Thursday, February 8, 2024, 7:30 p.m.
16,996th Concert

Saturday, February 10, 2024, 8:00 p.m.
16,997th Concert

Sunday, February 11, 2024, 2:00 p.m.
16,998th Concert

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 7:30 p.m.
16,999th Concert

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Conductor
Esther Yoo, Violin
(New York Philharmonic debut)

Wu Tsai Theater
David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the New York Philharmonic

This program will last approximately one and three-quarters hours, which includes one intermission.
Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Conductor
Esther Yoo, Violin (New York Philharmonic debut)

BERNSTEIN
(1918–90)

Serenade (after Plato’s Symposium) for Violin, String Orchestra, Harp, and Percussion (1953–54)
Phaedrus: Pausanias (Lento — Allegro marcato)
Aristophanes (Allegretto)
Eryximachus (Presto)
Agathon (Adagio)
Socrates: Alcibiades (Molto tenuto — Allegro molto vivace — Presto vivace)

ESTHER YOO

Intermission

R. STRAUSS
(1864–1949)

Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony), Op. 64 (1911–15)
Night
Sunrise
Ascent
Entering the Forest
Strolling by the Stream
By the Waterfall
Apparition
In Flowery Meadows
In Pastures
Through Thickets and Briars on a Mistaken Route
On the Glacier
Dangerous Moments
On the Summit
Vision
Mists Rise Up
The Sun Gradually Grows Dark
Elegy
Calm Before the Storm
Thunder and Tempest — Descent
Sunset
Fading Tones
Night

(played without pause)
Throughout his career, Leonard Bernstein struggled to balance the competing demands of his multifarious gifts as composer, conductor, pianist, media personality, and all-around celebrity. Time for composition was potentially the most endangered in the mix that packed his datebook, and he had to take special care to ensure that it didn’t get entirely crowded out by his day-to-day obligations as a performer. This balance became especially challenging in the full flower of his career, and never more so than during his 11 years as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic (1958–69).

Bernstein and his wife, Felicia Montealegre, spent the summer of 1954 in a home they rented on Martha’s Vineyard, a site sufficiently isolated to allow the composer to concentrate on two major works. He wrote to friends:

My life is all Lillian Hellman and Candide, and the violin concerto for Isaac Stern to première at the Venice Festival in September.

Candide would end up dragging on and on; it was brought to its first completion in 1956, but Bernstein kept rewriting it for the rest of his career. The “violin concerto,” however, was accomplished in less than a year once he set about working on it seriously in the fall of 1953, and people close to Bernstein reported that the Serenade (after Plato’s Symposium) was one of the works of which he remained the fondest. Its roots go back to the summer of 1951, when the Koussevitzky Music Foundation commissioned Bernstein to write a piece in memory of the recently departed conductor Serge Koussevitzky, who had served as his mentor.

That Bernstein was a highly literate man is beyond question. Fellow composer, conductor, and pianist Lukas Foss once said in an interview about Bernstein:

Probably the reason he had so much success with his collaborations in the music theater was that he was fired by the intrusion of the other arts, that they inspired his imagination. I would

In Short

Born: August 25, 1918, in Lawrence, Massachusetts
Died: October 14, 1990, in New York City
Works composed: from late 1953 through August 7, 1954, on commission from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation; dedicated “To the beloved memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky”
World premiere: September 12, 1954, at Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy, by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, with the composer conducting, Isaac Stern, soloist
New York Philharmonic premiere: July 15, 1965, with the composer conducting, Zino Francescatti, soloist
Most recent New York Philharmonic performance: July 1, 2018, Jaap van Zweden, conductor, Renaud Capucon, soloist, at Shanghai Symphony Hall
Estimated duration: ca. 31 minutes
Bernstein penned this program note for his Serenade the day after he signed off on the score:

There is no literal program for this Serenade, despite the fact that it resulted from a re-reading of Plato’s charming dialogue, “The Symposium.” The music, like the dialogue, is a series of related statements in praise of love, and generally follows the Platonic form through the succession of speakers at the banquet. The “relatedness” of the movements does not depend on common thematic material, but rather on a system whereby each movement evolves out of elements in the preceding one. For the benefit of those interested in literary allusion, I might suggest the following points as guideposts:

**Phaedrus: Pausanius (Lento — Allegro).** Phaedrus opens the symposium with a lyrical oration in praise of Eros, the god of love. (Fugato, begun by the solo violin.) Pausanias continues by describing the duality of lover and beloved. This is expressed in a classical sonata-allegro, based on the material of the opening fugato.

**Aristophanes (Allegretto).** Aristophanes does not play the role of clown in this dialogue, but instead that of the bedtime storyteller, invoking the fairy-tale mythology of love.

**Eryximachus (Presto).** The physician speaks of bodily harmony as a scientific model for the workings of love-patterns. This is an extremely short fugato scherzo, born of a blend of mystery and humor.

**Agathon (Adagio).** Perhaps the most moving speech of the dialogue, Agathon’s panegyric embraces all aspects of love’s powers, charms, and functions. This movement is a simple three-part song.

**Socrates: Alcibiades (Molto tenuto — Allegro molto vivace).** Socrates describes his visit to the seer Diotima, quoting her speech on the demonology of love. This is a slow introduction of greater weight than any of the preceding movements, and serves as a highly developed reprise of the middle section of the Agathon movement, thus suggesting a hidden sonata-form. The famous interruption of Alcibiades and his band of drunken revelers ushers in the Allegro, which is an extended Rondo ranging in spirit from agitation through jigglike dance music to joyful celebration. If there is a hint of jazz in the celebration, I hope it will not be taken as anachronistic Greek party-music, but rather the natural expression of a contemporary American composer imbued with the spirit of that timeless dinner party.

Bernstein and violinist Isaac Stern, who premiered the Serenade, during a recording session in 1956
say that Lenny was the most well-read composer I have ever met.

A number of Bernstein’s works relate to literary sources of grand standing, including his early incidental music for The Birds and The Peace (two plays by Aristophanes), Candide (from Voltaire’s novella), West Side Story (from Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet), and The Age of Anxiety Symphony (after poems by Auden). He is known to have been reading Plato in 1951, at about the time the Koussevitzky Foundation extended its commission, but there’s no indication that he decided to attach Plato to the piece until later. The biographer Humphrey Burton believes that the connection may have been forged “not long before the completion of the work, since a glance at Plato reveals obvious discrepancies between Bernstein’s adaptation and the original.” Burton notes:

Bernstein names the individual movements of the concerto after the various speakers at the banquet but has changed the order of the speeches and modified their character. Thus in Bernstein’s version, Aristophanes, the comic playwright, becomes “a bedtime storyteller, invoking the fairy-tale mythology of love.” Moreover, Bernstein shifts the emotional center of gravity from Socrates to Agathon. The fourth movement of the concerto, dedicated to Agathon, contains some of the most beautiful music of any twentieth-century score. But in Plato it is Socrates who has the longest and most important speech.

These are cogent observations, and they do lend credence to the idea that episodes from Plato’s Symposium may have been largely superimposed over a piece that had already found its own shape.

The decision to call this half-hour long work a serenade, rather than a concerto, also seems to have come quite late in the process of composition, as is evident from Bernstein’s regularly referring to it as a concerto during the months preceding its completion. Burton imagines that Bernstein may have selected the name as an allusion to the fact that some early serenades were used for wooing — literally, serenades sung beneath a balcony. He writes:

What Bernstein surely meant us to understand was that his Serenade embodied all his loving feelings toward all his fellow human beings. Complete movements from Bernstein’s Anniversaries, short piano pieces dedicated to loving friends, are woven into the musical fabric of three of the Serenade’s five movements. But the work can also be perceived as a portrait of Bernstein himself: grand and noble in the first movement, childlike in the second, boisterous and playful in the third, serenely calm and tender in the fourth, a doom-laden prophet and then a jazzy iconoclast in the finale.

Instrumentation: harp, timpani, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, triangle, suspended cymbals, xylophone, orchestra bells, chimes, Chinese blocks, tambourine, and strings, in addition to the solo violin.

— James M. Keller, former New York Philharmonic Program Annotator; San Francisco Symphony program annotator; and author of Chamber Music: A Listener’s Guide (Oxford University Press)
The idea of the symphonic (or tone) poem was codified in the 1840s and '50s by Franz Liszt through a dozen single-movement orchestral pieces that drew inspiration from, or were otherwise linked to, literary sources. The repertoire grew quickly thanks to notable contributions by such composers as Smetana, Dvořák, Musorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Franck, and — most impressively of all — Richard Strauss.


In his earlier symphonic poems Strauss had engaged topics with distinguished literary or philosophical pedigrees. By the time he reached *Ein Heldenleben* and *Symphonia domestica* he expanded the programmatic possibilities to embrace autobiography. For *Eine Alpensinfonie* Strauss adopted a narrative that was neither drawn specifically from a pre-existing literary source nor from autobiography, but rather one that embraced both in a general way. It is autobiographical to the extent that it represents man’s ardent celebration of nature — indeed, of nature at its most spectacular, as epitomized by a day of mountain climbing in the Alps.

But *Eine Alpensinfonie* also draws, if indirectly, on the philosophical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, another of whose texts had inspired the composer’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* some years earlier. This time it was Nietzsche’s 1888 essay *Der Antichrist* that had Strauss’s attention. Engrossed in soul-searching following the death of his friend Gustav Mahler, Strauss wrote in his diary in 1911:

It is clear to me that the German nation will achieve new creative energy only by liberating itself from Christianity. ... I shall call my alpine symphony: *Der Antichrist*, since it represents: moral purification through one’s own

In Short

**Born:** June 11, 1864, in Munich, Bavaria

**Died:** September 8, 1949, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen

**Work composed:** 1911–1915, although related sketches extend as far back as 1902; dedicated to Graf von Seebach and the Dresden Hofkapelle

**World premiere:** October 28, 1915, at the Berlin Philharmonie, with the composer conducting the Dresden Hofkapelle

**New York Philharmonic premiere:** October 26, 1916, Josef Stranisky, conductor; this marked the work’s New York Premiere

**Most recent New York Philharmonic performance:** January 11, 2020, Daniel Harding, conductor

**Estimated duration:** ca. 56 minutes
strength, liberation through work, worship of eternal, magnificent nature.

The Antichrist scenario soon fell by the wayside, left to hover in the background as a shadow of inspiration. Instead Eine Alpensinfonie evolved as a detailed piece of landscape tone-painting that the listener can enjoy thoroughly without getting wrapped up in philosophical implications. The action unrolls in the space of 24 hours, from the pre-dawn of a new day through the late-night of the next, and in the course of 22 discrete episodes (one is bipartite, so one may identify 23 events), the listener goes up the mountain and down again, encountering along the way a catalogue of natural features one might expect to find on such a journey — forests, streams, meadows, and so on — as well as a hunting party (in Sunrise), some close calls (a slippery “dangerous moment” and a violent storm), a spectacular view from the summit, and a post-sunset return home where the mountaineer(s) must surely sit back and contemplate what has been a most excellent excursion.

**Instrumentation:** four flutes (two doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn) and heckelphone, two clarinets plus

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**Listen for . . . the Rarities**

Even by Strauss’s luxurious standards, Eine Alpensinfonie boasts a massive orchestra, including such rarely spotted items as the wind machine and thunder sheet (used in guess which section). Among the instruments is a true rarity: the heckelphone. It is a baritone member of the oboe family, pitched an octave below the standard oboe and notably robust of tone. The instrument, which takes its name from the Heckel firm that invented it in 1904, looks rather like an overgrown English horn. It shows up in a handful of scores by other composers, but basically the heckelphone is a Strauss instrument, used memorably in his operas Salome and Elektra, his ballet Josefslegende, and his orchestral Festliches Präludium, in addition to Eine Alpensinfonie.

Eine Alpensinfonie displays another curiosity in its wind writing: occasional notes held so long that players might be forced to interrupt them to take a breath. Strauss suggested a solution in his score: the Samuels Aerophon. The Aerophon (also known as Aerophor), introduced by the German flutist Bernhard Samuels in 1911, was a mouthpiece attached to a tube leading to a bellows operated by a foot treadle, allowing the wind player to pump away without using his own breath in such trying situations. It didn’t catch on. Today orchestral musicians are more likely to address the problem by using circular breathing, a nifty trick whereby they inhale through their nose while forcing air into their instrument with a little extra push from their cheek muscles.
C clarinet (doubling bass clarinet) and E-flat clarinet, four bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), eight horns (four doubling Wagner tubas), four trumpets, four trombones, two tubas, timpani (two players), wind machine, thunder sheet, orchestra bells, cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, triangle, cowbell, tam-tam, two harps, organ, celesta, and strings, plus an offstage ensemble of 12 horns (four of whom come from the onstage orchestra), two trumpets, and two trombones.

— J.M.K.

Travelogue

The landscape chronicled musically in Eine Alpensinfonie was ultra-familiar to Richard Strauss, who was born in mountainous Bavaria. Buoyed by the earnings from his opera Salome, he constructed a villa in the gorgeous, high-altitude landscape of Garmisch (which in 1936 would merge with its sister-town Partenkirchen to host the Olympic Winter Games). He moved into his new home at the beginning of 1908 and lived there to the end of his days, composing in a room that afforded a spectacular view of the surrounding mountains, including Germany’s highest peak, Zugspitze (9,718 feet above sea level).

The villa (below) remains in the Strauss family to this day, and some descendants continue to use it as an occasional residence, although limited tours are sometimes arranged through the Richard Strauss Institute, located in the town.
New York Philharmonic

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Kurt Masur, Music Director Emeritus, 1991–2015

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Gonzales
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The New York Philharmonic uses the revolving seating method for section string players who are listed alphabetically in the roster.

HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY
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Programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.
The Artists

The 2024–25 season is Santtu-Matias Rouvali’s fourth year as principal conductor of London’s Philharmonia Orchestra, and he continues as chief conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony. He is honorary conductor of Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, close to his home in Finland. In the summer of 2024, he and the Philharmonia will continue their residency in Mikkeli, Finland, and return to the Edinburgh International Festival, performing the Verdi Requiem. He also conducts the New York Philharmonic in two concerts at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival.

Throughout this season and last, Rouvali has been continuing his relationships with top level orchestras and soloists across Europe — including the Munich Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Accademia nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra — and returns to North America for concerts with the New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

European touring highlights of the season include tours with the Philharmonia to Finland, Estonia, and Spain — conducting works by Sibelius, Saint-Saëns, Stravinsky, Debussy, and Frank — and with the Gothenburg Symphony to Germany and Prague, leading works by Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and Tchaikovsky. Rouvali and the Philharmonia also embark on an extensive tour of Japan with concerts in Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka, and other cities, performing works by Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Bartók, Sibelius, and Grieg. They also continue regularly performing in London and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Rouvali is building on his impressive discography. In January 2019 with Gothenburg, he released a celebrated first disc of an ambitious Sibelius cycle, pairing the Symphony No. 1 with the early tone poem En saga. The album won the Gramophone Editor’s Choice award, Choc de Classica, a prize from the German Record Critics, and the prestigious French Diapason d’Or “Decouverte.” In February 2020 they released the second volume, featuring Sibelius’s Symphony No. 2 and King Christian II, which was immediately awarded a Choc de Classica award. The third disc — Sibelius’s Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5 coupled with Pohjola’s Daughter — released in October 2022, was awarded the Radio Classique Trophée and Choc de Classica. Philharmonia Records’s first release — the double-CD Santtu Conducts Strauss — was released in March 2023, following releases of Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake and Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5. Rouvali and the Philharmonia’s most recent CD — Santtu Conducts Mahler — was released in September 2023.

Violinist Esther Yoo — one of the few classical soloists who are fully tricultural — was born in New Jersey, where she spent her early years; received her education in Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom; and proudly retains her family’s Korean heritage. Having roots in three continents contributes to her exceptionally broad
range of expression and is unquestionably a factor in making her one of the most articulate and gifted communicators in the field of classical music. A prolific recording artist, she has released several albums on Deutsche Grammophon, including Barber and Bruch violin concertos with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which she served as its first artist-in-residence. She has also released two DG albums as a member of the Z.E.N. Trio.

Yoo has performed with leading conductors — among them Gustavo Dudamel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vasily Petrenko, Dalia Stasevska, Myung-whun Chung, Thierry Fischer, Karina Canellakis, and Ken-David Masur — and with orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and Seoul Philharmonic. She has appeared at Lincoln Center in New York City, Royal Albert Hall in London, Hong Kong City Hall, and Seoul Arts Center, as well as at prominent festivals such as the BBC Proms and Aspen Music Festival. Her 2024 highlights include a tour with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the world premiere of Raymond Yiu's Violin Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Andrew Davis, and returns to iconic venues such as Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and London’s Wigmore Hall.

Esther Yoo was the youngest prizewinner of the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition, in 2010, and the Queen Elisabeth Competition, in 2012.
Jaap van Zweden became Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in 2018. In 2023–24, his farewell season celebrates his connection with the Orchestra’s musicians as he leads performances in which six Principal players appear as concerto soloists. He also revisits composers he has championed at the Philharmonic, from Steve Reich and Joel Thompson to Mozart and Mahler. He is also Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, since 2012, and becomes Music Director of the Seoul Philharmonic in 2024. He has appeared as guest with the Orchestre de Paris; Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestras; Vienna, Berlin, and Los Angeles philharmonic orchestras; and London Symphony, Chicago Symphony, and Cleveland orchestras.

Jaap van Zweden’s NY Phil recordings include David Lang’s prisoner of the state and Julia Wolfe’s Grammy-nominated Fire in my mouth (Decca Gold). He conducted the first performances in Hong Kong of Wagner’s Ring Cycle, the Naxos recording of which led the Hong Kong Philharmonic to be named the 2019 Gramophone Orchestra of the year. His performance of Wagner’s Parsifal received the Edison Award for Best Opera Recording in 2012.

Born in Amsterdam, Jaap van Zweden became the youngest-ever concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at age 19 and began his conducting career almost 20 years later. He was named Musical America’s 2012 Conductor of the Year, was profiled by CBS 60 Minutes on arriving at the NY Phil, and in the spring of 2023 received the prestigious Concertgebouw Prize. In 1997 he and his wife, Aaltje, established the Papageno Foundation to support families of children with autism.

The New York Philharmonic connects with millions of music lovers each season through live concerts in New York and around the world, broadcasts, streaming, education programs, and more. In the 2023–24 season — which builds on the Orchestra’s transformation reflected in the new David Geffen Hall — the NY Phil honors Jaap van Zweden in his farewell season as Music Director, premieres 14 works by a wide range of composers including some whom van Zweden has championed, marks György Ligeti’s centennial, and celebrates the 100th birthday of the beloved Young People’s Concerts.

The Philharmonic has commissioned and/or premiered important works, from Dvořák’s New World Symphony to Tania León’s Pulitzer Prize–winning Stride. The NY Phil has released more than 2,000 recordings since 1917, and in 2023 announced a partnership with Apple Music Classical, the new streaming app designed to deliver classical music lovers the optimal listening experience. The Orchestra builds on a longstanding commitment to serving its communities — which has led to annual free concerts across New York City and the free online New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives — through a new ticket access program.

Founded in 1842, the New York Philharmonic is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and one of the oldest in the world. Jaap van Zweden became Music Director in 2018–19, following titans including Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler. Gustavo Dudamel will become Music and Artistic Director beginning in 2026 after serving as Music Director Designate in 2025–26.
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Induction loops are available in all performance spaces and at commerce points including the Welcome Center, Coat Check, and select bars. Receivers with headsets and neck loops are available for guests who do not have t-coil accessible hearing devices.
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