

2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, January 16, at 7:30

Friday, January 17, at 8:00

Saturday, January 18, at 8:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor
Yuja Wang Piano

Bonds *The Montgomery Variations*

- I. Decision
- II. Prayer Meeting
- III. March
- IV. Dawn in Dixie
- V. One Sunday in the South
- VI. Lament
- VII. Benediction

Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23

- I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso—Allegro con spirito
- II. Andantino semplice—Prestissimo—Tempo I
- III. Allegro con fuoco

Intermission

Still Symphony No. 2 ("Song of a New Race")

- I. Slow
- II. Slowly and deeply expressive
- III. Moderately fast
- IV. Moderately slow—Faster

This program runs approximately two hours, five minutes.

These concerts are part of the **Dr. Alan Cohen and Ms. Michele Langer Visiting Pianist Fund**.

The January 18 concert is sponsored by **Claudio Pasquinelli and Kyong-Mi Chang**.

Programs featuring the music of William Grant Still are supported by the **Pew Center for Arts & Heritage**.

William Grant Still's Symphony No. 2 ("Song of a New Race") and Margaret Bonds's *The Montgomery Variations* are highlights of the Marian Anderson Artistic Initiative, supported in part by the **Wyncote Foundation**. The Marian Anderson Artistic Initiative showcases composers and artists who embody Ms. Anderson's passion for increasing inclusivity, diversity, equity, and access in the performing arts, contributing to the advancement of a more representative art form.

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 and around the community, in classrooms and hospitals, and 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 Partnership Program and 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.

Music and Artistic Director



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.

Soloist



Pianist **Yuja Wang** is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty, and captivating stage presence. She has performed with the world's most venerated conductors, musicians, and ensembles and is renowned not only for her virtuosity, but also for her spontaneous and lively performances, famously telling the *New York Times*, "I firmly believe every program should have its own life and be a representation of how I feel at the moment." She made her Philadelphia

Orchestra debut in 2008 at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and her subscription debut the following year. Her skill and charisma were recently demonstrated in a marathon Rachmaninoff performance at Carnegie Hall alongside conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Orchestra. This historic event celebrating 150 years since the birth of Rachmaninoff included performances of all four of his concertos plus the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini in one afternoon. Other recent performance highlights include the world premiere of Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the San Francisco Symphony with further performances of the work throughout North America and Europe. Appointments in the 2024–25 season include artistic partner with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and artist-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic.

Ms. Wang was born into a musical family in Beijing. After childhood piano studies in China, she received advanced training in Canada and at the Curtis Institute of Music under Gary Graffman. Her international breakthrough came in 2007 when she replaced Martha Argerich as soloist with the Boston Symphony. Two years later she signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon and has since established her place among the world's leading artists, with a succession of critically acclaimed performances and recordings. She was named *Musical America's* Artist of the Year in 2017, and in 2021 she received an Opus Klassik Award for her world-premiere recording of John Adams's *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel.

Ms. Wang last appeared at the Kimmel Center in April 2024 in recital. As a chamber musician she has developed long-lasting partnerships with several leading artists. This season she embarks on a highly anticipated international duo recital tour with pianist Víkingur Ólafsson with performances in world-class venues across North America and Europe, which will once again showcase her flair, technical ability, and exceptional artistry in a wide-ranging program.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1874
Tchaikovsky

Piano
Concerto
No. 1

Music

Verdi
Requiem

Literature

Hardy
*Far from the
Madding Crowd*

Art

Renoir
La Loge

History

First American
zoo established
in Philadelphia

1936

Still

Symphony
No. 2

Music

Barber
Adagio for
Strings

Literature

Mitchell
*Gone with the
Wind*

Art

Mondrian
*Composition in
Red and Blue*

History

Spanish Civil
War begins

1964

Bonds

*The
Montgomery
Variations*

Music

Pärt
*Collage über
B-A-C-H*

Literature

Isherwood
A Single Man

Art

Warhold
*Shot Blue
Marilyn*

History

Earthquake in
Alaska

The Montgomery Variations is Margaret Bonds's moving tribute dedicated to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She constructed a theme and variations in seven movements based on the spiritual "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" that concerns key events of the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama during the 1950s and '60s.

The concert continues with Yuja Wang as soloist in Tchaikovsky's thrilling First Piano Concerto. By the end of his life Tchaikovsky had emerged as a cosmopolitan figure, traveling constantly across Europe and even coming to America in 1891 for the inauguration of Carnegie Hall. During that trip he conducted the Concerto at Philadelphia's Academy of Music.

William Grant Still's ground-breaking *Afro-American Symphony* caused a stir in 1931 and was widely performed across the country. To conclude tonight's concert we hear its sequel: the Symphony No. 2 in G minor, subtitled "Song of a New Race." Leopold Stokowski and The Philadelphia Orchestra premiered the work here in December 1937. Still said that in it he wanted "to point musically to changes wrought in a people through the progressive and transmuting spirit of America."

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.

ThePhiladelphiaOrchestra

The Music

The Montgomery Variations

Margaret Bonds

Born in Chicago, March 3, 1913

Died in Los Angeles, April 26, 1972



"Have you heard the 'Montgomery Variations'? It's an orchestral work written at the height of the civil rights movement, dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr., by an accomplished African American composer-activist who was committed to spreading the word about the black experience in America in any way that she—yes, SHE—could," *Washington Post* critic Anne Midgette wrote in November 2017 when the work was rediscovered. *The Montgomery Variations* had long been

believed to be lost after the deaths of Margaret Bonds and her daughter, but it turns out that the work was serendipitously saved and, with the rest of Bonds's scores and papers, archived at Georgetown University's Special Collections. The piece remained shrouded in mystery and inaccessible until John Michael Cooper created an edition during the COVID-19 pandemic. His work led to its performance and debut recording with the Minnesota Orchestra.

A Promising Start Bonds was born into a prominent Chicago family. Her father, Monroe Alphus Majors, was a physician and noted author. Her mother, Estella Bonds, was a pianist, organist, choir director, teacher, and founding member of the National Association of Black Musicians. They divorced when Bonds was four and she was raised by her mother, who was her initial teacher. Estella held Sunday afternoon musicales that regularly attracted leading Black artists, including composer-pianist Florence Price. Bonds went on to study piano and composition with Price and, in high school, composition with William Dawson.

Bonds earned both her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music at Northwestern University. She began her professional career at 19, when she won the Wanamaker Prize for the song "Sea Ghost," and she crossed racial barriers as a concert pianist, becoming the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first Black soloist in 1933. Bonds and Price continued to be linked as the Chicago Renaissance's premier composer-pianists: Their compositions were performed on the same programs and Bonds played Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement with the Women's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago. Despite her success while at Northwestern, Bonds experienced racial segregation as she was denied campus housing.

After graduation, Bonds continued to compose, perform, and teach in Chicago. She briefly operated a music school for Black children. A 1939 scholarship from the National Association of Negro Musicians enabled her to move to New York and study piano and composition at Juilliard. In New York she met and married Lawrence Richardson, with whom she had a daughter.

Thriving in New York Bonds flourished in Harlem as she had in Chicago. She taught and was music director at Mount Calvary Baptist Church. She worked in a range of musical genres to support herself, including composing popular songs that were recorded by jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong and Woody Herman, and was also involved in musical theater. She established two institutions: the Margaret Bonds Chamber Society (dedicated to performing works by Black classical composers) and a Cultural Community Center. As a pianist, she debuted in New York at Town Hall on February 7, 1952.

Bonds collaborated with major Harlem Renaissance figures, the most important being the writer Langston Hughes. She set several of his poems and collaborated on one of her most well-known works, the Christmas cantata *The Ballad of the Brown King*, which depicts Balthazar, the African king of the Magi.

After Hughes's death, Bonds left her family and moved to Los Angeles, where she worked in film and television. Her classical works were regularly performed. As in both Chicago and New York, she became involved in LA's arts institutions, eventually founding her own music school. After a period of decline, she died of a heart attack in 1972 at age 59.

An Activist and a Composer The musicologist Tammy L. Kernodle has described Bonds as an artist-activist, and *The Montgomery Variations*, Bonds's sole purely orchestral work to survive, is a Civil Rights piece. Bonds was committed to working toward racial justice throughout her career and repeatedly had to surmount racial and gender barriers. The genesis of *The Montgomery Variations* lies in the 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four young girls and was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. The work is programmatic, drawing upon key historical moments in the 1950s and '60s. In spring 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led major desegregation efforts in Birmingham that culminated in King's arrest and the Birmingham Children's Crusade.

Drawing on her own experiences with racism, Bonds dedicated *The Montgomery Variations* to Dr. King (as she did *The Ballad of the Brown King*). She had recently completed a tour of the South with bass-baritone Eugene Brice and the male vocal group the Manhattan Melodaires. The tour included a stop in Montgomery, Alabama, a site of major Civil Rights struggles that include the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955–56. Like many Black composers past and present, Bonds based her classical works on Black vernacular music. She combined the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms of spirituals and jazz with Western classical techniques,

such as counterpoint, and traditional forms and genres.

The Montgomery Variations is a programmatic theme and variations on the spiritual "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." Bonds chose this spiritual for several reasons. First, spirituals are a foundational African-American music originating during the period after the enslaved Africans were Christianized in the late 18th century. Second, they are, as W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, the voice of the enslaved, expressing a range of emotions, documenting chattel slavery, and voicing commentary and resistance. Third, during the Civil Rights Movement, they were sung at marches, demonstrations, mass meetings, and in other contexts. Often, new words were fit to the old melodies and the spirituals became Freedom Songs.

A Closer Look This is Bonds's response to the bombing and she based each of the seven movements on an event in the Civil Rights Movement, loosely chronicling the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the Birmingham Church Bombings, treating the themes of strength, resolve, resistance, determination, and faith through the variations. In the first movement, **Decision**, we hear three statements of the spiritual, the second of which is dissonant and contrapuntal. **Prayer Meeting** depicts a religious service. In **March** we hear the spiritual first in the bassoon; tension and anticipation build as it moves to the trombones and full brass. In the coda Bond uses the two bassoons and timpani to symbolize Jesus walking with the marchers. The next movement, **Dawn in Dixie**, begins with a passacaglia heard in the low strings. The spiritual is least recognizable here: Bonds presents it in triple meter and uses only the first phrase. This movement symbolizes a New South where there is social harmony.

One Sunday in the South references church, filled with Sunday school and the main service. **Lament** addresses the 1963 church bombing. In this movement, Jesus, who gave strength to the marchers, now comforts those who mourn. In the final movement, **Benediction**, the spiritual is used as the theme, expressing resolve, determination, and faith.

—Gayle Murchison

Gayle Murchison is associate professor of music at William and Mary. Her most recent publications include book chapters on Nadia Boulanger in the US, music in Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Woman, and Mary Lou Williams's Girl Stars.

The Montgomery Variations was composed in 1964.

The first complete performance of the piece by The Philadelphia Orchestra was at the Mann Center in May 2023, led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. The Orchestra and Yannick had performed selections from the work on the Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert the previous January.

The score calls for three flutes (III doubling piccolo and alto flute), two oboes, English horn, three clarinets (III doubling bass clarinet), two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals, large drum, tambourine, triangle, wood block), harp, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

The Music

Piano Concerto No. 1

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840

Died in St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893



Two of the most influential performers of the latter half of the 19th century, both eminent pianists as well as conductors, initially held diametrically opposed views concerning Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. First came the celebrated Russian Nikolai Rubinstein, who had founded the Moscow Conservatory where Tchaikovsky taught. It was with this generous colleague in mind that Tchaikovsky wrote the Concerto in 1874, relatively early in his career, situated between his

Second and Third symphonies.

The composer later recalled how a few days after completing the piece in December he played it through for his friend, who promptly exploded that it was "impossible to play, that the passages were commonplace, clumsy, and so awkward that there was no way even to correct them, that as a composition it was bad, vulgar." Tchaikovsky declared he would "not change a single note," and published the Concerto the next year as it stood. (He did in fact later revise the piece twice, in 1879 and 1889.)

The enthusiastic response, in contrast, came from the great German pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, to whom the Concerto was ultimately dedicated. Bülow told Tchaikovsky that "the ideas are so original, so noble, so powerful; the details are so interesting, and though there are many of them they do not impair the clearness and unity of the work. The form is so mature, ripe, and distinguished for style." Bülow was the soloist at the premiere in October 1875, which took place in far off Boston, Massachusetts, and sent Tchaikovsky a telegram informing him of the enthusiastic response the piece received, so much so that he had to encore the final movement.

Divided Opinions Resolved And it no doubt gave Tchaikovsky enormous satisfaction that Rubinstein very soon came around as well and became a staunch advocate of the Concerto. Just a month after the Boston premiere he conducted the first performance in Moscow and later played it as piano soloist as well, including giving the Paris premiere. (On a later occasion he served as both soloist and conductor.) The Concerto quickly entered the international repertory and it was one of the works Tchaikovsky chose to feature when he conducted concerts in New York marking the inauguration of Carnegie Hall in May 1891.

Two weeks later Tchaikovsky conducted the Concerto at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, with Adele aus der Ohe as soloist. A critic for the *Philadelphia Press* reported that "audience, orchestra, and soloist seemed to realize that they were in the presence of genius"; another critic called the piece "a colossal composition, enormously difficult, full of poetry and passion; made continually striking by bizarre effects, displaying a perfect mastery over the modern orchestra and strangely moving the imagination with its melodic beauty and rich, resounding harmonies. It is great music of the most modern school and spirit."

A Closer Look It is perhaps understandable how musicians, critics, and audiences could either be baffled or entranced by the Concerto, which, in addition to its remarked upon difficulty, has various features that made it seem at the time unusual and modern. The piece famously begins with four French horns blaring out a falling four-note motif in unison, punctuated by mighty orchestral chords (**Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso**). The piano soloist boldly enters with rich chords that span most of the range of the instrument against which unfolds a sweeping string melody. After this extended introduction, the tempo quickens (**Allegro con spirito**) for the heart of the movement. Tchaikovsky included a number of borrowed melodies in the Concerto, beginning with a Ukrainian folk tune he had heard sung by a blind beggar ("O caw, caw, black raven").

An operatically lyrical flute melody opens the second movement (**Andantino semplice**), in which Tchaikovsky uses a popular French song, "One must have fun, dance, and laugh," during the fast middle section, creating an overall ABA form. The brilliant finale (**Allegro con fuoco**) is a rondo with two contrasting themes, the first of them derived from another Ukrainian melody ("Go on, go on, Ivan"), the other one more relaxed.

—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.

Tchaikovsky composed his Piano Concerto No. 1 from 1874 to 1875.

Ossip Gabrilowitsch was pianist and Fritz Scheel was conductor in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the First Concerto, which took place on November 16, 1900, the Orchestra's very first concert. Since then nearly all the great pianists have performed the work here, including Olga Samaroff, Vladimir Horowitz, Artur Schnabel, William Kapell, Claudio Arrau, Emil Gilels, Van Cliburn, André Watts, Garick Ohlsson, and Lang Lang. Most recently on subscription, Denis Kozhukhin played the work in October 2016 with Stéphane Denève conducting.

The Philadelphians have recorded the Concerto three times, all with Eugene Ormandy: in 1947 for CBS with Oscar Levant, in 1959 for CBS with Gary Graffman, and in 1965 for CBS, again with Graffman.

Tchaikovsky scored the work for solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

The Music

Symphony No. 2 ("Song of a New Race")

William Grant Still

Born in Woodville, Mississippi, May 11, 1895

Died in Los Angeles, December 3, 1978



In the 1930s three Black composers came to prominence with remarkable symphonies. William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* premiered in 1931 with Howard Hanson conducting the Rochester Philharmonic, the first time a leading American orchestra had programmed a symphony by a Black composer. Six years later Leopold Stokowski and The Philadelphia Orchestra unveiled Still's Second Symphony, subtitled "Song of a New Race," which

we hear tonight. In 1933 Friedrich Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented Florence Price's *Symphony No. 1* and the next year Stokowski and The Philadelphians premiered William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony*.

The "Dean" of Black Composers The Philadelphia Orchestra has been at the forefront in the rediscovery of Price, including a recent GRAMMY Award for its recording of her First and Third symphonies, and it performed Dawson's *Symphony* two seasons ago. Still's essays in the genre have remained more in the public eye as he long enjoyed the reputation as "the Dean" of Black composers and was regularly referred to as such beginning in the late 1930s. In 1974 *Newsweek* wrote of "78-year-old William Grant Still, dean of black American composers, originally a jazz man, whose gay *Afro-American Symphony* reflects not only Still's blackness but his ambivalent years as a commercial arranger (he put together *Frenesi* for Artie Shaw) and as a student of Edgard Varèse."

The *Newsweek* article points to Still's fruitfully eclectic origins: youthful jazz experiences, being a master arranger, and receiving a rigorous classical training, including with the notorious "ultra-modernist" Varèse. Still was born in Mississippi and after his father's early death moved with his mother to Little Rock, Arkansas, where he sang in a church choir and began violin lessons. He went on to learn many instruments and at age 16 started pre-medical studies at Wilberforce University in Ohio. By 1916, age 21, he was working with W.C. Handy and publishing his first arrangement. He went on to attend Oberlin College, studied with the prominent American composer George Whitefield Chadwick in Boston, and then spent two years working with Varèse. Still performed with many leading jazz musicians and became ever more in demand as an arranger, worked on

Broadway, in radio and television, and eventually moved to Hollywood where he briefly got involved with film. He decided to stay in California in 1934, the year he won a Guggenheim Foundation grant and began writing the first of his eight operas. He was increasingly drawn to classical genres, composing ballets, operas, symphonies, tone poems, and a multitude of other pieces.

A Closer Look Still wrote his ground-breaking and widely performed *Afro-American Symphony* at age 36 and we hear its sequel on this concert, the Symphony No. 2 in G minor. Stokowski, who was an ardent supporter of Still's music, apparently suggested the subtitle "Song of a New Race." He led the Philadelphians in its premiere at the Academy of Music in December 1937. As Still explained in a program note for the occasion: "the Symphony is related to my *Afro-American Symphony* (composed in 1930), being, in fact, a sort of extension or evolution of the latter. This relationship is implied musically through the affinity of the principal theme of the first movement of the Symphony in G Minor ["Song of a New Race"] to the principal theme of the fourth, or last, movement of the *Afro-American*."

Beyond the musical connection there is a narrative link as well, a continuation of the story of African Americans: "the purpose of the Symphony in G Minor is to point musically to changes wrought in a people through the progressive and transmuting spirit of America. I prefer to think of it as an abstract piece of music, but, for the benefit of those who like interpretations of their music, I have written the following notes":

The *Afro-American Symphony* represented the Negro of days not far removed from the Civil War. The Symphony in G Minor represents the American colored man of today, in so many instances a totally new individual produced through the fusion of White, Indian and Negro bloods.

The four movements in the *Afro-American Symphony* were subtitled *Longing*, *Sorrow*, *Humor* (expressed through religious fervor) and *Aspiration*. In the Symphony in G Minor, longing has progressed beyond a passive state and has been converted into active effort; sorrow has given way to a more philosophic attitude in which the individual has ceased pitying himself, knowing that he can advance only through a desire for spiritual growth and by nobility of purpose; religious fervor and the rough humor of the folk have been replaced by a more mundane form of emotional release that is more closely allied to that of other peoples; and aspiration is now tempered with the desire to give to humanity the best that their African Heritage has given them.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Still composed his Symphony No. 2 from 1936 to 1937.

The Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski gave the world premiere of the Second Symphony in December 1937, the only time the ensemble has played the work prior to this week's performances.

The score calls for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), three oboes (III doubling English horn), three clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbal, drum set, glockenspiel, suspended cymbals, vibraphone), harp, celesta, and strings.

The Symphony runs approximately 30 minutes in performance.

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The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music and Artistic Director

Musical Terms

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

Cantata: A multimovement vocal piece consisting of arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses and based on a continuous narrative text

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Coda: A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

Contrapuntal: See counterpoint

Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

Dissonance: A combination of two or more tones requiring resolution

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

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

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Modernism: A consequence of the fundamental conviction among successive generations of composers since 1900 that the means of musical expression in the 20th century must be adequate to the unique and radical character of the age

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output

Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without

costumes, scenery, and actions.

Ostinato: A steady bass accompaniment, repeated over and over

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

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm

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.).

Ternary: A musical form in three sections, ABA, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

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

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andantino: Slightly quicker than walking speed

Con fuoco: With fire, passionately, excited

Con spirito: Spirited, lively

Maestoso: Majestic

Presto: Very fast

Semplice: Simply

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Molto: Very

Non troppo: Not too much

MODIFYING SUFFIXES

-issimo: Very

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Daniil Trifonov

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

This performance will be a powerful expression of Trifonov's deep connection to the piano.

Lang Lang

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

The world-renowned pianist will dazzle you in a spectacular recital that showcases his virtuosity.



Hilary Hahn

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Feel the connection between artist and violin as Hahn breathes life into an all-Bach program.



philorch.org/spotlight

The Philadelphia Orchestra does not perform on the Spotlight Series.

Photos: Dario Acosta, Olaf Heine, Chris Lee



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The Academy of Music

Broad and Locust Streets

Philadelphia, PA 19102

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