

2025–2026 | 126th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, March 20, at 2:00

Saturday, March 21, at 8:00

Sunday, March 22, at 2:00

Marin Alsop Conductor

Haochen Zhang Piano

Aleksiychuk *Go where the wind takes you ...*

First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, for piano and orchestra

Intermission

Schumann Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61

I. Sostenuto assai—Allegro ma non troppo

II. Scherzo: Allegro vivace

III. Adagio espressivo

IV. Allegro molto vivace

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

PHILADELPHIA/ORCHESTRA

Yannick Nézet-Séguin · Music & Artistic Director



Photo: Francesco D'Amico

Celebrating our partnership with **THE SARATOGA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

The Philadelphia Orchestra is proud to celebrate 60 years of partnership with Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in New York.

We are thankful to SPAC Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth Sobol, SPAC President Christopher Shiley, and the SPAC Board of Directors and are pleased to welcome them and their special guests to **Saratoga Day at The Philadelphia Orchestra on March 21**.

Join Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Principal Guest Conductor Marin Alsop, and the Orchestra at SPAC, August 5–22, for a spectacular 60th anniversary residency—highlighted by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and special appearances by Josh Groban, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Emanuel Ax, Daniele Rustioni, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, and more.

*For full program details, please visit **spac.org**.*



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.

The 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.

Principal Guest Conductor

Qigata Photo



One of the foremost conductors of our time, **Marin Alsop** is principal guest conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, with which she made her debut in 1990. She is the first woman to serve as the head of major orchestras in the United States, South America, Austria, and Great Britain. She is also the first and only conductor to receive a MacArthur Fellowship. This season marks her third as artistic director and chief conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony and her third as principal guest conductor of London's Philharmonia. She is

also chief conductor of the Ravinia Festival and the first music director of the National Orchestral Institute + Festival at the University of Maryland. She served as chief conductor of the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony from 2019 to 2025; she is now honorary conductor. Season highlights include her five-concert Carnegie Hall Perspectives series, Washington National Opera's new production of Bernstein's *West Side Story*, and a tour to Japan with the Polish National Radio Symphony. She also conducts the Chicago, Dallas, Houston, and ORF Vienna Radio symphonies; the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; and London's Philharmonia. Last season, she became the first United States-born woman to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic.

In 2021 Ms. Alsop assumed the title of music director laureate and OrchKids founder of the Baltimore Symphony. During her 14-year tenure as its music director, she led the orchestra on its first European tour in 13 years, released multiple award-winning recordings, and conducted more than two dozen world premieres, as well as founding OrchKids, its groundbreaking music education program for Baltimore's most disadvantaged youth. In 2019, after seven years as music director, she became conductor of honor of Brazil's São Paulo Symphony. Deeply committed to new music, she was music director of California's Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music for 25 years, leading 174 premieres.

Recognized with *BBC Music Magazine's* "Album of the Year" and Emmy nominations in addition to GRAMMY, Classical BRIT, and *Gramophone* awards, Ms. Alsop's discography comprises more than 200 titles on the Decca, Harmonia Mundi, Sony Classical, Naxos, Pentatone, and LSO labels. Among her many awards and academic positions are the 2025 Golden Baton Award, the highest accolade conferred by the League of American Orchestras; the 2019 World Economic Forum's Crystal Award; the 2021–22 Harman/Eisner Artist-in-Residence of the Aspen Institute Arts Program; and the 2020 artist-in-residence at Vienna's University of Music and Performing Arts. She is currently director of graduate conducting at the Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute. She holds honorary doctorates from Yale University, Johns Hopkins University, and the Juilliard School. To promote and nurture the careers of her fellow women conductors, Ms. Alsop founded the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship in 2002. *The Conductor*, an Emmy-nominated feature documentary about her life, debuted at New York's 2021 Tribeca Film Festival.

Soloist



Haochen Zhang made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut as a winner of the Orchestra's Albert M. Greenfield Student Competition in 2006 and his subscription debut in 2017, the same year he received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, which recognizes the potential for a major career in music. Since winning the gold medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, he has appeared with many of the world's leading festivals and orchestras, including the China Philharmonic with Long Yu at the BBC

Proms; the Munich Philharmonic with Lorin Maazel in a sold-out tour in Munich and China; the Sydney Symphony and David Robertson in a tour to China; and the NDR Hamburg and Thomas Hengelbrock in a tour of Tokyo, Beijing, and Shanghai. In 2019 he joined Yannick Nézet-Séguin and The Philadelphia Orchestra for tours of China and Japan.

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

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

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1846

Schumann

Symphony No. 2

Music

Berlioz

The Damnation of

Faust

Literature

Dostoyevsky

Poor Folk

Art

Cole

Catskill Landscape

History

Potato famine in

Ireland

1934

Rachmaninoff

Paganini

Rhapsody

Music

Hindemith

Mathis der Maler

Literature

Graves

I Claudius

Art

Dali

Cousine

History

Lindbergh baby

kidnapped

Today's program opens with *Go where the wind takes you ...* by the Ukrainian composer Iryna Aleksiychuk, an orchestral work commissioned for the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship founded by Marin Alsop. It is inspired by a poem by the Ukrainian writer Olena Stepanenko and dedicated to "Ukrainian women who, despite all the horrors of the war against Ukraine, do not lose their Courage, Hope, and Faith in our Victory."

Sergei Rachmaninoff enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with The Philadelphia Orchestra and once said that he had the distinctive sound of the ensemble in mind when he composed. He wrote most of his late works for the Orchestra and was the soloist in 1934 with Leopold Stokowski for the premiere of his brilliant Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, a set of variations on the 24th Caprice by the great 19th-century Italian violinist.

Robert Schumann's Second Symphony in C major was inspired in large part by Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in the same key. Schumann was the one who first discovered that magnificent work while visiting Vienna nearly a decade after Schubert's death and arranged for his friend Felix Mendelssohn to conduct the premiere in Leipzig in 1839. Six years later, Schumann heard further performances, which prompted him to write the Symphony we hear today. It moves from a darkly brooding opening to a triumphant finale and encodes messages to his beloved wife, Clara.

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

Go where the wind takes you ...

Iryna Aleksiychuk

Born in Dovzhansk, Ukraine, December 16, 1967

Currently living in Torrevieja, Spain



Award-winning Ukrainian composer Iryna Aleksiychuk has been acclaimed for her innovative and wide-ranging compositional output and for her commitment to Ukrainian artists and culture. A pianist since before her feet could reach the pedals, she composed her first piece at the age of four. She has had an active career as a keyboard soloist and she and her husband, Yuri, have won numerous international competitions as a piano duo. Simultaneously, she has maintained an active career as a dancer, with multiple championships to her credit.

Aleksiychuk's father was a choirmaster, instilling in her a particular interest in choral music, leading to some of her most evocative works. She is on the composition faculty of Ukraine's National Academy of Music and has been commissioned by numerous American and international ensembles.

An Artist in Wartime Many of Aleksiychuk's compositions, especially for chorus, have their origins in Ukrainian history and language. *Trisagion*, dating from 2022, is a six-part a cappella canonical arrangement of Ukrainian text for women's chorus and violin. Also dating from 2022, *Are there the best among flowers ...* sets verses of Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka for four-part a cappella women's chorus. Aleksiychuk's choral pieces have been performed by more than 40 choruses, and her instrumental works have been presented by ensembles ranging from high school bands to major orchestras. Like many artists in times of war, she sees her role as a composer to speak to the entire world and ask "people of goodwill to unite" and preserve the independence, culture, traditions, and language of her homeland.

Go where the wind takes you ... was commissioned by the organization Classical Movements for the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship, as part of the Eric Daniel Helms New Music Program, which mentors, supports, and promotes women conductors in their careers. The work was premiered on July 5, 2024, by the Prague Festival Symphony Orchestra as part of Prague Summer Nights: Young Artists Music Festival, in a "Concert for Ukraine" conducted by Laura Jackson. Marin Alsop, a long-time champion of the piece, led both a preview performance by the Peabody Symphony Orchestra in Baltimore in March 2024 and the official United States premiere with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in July 2024 at the Ravinia Festival.

A Closer Look Inspired by a poem (given below) by the Ukrainian writer Olena Stepanenko, *Go where the wind takes you ...* is dedicated to "Ukrainian women who, despite all

the horrors of the war against Ukraine, do not lose their Courage, Hope, and Faith in our Victory.” As Aleksiychuk writes, “Olena has a lot to tell. She and her young son survived in Bucha, a town that was almost completely destroyed by the Russian army along with its inhabitants.” A frequent collaborator, Stepanenko is co-organizer of the “War and Word” movement, a volunteer initiative supporting the Ukrainian military through sales of homemade jewelry and the presentation of charity readings. Aleksiychuk’s work also shows the influence of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, often viewed as an artistic symbol of resilience and triumph over adversity.

The instrumental texture of *Go where the wind takes you ...* travels through varied landscapes, inviting the audience to envision the conditions under which it was written. Barely audible shimmering violins and vibraphone convey a desolate war-torn palette of sadness while poignant melodies express elegiac mourning. The orchestration includes extensive and imaginative percussion, and despite its roots in war, tragedy, and anguish, the music points to an optimistic future. The combination of glockenspiel and vibraphone against flutes expresses a sign of hope, while the brass offer a majestic statement of defiance in the closing moments.

Go where the wind takes you ... has been described as a symphony of Ukrainian strength and a “manifesto of solidarity and consolation in the face of the tragedy of war.” Aleksiychuk acknowledges that “anytime I write music, I exhaust myself entirely,” but emphasizes that after the completion of a work, she is “reborn like a flaming bird from the ashes.” She characterizes *Go where the wind takes you ...* as deeply autobiographical—“like every Ukrainian, my life was irrevocably altered in the most tragic and horrifying way.” As the poet Stepanenko writes, “The civilization of patriarchal values is crumbling, and we are witnessing new destruction every day. What will keep the world on the edge of the abyss? A hand outstretched in the dark, a voice of compassion and support, effective nursing—across borders, races, and religions. Love that will conquer violence and death itself.”

—Nancy Plum

Nancy Plum has been a program annotator for 30 years and has written notes for The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Kimmel Center, Carnegie Hall, and Philadelphia Singers, among others. She has been a music critic in Princeton for more than 35 years and is a member of the Philadelphia Chorale. She wrote a history of the U.S. Air Force Singing Sergeants and a book about an incident in the Cuban underground in the 1950s.

Go Where the Wind Takes You

(Olena Stepanenko)

You are—a wall, a memory, complete, indestructible
scarred with the names of the living, the dead, the as yet unborn
in your voice's home they weave gentle nests
never alone nor tied down

despite pain, daily pain and loss, blanching, blind pain
(it hides you under it every day), every day you come alive at its call:
—Sister, come and look!

Behold, the serpent of the sun basks in the ruins of your house
Behold your body's shirt crocheted with bullet holes
Sister, sister ... but you pick up the roots
pocketing your son, a toy tractor and the lamb-like clouds
that dried over the house (as long as it was, so it is)
you part the air, holding on only to your voice
millions of sisters who see and hear every day
wait at the gates of life, holding death on a leash
your hand is among them
invisible and unwavering
your voice
your task:
Sister, go where the wind takes you
There is nothing
that you cannot overcome

Go where the wind takes you ... was composed in 2023.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work and the first time the Orchestra has performed anything by the composer.

The score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; four horns; three trumpets; three trombones; tuba; timpani; percussion (bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, tam-tam, tubular bells, vibraphone, wind chimes, wood blocks); piano; and strings.

The piece runs approximately 14 minutes in performance.

The Music

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born in Semyonovo, Russia, April 1, 1873

Died in Beverly Hills, March 28, 1943



Sergei Rachmaninoff's five works for piano and orchestra span most of his career and are tied in intimate ways to The Philadelphia Orchestra, a long partnership immortalized on magnificent recordings featuring the composer as soloist.

The four concertos hold somewhat unequal positions in the repertoire. On opposite ends are the First Concerto, which Rachmaninoff wrote as a teenager and later extensively revised, and his Fourth Concerto, which the Philadelphians premiered in 1927. The two middle concertos proved most

popular. The encouraging success of the Second in 1901 came at a transformative juncture in Rachmaninoff's career, following a nearly three-year compositional paralysis after the failure of his First Symphony. The Third Concerto proved another triumph in 1909 when it premiered in New York. Rachmaninoff composed his fifth and final piece for piano and orchestra, the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, for The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1934.

From Solo Violin to Full Orchestra and Piano Rachmaninoff wrote the Rhapsody that summer at his Swiss villa near Lucerne. At the time he described it as "not a 'concerto,' and its name is 'Symphonic Variations on a Theme of Paganini,'" which he then changed to "Fantasy." But ultimately it was as a Rhapsody that Leopold Stokowski led the Philadelphians in the world premiere in Baltimore on November 7, 1934, with the composer as soloist. The forces recorded the piece on Christmas Eve. Rachmaninoff went on to write his final two orchestral works for the Orchestra as well: the Symphony No. 3 in 1936 and the magisterial Symphonic Dances in 1940.

Rachmaninoff had earlier been attracted to variation form and written substantial pieces based on themes by Chopin and Corelli. For the Rhapsody he chose a simple but ingenious tune that has also seduced other composers: the Caprice No. 24 in A minor by Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840). The great Italian violinist, the first instrumental "rock star" of the 19th century, wrote a dazzling collection of 24 caprices for solo violin that explored everything that the instrument, and the instrumentalist, could do. In 1820 Paganini published the pieces, on which he had worked for nearly two decades, as his Op. 1. Franz Liszt, who at age 20 was deeply inspired when he first witnessed Paganini perform at the Paris Opera and who aspired to become the "Paganini of the Piano," transcribed some of them for piano, as did Robert Schumann. More surprising and impressive are Johannes Brahms's two sets of variations on the A-minor Caprice, Op. 35. Prominent 20th-century

composers after Rachmaninoff, including Witold Lutoslawski, Alfred Schnittke, and George Rochberg, took Modernist looks at the alluring theme.

A Closer Look Paganini's original A-minor Caprice is itself a miniature set of variations. Almost by definition variation sets begin with a statement of the principal theme in the simplest possible way so that listeners can grasp the basis for what follows. After a very brief introduction for the full orchestra, Rachmaninoff begins unusually with a pointillist variation (marked "precedente") before the strings actually state the theme with unobtrusive piano support. The first variations are dispatched at a quick pace until things slow down with No. 7, in which the rich piano chords introduce another theme that plays a prominent role in what follows. This is the well-known plainchant *Dies irae* from the Requiem Mass for the Dead. Rachmaninoff, who alluded to or quoted the medieval melody in other compositions, associated this motto not only with death but also with the violin's longstanding connection to the devil. (Many contemporaries commented on demonic performances by Paganini, whose name translates as "little pagan.")

Five years after writing the Rhapsody, Mikhail Fokine, the prominent Russian choreographer, used the piece for a ballet called *Paganini*. While in the planning stages Rachmaninoff suggested to him: "Why not resurrect the legend about Paganini, who, for perfection in his art and for a woman, sold his soul to an evil spirit?" He further remarked that "the variations which have the *Dies irae* represent the evil spirit." Over the course of the 24 variations Rachmaninoff devises many ingenious transformations of the theme, the most famous being the beautiful 18th variation, which offers a lyrical inversion (upside-down) of the tune as the emotional climax of the Rhapsody.

—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.

The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini was composed in 1934.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was the soloist in the world premiere performance of the Rhapsody with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski on November 7, 1934, in Baltimore. The most recent subscription performances were in January/February 2023, with Yuja Wang as soloist and Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting.

In addition to Rachmaninoff's recording of this work with the Philadelphians in 1934 with Stokowski for RCA, the Orchestra has recorded the Rhapsody four times: in 1958 with Philippe Entremont and Eugene Ormandy for CBS; in 1970 with Van Cliburn and Ormandy for RCA; in 1989 with Andrei Gavrilov and Riccardo Muti for EMI; and in 2015 with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for Deutsche Grammophon.

The score calls for an orchestra of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, orchestra bells, side drum, snare drum, triangle), harp, and strings, in addition to the solo piano.

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

The Music

Symphony No. 2

Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony, June 8, 1810

Died in Endenich (near Bonn), July 29, 1856



When Mozart wrote his First Symphony, at the tender age of eight, he probably was not much concerned with his place in music history. For the Romantics, however, the genre of the symphony became the proving ground for greatness. Expectations were intense, which led some composers, like Johannes Brahms and Anton Bruckner, to long delay the public presentation of one. Others, like Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt, sought to reinvent the genre, writing not a traditional Symphony No. 1, but rather a symphonic poem or

some other kind of large orchestral work, often with an extramusical program based on literature, history, or nature.

How to Write a Symphony Robert Schumann, like most of his Romantic contemporaries, faced the vexing challenge of how to write a symphony after Beethoven. In the longest review he ever wrote, he highly praised Berlioz's *Symphonic fantastique* (although he found the story silly and very French) and yet he was not inclined to follow the same path himself. Only the title of Schumann's First Symphony, "Spring," has his authority (and that was just at an early stage). Rather than pursuing musical narratives, Schumann inclined toward the aesthetic Beethoven famously proclaimed in his "Pastoral" Symphony: "More an expression of feeling than painting."

With a few exceptions, Schumann despaired about the state of the symphony in the 1830s and '40s. As an extremely powerful music critic he was not shy in making his views known. He felt that Schubert offered a remarkable model in his "Great" C-major Symphony, written in 1825, less than a year after Beethoven's Ninth. Yet that magnificent piece remained unknown for more than a decade after Schubert's death in 1828. Schumann was amazed when he learned of its existence during a visit to Vienna and he was the one to arrange for its first performance with his friend Felix Mendelssohn conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in March 1839.

Schumann had tentatively tried his hand at symphonies early in his career, but he increasingly felt the need, as he approached age 30, to expand the scope of his musical palette. His discovery of Schubert's Symphony was perhaps the principal impetus for him to focus on orchestral projects. After hearing Mendelssohn lead the premiere, he wrote to his beloved Clara Wieck, "I was totally happy and wished only that you should be my wife and that I also could write such symphonies." She encouraged her fiancé's

symphonic aspirations and he began an intense “symphonic year” in 1841 by sketching his First Symphony in B-flat, Op. 38, and then started a piece that was eventually published as Overture, Scherzo, and Finale, Op. 52. In May he started composing his Symphony in D minor, Op. 120, best known in its revised version as the Fourth Symphony.

We now fast forward four years for his return to the genre. In December 1845 he again heard a performance of Schubert’s C-major Symphony. (We need to remember how rare chances were to hear major orchestral works before the modern age of recordings.) Schumann’s Second Symphony initially failed to please when Mendelssohn conducted the premiere at the Leipzig Gewandhaus in November 1846, and he went about revising it for a performance later that month.

A Closer Look Schumann was challenged for most of his life with issues of mental health and experienced a particularly severe period of depression, a mental breakdown, in 1844. Despite these problems, which would eventually lead to madness, the Second Symphony moves in a Beethovenian trajectory from darkness to light. The slow introduction to the first movement (**Sostenuto assai**) combines a trumpet motto with meandering string writing underneath. This motto is similar to the principal theme of Joseph Haydn’s final Symphony No. 104 (“London”) and Schumann uses it to unify the entire cyclic symphony. A gradual transition leads to the fast main body of the movement (**Allegro ma non troppo**), the main theme of which is derived from the introduction.

Also Beethovenian is the reversed order of the middle movements. The boisterous **Scherzo: Allegro vivace** opens with the first violins playing an energetic perpetual motion theme that propels most of the movement, with some relaxation in two trio sections. Schumann’s new interest in the music of J.S. Bach is apparent in this symphony not only in the contrapuntal writing but also in his including the cipher of the composer’s name (BACH). The trumpet motto reappears at the close. The third movement (**Adagio espressivo**) is a profound slow movement with strings stating the opening theme that is then taken up by the oboe. There is a fugato in the middle, another nod to Bach.

The triumphant finale (**Allegro molto vivace**) reflects Schumann’s relief at his return to health. He informed a friend, “I began to feel more myself when I wrote the last movement, and was certainly much better when I finished the whole work. All the same it reminds me of my dark days.” It opens with an ascending scale before fanfarelike eruptions in the woodwinds and brass. The cellos intone a second theme derived from the melancholy slow movement. A further autobiographical element comes later in the movement with a quotation from Beethoven’s song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved) that originally had the words “Take them then, these songs that I sang to you beloved.” This is a coded message to Clara; he had done so earlier in his Piano Fantasy, Op. 17, also in C major. (The very key of these works are probably references to Clara.) Interwoven as well is the trumpet motto that opened the Symphony and that brings the piece to a thrilling conclusion.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

The Second Symphony was composed from 1845 to 1846.

Fritz Scheel conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Schumann's Second Symphony, in February 1903. The work has appeared consistently throughout the years, most recently on subscription in May 2017, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting.

The Philadelphians have recorded the work three times: in 1937 with Eugene Ormandy for RCA; in 1977 with James Levine for RCA; and in 2003 with Wolfgang Sawallisch on the Orchestra's own label.

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

Performance time is approximately 40 minutes.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

A cappella: Choral singing performed without instrumental accompaniment

Canon: A device whereby an extended melody, stated in one part, is imitated strictly and in its entirety in one or more other parts

Caprice: A short piece of a humorous or capricious character

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

Contrapuntal: See counterpoint

Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

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

Fugato: A passage or movement consisting of fugal imitations, but not worked out as a regular fugue

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

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

Monophony: Music for a single voice or part

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.

Perpetual motion: A musical device in which rapid figuration is persistently maintained

Plainchant: The official monophonic unison chant (originally unaccompanied) of the Christian liturgies

Rhapsody: Generally an instrumental fantasia on folksongs or on motives taken from primitive national music

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

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.

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

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

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (**Tempo**)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Espressivo: With expression, with feeling

Precedente: Previous

Sostenuto: Sustained

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Assai: Much

Ma non troppo: But not too much

Molto: Very

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Please don't hesitate to contact us via phone at 215.893.1999, in person in the lobby, or online at ensembleartshilly.org/contact-us.

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The Kimmel Center

Broad and Spruce Streets

Philadelphia, PA 19102

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