

SCHUBERT'S UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

May 2,* 3,** & 4, 2024 • 7:30 PM

*Thursday Classics presented by Quikcard

**Friday Classics presented by Lexus of Edmonton

Featuring:

Shiyeon Sung, conductor – see bio on page 5.

Robert Uchida, ESO Violin – see bio on page 6.

To read the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra roster, see page 7.

WEBER

Der Freischütz: Overture

(10')*

BARBER

Violin Concerto, Op.14

(24')*

I - Allegro

II - Andante

III - Presto in moto perpetuo

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

SCHUBERT

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D 759 "Unfinished"

(24')*

I - Allegro moderato

II - Andante con moto

BEETHOVEN

Leonore Overture No. 3, Op.72b

(12')*

Program subject to change.

*indicates approximate performance duration

Der Freischütz: Overture

Carl Maria von Weber

(b. near Lübeck, 1786 / d. London, 1826)

First performance of the overture alone: October 8, 1820, in Copenhagen

First performance of the opera: June 18, 1821, in Berlin

Last ESO performance (of the overture): March 2010

With *Der Freischütz*, a new era dawned in German music. While operas had been sung in German often enough before it, what Weber set out to do (whether he realized it or not) helped set romanticism on its way, and began a path that led straight to the great music dramas of Wagner.

Weber wanted a German story, sung in German – a tale based in German folklore. To that purpose, librettist Johann Friedrich Kind adapted *Gespenssterbuch*, by Johann August Apel and Friedrich Laun, a tale of virtue and love, but also of ghosts and the selling of souls. Its premiere created a sensation. “Overture and Bridesmaid’s songs encored; out of seventeen pieces, fourteen loudly applauded,” Weber wrote of the work’s reception. “He produced ... exactly what the German public wanted,” writes Denis Forman in his book *A Night at the Opera*. “The fame of *Freischütz* spread like wildfire and it became easily the most often performed German opera in the repertory. It also spread to opera houses all over the world and has never really gone out of fashion.”

Even with the overture, Weber created a new trend. *Der Freischütz* has one of the first overtures which features themes to be heard later during the drama; in effect, it foreshadows the moods and emotions the audience would experience. Tuneful and powerful, the overture has become a staple in the concert hall.

Violin Concerto, Op.14

Samuel Barber

(b. West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1910 / d. New York, 1981)

First performed: February 7, 1941, in Philadelphia

Last ESO performance: May 2019

Among the first class of students at the new Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia (founded in 1924), American child prodigy Samuel Barber found himself among gifted company. His fellow students included Iso Briselli, a violinist and adopted son of industrialist Samuel Fels. It was Fels who commissioned Barber to write a violin concerto for Briselli, and with the commission fee in hand, Barber left for Switzerland in the summer of 1939 to work on the piece.

Yet trouble soon began with his concerto. Barber sketched out the first two movements with some speed, yet their intended dedicatee did not care for them. The first movement was lyrical and beautiful, the second resigned and even sad, yet neither presented the virtuosic challenge Briselli claimed to be looking for.

Don't worry, Barber assured both father and son, the final movement will provide all the bravado fireworks you're looking for. And so it did, to the point where Briselli pronounced the piece unplayable. Eventually, the two young musicians went their own ways, and the concerto's

official premiere was given by Albert Spalding and the Philadelphia Orchestra – although the Curtis Institute Orchestra performed it the season before, under Fritz Reiner, with yet another Curtis alum, Herbert Baumel as soloist.

Always a composer with a strong melodic feel, Barber wastes no time, giving the violin an extended and tender solo melody from the work's opening bars, to discreet orchestral support. A second dominant motif is hinted at in the woodwinds, but the orchestra picks up the main song of the opening, and whips it into a brief frenzy, which ebbs, bringing back the secondary motif which, with its use of short-long "Lombardic" rhythm and a modal harmonic quality have led many to refer to as Scottish in influence. The development section features a striking counterpoint between the violin's impassioned song (much of it in the higher register) against a darker, more pointed orchestral melody. It is only here, about halfway through, that there is sustained drive and fortissimo, with the Scots-tinged secondary subject leading to a tutti statement of the main theme, grand and noble in full orchestral garb. The orchestra launches the Recapitulation, though the violin leads the charge to the dramatic tutti that winds the movement down to its whispered finish.

The second movement is in E Major, and important melodic ideas are given by oboe, strings, clarinet, and horn (to pizzicato accompaniment) before the violin even enters, fully a quarter way through the movement. But with its first notes, the soloist dominates both the melodic and emotional direction, notwithstanding the important punctuations and comments from the orchestra. The movement ends with violin over a hushed timpani roll, and it is those drums, with a driving triple metre, which launch the fierce "moto perpetuo" final movement. The dashing pace set by the soloist rarely flags, occasionally crossed with a counter-rhythm or secondary subject in the orchestra – but never for long. Only about four minutes long, this daunting finale is a physical as well as technical challenge – one certainly at odds with the tenderness of the preceding two movements.

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D 759 "Unfinished"

Franz Schubert

(b. Vienna, 1797 / d. Vienna, 1828)

First performed: December 17, 1865, in Vienna (37 years after Schubert's death)

Last ESO performance: November 2012

It is certainly no surprise to learn that a composer who died far too young, at only 31 years old, left a good deal of music incomplete at the time of his death. But the case of the work famously known as the "*Unfinished*" Symphony is unique. Schubert wrote these two movements in 1822, but whatever plans he had for subsequent movements proved inadequate to him, and so he set the work aside, fully intending on completing it at some point. That same year, he was elected an honorary member of the Linz and Graz musical club, but a requirement of admission to the club was the submission of one of his compositions to them. For whatever reason, he gave them the two completed movements of this obviously incomplete symphony. But performance of the submitted work was not necessarily tied to the requirement, and so the work was left, unplayed and virtually unknown, with the club's Artistic Director. And there it lay for some 43 years, until it was rescued from obscurity and presented to the public – in 1865 – 37 years after Schubert's untimely death.

The work's opening movement begins with a five-measure theme in the lower strings, answered by the clarinets and oboes. Their melody is developed over a rhythm set by violas and winds, until the cellos announce the beautiful, lyrical second subject – Schubert's gift for melody shines through. It is all done through fairly strict adherence to classical sonata form.

Of the second movement, music scholar Alfred Einstein wrote, "In its mystery and unfathomable beauty, it is like one of those plants whose flowers open only the night of the full moon." A little rhapsodic for music scholarship, perhaps, but certainly the breathy, ethereal quality of the gossamer strings which open the movement, followed by the lovely song given to the clarinet as a second subject, merits consideration of Einstein's poetic simile.

Leonore Overture No. 3, Op.72b

Ludwig van Beethoven

(b. Bonn, 1770 / d. Vienna, 1827)

First performance of the overture: March 29, 1806, in Vienna

Last ESO performance: January 2019

The libretto which Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1763-1842) conceived about a woman (Leonore) who disguises herself as a man in order to free her wrongly jailed husband (Florestan) from an oppressive Spanish regime formed the basis for Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*. Its themes of universal brotherhood and freedom certainly struck a chord for Beethoven – despite the fact that Bouilly himself was head of the military commission in Tours during the Reign of Terror following the French Revolution.

The opera, originally called *Leonore* (she assumes the identity of Fidelio while disguised as a man), went through several revisions before its final form; as a consequence, there were several overtures written for various productions early on. The overture known as *Leonore Overture No. 3* has become a regular favourite in the concert hall. It is about twice the length of the overture Beethoven finally used as the opera's curtain-raiser, and captures many of the moods and colours of the drama itself. The clarinet melody of the opening section, for example, is taken from Florestan's Act II aria, in which he states the reason for his unjust imprisonment: "I dared to tell the truth, and my reward is these fetters." The overture's middle section intertwines music from the opera's climax: the proud trumpet call of Florestan's freedom, and the tender melody of the couple's reunion.

Program notes © 2024 by D.T. Baker

Biographies

Shiyeon Sung

Conductor

The South Korean conductor Shiyeon Sung is a real trailblazer of her profession. She is the first female conductor out of South Korea to make the leap to the podium of internationally renowned orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin and the Bamberg Symphony.

When she was appointed assistant conductor at the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2007, her reputation as one of the most exciting emerging talents on the international music circuit was already secure: shortly before, Shiyeon Sung had won the International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti and the Gustav Mahler Conductors' Competition in Bamberg. During her three-year tenure in Boston, she began a close collaboration with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted their season-opening concert in 2007. In 2009, the orchestra established an associate conductor's position especially for her, which she held until 2013.

The list of orchestras that Shiyeon Sung has worked with since then is remarkable. It includes renowned European orchestras such as the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin, and Bamberg Symphony, as well as the National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which she led in a spectacular debut concert with Martha Argerich at the Tongyeong International Music Festival. In addition, she appeared as guest conductor at the Teatro Colón and the Stockholm Opera.

She was chief conductor of the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra from 2014 until the end of 2017, during which time she led the orchestra to international success. Following a performance in 2015 at the Philharmonie Berlin, in 2017 Shiyeon Sung and her orchestra were the first Asian orchestra to be invited for a guest appearance at the Musikfest Berlin, the renowned international orchestra festival. Their recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 5 for Decca documents Shiyeon Sung's outstanding work with the group of predominantly young orchestral musicians, for which she was awarded the Musical Performance Prize 2017 from the Daewon Cultural Foundation. After her departure from Gyeonggi, Shiyeon Sung relocated to Berlin where she now resides, but remains a popular guest in her home country and regularly returns to the Korea National Opera and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

Her debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, the Utah Symphony, the Orquesta Nacional de España, the Haifa Symphony, the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta de Valencia and the Auckland Philharmonia were special highlights of the 2021/22 season. In the 2022/23 season, she will make her debuts with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Haifa Symphony, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Queensland Orchestra, Tucson Symphony Orchestra, with the Hofer Symphoniker as well as the orchestras of Navarra and Tenerife in Spain. She will also return to the Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires for a concert in the Teatro Colon, the Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, the Oviedo Filarmónica, the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and the Auckland Philharmonia.

Born in Pusan, South Korea, Shiyeon Sung won various prizes as a pianist in youth competitions. From 2001 to 2006, she studied orchestral conducting with Rolf Reuter at the Hanns Eisler School of Music in Berlin and continued her education with advanced conducting studies with Jorma Panula at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

Robert Uchida

ESO Violin

Canadian violinist Robert Uchida has been hailed for his “ravishing sound, eloquence and hypnotic intensity” (Strings magazine). Robert joined the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra as Concertmaster in 2013, having previously held the same position with Symphony Nova Scotia for seven years.

Robert was also invited to perform as Associate Concertmaster of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra in the 2005–2006 season. Engagements as a guest leader have included projects with the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Robert’s CD recordings include Requiem 21.5: Violin Concerto by Tim Brady for CentreDiscs, which won Classical Recording of the Year at the ECMAs, and the Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin by Andrew Violette for Innova Records.

A passionate teacher, Robert serves on the faculty at the University of Alberta and has held teaching positions at Acadia University, the Manhattan School of Music, and the National Arts Centre of Canada’s Young Artists Program. His students have continued their studies at the Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and Guildhall School in London, and perform in ensembles in North America and Europe.

Robert holds a Master’s Degree in Violin Performance from the Manhattan School of Music in New York and a Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Ottawa. His teachers and mentors include Andrew Dawes, Morry Kernerman, Patinka Kopec, Heratch Manoukian, David Stewart, and Pinchas Zukerman.

Robert loves volunteering and is honoured to have been inducted into the Ronald McDonald House’s Character Club in Edmonton. Robert is honoured to work as a concert artist for the Health Arts Society of Alberta.

He performs on a rare 1770 Guadagnini violin with Vision Solo Titanium strings by Thomastik-Infeld Vienna.

Meet the Musicians

Michael Stern, Artistic Advisor

Cosette Justo Valdés, Resident Conductor and Community Ambassador

William Eddins, Music Director Emeritus, Conductor

Violin I

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster

The John & Barbara Poole Family Concertmaster Chair

Eric Buchmann, Associate Concertmaster

Broderick Olson

Ewald Cheung

Joanna Ciapka-Sangster

Laura Veeze

Anna Kozak

Aiyana Anderson-Howatt

Anita Walsh

Violin II

Dianne New – Principal

Susan Flook – Assistant Principal

Heather Bergen

Yue Deng

Danielle Greene

Buon Park

Yeeun Ha

Zoë Sellers (on leave)

Viola

Keith Hamm – Principal

Ethan Filner – Assistant Principal

Clayton Leung

Rhonda Henshaw

Stefan Jungkind

Cello

Rafael Hoekman – Principal

The Stuart & Winona Davis Principal Cello Chair

Julie Hereish – Assistant Principal

Ronda Metzies

Meran Currie-Roberts

Victor Pipkin

Bass

Hilda Cowie – Principal

Chris Jones – Acting Assistant Principal

Janice Quinn

Rob Aldridge

Chantel Leung

Douglas Ohashi (on leave)

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(American Federation of Musicians of the United States
and Canada) Local 390.*

Flute

Elizabeth Koch – Principal

Sarah Pollard – Assistant Principal

Oboe

June Kim – Principal

Paul Schieman – Assistant Principal

The Steven & Day LePoole Assistant Principal Oboe Chair

Clarinet

Julianne Scott – Principal

David Quinn – Assistant Principal

Bassoon

Bianca Chambul – Principal

Edith Stacey – Assistant Principal

Horn

Allene Hackleman – Principal

Megan Evans – Assistant Principal

Ryan Garbett – Assistant Principal

Donald Plumb – Assistant Principal

Trumpet

Robin Doyon – Principal

Frédéric Payant – Assistant Principal

Trombone

John McPherson – Principal

Kathryn Macintosh – Assistant Principal

Bass Trombone

Tyler Cairns – Principal

Tuba

Scott Whetham – Principal

Timpani

Barry Nemish – Principal

Percussion

Martin Bui – Principal

Harp

Nora Bumanis – Principal