2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Saturday, March 22, at 8:00
Sunday, March 23, at 2:00

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider Conductor and Violin

Beethoven Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61
I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Larghetto—
III. Rondo: Allegro

Intermission

Dvořák Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70
I. Allegro maestoso
II. Poco adagio
III. Scherzo: Vivace
IV. Finale: Allegro

This program runs approximately one hour, 55 minutes.

These concerts are part of the Peter A. Benoliel Violin Concerts, established in his honor by **Dr. Richard M. Klein.**

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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.

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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 and Soloist

Lars Gundersen

Violinist and conductor **Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider** made his Philadelphia Orchestra soloist debut in 2000 and makes his conducting debut with these performances. He is in his fifth season as music director of the Orchestre National de Lyon, a partnership that has been extended until the 2026–27 season. He regularly guest conducts the world's leading orchestras, with recent and upcoming performances including the New York and Oslo philharmonics and the Chicago and Bamberg symphonies. Following a successful debut conducting Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Dresden Semperoper, he was immediately re-invited to conduct Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier.* He also recently made debuts with the Royal Danish Opera and the Zurich Opera House with *The Magic Flute,* a work he will also conduct at the Bavarian State Opera.

Also a virtuoso violinist, Mr. Szeps-Znaider maintains a busy calendar of concerto and recital engagements. This season he returns to the London Philharmonic and Leipzig's Gewandhaus, where he takes part in a Shostakovich Festival, performing works alongside pianist Daniil Trifonov and cellist Gautier Capuçon on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. With the London Symphony he has recorded the complete Mozart violin concertos, leading from the violin. Mr. Szeps-Znaider's extensive discography also includes the Nielsen Concerto with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic and award-winning recordings of the Brahms and Korngold concertos with Valery Gergiev and the Vienna Philharmonic. He has also recorded the complete works of Brahms for violin and piano with Yefim Bronfman.

Mr. Szeps-Znaider is passionate about supporting the next generation of musical talent, and he is president of the Nielsen Competition, which takes place every three years in Odense, Denmark. He plays the "Kreisler" Guarnerius "del Gesù" 1741 on extended loan to him by the Royal Danish Theatre through the generosity of the Velux Foundation, the Villum Foundation, and the Knud Højgaard Foundation.

Peter A. Benoliel Violin Concerts

A passionate violinist from early childhood, Peter A. Benoliel joined the Philadelphia Orchestra Board of Directors in 1980 and served as chair from 1995 to 2000. His huge contributions to the Orchestra as a leader and philanthropist are paralleled only by his deep love for the violinists who help bring the famous Philadelphia Sound to the world.

PHILADELPHIA/ORCHESTRA

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Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1806
Beethoven
Violin Concerto

Music
Weber
Symphony No. 1
Literature
Armin and Brentano
Des Knaben Wunderhorn
Art
Constable
Windermere
History
Formal dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire

1884
Dvořák
Symphony No. 7

Music
Debussy
L'Enfant prodigue
Literature
Ibsen
The Wild Duck
Art
Seurat
Une Baignade, Asnières
History
First subway, in London

Beethoven's lone Violin Concerto was an unusually substantive concerto for its time, which led to its being largely ignored for many decades. This is a signal work from the composer's "heroic" period, alongside the "Eroica" and Fifth symphonies. And as with those transformative and challenging masterpieces, the Violin Concerto breaks with contemporaneous expectations for entertainment and flashy virtuosity. Beethoven aimed for something more, which is why the piece is beloved while nearly every other violin concerto of his time is forgotten.

In 1884 Antonín Dvořák heard a performance of Johannes Brahms's most recent symphony, the brooding Third in F major, which inspired him to write a new one of his own, the Seventh in D minor. This impassioned work, which partly reflects the political struggles of his Czech countrymen, has touched audiences since its London premiere in 1885, conducted by the composer.

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

Violin Concerto

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

As he entered his 30s at the turn of the 19th century, Beethoven's personal life dramatically changed, and so, too, did his music. In letters dating from the fall of 1801 he revealed for the first time the secret of his looming deafness. Despite ever growing professional successes, he lamented how "that jealous demon, my wretched health, has put a nasty spoke in my wheel; and it amounts to this, that for the past three years my hearing has become weaker and weaker."

The following spring Beethoven moved to the Vienna suburb of Heiligenstadt, where he penned the remarkable "Heiligenstadt Testament," an unsent letter to his brothers in which he poured out his heart. After describing various social, personal, and professional consequences of his condition, such as that he could no longer hear the sounds of nature, he confessed: "Such incidents brought me almost to despair; a little more and I would have ended my life. Only my art held me back. It seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt was within me."

New Paths The challenges Beethoven faced at this crucial juncture in his life can be sensed in many of the compositions he wrote over the next decade, usually labeled as his "heroic" period. He talked of writing in a "completely new manner" and of a "new path," producing music that proved increasingly challenging both for performers and audiences. The Third Symphony, the monumental "Eroica," is a key work in this respect, but his first two symphonies (a genre he came to relatively late) had already been greeted with some skepticism. "Bizarre"— the word is the same in German—crops up more and more often in reviews.

Beethoven initially played it somewhat safer with the genre of the concerto, partly because, as for his model Mozart before him, they were meant for his own use as a virtuoso soloist. While he held off writing a symphony, concertos came early and his involvement extends beyond the canonic five piano concertos; the "Triple" Concerto for piano, violin, and cello; and the Violin Concerto. During his student years in his native Bonn, and then after moving to Vienna at age 21, Beethoven experimented with concertos for piano, for violin, and even one for oboe, but these early works are either incomplete or lost. Around 1800 he composed two attractive Romances for violin and orchestra, a sort of preview of coming attractions, specifically of the second movement

of the Concerto we hear today. Beethoven played the violin, but he was far from the virtuoso that Mozart had been with the instrument.

A Concerto for a Friend Beethoven's Violin Concerto challenged the expectations of his contemporaries, who were more accustomed to flashy entertainment in such pieces than to works of sustained substance. It took several decades for the piece to enter the standard repertoire. Beethoven composed it quickly in 1806 for Franz Clement, an important figure in Vienna's musical scene whom he had long admired. Clement was the first violinist at the Theater an der Wien, a position that gave him the opportunity to present an annual concert for his own benefit. On April 7, 1805, he played his own Violin Concerto in D on a program that also included the public premiere of the "Eroica." It was for Clement's concert the next year, given on December 23, that Beethoven wrote his Violin Concerto, which he allegedly completed just before the premiere. The concert opened with an overture by Etienne Méhul followed by the new Concerto. After works by Handel, Mozart, and Cherubini, Clement improvised and then performed a "Sonata on one string played with the violin upside down" before a concluding chorus by Handel. It was thus hardly an event of sustained high-mindedness.

Beethoven's Concerto was to some extent influenced by Clement's own from the previous year, the work that had been paired with the "Eroica." As with that profoundly challenging symphony, some critics worried that the composer was pursuing the wrong path. The *Wiener Theater-Zeitung* noted that the Concerto was "received with exceptional applause due to its originality and abundance of beautiful passages" and commended Clement's performance but followed with a word of caution: "It is feared that if Beethhofen [sic] continues to follow his present course, it will go ill both with him and the public. The music could soon fail to please anyone not completely familiar with the rules and difficulties of the art. … [Listeners risk being] oppressed by a multitude of interconnected and overabundant ideas and a continuous tumult of the combined instruments … [and may] leave the concert with only an unpleasant feeling of exhaustion."

A Closer Look Beethoven establishes an unusually meditative mood at the outset of the Concerto with an expansive orchestral introduction featuring one of his most lyrical themes (**Allegro ma non troppo**)—indeed, a lovely lyricism and soaring melodies in the highest registers characterize much of the movement. The following **Larghetto** opens with a hymn-like theme for muted strings before horns and clarinet take over and the violin provides decorative commentary. This movement, in a modified variation form, leads without pause to the lively and dancelike **Rondo** finale that more overtly showcases virtuosic playing for the soloist.

Beethoven was asked a couple of years later to transform the work into a piano concerto, which was then published in London. While the orchestral parts are the same, the violin solo is arranged for piano. It is not entirely clear how much of this version was actually Beethoven's own work; not many musicians today find the result persuasive, which means it is rarely performed, although a few recordings are available. The arrangement

is of some interest, however, because while Beethoven did not write any cadenzas for the Violin Concerto, he did for the piano arrangement. Neither version was often performed during Beethoven's lifetime, nor even in the 1830s, as the work was widely viewed as "ungrateful" and "unplayable." The great violinist Joseph Joachim is credited for championing the Concerto beginning in 1844, when, as a 12-year-old virtuoso, he played it with Felix Mendelssohn conducting the London Philharmonic Society. In the absence of any cadenzas by Beethoven, Joachim's were widely played for many years until displaced by Fritz Kreisler's, which we hear today.

—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.

Beethoven composed the Violin Concerto in 1806.

Conductor Fritz Scheel and violinist Fritz Kreisler collaborated on the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Beethoven's Violin Concerto, in January 1902. The most recent subscription performances were in November 2016, with Gil Shaham and conductor Susanna Mälkki. In between, most of the great violinist have played the piece with the Orchestra, including Eugène Ysaÿe, Joseph Szigeti, Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, Nathan Milstein, David Oistrakh, Itzhak Perlman, Gidon Kremer, Joshua Bell, Leonidas Kavakos, Lisa Batiashvili, and Midori.

The Orchestra has recorded the work only once, in 1950 for CBS, with soloist Zino Francescatti and Eugene Ormandy.

The Concerto is scored for an orchestra of solo violin, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 45 minutes.

The Music

Symphony No. 7

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

In a 1941 article titled "Dvořák the Craftsman," the British composer and conductor Victor Hely-Hutchinson wrote, "To begin with, Dvořák was not a miniaturist, nor an epigrammatist, but a composer in the true sense of the word: he had from the outset that sense of musical construction and development on a big scale which distinguished the great masters. ... He is a master of the terse expository style, and equally of discursive development; and he can also perorate at the end of a movement with real oratorical power." He continued, "Among the symphonies the 'New World' is obviously the most popular, while the tragic and impassioned [Seventh] Symphony in D minor has, at any rate, until recent years been comparatively seldom performed." Hely-Hutchinson was joined in his admiration of the Seventh Symphony by the composer, conductor, and music analyst Donald Francis Tovey, who was quite impressed by this majestic score: "I have no hesitation in setting Dvořák's [Seventh] Symphony along with the C-major Symphony of Schubert and the four symphonies of Brahms, as among the greatest and purest examples of this art-form since Beethoven." He concluded, "There should be no difficulty at this time of day in recognizing its greatness."

A Connection with England It is unsurprising that two British musicians should laud Dvořák in such terms considering the exalted reputation the Czech composer enjoyed in Britain during his lifetime and thereafter. The picturesque tale of Dvořák's time in America has overshadowed his many successful visits to England: Indeed, British musicians were greatly responsible for widening Dvořák's international reputation. In 1883 the choral conductor Joseph Barnaby presented the composer's Stabat Mater to sensational acclaim in London. In the wake of this performance, Dvořák was commissioned to write large choral scores for festivals in Birmingham and Leeds. In 1884 a young Edward Elgar played in the first violin section when Dvořák conducted his Stabat Mater at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. Elgar wrote to a friend, "I wish you could hear Dvořák's music. It is simply ravishing, so tuneful & clever & the orchestration is wonderful." The Czech composer's esteem in Britain was confirmed in 1891 when he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University.

In response to the ecstatic reception accorded to Dvořák's Sixth Symphony at its British premiere in 1884, the Royal Philharmonic Society made him an honorary

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fellow. It also commissioned him to write a symphony to be presented in the following season. During that same year, the composer had heard a performance of his friend Johannes Brahms's new Third Symphony and was determined to meet its high symphonic standard. Dvořák began to sketch his Seventh Symphony on December 13, 1884; he later recalled that the first theme "flashed into my mind on the arrival of the festive train bringing our countrymen from Pest." As he wrote to a friend later that month, "a new symphony (for London) occupies me, and wherever I go I think of nothing but my work, which must be capable of stirring the world, and God grant me that it will!" The Seventh Symphony was completed on March 17, 1885, and Dvořák conducted the premiere in London on April 22. It was a resounding success among audience members and music critics alike.

A Closer Look Cast in the somber key of D minor, the Seventh Symphony is one of Dvořák's towering achievements. The evidence of his labor can be seen on every page: His sketches evince a constant process of evaluation and revision. As the composer's English biographer, John Clapham, noted, "His inspiration came through hard work." The Symphony itself is brilliantly scored; Hely-Hutchinson observed that as an orchestrator Dvořák possessed an "unerring sense, born of a combination of imagination and experience, of apt and arresting tone-quality.

The first movement (**Allegro maestoso**) is cast as a taut sonata form, the material of which is derived solely from the brooding opening theme. The second movement (**Poco adagio**) begins serenely with a chorale in the woodwinds, but this otherworldly music is soon interrupted by eruptions of sweeping heroic tragedy and deep emotion. The **Scherzo** (**Vivace**) is a furiant, a wild Czech dance that is characterized by constant syncopation; it is paired with a lyrical and pastoral trio in order to offer a respite from the whirling fervor of the dance. The music of the **Finale** (**Allegro**) is barely contained within a modified sonata form, dark, impassioned music hurtling forward to a coda of overwhelming tragic grandeur.

—Byron Adams

Byron Adams is emeritus distinguished professor of musicology at the University of California, Riverside. Both composer and musicologist, he specializes in French and British music of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among his publications are two edited volumes, Edward Elgar and His World *(2007) and* Vaughan Williams and His World *(2023), which he co-edited with Daniel M. Grimley.*

Dvořák's Seventh Symphony was composed from 1884 to 1885.

The first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Seventh were not until February 1965, when Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt conducted the work. Its most recent appearance on subscription concerts was in November 2021 with Rafael Payare.

The Philadelphians have recorded the Symphony twice: in 1976 with Eugene Ormandy for RCA and in 1989 with Wolfgang Sawallisch for Angel/EMI.

Dvořák scored the piece for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 40 minutes.

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Photos: Allie Ippolito, Jeff Fusco

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

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

Chorale: A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

Furiant: A rapid Bohemian dance, with alternating rhythms and changing accentuation

Mute: A mechanical device used on musical instruments to muffle the tone

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Romance: A title for short instrumental pieces of sentimental or romantic nature, and without special form

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

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

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Sonata form: The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development, and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda. The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated with modifications.

Syncopation: A shift of rhythmic emphasis off the beat

Trio: A division set between the first section of a minuet or scherzo and its repetition, and contrasting with it by a more tranquil movement and style dance music. Later, a group of pieces extracted from a larger work, especially an opera or ballet.

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Larghetto: A slow tempo

Maestoso: Majestic

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

(**Ma**) **non troppo:** (But) not too much

Poco: Little, a bit

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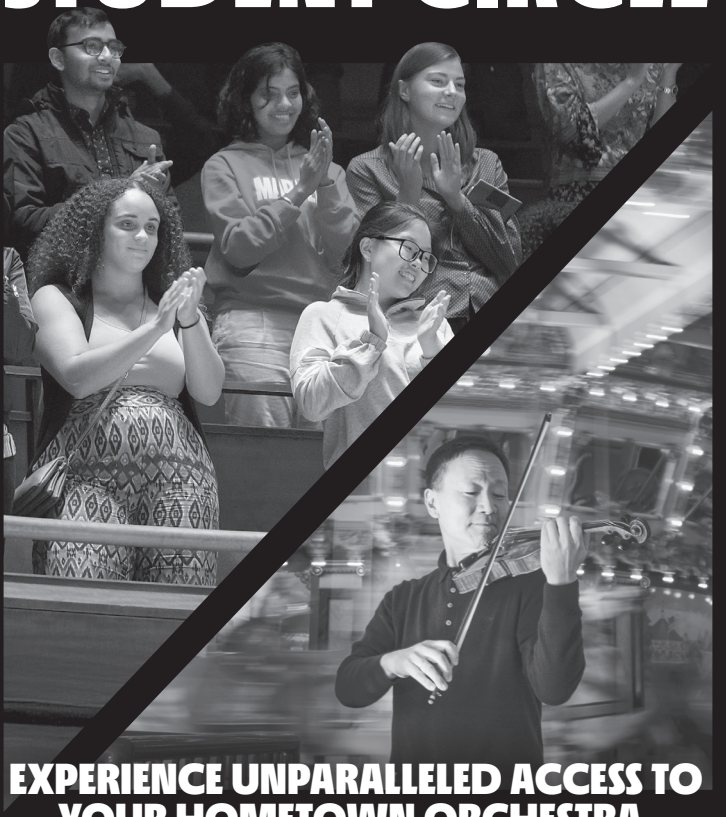

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