

Season 2017-2018

Thursday, May 17, at 7:30

Sunday, May 20, at 2:00

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Hélène Grimaud Piano

Dvořák *Othello*, concert overture, Op. 93

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

I. Allegro moderato

II. Andante con moto—

III. Rondo: Vivace

Intermission

Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92

I. Poco sostenuto—Vivace

II. Allegretto

III. Presto—Assai meno presto—Presto

IV. Allegro con brio

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

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The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director



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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 three 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.

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Soloist



Mat Hennek/DG

French pianist **Hélène Grimaud** was born in 1969 in Aix-en-Provence, where she began her piano studies. She was accepted into the Paris Conservatory at the age of 13 and in 1987 made her recital debut in Tokyo. That same year Daniel Barenboim invited her to perform with the Orchestre de Paris, marking the launch of her musical career, one highlighted by concerts with most of the world's major orchestras and many celebrated conductors. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2000 and has enjoyed many collaborations with her friend Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Ms. Grimaud's recordings have been awarded numerous accolades, among them the Cannes Classical Recording of the Year, the Choc du Monde de la Musique, the Diapason d'Or, the Grand Prix du Disque, the Midem Classical Award, and the ECHO Klassik Award. An exclusive Deutsche Grammophon (DG) artist since 2002, her most recent album, *Perspectives*, is a two-disc personal selection of highlights from her DG catalogue. In addition to performances with The Philadelphia Orchestra, highlights of her current season include appearances with the Gothenburg Symphony, where she is artist in residence; concerts with Valery Gergiev and the Munich Philharmonic; and a multimedia concert project combining piano works with images from *Woodlands*, the latest publication by her partner, fine art photographer Mat Hennek.

Ms. Grimaud has established herself as a committed wildlife conservationist, a passionate human rights activist, and a writer. Between her debut in 1995 with the Berlin Philharmonic under Claudio Abbado and her first performance with the New York Philharmonic under Kurt Masur in 1999, she established the Wolf Conservation Center in New York State. Her love for the endangered species was sparked by a chance encounter with a wolf in northern Florida. Ms. Grimaud is a member of Musicians for Human Rights, a worldwide network of people working in the music field to promote a culture of social change. She is also the author of three books.

Hélène Grimaud's performances with The Philadelphia Orchestra are made possible by a generous gift from Robert Heim and Eileen Kennedy.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1805

Beethoven

Piano Concerto
No. 4

Music

Spontini

La vestale

Literature

Chateaubriand

René

Art

Turner

Shipwreck

History

Victory at

Trafalgar

1812

Beethoven

Symphony
No. 7

Music

Weber

Piano Concerto
No. 2

Literature

Brothers Grimm

Fairy Tales

Art

Géricault

The Charging

Chasseur

History

U.S. declares

war on Britain

1892

Dvořák

Othello

Music

Tchaikovsky

The Nutcracker

Literature

Wilde

Lady

Windermere's

Fan

Art

Toulouse-

Lautrec

At the Moulin

Rouge

History

First cans of

pineapples

The Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's rise to international fame got enormous assistance from the passionate advocacy of Johannes Brahms, with whom he shared many basic aesthetic principles. Yet Dvořák, unlike Brahms, was also dedicated to composing operas as well as to writing programmatic pieces. In January 1892 he completed a cycle of three concert overtures (*In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival*, and *Othello*), which he initially called *Nature*, *Life*, and *Love*. Today we hear the last of them, inspired by Shakespeare's great tragedy.

Two magnificent Beethoven compositions round out the program. Although the composer did not give any indication of extra-musical inspirations for these pieces, quite specific interpretations have accumulated over the past two centuries.

The Fourth Piano Concerto opens magically, with a noble statement from the soloist, a bardic invocation likened to that on a lyre. The unusual second movement has long been linked to the soloistic Orpheus pleading with the orchestral Furies for entry into the Underworld. A spirited Rondo concludes the Concerto.

Richard Wagner famously characterized Beethoven's Seventh Symphony as "the apotheosis of the dance." Beethoven was at the height of his popular fame when the jubilant piece premiered in 1813. In this Symphony, unveiled as victory in the Napoleonic wars was close at hand, he brilliantly captured the celebratory spirit of the times

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The Music

Othello Overture



Antonín Dvořák
Born in Nelahozeves,
Bohemia, September 8, 1841
Died in Prague, May 1, 1904

In the heated musical politics of the late 19th century, Dvořák is not nearly as easy a figure to pin down as one might first think. He is remembered as the quintessential Czech composer, and indeed nationalist sentiment was central both to his self-definition and to much of his music. Yet Dvořák was far from provincial. He actively sought an international reputation and succeeded brilliantly in obtaining one. Early success quickly led to fame far beyond the Czech lands, especially after Brahms recommended him to his own German publisher, Fritz Simrock, who initially published the alluring Moravian Duets and Slavonic Dances.

As Dvořák was quick to point out to the publisher, these pieces proved a “goldmine,” and he wanted to move on to bigger works—symphonies, concertos, and operas that would be heard and judged within a great tradition of Western music, not as a colorful, quaint, local phenomenon. In this respect, we can consider Dvořák within the context of late-19th-century debates about what music should be and do, whether to write “absolute” works as Brahms believed, or “programmatic” ones, infused with extra-musical meanings, as Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss practiced. At first Dvořák seemed solidly in the Brahmsian camp, although from the start he greatly admired Wagner and wrote operas himself. Near the end of his career, however, Dvořák became increasingly drawn to extra-musical sources for his orchestral compositions.

From Absolute Music to Works with Stories By the early 1890s, as he turned 50, Dvořák stood at a stylistic and aesthetic crossroads. In January 1892 he completed a cycle of three overtures (*In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival*, and *Othello*) that he initially called *Nature*, *Life*, and *Love*, and to which he gave the collective opus number of 91. His unique American adventure was about to begin—a three-year sojourn that would profoundly influence his musical outlook—and it is worth noting that the first two performances of these overtures took place on opposite sides of the Atlantic, within a few weeks of each other. The world premiere was in April 1892, at a farewell concert in Prague shortly before Dvořák's departure from Europe; the U.S. premiere was that October, in a Carnegie Hall concert

Dvořák composed the Othello Overture in 1892.

The piece was first performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1967, with István Kertész. Hans Graf presented the most recent subscription performances, in March 2006.

The Overture is scored for two flutes (fl doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals), harp, and strings.

The Orchestra recorded Othello in 1999 with Wolfgang Sawallisch for Water Lily Acoustics.

The work runs approximately 15 minutes in performance.

welcoming him to New York. The composer conducted both programs; the Czech and American audiences found the works brilliant and dazzling—and puzzling.

Dvořák conceived this “novelty” (as he called it) as a trio of tone poems that together would depict “the creative forces of the universe.” The initial title, *Nature, Life, and Love*, was metamorphosed several times before it resulted in the titles and separate opus numbers that we know today. In 1893 he wrote to Simrock, with the titles in more or less the form now used, although he was still uncertain about the last piece: “Othello”? or ‘Tragic’? or even ‘Eroica’? Or should I leave them just ‘Overtures’? No, because this is, to a certain extent, still program music.” There are indications, in any case, that he was thinking of Shakespeare’s play all along. Even though the final title was fixed at a later time, that does not mean Dvořák “cheated,” inventing that association after writing the music. (A practice, by the way, composers do quite frequently.)

A Closer Look The three overtures are interconnected musically—a shared “nature” theme appears in each of them, quite simply in the first two, and somewhat distorted in *Othello*. Altogether the works even suggest a sort of symphony, with a lyrical first movement, a boisterous scherzo, and concluding with a dramatic finale.

Othello depicts love as it exists in this most harrowingly passionate of Shakespearean tragedies. It is a sort of rumination on the end of the bard’s drama, beginning with Desdemona’s prayer (heard as a hymn-like theme), and continuing with the uneasy music of Othello’s appearance at the bedroom door. As he enters the room, the music becomes agitated; heated dialogue ensues, and the jealousy-crazed Moor works himself into a frenzy and smothers his beloved. As he realizes what he has done, the music of Desdemona is heard again. Understanding that he has been tricked, and knowing that there remains no happiness for him now, he says his own last prayers, kisses her one last time, and kills himself.

This unfolding of events in relation to the music, although not indicated in the published score, is found in pencil marks that Dvořák entered into his own copy, comments such as “they embrace in silent ecstasy,” “in the mind of Othello jealousy and revenge begin to grow,” “Othello murders her at the height of his anger,” “he prays,” and “kills himself.”

—Paul J. Horsley/Christopher H. Gibbs

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director



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Yannick Nézet-Séguin

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For more information please contact **Dorothy Byrne** at **215.893.3124**.

The Music

Piano Concerto No. 4



Ludwig van Beethoven
Born in Bonn, probably
December 16, 1770
Died in Vienna, March 26,
1827

The first decade of the 19th century was a difficult period for Beethoven—personally, politically, financially, relationally, and with the increasing severity of his deafness, musically. But the middle of the decade was a remarkably prolific period for the composer, a kind of “sweet spot” in his career. In an especially productive burst, he completed and revised his opera *Fidelio*, along with the *Leonore* Overtures Nos. 1 and 3, the Fourth Symphony, the three “Razumovsky” string quartets, a piano sonata (the “Appassionata”), the Triple Concerto, the Violin Concerto, and the Piano Concerto No. 4, along with various smaller compositions.

Triumphs and Challenges While all these middle-period works represent innovative developments in form and musical language, the Fourth Piano Concerto is also something of a poignant conclusion within Beethoven’s still-developing career. As his deafness intensified, he found public performance increasingly difficult, and this Concerto was the last keyboard work he wrote for his own public use. His final concerto (No. 5, the “Emperor”) would be premiered by another pianist.

The Fourth Concerto actually enjoyed two premieres, both of them part of legendary concerts, and both with the composer directing from the keyboard. A private premiere took place in March 1807 in the home of Prince Lobkowitz, one of Beethoven’s principal patrons, in a concert that also included the premieres of the *Coriolan* Overture and the Fourth Symphony. The second, public premiere took place during an infamous four-hour concert in December 1808, on a program with the first performances of the Fifth and Sixth (“Pastoral”) symphonies, portions of the Mass in C, and the “Choral” Fantasy, along with assorted shorter works.

This public concert was painfully under-rehearsed and not well received. But fellow-composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt, who was in the audience, noted that Beethoven played the Concerto “with astounding cleverness and skill,” and the Andante was “a masterly movement of beautifully developed song.” Another reviewer declared this work to be “the most admirable, singular, artistic, and complex Beethoven concerto ever.”

A Closer Look The Fourth Concerto opens (**Allegro moderato**) not with the traditional orchestral exposition of the main themes, but with the soloist, unaccompanied. This switching of roles wasn't entirely unprecedented; Mozart had allowed the piano to enter "early" in his Piano Concerto No. 9 (K. 271). But the effect here is quite new, and laid the groundwork for the solo piano cascades that open Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto.

At the outset, the piano plays a gentle precursor of the "fate" motif of the Fifth Symphony, which was still two years away from completion. Here it is a chorale, dignified but ruffled by an elusive rhythmic unevenness. The orchestra then enters in B major, a surprisingly distant key, to continue the exposition. It is the most intimate concerto opening Beethoven ever wrote, foreshadowing the pastoral quality of the Sixth Symphony.

Throughout this movement the piano rarely asserts itself, but gains quiet authority through reserve, frequently pulling back from the brink of exuberance and retreating carefully into filigree passagework. But this endows it cumulatively with an independence that it will assert in the famous second movement.

Beethoven scored the second movement (**Andante con moto**) for strings and piano only, a reduction in ensemble that belies the intensification of the drama. A Beethoven slow movement is often an opportunity for utopian repose—delicate, soothing, and restorative—but famed pianist Arthur Schnitke described this movement as having been "written by a man in mortal fear." Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny suggested it was a mythological drama, which the composer's biographer Adolf Bernhard Marx refined into a possible representation of Orpheus (the piano) taming the Furies (denoted by the forceful unison string passages). This interpretation, often attributed to Liszt, was also reiterated by the renowned English novelist E.M. Forster, who wrote that the piano's Orphic song, unaffected by the insolent interruptions, eventually lulls the serpentine strings into submission. The movement closes in a quiet E minor that leads without a pause into the rondo finale.

After such drama, Beethoven takes a light, Haydnesque approach to the finale (**Vivace**). The movement's main theme, which begins in the "wrong" key of C before coming around to G major, is rife with waggishness and even a little mischief. The trumpets and timpani, which have been sitting silent through the first two movements, add

Beethoven composed his Fourth Piano Concerto from 1805 to 1806.

The piece was first performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra in January 1905, with pianist Eugene d'Albert and Fritz Scheel. The most recent subscription performances were in February 2017, with pianist Lise de la Salle and Fabio Luisi.

The Orchestra has recorded the Concerto four times, all for CBS: in 1947 with Robert Casadesus and Eugene Ormandy; in 1955 and 1962 with Rudolf Serkin and Ormandy; and in 1966 with Eugene Istomin and Ormandy. A recording of the Fourth Concerto from 1938 with Josef Hofmann and Ormandy can also be found in The Philadelphia Orchestra: The Centennial Collection (Historic Broadcasts and Recordings from 1917-1998).

The Concerto is scored for solo piano, one flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

their emphatic accents to the carefree celebration. And the pianist also gets to show off some of the sparkling virtuosity that was absent from the Concerto's opening as it brushes aside the soberness of the middle movement.

—Luke Howard

The Music

Symphony No. 7



Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven called his Seventh Symphony “one of my most excellent works” in a letter to Johann Peter Solomon in London (the same Solomon who, some 20 years prior, had brought Haydn to the English capital and who, like Beethoven, was a native of Bonn). The composer may well be forgiven for this lavish self-praise: Even after the revolutionary accomplishments of the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, he had clearly found a new approach to symphonic composition—one in which he had no need of a spoken or unspoken program such as the “fate” or “nature” associations in the earlier works in order to project a high level of dramatic energy. In many ways, the Seventh marks the culminating moment of Beethoven’s “heroic period,” but it manages to be “heroic” without evoking any hero in particular.

One way in which Beethoven achieved this was by having each of the four movements dominated by a single recurrent rhythmic figure, while creating an endless diversity of melodic and harmonic events against a backdrop of those continually repeated dance rhythms. There is a strong drive propelling the music forward creating constant excitement; at the same time, harmony, melody, dynamics, and orchestration are all full of the most delightful surprises, making for interesting turns in the musical “plot.”

A Closer Look In the first movement (**Poco sostenuto—Vivace**), we see how the predominant rhythm gradually emerges during the transition from the slow introduction to the fast tempo. The introduction is the longest Beethoven ever wrote for a symphony. It presents and develops its own thematic material, linked to the main theme of the “Allegro” section in a passage consisting of multiple repeats of a single note—E—in the flute, oboe, and violins. Among the many unforgettable moments of this movement, let us single out just two: the surprise oboe solo at the beginning of the recapitulation and the irresistible, gradual crescendo at the end that culminates in a fortissimo statement of the movement’s main rhythmic figure.

The second-movement **Allegretto** in A minor was the section in the Symphony that became the most popular

Beethoven composed his Seventh Symphony from 1811 to 1812.

Fritz Scheel conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Symphony, in March 1903. The most recent subscription performances were in May 2016, with Stéphane Denève on the podium.

The Orchestra has recorded the work five times: in 1927 for RCA with Leopold Stokowski; in 1944 and 1964 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy; and in 1978 and 1988 for EMI with Riccardo Muti. A live recording with Christoph Eschenbach from 2006 is also currently available as a digital download.

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

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

from the day of its premiere, when it had to be repeated. The main rhythmic pattern of this movement was used in Austro-German church litanies of the 18th and 19th centuries. The same pattern is so frequent in the music of Franz Schubert that it is sometimes referred to as the “Schubert rhythm.” The Allegretto of Beethoven’s Seventh combines this rhythm with a melody of rare expressive power. The rhythm persists in the bass even during the contrasting middle section in A major. Yet the movement opens and ends on a single long-held chord. In an influential essay on Beethoven’s symphonies, Hector Berlioz described this chord as a “mournful cry” that leaves “the listener in suspense ... thereby increasing the impression of dreamy sadness.”

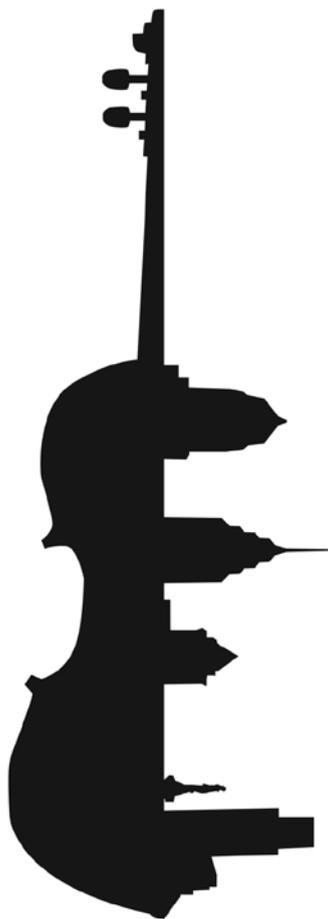
The third-movement scherzo (**Presto**) is the only one of the Symphony’s movements where the basic rhythmic patterns are grouped in an unpredictable, asymmetrical way. The joke (which is what the word scherzo means) lies in the fact that the listener may never know what will happen in the next moment. Only the trio returns to regular-length periods, though there are some harmonic and rhythmic irregularities that, according to Berlioz, always took the public by surprise. Beethoven expanded the traditional scherzo-trio-scherzo structure by repeating the trio a second time, followed by a third appearance of the scherzo. At the end Beethoven leads us to believe that he is going to start the trio over yet another time. But we are about to be doubly surprised: first when the by-now familiar trio melody is suddenly transformed from major to minor, and second when, with five quick tutti strokes, the movement abruptly ends, as if cut off in the middle.

In the fourth-movement **Allegro con brio**, the exuberant feelings reach their peak as one glorious theme follows another over an almost entirely unchanging rhythmic pulsation as the dance reaches an unprecedented level of intensity. It is a movement of which even Sir Donald Francis Tovey, the most celebrated British musical essayist of the first half of the 20th century, had to admit: “I can attempt nothing here by way of description.” Fortunately, the music speaks for itself.

—Peter Laki

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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

Exposition: See sonata form

Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

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

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

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.

Recapitulation: See sonata form

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

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo in triple time, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

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.

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

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

Trio: See scherzo

Tutti: All; full orchestra

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Con brio: Vigorously, with fire

Con moto: With motion

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Presto: Very fast

Sostenuto: Sustained

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Assai: Much

Meno: Less

Poco: Little, a bit

DYNAMIC MARKS

Crescendo: Increasing volume

Fortissimo (ff): Very loud

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