

2025–2026

Marian Anderson Hall

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Wednesday, December 10, at 7:30

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Veronika Eberle Violin

Jean-Guihen Queyras Cello

Brahms *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81

Brahms Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, Op. 102 (“Double”)

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Vivace non troppo

Intermission

Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

I. Un poco sostenuto—Allegro

II. Andante sostenuto

III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso

IV. Adagio—Più andante—Allegro non troppo, ma con brio—Più allegro

This program runs approximately two hours, five minutes.



Chamber Orchestra of Europe

The Chamber Orchestra of Europe (COE) was founded in 1981 by a group of young musicians who became acquainted as part of the European Community Youth Orchestra (now EUYO). There are now about 60 members of the COE, who pursue parallel careers as principals or section leaders of nationally based orchestras, as eminent chamber musicians, and as tutors of music. From the start, the COE's identity was shaped by its partnerships with leading conductors and soloists. Claudio Abbado served as an important mentor in the early years. He led the COE in numerous operas and concerts featuring works by Rossini, Schubert, and Brahms in particular. Nikolaus Harnoncourt also had a major influence on the development of the COE through his performances and recordings of all of the Beethoven symphonies, as well as through opera productions at the Salzburg, Vienna, and Styriarte festivals. Past associations with Sándor Végh, Alexander Schneider, Paavo Berglund, and Bernard Haitink are also important highlights in the life of the COE.

Currently the Orchestra works closely with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Antonio Pappano, Simon Rattle, András Schiff,

and Robin Ticciati, who are honorary members (following in the footsteps of Mr. Haitink and Mr. Harnoncourt). The COE has strong links with many of the major festivals and concert halls in Europe. It has been "Residenzorchester Schloss Esterházy" in Eisenstadt, as well as the first-ever orchestra-in-residence at the Casals Forum in partnership with the Kronberg Academy since 2022. The COE works with all the major recording companies and has recorded over 250 works, winning numerous international awards, including three *Gramophone* Record of the Year awards and two GRAMMYs.

The COE created its Academy in 2009 and each year awards scholarships to talented postgraduate students and young professionals to study with principal players when the Orchestra is on tour. The COE is a private orchestra that receives invaluable financial support, especially from the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and a further number of friends including Dasha Shenkman, Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement, the Rupert Hughes Will Trust, the Underwood Trust, the 35th Anniversary Friends, and American Friends.

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Violins

Lorenza Borrani
(Leader Chair supported by Dasha Shenkman)
Maia Cabeza
Sophie Besancon
Fiona Brett
Christian Eisenberger
Lucy Gould
Rosa Hartley
Mairead Hickey
Maja Horvat
Matilda Kaul
Stefano Mollo
Peter Olofsson
Fredrik Paulsson
Joseph Rappaport
Håkan Rudner
Aki Sauliere
Martin Walch
Elizabeth Wexler

Violas

Pascal Siffert
Hector Camara Ruiz
Ida Grøn
Wouter Raubenheimer
Riikka Repo
Hanne Skjeltbred
Pierre Tourville

Cellos

Richard Lester
(Principal Cello Chair supported by an anonymous donor)
Luise Buchberger
Henrik Brendstrup
Tomas Djupsjobacka
Sally Pendlebury

Double Basses

Enno Senft
(Principal Bass Chair supported by Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement)
Philip Nelson
Dane Roberts
Axel Ruge

Flutes

Clara Andrada
(Principal Flute Chair supported by the Rupert Hughes Will Trust)
Josine Buter

Piccolo

Paco Varoch

Oboes

Philippe Tondre
(Principal Oboe Chair supported by the Rupert Hughes Will Trust)
Carolina Rodriguez

Clarinets

Romain Guyot
Julien Chabod

Bassoons

Daniel Matsukawa
Christopher Gunia

Contrabassoon

Ulrich Kircheis

Horns

Benoit De Barsony
Elizabeth Randell
Jan Harshagen
Peter Richards

Trumpets

Neil Brough
(Principal Trumpet Chair supported by the Underwood Trust)
Julian Poore

Trombones

Håkan Bjorkmann
Helen Vollam

Bass Trombone

Nicholas Eastop

Tuba

Jens Bjørn-Larsen

Timpani

John Chimes
(Principal Timpani Chair supported by the American Friends)

Management

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Music and Artistic Director



London Neudeman

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



Louie Thain

Violinist **Veronika Eberle**'s exceptional talent and the poise and maturity of her musicianship have been recognized by many of the world's finest orchestras, venues, and festivals, as well as by some of the most eminent conductors. In the 2025–26 season she makes her Carnegie Hall debut during this current tour of Europe and the United States with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Other notable debuts include the Konzerthausorchester Berlin under the baton of Thomas Søndergård, the Helsinki Philharmonic with Anja Bihlmaier, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony with John Storgårds, the Hyogo PAC Orchestra with Andreas Ottensamer, and

the Royal Scottish National Orchestra with Jörg Widmann. She also makes returns to the Dresden and Brussels philharmonics, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and the Gürzenich Orchestra. Recent performance highlights include debuts with the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra, and returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, and the Budapest Festival Orchestra.

Ms. Eberle's other key collaborations include with orchestras such as the London Symphony, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Berlin Radio Symphony, as well as with conductors including Simon Rattle, Daniel Harding, Christian Thielemann, Lorenzo Viotti, Louis Langrée, Robin Ticciati, Paavo Järvi, Alan Gilbert, Heinz Holliger, Antonio Pappano, and Andrés Orozco-Estrada. She has worked closely with composers such as Toshio Hosokawa, who dedicated his Violin Concerto ("Genesis") to her, and Mr. Widmann, who composed new cadenzas for Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which she recorded with Mr. Rattle and the London Symphony. A dedicated chamber musician, she performs regularly with artists such as Sol Gabetta, Steven Isserlis, Julia Hagen, Beatrice Rana, Nils Mönkemeyer, and Dénes Várjon, performing at festivals including Klosters Music, Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Rheingau Musik Festival, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Mozartfest Würzburg, Carinthian Sommer, and Vevey Spring Festival, to name a few. In the 2024–25 season she returned to Wigmore Hall as artist in residence.

Ms. Eberle has benefited from the support of a number of prestigious organizations, including the Reinhold Würth Musikstiftung, the Nippon Music Foundation, the Borletti-Buitoni Trust (Fellowship in 2008), the Orpheum Stiftung, the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben, and the Jürgen-Ponto Stiftung. She was a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist from 2011 to 2013 and a Dortmund Konzerthaus "Junge Wilde" artist from 2010 to 2012. She won First Prize at the 2003 Yfrah Neaman International Competition in Mainz and was awarded Audience Awards by the Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern festivals. Born in Donauwörth, Germany, she was a junior student at the Richard Strauss Conservatory in Munich with Olga Voitova, later continuing her studies with Christoph Poppen and Ana Chumachenko. She plays the 1693 "Ries" Stradivarius, which is kindly on loan from the Reinhold Würth Musikstiftung.

Soloist

Marco Borggreve



Curiosity, variety, and a firm focus on the music itself characterize the artistic work of cellist **Jean-Guihen Queyras**. Three key elements contribute to a successful performance: the alignment of the inner worlds of composer, performer, and audience alike. He learned this interpretative approach from Pierre Boulez, with whom his artistic partnership spanned many years. This philosophy—alongside a flawless technique and a clear, decisive sound—shapes every performance and informs his approach to historical and contemporary repertoire, notably in his collaborations with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and the Akademie für Alte

Musik Berlin. He has given world premieres of works by Ivan Fedele, Gilbert Amy, Bruno Mantovani, Michael Jarrell, Johannes Maria Staud, Thomas Larcher, and Tristan Murail. Mr. Queyras also recorded Peter Eötvös's Cello Concerto, conducted by the composer to mark his 70th birthday in November 2014.

Mr. Queyras was a founding member of the Arcanto Quartet and performs as part of a trio with violinist Isabelle Faust and pianist Alexander Melnikov. He has also collaborated with zarb specialists Bijan and Keyvan Chemirani on a program featuring music of the Mediterranean. Mr. Queyras's versatility has led numerous concert halls, festivals, and orchestras to invite him to serve as artist in residence, including the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. He appears often with renowned orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the London Symphony, the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra, working with conductors such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Iván Fischer, Philippe Herreweghe, François-Xavier Roth, John Eliot Gardiner, and Roger Norrington. Mr. Queyras's recordings of the cello concertos of Elgar, Dvořák, Philippe Schoeller, and Mr. Amy were met with critical acclaim. His Schumann project, spanning three albums of works by the composer, includes the complete piano trios recorded with Ms. Faust and Mr. Melnikov, as well as the Cello Concerto alongside the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under the baton of Pablo Heras-Casado. Mr. Queyras records exclusively for Harmonia Mundi.

In addition to the current European and United States tour with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, highlights of Mr. Queyras's 2025–26 season include tours to Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Together with pianist Alexandre Tharaud he will premiere a new double concerto by Oscar Strasnoy. He also performs under the batons of Dima Slobodeniouk, Andris Poga, Juraj Valčuha, Duncan Ward, Karina Canellakis, Aziz Shokhakimov, and Christian Reif. Mr. Queyras holds a professorship at the University of Music Freiburg and is artistic director of the Rencontres Musicales de Haute-Provence festival in Forcalquier. He plays on the "Kaiser" Stradivarius made in Cremona in 1707, kindly made available to him by Canimex Inc. of Drummondville (Quebec), Canada.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1876 Brahms Symphony No. 1	Music Ponchielli <i>La gioconda</i> Literature Mallarmé <i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i> Art Renoir <i>In the Garden</i> History World Exhibition in Philadelphia
1880 Brahms <i>Tragic Overture</i>	Music Tchaikovsky <i>1812 Overture</i> Literature Zola <i>Nana</i> Art Cézanne <i>Château de Medan</i> History New York streets first lit by electricity
1887 Brahms "Double" Concerto	Music Stainer <i>The Crucifixion</i> Literature Conan Doyle <i>A Study in Scarlett</i> Art Klinger <i>The Judgement of Paris</i> History Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee

This evening features Yannick conducting the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in an all-Brahms program that offers an overture, concerto, and symphony.

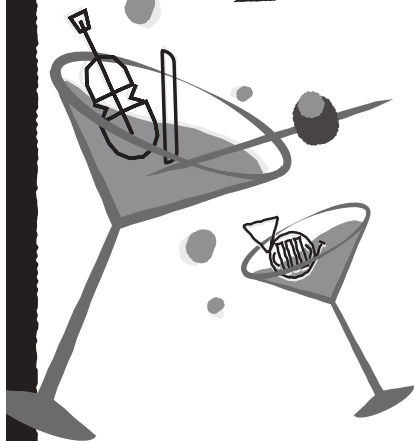
In the summer of 1880, Brahms composed two concert overtures: the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture*. The first, a cheery work, was meant to acknowledge an honorary doctorate bestowed by the University of Breslau; the other, its unidentical twin, is a serious dramatic piece. Brahms said of them that "one laughs and the other cries" and conducted them together in Breslau in January 1881.

Brahms wrote four concertos and four symphonies. By the 19th century, concertos usually featured one soloist, so it was somewhat surprising that he composed the "Double" for violin and cello. It is a marvelous partnership, the teaming up of the two string instruments in conversation with the full orchestra.

In 1853 Robert Schumann hailed the 20-year-old Brahms as the potential savior of German instrumental music. The lavish praise generated enormous expectations for the young composer, especially with regard to writing a symphony. Ever since Beethoven's death in 1827 the musical world had debated what form and style symphonies should take—Brahms's answer was eagerly awaited. At age 43, he finally completed his First Symphony, which was immediately hailed as "Beethoven's Tenth." Without programmatic titles, chorus, or obvious extramusical references, Brahms's First helped to reinvent the genre of the symphony.

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The Music

Tragic Overture

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833

Died in Vienna, April 3, 1897



Despite his eventually composing some of the greatest symphonies, overtures, and concertos ever written, Johannes Brahms's production of orchestral music was slow to start. Robert Schumann's declaration in 1853 that the 20-year-old Brahms was the musical messiah for whom everyone had been waiting since the death of Beethoven in 1827 proved a mixed blessing. Such lavish praise was deserved (and turned out to be prescient), but it also raised the stakes for the young composer. Brahms acutely felt the pressure to show what

he could do. His youthful piano and chamber music earned the admiration of musicians, critics, and audiences alike, but everyone wondered when he would turn to what really mattered: symphonies and operas. Of course, Brahms never did write an opera, and his First Symphony took more than another 20 years to arrive, with abortive attempts on the way diverted into other compositions, such as the First Piano Concerto. Unwilling to write programmatic symphonies along the lines of the ones by Liszt and others, Brahms remained true to his Classical ideals.

After the success of the First Symphony in 1876, orchestral masterpieces flowed with greater ease and frequency. The Second Symphony appeared the next year and a few years later Brahms composed two concert overtures, the *Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80, and the *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81.

Twin Overtures The happy birth of these pieces, unidentical twins, occurred during the summer of 1880 when Brahms was vacationing at Bad Ischl. The circumstances leading to the *Academic Festival Overture* are well known—Brahms was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau in 1879 and wrote the Overture as a gesture of thanks. While composing the piece, however, he felt the need to provide a companion. “The *Academic* has led me to a second overture that I can only entitle the ‘Dramatic,’ which does not please me.” Problems with a title continued, as he informed the Breslau Orchestra Society, “You may include a ‘Dramatic’ or ‘Tragic,’ or ‘Tragedy Overture’ in your program for January 6; I cannot find a proper title for it.” Eventually the title *Tragic* was chosen, although it is meant as an overture to a tragedy, not an expression of personal pain or grief. Indeed, performances of Goethe's *Faust* in Vienna's Burgtheater, for which Brahms contemplated writing incidental music, may have been in his mind.

Hans Richter, the noted conductor, led the Vienna Philharmonic in the Overture's premiere

in December 1880 and Brahms conducted both overtures in Breslau the following week.

A Closer Look As is the case with Brahms's other orchestral music, there is no public story or other extra-musical element attached to the *Tragic Overture*—simply the idea of it preceding a tragedy. Yet the composer Hugo Wolf was unwilling to listen to the work innocently, on Brahms's terms, and therefore provided a story, just as he no doubt would have had he composed the piece himself. As one often encounters in writings about music at the time, Wolf's plotline helps to orient listeners. (Wagner and others often did this for Beethoven's music.) In one of his more favorable reviews of Brahms, Wolf writes:

Brahms's *Tragic Overture* reminds us vividly of the ghostly apparitions in Shakespeare's dramas who horrify the murderer by their presence while remaining invisible to everyone else. We know not what hero Brahms murdered in this Overture, but let us assume that Brahms is Macbeth and the Overture is the embodiment of the murder of the spirit of Banquo, whom, with the first down-bows falling like the blows of an ax, he is just murdering. In the course of the composition the ghost of his victim appears again and again, the blows of the ax reintroduce the motif of the murder as at the opening of the Overture, reminding him pointedly of these events. Horrified, he turns away and seeks in feigned repose to pull himself together. Brahms–Macbeth expresses this excellently in a very stilted, artificial middle theme. This spectacle repeats itself until the end of the Overture.

This description captures some of the most striking musical moments in the work, from the two thundering chords that open the work (and that look back to Beethoven's concert overtures) to the stark conclusion. A dark and mysterious mood pervades the entire composition, even when the thematic material is treated with warmth and tenderness. This is an underrated and somewhat neglected composition, but a great and most characteristically Brahmsian one.

—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.

Brahms composed the Tragic Overture in 1880.

Brahms scored the piece for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.

The Music

Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra ("Double")

Johannes Brahms



The ensemble concerto with multiple soloists, a favored genre of the Baroque era, became a rarity during the 19th century. This can be explained partly in terms of the changing nature of the soloist's role: By the early 19th century, the chamber-like concertante approach that had governed even the early Classical concerto was being replaced with something more nearly resembling a titanic struggle. Beethoven, in his Third Piano Concerto, had already hinted at the expanded role a soloist might play, and with this and other works after 1800

he established and developed a new prototype for the concerto: a heroic and grandiose model that would be embraced by composers from Mendelssohn to John Adams. Since there was rarely room for more than one "hero" in a concerto, however, the collaborative approach of the Baroque concerto grosso was temporarily eclipsed, not to be revived until the Neo-Classical works of the 20th century.

Two notable examples of 19th-century multiple concertos have survived to take their place at the center of the orchestral repertory—Beethoven's "Triple" Concerto from the early part of the century (1804) and Brahms's "Double" from 1887, which appears to have taken Beethoven's model as a jumping-off point. Each work is an anomaly, and each handles quite differently the problems inherent in the genre. Beethoven's extroverted piece glories in the riches of "too much talent," while Brahms's Concerto deals in shadowy contemplation and stern outbursts of almost frightening potency.

A Peace Offering The "Double" Concerto, Brahms's last orchestral composition, was designed partly as an offering of friendship and reconciliation to Joseph Joachim, the great violinist who had staunchly championed the composer's orchestral and chamber works throughout his career. During Joachim's divorce in 1881, Brahms had meddlesomely sided with the violinist's wife, and a rift had ensued. Determined to make things right again, Brahms began working on the piece that would become the "Double" Concerto in 1887. Rather timidly he wrote to Joachim that "the idea of writing a concerto for violin and cello has been too strong for me, much as I have tried to resist it."

Some have speculated that writing another violin concerto would have been too direct and overt a peace offering and might have produced an embarrassing situation. Instead, he presented the unusual concerto to Joachim and Robert Hausmann, the cellist of the Joachim Quartet. In any case the composer needn't have worried, for Joachim—who had

never lost respect for his fellow musician–friend—was all too eager to reinstate the tie. “I did not think it possible that we could ever again come together personally,” Brahms wrote to Simrock. “But a short communication I sent, leaving him full freedom of action, was so eagerly embraced by him that we are to try the work together with Hausmann very shortly.”

Later that summer Brahms met in Baden-Baden with the two soloists to go over the piece together. “Joachim and Brahms have spoken to one another again after years of silence,” wrote Clara Schumann, who was present at the rehearsals, in her diary. The first public performance was in Cologne on October 18, 1887, with Joachim and Hausmann as soloists and the composer leading the Gürzenich Orchestra.

A Closer Look Neither as straightforward nor as immediately coherent as the composer’s concertos for piano or for violin, the “Double” Concerto is full of elusive structural and gestural elements that require study and multiple hearings to grasp. The work opens unconventionally and tantalizingly, with a discursive introduction of the soloists without orchestra, in quasi-recitative style. The two principal themes, one jagged and succinct, the other lilting and hesitant, are expanded and developed with remarkable brevity, considering the challenge of giving each soloist his virtuosic due within the confines of the concerto-allegro form. The development section of this **Allegro** is especially dramatic, even operatic, in its passagework and powerful chiaroscuro. The slow movement (**Andante**) is one of Brahms’s most frankly sentimental moments, with long and lyrical lines that break into loose-limbed passagework and nostalgic heart-on-the-sleeve expressions. The finale (**Vivace non troppo**), written in the composer’s *alla zingarese* (gypsy) style, is full of the vigor and down-to-earth passion of Brahms’s best instrumental music.

—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.

Brahms composed his Concerto for Violin and Cello in 1887.

Brahms scored the Concerto for solo violin and cello; pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; four horns; two trumpets; timpani; and strings.

The work runs approximately 32 minutes in performance.

The Music

Symphony No. 1

Johannes Brahms



As a young composer, Johannes Brahms enjoyed the close friendship and enthusiastic support of Robert and Clara Schumann, two of the most influential musical figures of their day. In 1853, when Brahms was only 20 years old (and with merely a handful of songs, piano solos, and chamber pieces under his belt), Robert proclaimed to the world that his young friend's piano sonatas were "veiled symphonies," and that this composer was the rightful heir to Beethoven's stupendous musical legacy.

Schumann's enthusiastic promotion of Brahms was a double-edged sword. While it was flattering to be regarded as the savior of German music, Brahms was intimidated by the pressure to write symphonies worthy of the standard Beethoven had established. It would take him another 23 anxious years, and several abandoned attempts, before he could bring himself to tackle a symphony "after Beethoven," as he put it. And even then he worried it would not be good enough.

The Path to a First Symphony Brahms began sketches for a first symphony as early as 1854, though subsequent progress was slow and sporadic. In 1862 he showed the first movement of a proposed symphony in C minor to some friends. Then, six years later, he sent Clara a postcard with the alphorn melody that would eventually find its way into the finale of his Symphony No. 1 in C minor. But by the early 1870s, Brahms despaired of completing the work, lamenting to a friend, "I shall never write a symphony! You have no idea how it feels for someone like me always to hear the footsteps of such a giant as Beethoven marching along behind me!"

Still, the specter of a first symphony did not prevent Brahms from writing other orchestral works in the meantime. He produced two orchestral serenades, a piano concerto, and the masterly *A German Requiem*, all of which had started out with symphonic aspirations. And in 1873 his orchestral Variations on a Theme of Haydn enjoyed enough success to convince him that perhaps a real symphony was not as impossible as it had once seemed. By 1876 Brahms had completed his Symphony No. 1 at the relatively advanced age of 43.

An Homage to Beethoven Brahms tackled the looming shadow of Beethoven by making his own symphony an homage to the master. While Wagner claimed that the only possible path after Beethoven was the music drama and the single-movement symphonic poem,

Brahms attempted to show that the four-movement model of the Classical symphony was still ripe for development, and he used Beethoven's own symphonies as a springboard. Indeed, Brahms's First Symphony from the start has frequently been referred to as "Beethoven's Tenth."

A primary inspiration for Brahms's First Symphony was Beethoven's monumental Fifth. Brahms chose the same key, C minor, and used both the rhythm of its famous "fate" motif and the final apotheosis into C major at the conclusion of his own symphony. The main theme in the finale of Brahms's First bears a striking resemblance, however, to the "Ode to Joy" theme from Beethoven's Ninth. Brahms meant for these references to be overt—when it was mentioned to him that this work shared some resemblances to Beethoven, he reportedly shot back with indignation, "Well, of course! Any idiot can see that!"

A Closer Look The Symphony's first movement opens with ominous drumbeats (**Un poco sostenuto**), over which chromatic lines in the strings and woodwinds weave an anxious tapestry. The drumbeat echoes continue throughout the slow introduction before giving way to the dramatically agitated **Allegro**. A gentler second theme adds the contrast that provides the musical light and shadow in this movement.

Brahms's natural gift for lyrical melody and rich harmonizations are evident in the opening of the second movement (**Andante sostenuto**), which then proceeds through a restless middle section before reprising the sumptuous melody in a new scoring for oboe, horn, and solo violin. The brief third movement (**Un poco allegretto e grazioso**) functions as a kind of intermezzo, with a rustic freshness that recalls some of Brahms's earlier orchestral serenades.

The final movement begins like the first, with a slow introduction (**Adagio**) that reintroduces the portentous timpani drumbeats and sinuous chromaticism. But the "alphorn" theme soon clears away the lingering melancholy, turning the harmony toward a triumphant C major (**Più andante**). The strings then present a stately hymn (**Allegro non troppo, ma con brio**) that, together with a majestic trombone chorale, forms the basis for a variety of thematic iterations before reaching a glorious, even euphoric coda (**Più allegro**).

—Luke Howard

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.

Brahms composed his Symphony No. 1 from 1862 to 1876.

Brahms scored the work for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 45 minutes.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

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

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

Concertante: A work featuring one or more solo instruments

Concerto grosso: A type of concerto in which a large group (known as the *ripieno* or the *concerto grosso*) alternates with a smaller group (the *concertino*). The term is often loosely applied to any concertos of the Baroque period except solo ones.

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

Intermezzo: A short connecting instrumental movement in an opera or other musical work

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.

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

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

Serenade: An instrumental composition written for a small ensemble and having characteristics of the suite and the sonata

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.

Suite: During the Baroque period, an instrumental genre consisting of several movements in the same key, some or all of which were based on the forms and styles of dance music. Later, a group of pieces extracted from a larger work, especially an opera or ballet.

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

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (*Tempo*)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Con brio: Vigorously, with fire

Grazioso: Graceful and easy

Sostenuto: Sustained

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Non troppo: Not too much

Più: More

Un poco: A little

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