music, this Symphony is an extraordinarily Schoenbergian work. On many occasions, Schoenberg created through music a conversation with God, and in one late piece, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, he worked with ancient Jewish prayer and a spoken narration relating to the contemporary world: exactly Bernstein’s mix in the present Symphony.

A Closer Look Introduced by the speaker, the first movement has a slow orchestral introduction followed by an allegro with chorus. The introduction starts out in darkest 12-tone territory, though Bernstein—like Copland, like Stravinsky—uses Schoenberg’s technique in a completely individual and instantly identifiable way. His harsh discords and yearning lines are already seeking tonal resolution; the gestures rise up toward the light. As the music becomes more continuous, a saxophone takes the lead. The opening music returns before the chorus enters and soon moves into the allegro, the first setting of the *Kaddish*, after which the movement ends with recollections of both introduction and allegro.

Bernstein gave his slow movement the title “Din-Torah,” after the Yiddish folk song “A Din Torah mit Got” (A Court

Bernstein composed his *Symphony No. 3* from 1961 to 1963.

The first, and only other, Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the "Kaddish" were in April 2008, with conductor John Axelrod, soprano Kelly Nassief, narrator Samuel Pisar, the Philadelphia Singers Chorale, and the American Boychoir.

The work is scored for four flutes (III doubling alto flute, IV doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (antique cymbals, bass drum, bongo drums, chimes, cymbals, finger cymbals, glockenspiel, hand drum, maracas, rasping stick, sandpaper blocks, side drum, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tambourine, temple blocks, tenor drum, tom-toms, triangle, vibraphone, wood block, xylophone), harp, celesta, piano, strings, soprano solo, speaker, mixed chorus, and boys' chorus.

The Symphony runs approximately 40 minutes in performance.

Session with God), which memorializes the 18th-century Hassidic rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, famous for his altercations with the Almighty on behalf of the Jewish people. The movement begins with thunder from the enlarged percussion section, out of which the chorus comes winding with the word "Amen." But nothing has been resolved: The orchestra's 12-tone music becomes more vociferous, and remains so after the voices have re-entered. This is the work's most ferocious passage, and it is followed by the sweetest: a lullaby from the soloist, singing *Kaddish* a second time, supported by orchestra and chorus. There is a middle section like a peal of bells, but it is with the slow, gentle music—tinged, though with intensity—that the movement closes.

Sleep, however, is not an answer to the world's questions, or to this Symphony's. The relentless scherzo is 12-tone, but based on six-note phrases answering one another—a dodecaphonic pop song. Bernstein suddenly transforms the theme into a big tune, taken up by boys' chorus. (The use of children to suggest angels recalls Mahler's Third Symphony.) Pessimism powerfully returns, but the 12-note theme is now beautifully drawn out and almost pacified. Then the big tune comes back, this time to initiate a final *Kaddish* in the form of a fugue, ending decisively on the word heard so often in this work: "Amen."

—Paul Griffiths

The Music

Stabat Mater



Gioachino Rossini
Born in Pesaro,
February 29, 1792
Died in Paris,
November 13, 1868

By 1820 Gioachino Rossini was the most popular and frequently performed composer in Europe. Although Beethoven was alive and still slowly productive—the Ninth Symphony and other late masterpieces had yet to be written—he did not enjoy the broad public success that his younger Italian colleague did. The two, who met in Vienna in 1822, apparently admired one another and were not really in direct competition. Beethoven reigned supreme in the sphere of instrumental music (he had struggled mightily with his lone opera *Fidelio*) and Rossini rarely wrote anything other than operas. He triumphed with both serious and comic works, although today it is the latter that remain most often performed, thus somewhat distorting his contemporaneous reputation.

An Extended Retirement The 1820s saw significant changes in Rossini’s career. In 1824 he moved to Paris and composed several operas in French, sometimes adapting earlier Italian ones for new audiences. And then in 1829 he wrote his grandest work, *William Tell*, whereupon, at the height of his popularity, he abruptly “retired,” never composing another opera during his remaining four decades. He was famous and rich and hoped he could do what he pleased, although ill health and depression clouded much of the rest of his long life.

In fact, Rossini did not entirely give up composing. He wrote many charming brief songs, piano, and chamber pieces as well as two significant sacred compositions: the *Stabat Mater* performed on this concert and *Petite messe solennelle* (Little Solemn Mass). While in his heyday he worked with enormous speed (he allegedly composed *The Barber of Seville* in just three weeks), things progressed at a slower pace in retirement.

A Joint Composition—At First During a trip to Madrid in 1831, two years after his withdrawal from the opera scene, Rossini was asked to write the *Stabat Mater*. He composed about half of the piece but due to poor health enlisted his friend Giovanni Tadolini (1789–1872) to finish it. The joint work apparently had just one performance in Madrid at Easter time in 1833. Four years later, after the death of the commissioning Spanish patron, the score was acquired by a Parisian publisher who wrote to

Rossini composed his *Stabat Mater* from 1831 to 1841.

Walter Howe led the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the work, in October 1945 at the Worcester Music Festival, with soprano Stella Roman, contralto Jean Watson, tenor Donald Dame, baritone Lansing Hatfield, and the Worcester Festival Chorus. Most recently on subscription, it was heard in May 1992 under Riccardo Muti's baton, with soprano Carol Vaness, mezzo-soprano Dolores Ziegler, tenor Frank Lopardo, bass Roberto Scandiuzzi, and the Philadelphia Singers Chorale.

The score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; four horns; two trumpets; three trombones; timpani; strings; two sopranos, tenor, and bass soloists; and a mixed chorus.

Performance time is approximately one hour.

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Rossini informing him that he planned to release it. The outraged composer responded that the work as it now stood was a composite composition—surely the publisher could tell two different composers at work and figure out which movements were Rossini's. He threatened that if it appeared he planned to “pursue the publisher to death.”

Rossini had at some point composed the movements that he had omitted years earlier and eventually won a court case supporting his rights of ownership. The final wholly Rossini version was unveiled in Paris to enormous acclaim in January 1842—the public was still hungry for new Rossini. Two months later, Gaetano Donizetti conducted the *Stabat Mater* in Bologna and reported: “The enthusiasm is impossible to describe. Even at the final rehearsal, which Rossini attended, in the middle of the day, he was accompanied to his home to the shouting of more than 500 persons. The same thing the first night, under his window, since he did not appear in the hall.”

A Closer Look Musical settings of the medieval hymn to the Virgin Mary, *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (The Sorrowful Mother Was Standing), which describes her suffering during the crucifixion, span the centuries. Rossini particularly admired the one by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi from 1736. An orchestral introduction to the first movement (**Stabat Mater**), somewhat dark in mood, leads to the entrance of the chorus and the four vocal soloists. The next three movements—ones that Rossini added later—omit the chorus to feature the soloists. **Cujus animam** is a jaunty aria and the most famous part of the piece, a favorite of many tenors who perform it independently from the rest of the work. Its pure melody would be at home in many of Rossini's operas. Attractive lyricism continues in **Quis est homo**, a duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano that ends with a marvelous joint cadenza. There follows the bass aria **Pro peccatis**.

The chorus returns, a cappella (without the orchestra) in the fifth movement, **Eia Mater**, supplemented by a bass recitative. After an orchestral introduction, the sixth movement, **Sancta Mater**, features the quartet of soloists leading to the mezzo-soprano aria **Fac ut portem**. The eighth movement is a virtuosic soprano air with chorus (**Inflammatum et accensus**) with an agitated accompaniment. The penultimate section offers an a cappella solo quartet (**Quando corpus**) before an energetic final chorus (**Amen**) that includes a fugue and circles back to the dark opening of the entire piece before a brief fugual conclusion.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

A cappella:

Unaccompanied voices

Air: A tune or melody

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

Atonality: Music that is not tonal, especially organized without reference to key or tonal center

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

Cavatina: A song, particularly a short aria without da capo

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Da capo: Repeated from the beginning

Diatonicism:

Music whose tonality is predominantly nonchromatic (such as the works of Haydn or Mozart)

Dodecaphony: A synonym for 12-tone

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice

and then imitated by the other voices in succession,

reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Legato: Smooth, even, without any break between notes

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

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.

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 in triple time, 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

12-tone: Music constructed according to the principle pioneered by Schoenberg in the early 1920s, whereby the 12 notes of the scale are arranged in a particular order, forming a series of pitches that serves as the basis of the composition and a source from which the musical material is derived

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Con gioia: With joy

Con tenerezza: With tenderness

Di nuovo adagio: Slow over again

L'istesso tempo: At the same tempo

Presto: Very fast

Scherzando: Playfully

Vivo: Lively, intense

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Molto: Very

Sempre: Always

DYNAMIC MARKS

Pianissimo (pp): Very soft

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