

2025–2026 | 126th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, October 24, at 2:00

Saturday, October 25, at 8:00

Sunday, October 26, at 2:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Lisa Batiashvili Violin

Sibelius Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

I. Allegro moderato—Allegro molto

II. Adagio di molto

III. Allegro ma non tanto

Intermission

Higdon Concerto for Orchestra /

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

Tchaikovsky *Francesca da Rimini*, symphonic fantasia after Dante, Op. 32

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

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

 designates a work that was given its world or United States premiere by The Philadelphia Orchestra, part of the Orchestra's 125th anniversary celebration.

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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. 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 14th 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 esteemed 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, throughout 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 programs connect, uplift, and celebrate nearly 40,000 Philadelphians and 250 schools from diverse communities annually, through inclusive arts education and vibrant engagement that reflect our city's voices and expand access to creative opportunities. Students, families, and other community members can enjoy free and discounted experiences with The Philadelphia Orchestra through programs such as the Jane H. Kesson School Concerts, Family Concerts, Open Rehearsals, PlayINs, and Our City, Your Orchestra community concerts.

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 became the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange through music.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 15 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



Landon Nordeman

Canadian-born conductor and pianist **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is currently in his 14th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick 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 *Philadelphia Inquirer* has said that under his baton the Orchestra is “at the top of its considerable form”; the Associated Press has called it “a premier orchestra at its peak”; and the *New York Times* wrote, “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 and recording the music of underappreciated composers of the past, including Florence Price, Clara Schumann, William Dawson, Lili Boulanger, Louise Farrenc, and William Grant Still. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 15 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

Summy Harr | Deutsche Grammophon



Georgian-born German violinist **Lisa Batiashvili** is praised by audiences and fellow musicians for her virtuosity. An award-winning artist, she has developed long-standing relationships with the world's leading orchestras, conductors, and musicians. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2005 and toured Europe with the ensemble and Yannick Nézet-Séguin in 2015 and again in 2022. In 2021 she formed, and continues to lead, the Lisa Batiashvili Foundation, which serves her lifelong dream and commitment to supporting young, highly talented Georgian musicians to thrive in their musical careers.

Ms. Batiashvili continues her successful collaboration with Mr. Nézet-Séguin in the 2025–26 season with these current performances and in Montreal. Other season highlights include a tour with the Munich Philharmonic and Lahav Shani; a tour with the Oslo Philharmonic and Klaus Mäkelä; projects with the Filarmonica della Scala, the Kammerakademie Potsdam, the City of Birmingham Symphony, the BBC and Swedish Radio symphonies, London's Philharmonia, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and her passion project "City Lights" with the Lucerne Symphony. As a chamber musician, she is set to tour extensively with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet and cellist Gautier Capuçon. She is an exclusive recording artist for Deutsche Grammophon. Her latest album, *Secret Love Letters* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and The Philadelphia Orchestra, was released in August 2022 and features Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto and Chausson's *Poème*. Her previous recording, *City Lights*, was released in 2020 and marks a musical journey that takes listeners around the world to 11 cities with an autobiographical connection with music ranging from Bach to Morricone, Dvořák, and Charlie Chaplin. A 12th city was added in 2022 with the release of her single *Desafinado*, celebrating Rio de Janeiro.

Among Ms. Batiashvili's many awards are the MIDEM Classical Award, the Accademia Musicale Chigiana International Prize, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival's Leonard Bernstein Award, and the Beethoven Ring. She was named *Musical America's* Instrumentalist of the Year in 2015 and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Sibelius Academy (University of Arts, Helsinki) in 2018. This year she was honored with the Kaiser Otto Prize of the City of Magdeburg for her commitment against war and antisemitism and for promoting European unity. She lives in Berlin and plays a Joseph Guarneri del Gesù violin from 1739, generously loaned by a private collector.

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.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1876

Tchaikovsky

Francesca da

Rimini

Music

Ponchielli

La Gioconda

Literature

Alcott

Rose in Bloom

Art

Manet

Before the Mirror

History

Bell invents

telephone

1905

Sibelius

Violin

Concerto

Music

Strauss

Salome

Literature

Wharton

House of Mirth

Art

Picasso

Two Youths

History

Einstein

formulates

Theory of

Relativity

2001

Higdon

Concerto for

Orchestra

Music

Saariaho

Nymphéa

Reflection

Literature

Franzen

The Corrections

Art

Freud

Portrait of Queen

Elizabeth II

History

September 11

terrorist attacks

Jean Sibelius composed what is probably the most beloved violin concerto of the 20th century. Despite its eventual popularity, the work initially caused the Finnish composer some trouble and he struggled to mold it into the form we know today. So much of Sibelius's music is connected to the history, mythology, and landscape of his native country. Even in abstract pieces without titles or programs, such as this Concerto, one senses an uncanny evocation of his homeland.

Jennifer Higdon is one of the most frequently performed composers of our time, widely admired for writing music that connects with contemporary audiences. She composed her five-movement Concerto for Orchestra 25 years ago to mark the centennial of The Philadelphia Orchestra. In this work, Higdon capitalized on her close personal relationships with many of the Orchestra's members, some of whom were also colleagues at the Curtis Institute of Music, where she taught at the time.

Tchaikovsky often visited Italy and the country inspired some of his compositions. He considered writing an opera on the theme of Paolo and Francesca, the doomed lovers assigned to the Second Circle of Hell in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and fated to remember happier times for eternity. In the end, Tchaikovsky diverted the project to the symphonic poem *Francesca da Rimini* that concludes the concert today.

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

Jean Sibelius

Born in Hämeenlinna, Finland, December 8, 1865

Died in Järvenpää, September 20, 1957



Between 1903 and 1904, Lars Sonck, a young Finnish architect, completed Jean and Aino Sibelius's beloved country home called Ainola. Situated near Lake Tuusula, some 30 miles north of busy Helsinki, the home had no running water or electricity, although it did have a telephone. Sibelius's study was next to the dining room, separated by a solid wall. "Look at this scenery," Sibelius once told a friend, "I like it; it's so restful, the best possible milieu for my work: these vast peaceful fields going right down to the lake."

Sibelius worked on his architecturally remarkable Violin Concerto in D minor while Ainola was being built. The grand master of music criticism, Donald Francis Tovey, wrote, "I have not met with a more original, a more masterly and a more exhilarating work than the Sibelius Violin Concerto." He particularly noted the composer's nimble conception, noting, "Sibelius does not design motor cars with a box seat or build reinforced concrete skyscrapers in the form of the Parthenon." In this violin concerto, the soloist, not the orchestra, introduces its iconic themes. Imagine the hero brandishing a violin while he surveys the Nordic landscape, passionate about its sonorous possibilities.

Creating a New Musical Tradition As a young man Jean Sibelius dreamt of becoming a violin virtuoso. Born in Hämeenlinna, in southern Finland, his earliest dated composition was for violin in 1875. He began formal lessons on the instrument with a military bandleader in 1881. In 1885 he moved to Helsinki to study violin and composition at the Music Institute (now called the Sibelius Academy). While living in Vienna (1890–91), Sibelius auditioned for the Vienna Philharmonic, whose jury judged him "not at all bad." Unable to secure a position in the violin section, he pivoted toward composition. Upon his return to Finland he became involved with a local cultural society that embraced Karelianism, Finnish romantic traditions, and he set out to develop a distinctly Finnish classical-music tradition. City life, however, proved tedious to Sibelius, and Aino became increasingly concerned about his excessive drinking.

Sibelius entered a period of great productivity in 1903 when the family decided to purchase land near the village of Järvenpää, where Aino's brother lived. She recounted, "Janne [Jean] was so enthusiastic that he was jumping up and down and demanding that I should take the train on my own to Järvenpää and decide." An early sketch of the Violin Concerto included Sibelius's doodles of two slurs forming a seagull and a long phrase line tracing a sunset. At the beginning of 1904, Aino recounted that Sibelius composed the Concerto with furious

inspiration, “Janne has been on fire all the time (and so have I!) and this time there has once again been an ‘embarras de richesse.’ He has such a multitude of themes in his head that he has been literally quite dizzy.”

A Closer Look Sibelius’s 35-minute Concerto begins with breathless strings supporting a gorgeous modal melody (**Allegro moderato**). From the start, the soloist expresses empathy and grace, bravado and courage, while the orchestra accompanies, rather than confronts or pesters. Sibelius had initially written two cadenzas for the movement but thought better of it when he revised the Concerto in 1905, where it only has one. In a stroke of genius, he replaced the development section with a cadenza to maintain the movement’s dramatic intensity. The opening returns at the end, the violin completing difficult parallel octave scales.

The second movement, **Adagio di molto**, opens in woodwind thirds, which suggest a pastoral landscape. The violin plays a melody in its low register representing sagacity. It seems that during the revision process, Sibelius became uncertain of whether the violinist Willy Burmester, to whom Sibelius had first promised the Concerto, could play the difficult work. He opted instead for Karel Halíř, who premiered the revised version in Berlin under the baton of Richard Strauss. The Concerto received respectable reviews until the 1930s when Jascha Heifetz propelled it to fame. A *morendo* fittingly ends the movement.

A dance ensues, the violinist firmly at the helm of the third movement (**Allegro ma non tanto**). The fireworks begin at once and the audience is left to marvel and hold on for dear life. Tovey dubbed this major-keyed movement a “polonaise for polar bears.” The opening theme returns to charm the audience throughout, playfully, with ease and a freedom not yet heard in the piece. Sibelius masterfully merges his Violin Concerto’s three movements into one cogent story—the lonely hero struggles, shows a sensitive side, and delights in virtuosic victory.

—Aaron Beck

Aaron Beck is a professor emeritus of musicology at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. He has published widely on the subject of Italian medieval and Renaissance music and art, including his latest book, Boccaccio and the Invention of Musical Narrative.

Sibelius composed his Violin Concerto from 1903 to 1904 and revised it in 1905.

Thaddeus Rich, concertmaster of The Philadelphia Orchestra from 1906 to 1926, was soloist in the Orchestra’s first performances of the Concerto, in February 1914; Leopold Stokowski was on the podium. Most recently on subscription, Augustin Hadelich performed the work in January 2023, with Roderick Cox conducting.

The Orchestra has recorded the Concerto three times, all with Eugene Ormandy: in 1959 with David Oistrakh for CBS; in 1969 with Isaac Stern for CBS; and in 1980 with Dylana Jenson for RCA. The Orchestra’s previously unreleased 1934 recording of the work with Jascha Heifetz and Stokowski is included in the 12-CD boxed set The Philadelphia Orchestra: The Centennial Collection (Historic Broadcasts and Recordings from 1917–1998).

Sibelius’s score calls for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings, in addition to the solo violin.

The Concerto runs approximately 35 minutes in performance.

The Music

Concerto for Orchestra

Jennifer Higdon

Born in Brooklyn, New York, December 31, 1962

Now living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina



Jennifer Higdon needs little introduction to audiences of The Philadelphia Orchestra, which during the past quarter century has performed her music more often than that of any other living composer, including giving four world premieres, among them the Concerto for Orchestra we hear today.

Born in Brooklyn to artistic parents, Higdon grew up in Atlanta before moving to Tennessee at age 10. She initially played percussion (something that leaves clear traces on many of her compositions) before teaching herself the flute. She went on to major in flute performance at Bowling Green State University and then, with the encouragement of one of her teachers, began to compose. Her somewhat late start led to graduate training at the Curtis Institute of Music and the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her Ph.D. Among her teachers were Wallace DePue, George Crumb, and Ned Rorem.

Higdon is one of the most often performed American composers of our time. Her many honors include a GRAMMY Award in 2010 for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for her Percussion Concerto, which was co-commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, and a Pulitzer Prize the same year for her Violin Concerto. Two additional GRAMMYS followed for her Viola Concerto and Harp Concerto. Higdon has received further awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Pew Fellowship, Meet the Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other organizations.

Writing for The Philadelphia Orchestra's Centennial When Higdon was commissioned to write a work for The Philadelphia Orchestra's Centennial celebrations, the inspiration for her piece came directly from the musicians themselves. Higdon has enjoyed a long and fruitful professional relationship with many Philadelphia Orchestra members. Some of them were her colleagues on the faculty at Curtis, some in her classes there, while others have known her through their performances of Higdon's works, or in performances with her. The commission wasn't so much an assignment as an opportunity to celebrate these years of collaborations and friendships in music.

The generic title of Concerto for Orchestra has been a popular one with composers of the last 75 years. Bartók's Concerto is widely regarded as a masterpiece. Many other composers have also written Concertos for Orchestra, including Witold Lutoslawski, Zoltán Kodály,

Michael Tippett, Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, and Joan Tower. Most of these works are understandably written in the shadow of Bartók, just as any symphonist works in the shadow of Beethoven. Higdon, however, makes no allusion to Bartók at all. Rather, her work is a concerto in the Baroque sense of the word, in that many soloists from within the orchestra are given an opportunity to shine. In addition to soloists from each of the instrumental families, the work also features different sections of the orchestra, so that the title is more literally applicable than in many works so named.

Higdon decided that the work should highlight not only the principal players in the orchestra, but also their own particular musical personalities. This idea seemed obvious to her in retrospect, but it came only after several years of contemplating the commission. Most of Higdon's works carry descriptive titles or movement subtitles, and these have often functioned as inspirations for her; but the motivation in this work came from the players themselves. As a flutist, Higdon's first point of contact was naturally the Orchestra's principal flute, Jeffrey Khaner, who asked her for "a really nice flute solo." The idea expanded to include a passage that highlighted the flute section as a whole, then all the woodwinds. (This would eventually become the Concerto's third movement). Other requests from Orchestra personnel helped Higdon channel her inspiration into fashioning the work as a showcase for the entire ensemble.

A Closer Look Higdon refrained from giving either the work or the individual movements descriptive titles and they are referred to only by their Roman-numeral indicators. The **first movement** highlights the entire orchestra. Higdon's extensive interactions with members from the Orchestra allowed her to be able to tailor the movement to suit the musical personalities of the players. The rhythmically active movement builds gradually to a climax but ends softly with held tones in the winds and brass. This conclusion provides a necessary moment of contrast, as the second movement, which had already been written before the first movement (actually the last one to be composed), is also energetic.

The **second movement** is scored for strings alone. Like so many others, Higdon had long known of the reputation of The Philadelphia Orchestra's string section, and she wrote exploring that sound and its possibilities. Gradually moving from pizzicato to bowed strings, the movement investigates contrasts in timbre, tempo, and rhythmic activity. The **third movement** was the first to be composed, emerging directly from Khaner's request for a flute solo. After the flutes, the oboe, clarinet, and bassoon sections each have their turn in the limelight before moving to string solos followed by brass solos.

Percussion and keyboard dominate the **fourth movement**, which begins with bowed pitched percussion (crotales and vibraphone) in an extremely slow tempo marking. For this movement the timpanist is required to leave the timpani and join the rest of the percussion section: another personal request from the Orchestra that Higdon willingly worked into the piece. The movement steadily accelerates as it proceeds, and the emphasis shifts to non-pitched percussion. The acceleration continues in the **fifth movement**, which follows without a break but is indicated clearly by the entrance of the orchestral strings. The quickening tempo speeds headlong through the final movement toward a frenzied fortissimo conclusion.

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.

Luke Howard is associate director of the School of Music at Brigham Young University, and for many years wrote program notes for The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Aspen Music Festival, and Utah Opera. His research focuses on classical music in popular culture and the reception histories of well-known concert works.

Jennifer Higdon composed her Concerto for Orchestra in 2001.

The Concerto for Orchestra was one of eight works commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra in celebration of its centennial and the ensemble gave the world premiere in June 2002, with Wolfgang Sawallisch conducting. The most recent appearance on subscription concerts was in December 2011, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin on the podium.

The score calls for an orchestra of three flutes (III doubling piccolo), three clarinets, two oboes, English horn, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, bongos, castanets, chimes, Chinese cymbal, crotales, flexatone, floor tom, glockenspiel, güiro, maracas, marimba, sandpaper blocks, roto-tom, sizzle cymbal, slapstick, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, temple blocks, tom-toms, triangles, vibraphone, vibraslap, wood blocks), harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA / 125

Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music & Artistic Director

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Photo: PeteCzechchia

The Music

Francesca da Rimini

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

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

Died in St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893



Always on the lookout for subject matter for new theatrical works, Tchaikovsky was fascinated by the critic Henry Laroche's suggestion of an opera on the story of Paolo and Francesca, as told by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*. Early in 1876 Laroche passed on to Tchaikovsky a libretto by Konstantin Zvantsov on the subject of these doomed lovers, whose carnal indiscretions have landed them in the Second Circle of the 14th-century poet's famous *Inferno*. Although other projects intervened, most notably the ballet *Swan Lake*, which made a full-scale opera untenable at this time, Tchaikovsky's imagination was piqued by this famous love story. During a train trip in August 1876—en route to the new Bayreuth Festspielhaus to hear the first complete performance of Richard Wagner's *Ring*—the composer re-read the Fifth Canto of Dante's *Inferno* and immediately "became fired to write a symphonic poem," as he wrote to his brother Modest, "on the subject of Francesca da Rimini." That autumn he plunged into the work, completing both composition and orchestration by mid-November. "I completed it *con amore*," he wrote to Modest, "and the *amore* has, it seems, turned out pretty well." He spoke here of the work's slow middle section, which represents Francesca's melancholic narration of her own tale.

A Number of Musical Influences "This is from Dante, the Second Circle of Hell," Tchaikovsky wrote in his preface to the printed score of his symphonic fantasia. "There one sees sensuality chastised, the punishment for which is to be tormented continually by the most brutal whirlwinds, in deep darkness. Among the tortured ones whom one recognizes is Francesca da Rimini, who proceeds to tell her story." The work that resulted is one of the composer's most full-voiced and subjective tone poems, full of thrilling modulatory disorientation and an obsessive working-out of themes that borders on bombast. Some have heard the influence of Liszt in the piece, and the composer's own contemporaries commented on (and in general, disapproved of) the use of a folk-like melody for the first theme.

But the primary musical influence here might be Wagner. Tchaikovsky did not emerge from Bayreuth unscathed; although expressing distaste for the *Ring*, he later admitted, in fact, that "the observation that I wrote [*Francesca da Rimini*] under the influence of the *Ring* is very true. I myself felt this while I was working on it; and unless I am mistaken this is especially noticeable in the introduction. Isn't it strange that I should have fallen under the influence of a work of art for which I feel, on the whole, a marked antipathy?" *Francesca* received its premiere in Moscow on February 25, 1877, less than a week after the first

performance of *Swan Lake*; Nikolai Rubinstein was the conductor, and in general the work was a success. But it was received even more warmly at its St. Petersburg premiere the following year.

In Dante's Words In addition to the statement cited above, the composer printed in the score the following passage from Dante, in which Francesca's story is recounted, with the poet's follow-up commentary:

“There is no greater sorrow
than to remember happy days
in times of misery,” [Francesca said],
“and this your Teacher knows;
but if you have such a great desire
to learn the first root of our love,
I shall do it as one who weeps and tells.
One day, for pleasure, we read
of Lancelot—how love enslaved him.
We were alone, and without any ill intent.
Time and again that reading drew our eyes together
and drained the color from our faces;

but it was only one point that overcame us—
when, reading of the longed-for smile
being kissed by so great a lover,
this one [i.e., Paolo], who will never be parted
from me,
kissed my all-trembling mouth.
Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.
That day we read no further.”
And all the while the one spirit told this story,
the other one wept so much that I fainted away
from sheer pity, as if I were dying,
and fell, just as a dead body falls.

The work's brooding introduction (*Andante lugubre*) sets a scene of desperation, which is taken up in the fervent *Allegro vivo*, with its graphic depiction of the lashing torments of hell; this segment contains some of Tchaikovsky's most vivid and colorful orchestral writing. The storm subsides momentarily, and Francesca's narrative begins with a plaintive clarinet solo (*Andante cantabile non troppo*), accompanied by muted strings. The tale builds to a climax in the telling, and soon enough the couple is tossed back into the black storm, their fate sealed by a return to the frenetic *Allegro vivo tempo*.

—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.

Tchaikovsky composed Francesca da Rimini in 1876.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's first performance of the work took place in November 1916, with Leopold Stokowski on the podium. The most recent subscription performances were in November 2011, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Orchestra has recorded Francesca da Rimini four times: in 1955 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS, in 1976 with Ormandy for RCA, in 1991 with Riccardo Muti for EMI, and in 2008 with Christoph Eschenbach for Ondine.

Tchaikovsky scored the work for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two cornets, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam), harp, and strings.

Francesca da Rimini runs approximately 25 minutes in performance.

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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

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Chromatic: Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

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

Development: See sonata form

Diatonic: Melody or harmony drawn primarily from the tones of the major or minor scale

Fantasia: A composition free in form and more or less fantastic in character

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Mode: Any of certain fixed arrangements of the diatonic tones of an octave, as the major and minor scales of Western music

Morendo: Fading away

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

Octave: The interval between any two notes that are seven diatonic (nonchromatic) scale degrees apart

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.

Pizzicato: Plucked

Polonaise: A Polish national dance in moderate triple meter

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

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.

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

Third: An interval of three diatonic degrees

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

Tone poem: See symphonic poem

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Cantabile: In a singing style, lyrical, melodious, flowing

Lugubre: Mournful, gloomy

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Vivo: Lively, intense

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Di molto: Very, extremely

Ma non tanto: But not too much so

Molto: Very

Non troppo: Not too much

DYNAMIC MARKS

Fortissimo (ff): Very loud

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