



Thomas Wilkins, conductor

Thomas Wilkins is principal conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s artistic advisor, education and community engagement. He holds Indiana University’s Henry A. Upper chair of orchestral conducting. At the end of the 2020-21 season he concluded his long and successful tenure as music director of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra. His other past positions include resident conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Florida Orchestra in Tampa Bay, and associate conductor of the Richmond Symphony in Virginia. He has led many orchestras throughout the U.S. and abroad; recent engagements have included returns to the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic,

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C., to name a few. Devoted to promoting a life-long enthusiasm for music, Wilkins brings energy and commitment to audiences of all ages. He is hailed as a master at communicating and connecting with audiences. Following his highly successful first season with the Boston Symphony, *The Boston Globe* named him among the “Best People and Ideas of 2011.” In 2014, he received the prestigious Outstanding Artist award at the Nebraska Governor’s Arts Awards for his significant contribution to music in the state, while in March of 2018, the Longy School of Music awarded him the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society. In 2019 the Virginia Symphony bestowed Wilkins with its annual Dreamer’s Award. More: hollywoodbowl.com.



Shirin Barghi, visual artist

Shirin Barghi is an Iranian journalist, audio producer and documentary filmmaker based in Brooklyn, New York. She currently works as a Senior Producer for BRIC TV, where she covers issues of social justice, immigration, inequality and more. Her character-driven short documentaries have received four New York Emmy nominations, and her passion for bringing communities directly into the conversation have led her to produce or co-produce a number of town hall forums on topics including Women’s Rights, Islamophobia, the #MeToo movement, school segregation and police accountability. She was a producer on the team that won a 2018 New York Emmy in the Education/

one-minute notes

Liszt: *Les Préludes*

Finding inspiration in many sources, and written in a form new to the orchestral repertoire, Franz Liszt’s *Les Préludes* is the work that laid the foundation for many great symphonic poems.

Thompson: *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*

Joel Thompson’s *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* speaks of the grief, sadness and horror that the composer and the world have felt after witnessing recent killings of Black men by police and other authority figures in the U.S. The final words of seven of these unarmed men—Kenneth Chamberlain, Trayvon Martin, Amadou Diallo, Michael Brown, Oscar Grant, John Crawford and Eric Garner—serve as the text of each of the cantata’s seven movements, in a structure inspired by Haydn’s *The Seven Last Words of Christ*.

Tchaikovsky: *Symphony No. 5*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s very popular Fifth Symphony—which journeys from minor to major and darkness to hope—is filled with wonderful mottos, orchestral color, balletic beauty and high drama. Watch for the finale’s false conclusion, a great climax that tricks many listeners into thinking the performance is complete.

School Program Category for *Class Divide: Breaking the Pattern of School Segregation*. Most recently, she is a producer of Brooklyn, USA—a bi-weekly audiovisual magazine series that blends short documentary, hyperlocal journalism, personal narratives, sound art and audiovisual experimentation. A graduate of New York University and The New School, her writing and visual work have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Souciant Magazine*, *The Huffington Post*, *Aljazeera*, *Vox* and beyond. She is currently co-directing a documentary about The Sirens, the longest running women's motorcycle club in New York. More: shirinbarghi.com.

Seven Last Words of the Unarmed advisory committee

Jalilia Abdul-Brown
 Brendon Adams
 Shemeka Bogan
 Mary K. Murray Boyd
 H. Yvonne Cheek
 Dr. Adrian Davis
 Remi Douah, Ph.D., M.P.H.
 Mayor Mike Elliott
 Bishop Richard D. Howell, Jr.
 Beth Kellar-Long
 Cassie Kopietz
 Judge LaJune Thomas Lange, retired
 Mary Beth Leone-Getten
 Felicia Perry
 Bob Peskin
 Emma Plehal
 Kathy Saltzman Romey
 Dr. B. Charvez Russell
 Jessi Ryan
 Pitnarry Shin
 Dr. Marcus A. Simmons
 Shekela Wanyama

Minnesota Chorale and Twin Cities Choral Partners Prepared by Kathy Saltzman Romey, Dr. Adrian Davis and Shekela Wanyama Barbara Brooks, accompanist and artistic advisor

The Minnesota Chorale, principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, has sung with the Orchestra for more than four decades, and is joined at this week's performances by additional singers from throughout the Twin Cities. The joint ensemble was prepared by Kathy Saltzman Romey, Dr. Adrian Davis and Shekela Wanyama. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by artistic director Romey, the Chorale is Minnesota's preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. More: mnchorale.org.

soprano

Kristi Bergland *
 Alyssa K. Breece *
 Deborah Carbaugh *
 Deborah Croker Treece
 Catherine Crosby-Schmidt *
 Monica deCausmeaker *
 Alyssa Ellson *
 Wendy Lukaszewski
 Anna Maher
 Erika Malpass
 Shana Marchand
 Meghan McCabe
 Merilu Narum
 Linda S. Neuman
 Alyssa Northrop
 Sherri Orr *
 Elizabeth Pauly *
 Adriana Pohl
 Natalie Scholz
 Polly Strege
 Shekela Wanyama *
 Jena Wilhelmi

alto

Bretta Alexander *
 Jaime Anthony
 Jill H. Apple
 Sarah Backman
 Kate Biederwolf
 Bethany Bobo
 Nan Buller
 Alyssa Burdick *
 Bridgette Cook-Jones
 Becca Donley
 Lynnette Fraser *
 Mallory Harrington
 Lindsey Hartjes
 Katy Husby
 Megan Kosse
 Maureen Long
 Mary B. Monson *
 Sharon Cogley Paulson
 Joan Potter
 Deborah E. Richman
 Kristen Schweiloch
 Sara Zanussi

tenor

Brendon Adams
 Jason José Bendezú
 Bryen Bogan
 Jared Campbell *
 Patrick L. Coleman
 Chris Crosby-Schmidt
 Daamir Johnson
 Scott D. McKenzie
 David Nordli *
 Mark Pladson
 Philip Reilly
 Scott Sandberg
 Luke Slivinski
 Erick Sood

bass

Peder Bolstad
 Scott Chamberlain
 Daniel J. Cosio *
 Mark J. Countryman
 Steve Cramer *
 James J. D'Aurora
 Adrian Davis *
 Elwyn Fraser *
 Stefan Gingerich
 Thomas Jermann
 Eric Johnson
 Joe Kastner *
 Evan Clay Kelly
 Bob Magil
 Ethan Murphy *
 Robert Oganovic
 Bob Peskin *
 Steve Pratt
 Peter Scholtz
 Marcus Simmons *
 Rick Treece
 Rick Wagner *

* section leader

29:11 International Exchange Brendon Adams, artistic director

The members of musical ensemble 29:11 come from the areas of the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa. They have been trained by world-renowned musician Camillo Lombard and are currently under the direction of Brendon Adams, co-founder of New Hope International Exchange. They performed at Orchestra Hall most recently in November 2019 performances of Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*. More: nhixchange.org.

soprano

Gaylene Adams
 Ayanda Ayanda
 Megan Charles
 Cheryl Lottering
 Baetile Sebata

alto

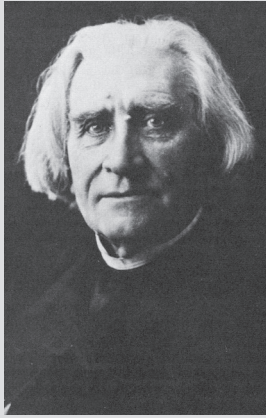
Nomvula Maneli
 Nikita Van Niebers

tenor

Storme Kock
 Jacques Laminie
 Roshane Solomons

bass

Brendon Adams
 Gilmore Garth
 Renaldo Hendricks



Franz Liszt

Born: October 22, 1811,
Raasdorf, Hungary

Died: July 31, 1886,
Bayreuth, Germany

***Les Préludes*, Symphonic
Poem No. 3**

Premiered: February 23, 1854

Although many might think of the Hungarian-born Franz Liszt as a piano virtuoso first and a composer second, he had considerable impact on his era in other respects. Liszt is credited with inventing the piano recital as we know it. He was also an influential patron and mentor of younger composers, particularly after 1850. As an orchestral composer, Liszt eschewed traditional symphonies for the most part, favoring instead a new type of composition: the symphonic poem.

Liszt’s concept was a single-movement orchestral piece, accompanied by a written program that the audience was intended to read prior to hearing the performance. Such a program was not the same as the printed program notes that you are currently reading. Rather, it introduced an extramusical association (for example, a poem or other literary source) intended to stimulate the listener’s imagination and subsequent grasp of the music.

Liszt was an educated and literate man. He perceived through program music an opportunity to merge different facets of romantic sensibility. Descriptive overtures such as Beethoven’s *Coriolan* (1807) and Mendelssohn’s *The Hebrides* (1829-32) prompted his thinking. In 1854, he coined the term “symphonic poem”—itself a combination of musical and literary terminology—as the subtitle for his latest orchestral work, *Tasso*. Eventually, he endowed the repertoire with a dozen examples of this new genre, all composed during the 13 years (1848-61) he spent in Weimar, Germany. Liszt’s widespread influence is eminently clear in the many tone poems of his younger contemporaries, most notably Richard Strauss.

from choral settings to orchestral masterwork

If we sought one symphonic poem that both encompassed the sweeping passions of 19-century romanticism and embodied the tempestuous career of Franz Liszt, *Les Préludes* would surely fit the bill. It has a bewildering and complex history. *Les Préludes* began

as an overture to four choral settings of poetry by Joseph Autran. By the time Liszt completed the score in 1854, he had discarded the choral pieces (which were never published) and reworked the overture to comport with the verse and philosophy of a more prominent French poet: Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869). Liszt’s score acquired the heading *Les Préludes (d’après Lamartine)*, connecting his music to the poet’s *Méditations poétiques*, a collection of 24 poems published in 1820.

The link is strengthened by the composer’s famous remarks at the front of the score:

“What is our life but a series of Preludes to that unknown song, the first solemn note of which is sounded by Death? The enchanted dawn of every existence is heralded by Love, yet in whose destiny are not the first throbs of happiness interrupted by storms?...”

The preface, which is more Liszt than Lamartine, provides the composer with latitude for widely contrasting emotional states: love and passion; the pastoral calm of nature’s beauty; spiritual conflict. They all find their way into the music. Through a process called thematic transformation (yet another Lisztian innovation), he moves through these widely varied states using only two basic themes. If *Les Préludes* is the only one of Liszt’s symphonic poems to have found a permanent place in the repertoire, it deserves that berth because of its sweeping grandeur, poetic themes, and inspired orchestration.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, harp and strings

Program note © 2017 by **Laurie Shulman**. First North American serial rights only.



Joel Thompson

Born: 1988,
The Bahamas

Seven Last Words of the Unarmed

Premiered: October 2015

"There was everything about me in there; there was no need to censor myself. It was as honest as possible." This is what Atlanta-based composer Joel Thompson said of the cantata he composed in 2014, *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, in a 2020 interview with *The New York Times*. The work is an intensely personal one, born of the grief, sadness and horror Thompson felt as the composer and the world witnessed the high-profile police killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014. Thompson also found inspiration from visual artist Shirin Barghi's #lastwords project, which turned the last words spoken by 15 different Black men and boys murdered at the hands of police and armed vigilantes into a series of simple black and white drawings. The words of seven of these men—Kenneth Chamberlain, Trayvon Martin, Amadou Diallo, Michael Brown, Oscar Grant, John Crawford, and Eric Garner—serve as the text of each of the cantata's seven movements.

the journey to performance

Once the work was completed, Thompson put it away with no intent of hearing it performed, fearing there would be no one willing to listen to a piece with such sensitive subject matter. Spurred by friends, a read-through of the score was organized, after which Thompson was persuaded to send the score to Dr. Eugene Rogers, director of choral activities and associate professor of choral conducting at the University of Michigan. Despite the way Dr. Rogers was able to connect to Thompson's work, he too was hesitant to bring it to life. In a 2020 interview with the National Endowment for the Arts, Dr. Rogers relates: "I loved it and it resonated with me. But I didn't know how I was going to do it with an historic group of mostly non-African American singers. I worried how it might be received by this community. It took me a long time, but I couldn't put it away, I kept coming back to it."

Eventually, Dr. Rogers was able to find an avenue to be able to introduce the piece to his musicians, saying that "...the idea of focusing on a universal theme—of love, loss, and humanity...

helped me figure out a way to get my students to consider the piece as not just a political piece of music, because it never was intended to be political. Whatever you thought about the different cases surrounding these seven individuals, we could all come together and unite around the value of human life." Dr. Rogers made a concerted effort to ensure that his musicians educated themselves on each of the individual seven men and their cases to ensure that his students could "form their opinions based on the facts."

Dr. Rogers and the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club premiered *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* in fall 2015. The fears that both Thompson and Dr. Rogers had about performing a work of this nature were not completely unfounded. At the time of its premiere, Dr. Rogers' dean received letters. Several audience members stormed out of the auditorium in plain view of the choir, destroying their programs as they left. But in the intervening years since, *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* has gained popularity and critical acclaim, as the United States continues to grapple with the continued killings of innocent, unarmed Black men, women and children at the hands of the police. "Here we are seven years later, and it's still frighteningly relevant," Thompson reflected during a recent visit to Minneapolis in which he discussed his music with Minnesota Orchestra musicians, staff and the community.

Detailed information about *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* and U.S. policing and reforms, as well as educational resources, are available at sevenlastwords.org.

about the composer

Composer, pianist, conductor and educator Joel Thompson this month completes a doctor of musical arts degree in composition at the Yale School of Music. He received a bachelor's degree in 2010 and a master's degree in choral conducting in 2013, both from Emory University. From 2013 to 2015, Thompson was the director of choral studies and an assistant professor of Music at Andrew College in Cuthbert, Georgia, and from 2015 to 2017 he taught at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School in Atlanta. His teachers include Eric Nelson, William Ransom, Laura Gordy, Richard Prior, John Anthony Lennon, Kevin Puts, Robert Aldridge and Scott Stewart. As a fellow at the Aspen Festival, Thompson worked with Stephen Hartke and Christopher Theofanidis. He and Dr. Eugene Rogers won an Emmy Award in 2017 for Craft Specialty—Musical Composition/Arrangement" for their work on *Love, Life & Loss*, a documentary performance of *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* from the Michigan chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Thompson, who comes from a Jamaican family, was born in the Bahamas and moved with his family to Houston when he was 10, then settled a few years later in Atlanta.

a borrowed melody with complex meaning

Thompson weaves the melody of *L'homme armé*, an anonymously composed 15th-century secular French song, throughout *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. Within just a few years after its emergence, *L'homme armé* had been used as a *cantus firmus* in dozens of masses. Its only surviving verse warns of the dangers of the armed man:

The armed man should be feared.
Everywhere it has been proclaimed
That each man shall arm himself
With a coat of iron mail.
The armed man should be feared.

The use of *L'homme armé* in religious masses allowed composers to imbue their works with complex layers of meaning. Its inclusion here not only provides thematic unity throughout the piece, but also a stark reminder that man has perpetrated horrifically violent acts against fellow man for centuries.

the composer's description

Originally scored for tenor and bass choir, strings and piano, the work is heard this week in a newly revised version scored for soprano, alto, tenor and bass choir and orchestra. The composer has provided the following descriptions of the cantata's seven movements.

I. "Officers, why do you have your guns out?" Encapsulating the sense of gloom that arises upon the news of the death of another unarmed black man, the chorus rises from the funereal piano ostinato singing **Kenneth Chamberlain's** last words interpolated with the medieval tune, *L'homme armé doibt on doubter* - "The armed man must be feared." After the final iteration of the 66-year old's dying breath, the chorus repeats one important word: "why?"

II. "What are you following me for?" This movement uses the classical form of the fugue not only to portray **Trayvon Martin's** last moments trying to escape death, but also to sonically capture the daily paranoia of the black experience while driving on roads, walking on sidewalks, and congregating at various social gatherings. Quotes of *L'homme armé* in the strings underneath the imitative counterpoint in the voices lead to a climactic yell of surprise at the movement's end.

III. "Mom, I'm going to college." In New York, February of 1999, four police officers fired 41 shots at **Amadou Diallo**, a 23-year-old immigrant from Guinea. The undulating pattern in the piano simultaneously yields a sense of calm with its simple harmonic underpinning and unease with its odd 5/4 meter.

IV. "I don't have a gun! Stop shooting!" Of the seven movements, this one contains the most anger. Through the use of agitated rhythms

and multiple harmonic exclamations on the word "stop," the target of the rage is media portrayal of black men on the news, in comedies, and in dramas. Even in the aftermath of such tragedies, the rhetoric and images used to describe the deceased was markedly appalling across all media. This was the case, especially, for **Michael Brown**.

V. "You shot me. You shot me!" **Oscar Grant III's** exclamations of surprise and incredulity were caught on several cellphone recordings in the BART station in which he was murdered. The movement honoring his life is a sonic representation of this epidemic. Aleatoric spoken exclamations of the last words crescendo alongside the humming of *L'homme armé* in the style of the Negro spiritual. Underneath the cacophony, the pulsing C of the piano, violin, and viola persist unflinchingly like a heart monitor until the end.

VI. "It's not real." Although they were referring to the BB gun he was carrying in the Walmart where he was killed, **John Crawford's** last words escape the lips of thousands of African-Americans. Thus, the movement's beginning is the soundtrack to my mental utopia. Saccharine sweet and soaring, the voices and strings are joined by the piano "heart monitor" which persists and gradually infects the strings, like reality interrupting a reverie.

VII. "I can't breathe!" The decision of a Richmond County grand jury to not indict the officer responsible for **Eric Garner's** death was the impetus for this entire work, and it is only fitting that his last words end the piece. After using a mournful Byzantine texture for the first half of the movement, I tried to capture the panicked death thralls of asphyxiation in the music.

changing "one heart, one mind"

When Thompson visited Minnesota earlier this year, he reflected on the evolving meaning of *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* both to himself and audiences. "I don't believe that one piece of music can completely change these big ideas and problems that we are tackling," he noted. "But I think it's a part of being an ethical artist nowadays, to understand the important role that community plays in music-making, that music can create community, that music can transcend boundaries....Holding these men and these victims and these communities in our memory will be a part of saving lives. I know that music has a transformative power, and if it could change one heart, one mind, then it's worth it."

Instrumentation: 4-part mixed chorus with orchestra comprising
2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani,
snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, marimba, harp,
piano and strings

Program note by **Michael Divino**.



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840,
Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 6, 1893,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Opus 64

Premiered: November 17, 1888

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony came from a moment of supreme personal tension for the composer—his disastrous and short-lived marriage—and in the process of completing it he collapsed. He suffered a nervous breakdown from which he recovered slowly, and this was followed by a creative dry spell that lasted nearly a decade.

creative once again

Then, in the winter of 1887-88, Tchaikovsky made a tour of Western Europe, conducting his own works in Leipzig, Hamburg (where he met Johannes Brahms), Berlin, Prague, Paris and London. Those audiences responded enthusiastically to his music (Brahms was an exception), and with his confidence somewhat bolstered, Tchaikovsky returned to Russia ready at last to attempt a new symphony. In April 1888, he moved into a villa in Frolovskoye, northwest of Moscow, where he could work on his new symphony and take long walks in the woods. His Fifth Symphony was done by August, and he led the premiere in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888. Despite some initial misgivings, he was finally convinced that he had regained his creative powers.

The Fifth Symphony—full of those wonderful Tchaikovsky themes, imaginative orchestral color, and excitement—has become one of his most popular works. As he did in the Fourth, he builds this symphony around a motto-theme, and in his notebooks he suggested that the motto of the Fifth Symphony represents “complete resignation before fate.” But that is as far as the resemblance goes, for Tchaikovsky supplied no program for the Fifth Symphony, nor does this music seem to be “about” anything. The motto-theme returns in each of the four movements, often in quite different guises, and it may be best to understand it as a unifying device rather than as anything so dramatic as the Fourth Symphony's “sword of Damocles.” Listeners are of course free to supply their own interpretations, but despite the tantalizing hints

about “resignation before fate,” Tchaikovsky apparently regarded his Fifth Symphony as abstract music.

the music: a wealth of melodies, excitement—and a false ending

andante-allegro con anima. Clarinets introduce the somber motto-theme at the beginning of the slow introduction, and gradually this leads to the main body of the movement, marked *Allegro con anima*. Over the orchestra's steady tread, solo clarinet and bassoon sing the movement's surging main theme, and there follows a wealth of thematic material. This lengthy movement is built on three separate theme groups, full of those soaring and sumptuous Tchaikovsky melodies.

andante cantabile con alcuna licenza. Deep string chords at the opening of the *Andante cantabile* introduce one of the great solos for French horn, and a few moments later the oboe has the graceful second subject. For a movement that begins in such relaxed spirits, this music is twice shattered by the return of the motto-theme, which blazes out dramatically in the trumpets.

valse: allegro moderato. Tchaikovsky springs a surprise in the third movement—instead of the expected scherzo, he writes a lovely waltz. He rounds the movement off beautifully with an extended coda based on the waltz tune, and in its closing moments the motto-theme makes a fleeting appearance, like a figure seen through the mists.

finale: andante maestoso-allegro vivace-moderato assai e molto maestoso. However misty that theme may have seemed at the end of the third movement, it comes into crystalline focus at the beginning of the finale. Tchaikovsky moves to E major here and sounds out the motto to open this movement. The main body of the finale, marked *Allegro vivace*, leaps to life, and the motto-theme breaks in more and more often as it proceeds. The movement drives to a great climax, then breaks off in silence. This is a trap, and it often tricks the unwary into premature applause, for the symphony is not yet over. Out of the ensuing silence begins the real coda, and the motto-theme now leads the way on constantly-accelerating tempos to the (true) conclusion in E major.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.