PLAYBILL

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Specially design art for the Wagner's Tristan and Isolde concerts, June 1 and 8, 2025, by Haeg Design

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From the Interim President and CEO

Dear Friends:

Summer is a special time for the Orchestra, when we perform residencies in locations that feel like second homes to us. This year is especially celebratory as we mark 60 years of performing at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and 50 years of performing at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts, two venues the Orchestra helped to open. In addition, this summer will mark 18 years since our first performance at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is widely lauded for its ability to perform many styles of music, and summer residencies showcase this variety from one night to the next. This season at the Mann, for example, we open with an all-Beethoven concert, play the soundtrack to *Star Wars: A New Hope* while the film is shown on giant screens, and the following night perform with superstar Cynthia Erivo. Additional concerts include a 125th birthday salute for the Orchestra (ahead of our official anniversary on November 16), a celebration of the Eagles's championship season, and a collaboration with rapper Nas.

Yannick and the Orchestra have been deeply committed to performing works by historically underrepresented composers, and residencies give us the opportunity to take some of those remarkable works to audiences in other cities. This year we look forward to performing William Grant Still's Symphony No. 2 ("Song of a New Race") in Saratoga and Augusta Holmès's "La Nuit et l'amour" from *Ludus pro patria* at Bravo! *Vail*. We also bring former Composer in Residence Gabriela Lena Frank's *Picaflor: A Future Myth* to Vail, which partnered with us to co-commission the piece.

I hope you will join us at our Mann Center residency in June and July. And if you happen to find yourselves in either Vail, Colorado, in July or Saratoga Springs, New York, in August, please come see us.

Best regards,

Ryan Fleur
Interim President and CEO

The Philadelphia Orchestra

2024–2025 Season

Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music and Artistic Director
Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair

Marin Alsop
Principal Guest Conductor
Ralph and Beth Johnston Muller Chair

Naomi Woo
Assistant Conductor

Joseph Conyers
Education and Community Ambassador
Mark and Tobey Dichter Chair

Charlotte Blake Alston
Storyteller, Narrator, and Host
Osagie and Losenge Imasogie Chair

First Violins
David Kim, Concertmaster
Dr. Benjamin Rush Chair
Juliette Kang, First Associate Concertmaster
Joseph and Marie Field Chair
Christine Lim, Associate Concertmaster
Marc Rovetti, Assistant Concertmaster
Dr. James F. Dougherty Chair
Barbara Govatos
Robert E. Mortensen Chair
Jonathan Beiler
Hirono Oka
Richard Amoroso
Robert and Lynne Pollack Chair
Yayoi Numazawa
Jason DePue
Larry A. Grika Chair
Jennifer Haas
Miyo Curnow
Elina Kalendarova
Daniel Han
Julia Li
William Polk
Mei Ching Huang

Second Violins
Kimberly Fisher, Principal
Peter A. Benoliel Chair
Paul Roby, Associate Principal
Sandra and David Marshall Chair
Dara Morales, Assistant Principal
Anne M. Buxton Chair
Philip Kates
Peter A. Benoliel Chair
Davyd Booth
Paul Arnold
Joseph Brodo Chair, given by Peter A.Benoliel
Boris Balter
Amy Oshiro-Morales
Volunteer Committees Chair
Yu-Ting Chen
Jeoung-Yin Kim
Willa Finck
John Bian
MuChen Hsieh
Eliot Heaton

Violas
Choong-Jin Chang, Principal
Ruth and A. Morris Williams, Jr., Chair
Kirsten Johnson, Associate Principal
Kerri Ryan, Assistant Principal
Burchard Tang
Renard Edwards
Anna Marie Ahn Petersen
Piasecki Family Chair
David Nicastro
Che-Hung Chen
Rachel Ku
Marvin Moon
Meng Wang
Hsiang-Hsin Ching

Cellos
Hai-Ye Ni, Principal
Priscilla Lee, Associate Principal
Yumi Kendall, Assistant Principal
Elaine Woo Camarda and A. Morris Williams, Jr., Chair
Richard Harlow
Kathryn Picht Read
John Koen
Derek Barnes
Alex Veltman
Jiayin He
Michael Katz

Basses
Joseph Conyers, Principal
Carole and Emilio Gravagno Chair
Gabriel Polinsky, Associate Principal

Tobias Vigneau, Assistant Principal
David Fay*
Duane Rosengard
Nathaniel West
Michael Franz
Christian Gray

Some members of the string sections voluntarily rotate seating on a periodic basis.

Flutes
Jeffrey Khaner, Principal
Paul and Barbara Henkels Chair
Patrick Williams, Associate Principal
Rachelle and Ronald Kaiserman Chair
Olivia Staton
Erica Peel, Piccolo

Oboes
Philippe Tondre, Principal
Samuel S. Fels Chair
Peter Smith, Associate Principal
Jonathan Blumenfeld
Edwin Tuttle Chair
Elizabeth Starr Masoudnia, English Horn
Joanne T. Greenspun Chair

Clarinets
Ricardo Morales, Principal
Leslie Miller and Richard Worley Chair
Samuel Caviezel, Associate Principal
Sarah and Frank Coulson Chair
Socrates Villegas
Paul R. Demers, Bass Clarinet
Peter M. Joseph and Susan Rittenhouse Joseph Chair

Bassoons
Daniel Matsukawa, Principal
Richard M. Klein Chair
Mark Gigliotti, Co-Principal
Angela Anderson Smith
Holly Blake, Contrabassoon

Horns
Jennifer Montone, Principal
Gray Charitable Trust Chair
Jeffrey Lang, Associate Principal
Hannah L. and J. Welles Henderson Chair
Christopher Dwyer
Chelsea McFarland
Ernesto Tovar Torres

Trumpets
(position vacant) Principal
Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest Chair
Jeffrey Curnow, Associate Principal
Anthony Prisk

Trombones
Nitzan Haroz, Principal
Neubauer Family Foundation Chair
Matthew Vaughn, Co-Principal
Jack Grimm
Blair Bollinger, Bass Trombone
Drs. Bong and Mi Wha Lee Chair

Tuba
Carol Jantsch, Principal
Lyn and George M. Ross Chair

Timpani
Don S. Liuzzi, Principal
Dwight V. Dowley Chair
Angela Zator Nelson, Associate Principal

Percussion
Christopher Deviney, Principal
Charlie Rosmarin, Associate Principal
Angela Zator Nelson

Piano and Celesta
Kiyoko Takeuti

Keyboards
Davyd Booth

Harp
Elizabeth Hainen, Principal

Librarians
Nicole Jordan, Principal
Holly Matthews

Stage Personnel
Dennis Moore, Jr., Manager
Francis "Chip" O'Shea III
Aaron Wilson

*On leave

Music and Artistic Director

Landon Nordeman

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 13th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, 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 the third-ever 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 14 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 conductors, most notably 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.

Marian Anderson Hall

Adrian Siegel Collection/Philadelphia Orchestra Archives

Marian Anderson with Music Director Eugene Ormandy during a Philadelphia Orchestra rehearsal at the Academy of Music in December 1938

On June 8, 2024, Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary Black contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The first major concert venue in the world to honor Marian Anderson—85 years after she was barred from performing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., because of her race—the hall is a permanent monument to its namesake's artistry and achievements, a reflection of the inclusive future she helped to engender, and an active testament to the intersection of music, art, and positive social impact. We look forward to honoring Marian Anderson in perpetuity with a venue that reflects the ideals by which she lived her life: equity, justice, freedom, and the belief that the arts are for everyone.

Marian Anderson Hall was named in her honor by a visionary $25-million philanthropic gift from Richard Worley and Leslie Miller. Worley has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra's Board of Trustees since 1997 and served as board chair from 2009 to 2019. Miller is a former Kimmel Center trustee and previous acting president of the Kimmel Center. They are among the largest donors in Philadelphia Orchestra history. Additional generous support for Marian Anderson Hall was given by Sidney and Caroline Kimmel.

Musicians Behind the Scenes

MuChen Hsieh Violin

Claire McAdams

Where were you born?
I was born in Taipei, Taiwan.

What is your most treasured possession?
Gowns, concert clothes, dresses, and mix-match outfits made by my 86-year-old grandmother over the years. Some of my outfits were made 40+ years ago by my grandma for herself. Others were made for me since I was in high school for special occasions and concerts.

What's your favorite food?
I love so many kinds of food; I can't pick a favorite! I like a variety of cuisines: Chinese/Taiwanese, Korean, Thai, sushi, and Italian are my favorites.

Tell us about your instrument.
I play a Joseph Curtin violin made in 1989 and a Benoit Rolland bow I commissioned in 2014.

What's in your instrument case?
A pencil case, humidity pack, five different kinds of violin mutes, viola rosin, ear plugs, and a tiny dachshund bag charm.

What piece of music never fails to move you?
The second movement of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major, especially the English horn solo.

What do you love most about performing?
I love the energy a performer can create and transfer to the audience.

When did you join the Orchestra? In July 2024.

Do you play any other instruments?
I grew up playing the piano.

What's your favorite Philadelphia restaurant?
Vernick Food & Drink, Illata, and Kalaya.

Do you speak any other languages?
I speak fluent Mandarin and understand Taiwanese.

What do you like to do in your spare time?
I like to cook, bake, and try new restaurants.

What is your favorite memory with the Orchestra?
Although I only joined in 2024, I have a fond memory of the 2024 Canada tour when we performed Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 and Brahms's *A German Requiem*. I was so in awe of the colors and rich tone in the Rachmaninoff. The string sound was so lush, and it was a blast playing with a group with such history.

Immortal *Tristan and Isolde*

A thousand-year-old story continues to haunt our music and our culture

By Paul J. Horsley

Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* tells a straightforward tale with surprising economy of means. Yet its musical-dramatic design is fantastically complex, and its historical impact—not just on music but on literature, art, and cinema—has been so profound that we are, in many ways, still assessing it. The Philadelphia Orchestra, which in 1934 presented the first complete *Tristan* heard in the United States, performs the opera in concert this June, with Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin and internationally renowned soloists, including Stuart Skelton and Nina Stemme.

Tristan exerted enormous influence on its contemporaries, although it wasn't until several years after its 1865 premiere in Munich that it began to gather steam—with performances in Berlin (1876), London (1882), Vienna (1883), and in 1886, New York, Prague, and Bayreuth. Initially, many music critics reacted negatively to it. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of July 5, 1865, called it "the glorification of sensual pleasure, tricked out with every titillating device ... an act of indecency."

Philosophers, in contrast, have been inclined to describe *Tristan* in high-flown, even hyperbolic terms. Friedrich Nietzsche called it "the real *opus metaphysicum* of all art ... overpowering in its simple grandeur" and even after his celebrated break with Wagner in the late 1870s he acknowledged the opera's legacy: "I am still in search of a work that exercises such a dangerous fascination, such a spine-tingling and blissful infinity as *Tristan*. I have sought in vain, in every art form."

Tristan remains one of the most psychologically dense dramatic works that has ever graced the stage. It "transcends its scenario of a conventional love story to offer a profound meditation on the nature of the material world, and on the mysteries of human existence itself," as scholar Barry Millington writes. Yet it tells a fundamentally human tale. A nobleman and a beautiful princess fall in love—rather inconveniently, as they are en route to the woman's arranged wedding to the nobleman's uncle. The sudden passion that strikes Tristan and Isolde on board a ship is so intense that it leads to extravagant declarations of eternal love, even death-wishes. (Perhaps the love-potion that Brangäne, her maid, administers acts as an accelerant to an already-existing flame: "less a maker of uncontrollable passion," writes Henry Krehbiel, "than a drink which causes the lovers to forget duty, honor, and the respect due to the laws of society.") ➤

John William Waterhouse's *Tristan and Isolde with the Potion* (1916)


Richard Wagner, circa 1860

Nevertheless, in Wagner's world a love this ferocious brings a "sweet suffering" that can only be extinguished, or apotheosized, through death. King Marke arrives to forgive the couple and permit them to marry, but he is too late. Tristan succumbs to Melot's sword, and Isolde sings her "Liebestod."

Wagner has structured the opera with great clarity, even simplicity. Its three weighty acts are organized symmetrically: The first is devoted to Isolde, the third to Tristan, and the second to the union of the two. Moreover, the primary action is in the hands of three almost-matching pairs of characters: Tristan and his attendant, Kurwenal; Isolde and Brangäne; and Marke and his disgruntled courtier, Melot.

If the story seems elemental, even archetypal, it is partly because it dates back to a foundational 12th-century tale, *Tristan and Iseult,* aspects of which can be traced to even earlier Irish tales such as *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne.* And if a tale of warring families and star-crossed lovers feels familiar, it might be because the author of a well-known 16th-century tragedy was obviously familiar with the medieval tale. Some believe Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is an intentional nod to the Tristan stories.

Tristan was the fruit of Wagner's longstanding fascination with medieval legends, folk tales, and ancient heroes of Norse and Celtic mythology, which found expression in such figures as Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, Parsifal, and Siegfried. "As was usual when a legend seized his imagination," writes biographer Curt von Westernhagen, "Wagner was closely identifying himself with its hero." There is little doubt that the composer placed himself, psychologically speaking, in the middle of his own opera. Penniless, unhappy in marriage, and on the verge of nervous collapse, Wagner had fallen under the dazzling spell of Mathilde Wesendonck—who together with her husband, Otto, supported the composer financially during this period. Meanwhile, his wife, Minna, was understandably perturbed, as Richard and Mathilde carried on a somewhat public (if possibly never consummated) affair.

With pressures mounting on all sides, Wagner was nearing a personal and an artistic crossroads. In 1857 he famously broke off from composing *Siegfried,* the third of his *Ring of the Nibelung* operas, not returning until more than a decade later, after having completed both *Tristan* (1857–59) and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1862–67).

The pause was sparked, in part, by tumultuous events in Wagner's life during the 1850s, including years of political exile. But one cannot underestimate the extent to which this was also an artistic crisis. The harmonic, dramatic, and philosophical innovations of *Tristan* represented a fundamental shift not just in Wagner's musico-dramatic style but in the tonal landscape of Western music. When he resumed the *Ring* in 1868, it is no exaggeration to say that he was a composer transformed. "One can see that he would not have been able to write [*Götterdämmerung*] without first having mastered the harmonies of *Tristan* and the counterpoint of *Die Meistersinger,*" von Westernhagen writes. ➤

The innovations of *Tristan* were not purely musical or dramatic: They were also philosophical and, perhaps just as significantly, sexual. The composer's immersion in Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* beginning in 1854 exerted a formidable impact on the composer's libretto for *Tristan*. Schopenhauer's concepts, influenced by Buddhist thought, maintained that by denying our "will" we relinquish individuality and begin learning empathy—losing ourselves in a virtuous state of selflessness.

Schopenhauer also believed that music was the supreme art form, and that the sound world can guide us through situations in which words fail. "There are limits to what can be even symbolically represented on the stage," writes Robert Gutman of what we might call *Tristan*'s sex scenes, "and the music must tell the full tale to the audience, too often led astray by the unruffled attitudes of soprano and tenor … singing at one another while decorously seated on a papier-mâché bench."

Regardless of how one stages the scene in Act II where Marke and his men interrupt the couple *in flagrante delicto,* the music indicates all too clearly the effect that the intrusion has on the lovers.

Considering the formidable resources that Wagner corralled for *Tristan,* the year 1865 stands as a pivot-point in the history of music. It would be another half-century before Arnold Schoenberg emancipated the 12 notes of the chromatic scale to treat them as co-equals. But when Schoenberg stated that his efforts to systematize atonality were an attempt to "break the barriers of a past aesthetic," *Tristan* was certainly one of the works he had in mind. It had, as much as any other composition, signaled the impending breakdown of traditional tonality.

Among the more disruptive early examples of the "post-*Tristan* era" were Schoenberg's song cycle *Gurrelieder* (1900–11) and his monodrama for soprano *Erwartung* (1909). The latter is a sort of miniature *Tristan,* complete with a compact love-death finale. The *Tristan* effect can

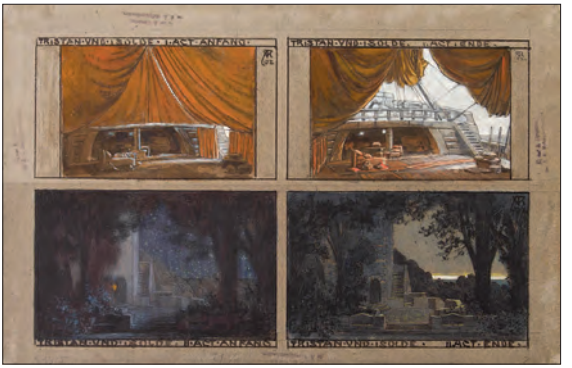
Music and Artistic Director **Yannick** Nézet-Séguin leading **The Philadelphia Orchestra** and soloists in Puccini's *La bohème,* June 2024

Jessica Griffin

also be traced through works by Mahler, Webern, Debussy, and Berg (Lyric Suite, 1925–26), among others. There is also self-conscious and at times satirical use of the *Tristan* chord in composers as diverse as Britten and Peter Schickele, Bernard Herrmann and Radiohead.

The enervating power of *Tristan* is found in literature, too. Thomas Mann's 1903 novella *Tristan* takes place in a sanatorium, where the fragile Gabriele (Isolde) is recovering from a tracheal illness. Fellow resident Detlev Spinell (Tristan) is a flighty writer who bonds with Gabriele over a love of the arts, much to the chagrin of her bourgeois husband, Anton (Marke). In Willa Cather's vivid 1904 short story *A Wagner Matinee,* a young man living in Boston invites his aging aunt for a visit; as Aunt Georgina listens to a Boston Symphony all-Wagner concert, she melts into an emotional heap from the sense of loss: from a memory of the life she gave up.

Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld and his wife, Malvina, starred as Tristan and Isolde at the 1865 premiere of the opera.



Alfred Roller's set designs for Acts I and II of the 1903 Viennese production of *Tristan and Isolde* conducted by Gustav Mahler

Tristan has had an impact on the art world, as well. The early "conceptual" set and costume designs of Secession artist Alfred Roller, created for the 1903 Viennese production that Mahler conducted, helped push operatic production into an era of stylized abstraction, which ultimately reflected the art of the period.

Tristan has also eked into cinema. In Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dali's surrealist *L'Âge d'or* (1930), a couple flouts taboo by making passionate love in awkward places—each time to music of *Tristan*—only to be suppressed by society, government, religion. In Lars von Trier's *Melancholia,* extended passages of the opera fit neatly into an end-of-the-world scenario: There is love and there is hate, and there will be death. "Human insistence on suffering is bringing about its own destruction," writes *OperaWire*'s David Salazar of this savvy film, adding that this "could not be more in line with the thinking of Arthur Schopenhauer."

Paul Horsley is performing arts editor of the Independent *in Kansas City. Before that he was music and dance critic for the* Kansas City Star *and program annotator and musicologist for The Philadelphia Orchestra.*

2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, May 1, at 7:30
Friday, May 2, at 2:00

Tugan Sokhiev Conductor
Haochen Zhang Piano

Wagner Overture to *Tannhäuser*

Liszt Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major
I. Allegro maestoso. Tempo giusto
II. Quasi adagio—Allegretto vivace—Allegro animato—Tempo I, allegro maestoso—
III. Allegro marziale animato—Alla breve. Più mosso—Più presto—Presto

Intermission

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

Strauss "Dance of the Seven Veils," from *Salome,* Op. 54

This program runs approximately one hour, 45 minutes.

These concerts are sponsored by **Neal Krouse and Karl Fong**.

Tugan Sokhiev's appearances are supported by **Nancy and Peter Grove**.

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.

Jeff Fusco

The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united. Today, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts brings the greatest performances and most impactful education and community programs to audiences in Philadelphia and beyond.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 13th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community. In addition to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers, Yannick and the Orchestra are committed to performing and recording the works of previously overlooked composers.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, around the community, over the airwaves, and online. The Kimmel Center has been the ensemble's home since 2001, and in 2024 Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; the free annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert; School Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Ensemble Program; All-City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 14 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award–winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor

Patrice Nin

Internationally renowned conductor **Tugan Sokhiev** divides his time between the symphonic and lyric repertoire, conducting the most prestigious orchestras around the world. He regularly leads the Vienna, Berlin, and Munich philharmonics; the Dresden Staatskapelle; the Bavarian Radio Symphony; the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra; London's Philharmonia; and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. Recent seasons have included a tour of Asia with the Vienna Philharmonic and a European tour with the Munich Philharmonic. He spends several weeks each season with the NHK Symphony in Tokyo and is invited to the finest orchestras in the United States, including the New York Philharmonic and the Boston and Chicago symphonies. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2014.

As music director of the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse from 2008 to 2022, Mr. Sokhiev led several world premieres and a significant number of tours abroad, propelling the orchestra to international prominence. Passionate about his work with singers, he was music director and chief conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow from 2014 to 2022, conducting many new productions and premieres. He has guest conducted at the Metropolitan Opera and received critical acclaim for his performances of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, a production he subsequently took to the Teatro Real in Madrid. In addition to these current performances, highlights of the 2024–25 season include debuts with the Orchestre de l'Opéra National de Paris; tours in Asia with the Munich Philharmonic and Europe with the Staatskapelle Dresden; and the Summer Night Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic. He also conducts a new production of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* at the Vienna State Opera.

Mr. Sokhiev's discography includes recordings with the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse on Naïve and Warner Classics and winning the Diapason d'Or in 2020. His recordings with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester (DSO) Berlin, where he was principal conductor from 2012 to 2016, have been released on Sony Classical. He has collaborated with EuroArts on a series of DVDs with the DSO Berlin, the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and the Berlin Philharmonic. One of the last students of legendary teacher Ilya Musin at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Mr. Sokhiev is eager to share his expertise with future generations of musicians. He founded a conducting academy in Toulouse and works with the young musicians of the Angelika Prokopp Summer Academy of the Vienna Philharmonic. He is honored to be a patron of the Philharmonic Brass Education Program, collaborating with musicians on their first recording.

Soloist

Benjamin Ealovega

Haochen Zhang made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut as a winner of the Orchestra's Albert M. Greenfield Student Competition in 2006 and his subscription debut in 2017, the same year he received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, which recognizes the potential for a major career in music. Since winning the gold medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, he has appeared with many of the world's leading festivals and orchestras, including the China Philharmonic with Long Yu at the BBC Proms; the Munich Philharmonic with Lorin Maazel in a sold-out tour in Munich and China; the Sydney Symphony and David Robertson in a tour to China; and the NDR Hamburg and Thomas Hengelbrock in a tour of Tokyo, Beijing, and Shanghai. In 2019 he joined Yannick Nézet-Séguin and The Philadelphia Orchestra for tours of China and Japan.

In addition to these current performances, highlights of Mr. Zhang's 2024–25 season include his recital debut at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, tours with the Munich and Hong Kong philharmonics, and a return to the Melbourne Symphony. He was appointed artist in residence at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, which includes an Asian tour with the NCPA Orchestra and concerts of the complete Liszt and Rachmaninoff concertos. In recent seasons he debuted with the New York and Luxembourg philharmonics, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. He has performed with the Filarmonica della Scala, the NHK Symphony, and the Staatskapelle Berlin. In October 2017 he performed at Carnegie Hall with the NCPA Orchestra, which was followed by his recital debut at Carnegie's Zankel Hall.

In 2019 Mr. Zhang released his debut concerto album on BIS Records, performing Prokofiev's Second Concerto and Tchaikovsky's First Concerto with the Lahti Symphony and Dima Slobodeniouk. His debut solo album, with works by Schumann, Brahms, Janáček, and Liszt, was released by BIS in 2017. These were followed by the complete Beethoven concertos with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Nathalie Stutzmann and a solo album of Liszt's Transcendental Etudes. He is also featured in Peter Rosen's award-winning documentary *A Surprise in Texas*, chronicling the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition. Mr. Zhang is frequently invited by chamber music festivals in the United States and collaborates with such colleagues as the Dover, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Brentano quartets. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, he studied under Gary Graffman. He was previously trained at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Shenzhen Arts School, where he was admitted in 2001 at the age of 11 to study with Dan Zhaoyi.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1845	**Music**	
Wagner	Berlioz	
Overture to	*The Damnation of*	
Tannhäuser	*Faust*	
	Literature	
	Mérimée	
	Carmen	
	Art	
	Ingres	
	Portrait of	
	Countess	
	Haussonville	
	History	
	Texas and Florida	
	admitted as states	
1855	**Music**	
Liszt	Bizet	
Piano Concerto	Symphony in C	
No. 1	**Literature**	
	Dickens	
	Little Dorrit	
	Art	
	Millais	
	Autumn Leaves	
	History	
	Paris World Fair	
1904	**Music**	
Strauss	Falla	
Salome	*La vida breve*	
	Literature	
	Chekov	
	The Cherry	
	Orchard	
	Art	
	Rousseau	
	The Wedding	
	History	
	Russo-Japanese	
	War	

The concert opens today with Richard Wagner's magnificent Overture to *Tannhäuser*, whose subtitle is "The Song Contest on the Wartburg." The opera explores the legend of the medieval knight Tannhäuser and his struggles between the forces of sensuality, represented by Venus, the goddess of love, and of sacred piety, embodied in the chaste Elizabeth.

At age 10 Franz Liszt left his native Hungary to study with Antonio Salieri and Carl Czerny in Vienna. During this time he was taken to meet Beethoven, a memory he cherished for the rest of his life. He began sketching ideas for this First Piano Concerto during his early years as a touring virtuoso in the 1830s, but only completed and premiered it in 1857, by which time he was himself an established master.

The concert concludes with two works by Richard Strauss. The great German composer conducted The Philadelphia Orchestra many times during his two trips to America (1904 and 1921) and on both occasions presented the delightful tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks.*

On the latter trip he also conducted "Dance of the Seven Veils" from his scandalous 1905 opera *Salome*. Strauss transformed Oscar Wilde's recent French play about the beautiful princess Salome who desires the imprisoned John the Baptist. Her stepfather, King Herod, lusts after her and offers to grant any wish if she will dance for him.

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 4 PM.

The Music

Overture to *Tannhäuser*

Richard Wagner
Born in Leipzig, May 22, 1813
Died in Venice, February 13, 1883

It seems that Wagner had strong views on nearly every topic (not limited, unfortunately, to musical matters) and was uninhibited in expressing them in voluminous writings, as well as orally for others to record. He felt that opera had become disastrously degraded, mere entertainment, and that the contemporary German scene was almost as bad as the Italian and French.

One of the many components of the operatic experience was the issue of how to begin: the overture. In an essay he wrote and published in Paris at age 27, Wagner set forth his perspective on the history, aesthetics, and future of the overture. At first, they acted merely as a prologue, so that even in a wonderful composition like Handel's *Messiah,* the overture bears no relation to what follows. Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, Weber, and a few others created successful ones linked musically to what followed dramatically. But the most recent history Wagner felt was one of decline. They had degenerated into mere potpourris of catchy tunes that would follow during the show, not much different from what we expect today in a Broadway musical.

Wagner argued that the overture should "reproduce the characteristic idea of the drama by the intrinsic means of independent music. … In a very weighty sense the composer plays the part of a philosopher, who seizes nothing but the *idea* in all phenomena." He had not realized this ideal in his own first attempts, which tended more to the medley model. His earliest operas—*Die Feen, Das Liebesverbot,* and *Rienzi*—were ultimately omitted from the approved Wagner canon of works that are mounted at the famed Wagner festival in Bayreuth. His next three operas, the first ones admitted to his ultimate legacy, all have magnificent overtures (or preludes, the term Wagner preferred when the music proceeded without interruption into the first act): *The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser,* and *Lohengrin.* While each uses musical material that plays an important role in the opera, they are constructed so as to highlight the larger metaphysical point of the work, to capture the "drama's leading thought," not merely to preview the best tunes.

Venereal Pleasures and Sacred Redemption Wagner began sketching *Tannhäuser* in 1839, while living in Paris. After writing his own libretto (as he did for all of his operas), he composed the music from the summer of 1843 to January 1845, and tackled the Overture last, completing the entire work on April 13, 1845. The opera premiered in Dresden that year and underwent various revisions before its publication in 1860. The following year

Wagner extensively altered the opening of the opera, as well as some other sections, for an ill-fated production in Paris. He made final changes for a production in Vienna in 1875, and shortly before his death eight years later told his wife, Cosima, that he still owed the world a *Tannhäuser*. He was never entirely happy with it, and productions today must choose between the so-called Dresden and Paris versions. In the latter, the Overture is cut short and leads directly into the opera's opening scene, a bacchanal. The Dresden version is heard today.

The opera explores the legend of the medieval knight Tannhäuser and his struggles between the forces of sensuality, represented by Venus, the goddess of love, and of sacred piety, embodied in the chaste Elizabeth. Venus inhabits the realm of the Venusberg, surrounded by graces, cupids, and nymphs. Elizabeth is niece to the Landgrave of Thuringia and a dignified presence in his court.

Wagner combined various sources to tell his own unique version of the story, a fact reflected in the opera's dual title, *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg* (Tannhäuser and the Song Contest on the Wartburg). "I added the title of the legend that I combined with the Tannhäuser myth," Wagner wrote, "although originally they had nothing to do with each other." Tannhäuser, like Orpheus before him, is a supreme lyric musician whose ability to compose and sing songs is unsurpassed. The middle section of the Overture prominently features his paean to Venus. After leaving the Venusberg, Tannhäuser is told that he must seek forgiveness in Rome. But the pope provides no easy grace and it is only through Elizabeth's redeeming love and death that Tannhäuser is freed from his sensual bonds and can himself die in peace.

A Closer Look An instrumental sextet consisting of pairs of clarinets, bassoons, and horns softly intone a devotional melody to open—the tune is the hymn sung by the pilgrims on their return from Rome, which conveys a mood of penitence. The words of the chorus, as heard in the final act, begin "The grace of God to the sinner is given, his soul shall live with the angels in heaven." Warmly rich strings take up the melody, which eventually builds to a loud and full orchestral statement. While the woodwind and brass instruments play the chorale-like pilgrims' hymn, the upper strings have a wonderful ornamental effect of cascading triplets. The first section concludes with the original sextet presenting the simple and pious pilgrims' theme.

The contrasting allegro that follows represents the secular world of venereal delights. The music is playful, wild, and fantastical, as well as extremely sensual in its repetitive statements of themes that mount in intensity and ardor. Eventually we hear the music associated with Tannhäuser's song to Venus—one could say his hymn to her—which commences: "Praise be to Love for pleasure never ending; Love by whose power man's heart is set ablaze!" The middle section of the Overture alternates between various musical ideas associated with the Venusberg (including a solo violin passage for the goddess herself) and an even more passionate restatement of the hero's hymn to Venus. Wagner again uses strings to ornamental effect, but while it was the higher violins for the sacred world, the rambunctious lower strings accompany the secular realm. The sensual world

reaches an orchestral climax with a battery of percussion (cymbals, tambourine, triangle), before returning to the pilgrims' chorus, now in 4/4 rather than 3/4 meter, to conclude.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Christopher H. Gibbs is James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College and has been the program annotator for The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2000. He is the author of several books on Schubert and Liszt, and the co-author, with Richard Taruskin, of The Oxford History of Western Music, College Edition.

Tannhäuser *was composed from 1843 to 1845.*

Fritz Scheel was the conductor for the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Tannhäuser *Overture, in February 1903. The most recent subscription performances were in November/December 2017 with Donald Runnicles.*

The Philadelphians have recorded the Overture seven times: in 1921, 1929, and 1937 for RCA with Leopold Stokowski; in 1953, 1959, and 1964 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy; and in 1973 for RCA with Ormandy. All except the 1921 and 1964 recordings also included the "Venusberg Music."

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals, tambourine, triangle), and strings.

The piece runs approximately 14 minutes in performance.

The Music

Piano Concerto No. 1

Franz Liszt
Born in Raiding, near Sopron (Hungary), October 22, 1811
Died in Bayreuth, July 31, 1886

Many 19th-century composers writing in the wake of Beethoven sought to extend his innovations in unifying large-scale compositions. The idea was to construct cyclic connections whereby different parts and movements relate one to another. The prevalence, for example, of the three shorts and a long rhythm at the start of the Fifth Symphony provided a particularly influential and inspiring model. Central to the procedure is the transformation or metamorphosis of a theme through the course of a piece, so that the musical material evolves, emerging in a fresh form at each new stage of its development. Such unifying transformations eventually allowed composers to write continuous large-scale works containing what would traditionally have been separate movements.

Although elements of this technique are found throughout music history, Franz Liszt's immediate models were works of Beethoven and Schubert. The latter's "Wanderer" Fantasy for piano, for example, is a four-movement sonata structure with no movement breaks, in which a single motivic germ is transformed into a variety of themes. The piece made a deep impression on Liszt, who performed it often and wrote an impressive arrangement for piano and orchestra.

A 19th-Century Rock Star Liszt probably had this sort of model in mind when he first began to conceive his own piano concertos during the late 1830s. His early attempts remained unfinished for many years as Liszt, the foremost keyboard virtuoso of the day, toured Europe and beyond. As a young man he had witnessed violinist Niccolò Paganini dazzle audiences in Paris with his technical prowess. This inspired not only some of Liszt's own piano compositions, which broke new ground in "transcendental" technique, but also provided a concrete model of what a solo virtuoso could do with his career.

For 10 years, beginning in 1838, Liszt led what was essentially the 19th-century version of the life of a touring rock star. (Ken Russell's 1975 movie *Lisztomania* shrewdly cast the Who's Roger Daltrey in the title role.) Liszt published mainly solo piano works and enjoyed a brilliant social life hobnobbing with Europe's bohemian elite. But by the late 1840s he decided to settle down and prove himself as a composer by writing more substantial pieces. He took a prominent position in Weimar, something of a musical backwater, but historically the city of Goethe and Schiller, and a place where he was given virtual carte-blanche to program what he wanted and to experiment with his own compositions.

Liszt's responsibilities in Weimar as conductor of the orchestra made continual demands for fresh orchestral music and this must have prompted him to look back to his concerto sketches once again. Progress was slow. Having composed chiefly virtuosic solo piano music up to this time, he at first lacked confidence in writing for orchestra. Liszt employed the assistance of Joachim Raff (1822–82), a composer and excellent orchestrator, with whose help he completed a first version of the E-flat Concerto in 1849. Shortly after this he began composing a series of symphonic poems in which he quickly mastered a delicate but rich orchestral palette. With renewed confidence he revised the First Concerto again in 1853. The successful premiere took place in Weimar in February 1855, with the composer at the piano and no less than his friend Hector Berlioz conducting.

"A Triangle Concerto" Despite the admiring reception accorded these two celebrated musicians at the first performance, the Concerto faced a much less sympathetic response when heard in Vienna the following season. Eduard Hanslick, the powerful anti-Wagnerian critic, called the piece a "triangle concerto" because of the prominent role the instrument plays in the second half of the piece. His views were enough to banish the work from Vienna for some years to come.

Liszt defended what he had done in an amusing letter:

> As regards the triangle, I do not deny that it may give offense, especially if it is struck too strongly and not precisely. A preconceived disinclination and objection to percussion instruments prevails, somewhat justified by the frequent misuse of them. … Of Berlioz, Wagner, and my humble self it is no wonder that 'like is drawn to like,' and, as we are all three treated as impotent *canaille* [rabble] among musicians, it is quite natural that we should be on good terms with the *canaille* among the instruments. … In the face of the most wise proscription of the learned critics I shall, however, continue to employ instruments of percussion and think I shall yet win for them some effects little known.

A Closer Look The Concerto is cast in several fluidly interwoven movements that are played in a seamlessly continuous gesture. Allegedly, Liszt fitted the loud opening motif (**Allegro maestoso**), scored for full strings to which the woodwinds and brass respond, with these humorous words: *Das versteht ihr alle nicht, ha-ha!* (This none of you understand, ha-ha!). Just after comes an extended virtuoso passage for the soloist; the first movement builds to a furious climax before giving way to a tranquil second movement (**Quasi adagio**), with a theme in low muted strings. Into this is interpolated an animated scherzo-like section (**Allegro animato**), as well as the infamous emergence of the triangle. The finale begins with a lively **Allegro marziale animato** and gradually draws the themes together into an organic synthesis.

In this Concerto, one of his first large-scale orchestral compositions, Liszt tried to achieve the kind of unity he so admired in Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy. As he remarked in a letter concerning the last movement, it "is only an urgent recapitulation of the earlier material with quickened, livelier rhythm, and it contains no new motifs, as will be clear to you from a glance through the score. This kind of binding together and rounding off a piece

at its close is somewhat my own, but it is quite organic and justified from the standpoint of musical form."

—Christopher H. Gibbs/Paul J. Horsley

Paul J. Horsley is performing arts editor for the Independent *in Kansas City. Previously he was program annotator and musicologist for The Philadelphia Orchestra and music and dance critic for the* Kansas City Star.

Liszt's First Piano Concerto was composed from 1835 to 1856.

Josef Hofmann was the soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work, in December 1901; Fritz Scheel conducted. The Concerto appeared most recently on subscription concerts in September/October 2022, with pianist Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Philadelphia Orchestra has recorded Liszt's First Piano Concerto three times, all with Eugene Ormandy: in 1952 with Claudio Arrau for CBS; in 1959 with Philippe Entremont for CBS; and in 1968 with Van Cliburn for RCA.

The score calls for solo piano, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (cymbals, triangle), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 20 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. He returned to Philadelphia in 1921 for another performance of the piece. Most recently on subscription concerts, the Orchestra played it under Christoph Eschenbach's baton in January 2015.*

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, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, field drum, ratchet, snare drum, triangle), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.

The Music

"Dance of the Seven Veils," from *Salome*

Richard Strauss

The "Dance of the Seven Veils" is one of the two most famous and often performed orchestral excerpts from any of Richard Strauss's 15 operas and it is indeed a dazzling showpiece. (The other is a suite drawn from *Der Rosenkavalier*.) Salome's dance was the finishing touch of what was a truly scandalous event in 1905. Alma Mahler later recounted its backstory. Strauss asked her husband, Gustav, if he might play through the manuscript score for them, which he did in a piano shop in Strasbourg:

> The room had big gleaming windows on all sides, with people constantly walking past or stopping to look in—pressing their noses against the window as they tried to catch the sound. Strauss sang and played incomparably well. Mahler was enthralled. We came to the dance. It was missing. "I haven't done that yet!" said Strauss and after this big hiatus played on to the end. Mahler asked, "Isn't it risky simply to leave out the dance and do it later when one is no longer in the mood of the work?" But Strauss laughed in his carefree way, "I'll manage."

An Operatic Triumph By the time he composed *Salome*, Strauss was 41 and a musical celebrity. His orchestral music, the magnificent tone poems that remain central to the late Romantic repertory, had made him famous (and infamous) in the 1890s, but operatic success had been elusive. *Guntram*, a Wagnerian concoction set to his own libretto, failed in 1894, although its successor, the light-hearted *Feuersnot,* fared better in 1901.

Strauss's breakthrough came in December 1905 with the triumphant premiere of *Salome* in Dresden. Among the reasons for this triumph were the compelling libretto, a somewhat abridged translation into German of Oscar Wilde's French play about the beautiful princess Salome, who desires the imprisoned John the Baptist (Jochanaan in the opera). Her stepfather, King Herod, lusts after her and offers to grant any wish if she will just dance for him, which leads to her famous striptease, the "Dance of the Seven Veils." Following this sensual orchestral section, Salome demands the severed head of Jochanaan, which she kisses. In disgust, Herod orders her death: "Go, kill that woman!" Curtain.

Mahler was wildly enthusiastic about *Salome*, writing to his wife: "It is absolutely brilliant, a *very powerful* work and without a doubt one of the most significant of our time! Beneath a pile of rubble smolders a living volcano, a subterranean fire—not just a display of fireworks." Mahler hoped he might give the premiere in Vienna but the ecclesiastical authorities refused to give permission. Other cities also shunned the controversial work because of its use of a biblical story and its extraordinary decadence. It was pulled from

the Metropolitan Opera after just one performance in 1907. Strauss, however, was laughing all the way to the bank as endless controversy sparked attention and interest. The opera earned him a lot of money; he was fond of saying it allowed him to construct a posh Bavarian villa in Garmisch where he lived for the rest of his life.

And more than a century later, the shocking drama, brilliant music, and awesome performing demands (both orchestral and vocal) continue to make for an experience of searing intensity. The Philadelphia Orchestra's long association with Strauss's music includes multiple appearances of the composer conducting the ensemble during both of his trips to America, in 1904 and 1921. During the latter he led the "Dance of the Seven Veils."

A Closer Look From the outset of the project Strauss hoped to create "a true Oriental color and scorching sun" in the opera. For some decades already Orientalism had been all the rage—box office gold—in Russia and France, but German composers had for the most part resisted. Salome's dance is the most explicit such moment in the opera: an exotic evocation of a distant time and place featuring the oboe, long associated in music with the snake-charmer's pipe, and unusual scales. Over the course of the nine-minute dance various themes from earlier in the opera pass in review, all unfolding as a distorted waltz—the Orient meets Vienna.

Strauss indicated in the score exactly how he wanted to dance to unfold on stage:

> The musicians begin a wild dance. Salome stands motionless. Salome rises to her full height and makes a sign to the musicians. They subdue the wild rhythm instantly and lead on to a soft and swaying tune. Salome dances the Dance of the Seven Veils. At the climax of the dance Salome seems to faint for a moment, then she pulls herself together as if with new strength. Salome remains for an instant in a visionary attitude near the cistern where Jochanaan is kept prisoner, then she throws herself at Herod's feet.

Herod exclaims "Ah, heavenly! Wonderful, wonderful!" and thus begin the negotiations for Salome to claim her monstrous reward.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Strauss composed Salome *between 1904 and 1905.*

Leopold Stokowski conducted the first Orchestra performances of the "Dance of the Seven Veils," *in March 1913. The piece has rarely appeared on subscription programs since then, the most recent being in April/May 1999, with Wolfgang Sawallisch.*

The Orchestra has recorded the work five times: in 1921, 1929, and 1937 with Stokowski for RCA, and in 1947 and 1962 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS.

The work is scored for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, heckelphone, four clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, castanets, cymbals, orchestra bells, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, xylophone), two harps, celesta, and strings.

Performance time is approximately nine minutes.

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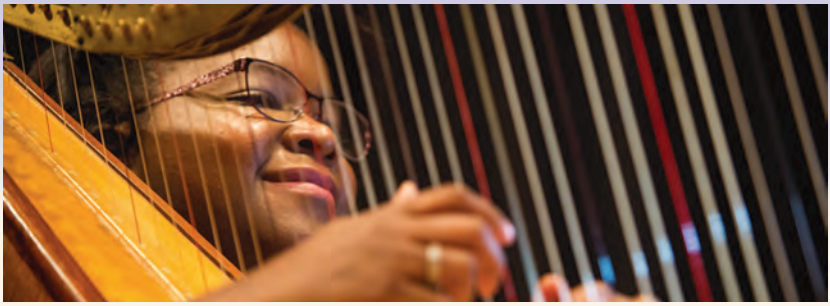

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The Volunteer Committees for The Philadelphia Orchestra are dedicated to supporting the Orchestra through audience development, educational programs, fundraising, community relations, and special events. The Committees were first formed in 1904 and have the distinction of being the oldest auxiliary volunteer organization associated with an orchestra in the United States. We are profoundly grateful for the Volunteers' leadership and support throughout the years.

For more information about the Volunteer Committees for The Philadelphia Orchestra, please contact Samantha Noll, senior manager of donor and volunteer relations, at 215.893.1956 or snoll@philorch.org.

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If you would like more information about how to make a planned gift to the Orchestra, please contact Helen Radenkovic, managing director of philanthropic engagement, at 215.893.1819 or hradenkovic@philorch.org.

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Broad and Locust Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tickets: 215.893.1999

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