

# Season 2014-2015

**Friday, February 20, at 8:00**

**Saturday, February 21, at  
8:00**

**Sunday, February 22, at  
2:00**

## The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Robin Ticciati** Conductor  
**Gil Shaham** Violin

**Wagner** Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*

**Berg** Violin Concerto  
I. Andante—Allegretto  
II. Allegro—Adagio

### Intermission

**Ligeti** *Atmosphères*

**Debussy** *La Mer*  
I. From Dawn to Midday at Sea  
II. Play of the Waves  
III. Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 35 minutes.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM. Visit [www.wrti.org](http://www.wrti.org) to listen live or for more details.

Please join us immediately following the February 22 concert for a Chamber Postlude, featuring members of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Ligeti** Six Bagatelles, for wind quintet

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Rubato. Lamentoso—Più mosso. Non rubato—Moderato
- III. Allegro grazioso
- IV. Presto ruvido
- V. Adagio. Mesto—
- VI. Molto vivace. Capriccioso—Più mosso: presto strepitoso—Meno mosso

**David Cramer** Flute

**Peter Smith** Oboe

**Samuel Caviezel** Clarinet

**Angela Anderson Smith** Bassoon

**Denise Tryon** Horn

**Bartók** String Quartet No. 6

- I. Mesto—Vivace
- II. Mesto—Marcia
- III. Mesto—Burletta
- IV. Mesto

**Juliette Kang** Violin

**Dara Morales** Violin

**Che-Hung Chen** Viola

**Derek Barnes** Cello

# The Philadelphia Orchestra



Jessica Griffin

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of imagination and innovation on and off the concert stage. The Orchestra is transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—and exceeding—that level by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world.

Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin's highly collaborative style, deeply-rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm, paired with a fresh approach to orchestral programming, have been heralded by critics and audiences alike since his inaugural season in 2012. Under his leadership the Orchestra returned to recording with a celebrated CD of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Leopold Stokowski transcriptions on the Deutsche Grammophon label, continuing its history of recording success. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of listeners on the radio with weekly Sunday afternoon broadcasts on WRTI-FM.

Philadelphia is home, and the Orchestra nurtures an important relationship with patrons who support the main season at the Kimmel Center, and also with those who enjoy the Orchestra's other area performances at the Mann Center, Penn's Landing, and other cultural, civic, and learning venues. The Orchestra maintains a strong commitment to collaborations with cultural and community organizations on a regional and national level.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador for Philadelphia and for the United States. Having been the first American orchestra to perform in China, in 1973 at the request of President Nixon, today The Philadelphia Orchestra boasts a new partnership with the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing. The ensemble annually performs at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center while also enjoying summer residencies in Saratoga Springs, New York, and Vail, Colorado.

The Philadelphia Orchestra has a decades-long tradition of presenting learning and community engagement opportunities for listeners of all ages. The Orchestra's recent initiative, the Fabulous Philadelphians Offstage, Philly Style!, has taken musicians off the traditional concert stage and into the community, including highly-successful Pop-Up concerts, PlayINs, SingINs, and ConductINs. The Orchestra's musicians, in their own dedicated roles as teachers, coaches, and mentors, serve a key role in growing young musician talent and a love of classical music, nurturing and celebrating the wealth of musicianship in the Philadelphia region. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Music Director

Chris Lee



Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** continues his inspired leadership of The Philadelphia Orchestra, which began in the fall of 2012. His highly collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm, have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called Nézet-Séguin “phenomenal,” adding that under his baton, “the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better.” He has taken the Orchestra to new musical heights. Highlights of his third season as music director include an Art of the Pipe Organ festival; the 40/40 Project, in which 40 great compositions that haven’t been heard on subscription concerts in at least 40 years will be performed; and Bernstein’s *MASS*, the pinnacle of the Orchestra’s five-season requiem cycle.

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most exciting talents of his generation. He has been music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic since 2008 and artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. He also continues to enjoy a close relationship with the London Philharmonic, of which he was principal guest conductor. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world’s most revered ensembles, and he has conducted critically acclaimed performances at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Deutsche Grammophon (DG) enjoy a long-term collaboration. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with a CD on that label of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* and Leopold Stokowski transcriptions. He continues a fruitful recording relationship with the Rotterdam Philharmonic on DG, EMI Classics, and BIS Records; the London Philharmonic and Choir for the LPO label; and the Orchestre Métropolitain for ATMA Classique.

A native of Montreal, Yannick Nézet-Séguin studied at that city’s Conservatory of Music and continued lessons with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini and with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick’s honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada, one of the country’s highest civilian honors; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada’s National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier, the highest distinction for the arts in Quebec; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec in Montreal and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

To read Yannick’s full bio, please visit [www.philorch.org/conductor](http://www.philorch.org/conductor).

# Conductor

Marco Borggreve



**Robin Ticciati** is principal conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) and, in 2014 he began his tenure as music director of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera. His Philadelphia Orchestra debut was in 2012 and he is making his third appearance with the ensemble. Other highlights of the current season include a major residency project at Vienna's Konzerthaus, which will feature the Royal Concertgebouw and Scottish Chamber orchestras, and the London and Vienna symphonies. Future guest conducting projects include a European tour with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and return engagements with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra; the Staatskapelle Dresden; the Swedish Radio Symphony; the London, Rotterdam, and Los Angeles philharmonics; and the Cleveland Orchestra; as well as debuts with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Budapest Festival Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the NDR Hamburg, and the Orchestre National de France.

For his first season as Glyndebourne music director, Mr. Ticciati conducted new productions of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*. In 2015 he conducts a new production of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and a revival of a double-bill of Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Other recent opera projects include Britten's *Peter Grimes* at La Scala, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Salzburg Festival, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the Royal Opera House, and a Metropolitan Opera debut with Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, which led to an immediate re-invitation.

Mr. Ticciati's 2014-15 season with the SCO features a twin focus on Mahler and Haydn. He and the orchestra have toured extensively in Europe and Asia, and their three recordings for Linn Records—two Berlioz discs and a double album featuring Schumann's four symphonies—have attracted critical acclaim. His discography also includes a number of opera releases on Opus Arte and on Glyndebourne's own label. Born in London, Mr. Ticciati is a violinist, pianist, and percussionist by training. He was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain when he turned to conducting at age 15 under the guidance of Colin Davis and Simon Rattle. He was recently appointed the Sir Colin Davis Fellow of Conducting by the Royal Academy of Music.

# Soloist



Luke Ratay

American violinist **Gil Shaham** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1988 and has performed regularly with the Philadelphians ever since. The Grammy Award winner, also named *Musical America's* 2012 "Instrumentalist of the Year," is sought after throughout the world for concerto appearances with leading orchestras and conductors as well as recital performances. Highlights of the current season include a return to the San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas with Mozart's Concerto No. 5 in San Francisco, and with Prokofiev's Second Concerto on that orchestra's 20th-anniversary tour, at venues including Carnegie Hall. The Prokofiev is one of the works showcased in Mr. Shaham's long-term exploration of "Violin Concertos of the 1930s." Now in its sixth season, the project informs these current performances of Berg's Violin Concerto, as well as performances of Britten's Concerto with the Berlin Radio and London symphonies.

Last season saw the release of *1930s Violin Concertos* (Vol. 1), the first double album in Mr. Shaham's project, which was recorded live with the New York Philharmonic, the Boston and BBC symphonies, and the Staatskapelle Dresden. Other recordings include *Nigunim: Hebrew Melodies*, featuring traditional and modern Jewish music performed with his sister, pianist Orli Shaham. Mr. Shaham has more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs to his name, including award-winning bestsellers that have appeared on record charts in the U.S. and abroad. His recent recordings are produced on the Canary Classics label, which he founded in 2004.

Born in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, in 1971, Mr. Shaham moved with his parents to Israel, where he began violin studies at the age of seven, receiving annual scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. In 1981, while studying with Haim Taub in Jerusalem, he made debuts with the Jerusalem Symphony and the Israel Philharmonic. In 1982, after taking first prize in Israel's Claremont Competition, he became a scholarship student at the Juilliard School. He was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990 and in 2008 he received the coveted Avery Fisher Award. Mr. Shaham lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, and their three children. He plays the 1699 "Countess Polignac" Stradivarius.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1847**

**Wagner**

*Lohengrin*

**Music**

Liszt

Hungarian

Rhapsody No. 2

**Literature**

Brontë

*Jane Eyre*

**Art**

Hicks

*Penn's Treaty*

**History**

Doughnut

created

**1905**

**Debussy**

*La Mer*

**Music**

Strauss

*Salome*

**Literature**

Wharton

*House of Mirth*

**Art**

Picasso

*Two Youths*

**History**

"Bloody Sunday"

in St. Petersburg

**1961**

**Ligeti**

*Atmosphères*

**Music**

Britten

*War Requiem*

**Literature**

Heller

*Catch-22*

**Art**

Johns

*Map*

**History**

Bay of Pigs

Invasion

The relative importance of the fundamental elements of music—melody, rhythm, and harmony—has shifted over the centuries. One component that gradually gained in importance was an emphasis on sheer sound, for example the timbres and colors of a single chord. The four compositions on the program today are notable for their unusually imaginative explorations of distinctive sound worlds.

Shimmering violins divided in eight parts create the radiant opening to Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*. The Prelude to Act I depicts the gradual unveiling of the Holy Grail, attended by a host of angels.

Alban Berg's last completed composition, his magnificent Violin Concerto, combines lush Romantic scoring with 12-tone musical techniques pioneered by his teacher Arnold Schoenberg. Baroque music also makes an appearance with the chorale "Es ist genug" (It is Enough), which J.S. Bach used in one of his cantatas. Berg's Violin Concerto is a deeply felt work, written in "memory of an angel," the recent death at age 18 of Alma Mahler Gropius's daughter Manon.

Some pieces by the great 20th-century Hungarian composer György Ligeti deal almost entirely with shifting sounds—melody and other musical aspects recede. His *Atmosphères* is best known for its incorporation into Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* but the work most comes alive when heard in performance by an orchestra such as Philadelphia.

The concert concludes with Claude Debussy's Impressionist masterpiece *La Mer*, his portrait of the sea with three movements entitled "From Dawn to Midday at Sea," "Play of the Waves," and "Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea."

# The Music

## Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*



**Richard Wagner**  
**Born Leipzig, May 22, 1813**  
**Died Venice, February 13,**  
**1883**

More has been written about Richard Wagner than about any other Western composer. The flood began with his own voluminous writings, which encompass fiction, drama, reviews, treatises, and essays as well as diaries, letters, and a massive autobiography, *My Life*, covering just the first half of his career. Wagner wrote his own librettos for his operas. His compositional output is likewise gigantic, although it is principally limited to dramatic music. The works he produced as a teenager—piano pieces, songs, and even a symphony—are almost uniformly mediocre; few composers ended up artistically so far from where they began.

**The Path to Master** Wagner composed 13 operas, the first three of which are very rarely performed except for the overture to the third, *Rienzi*. In the 1840s he wrote *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*. Franz Liszt conducted the premiere of *Lohengrin* in 1850 in Weimar. Wagner did not attend because two years earlier he had been exiled from Germany for his radical political activities. When the score was published in 1852 it carried an effusive dedication to “My dear Liszt! It was you who awakened the mute lines of this score to bright sounding life. Without your rare love for me, my work would still be lying in total silence—perhaps forgotten even by me—in some desk drawer at home.”

After his trilogy of “Romantic operas,” Wagner took off some years to reevaluate his artistic mission, during which time he produced lengthy writings expounding a new theory of “music drama.” He began to put his program into action with a new project, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, on which he toiled for more than a quarter century, interrupting it for some years to write *Tristan and Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. He ended his career with *Parsifal* in 1882.

*Lohengrin* tells the story of a mysterious knight who arrives in Brabant transported by a swan drawn boat. The knight defends Elsa, who has unjustly been charged with murdering her brother, the heir to the dukedom of Brabant. He insists Elsa vow never to ask either his name or about his ancestry. Through the evil machinations of

Lohengrin was composed between 1846 and 1848.

*Fritz Scheel led the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Act I Prelude, in November 1901, during the Orchestra's second season. Most recently on subscription the work was performed in March 1997, with Christian Thielemann on the podium.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra has recorded the Act I Prelude three times: in 1924 with Leopold Stokowski for RCA; in 1927 with Stokowski for RCA; and in 1997 with Thielemann for Deutsche Grammophon.*

*The score calls for three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals), and strings.*

*Performance time is approximately eight minutes.*

Ortrud and her husband, Telramund, Elsa's curiosity gets the better of her and she poses the forbidden questions just after marrying Lohengrin. Calling the entire court together he reveals his secret: He is a knight of the Holy Grail and the son of Parsifal, who leads the sacred community at Monsalvat, where he must now return. The swan is magically transformed into Elsa's missing brother, Gottfried, as she falls dead.

**A Closer Look** The ethereal Prelude to *Lohengrin* is delicately scored for shimmering strings divided in eight parts (four solo violins together with the entire violin section also divided in four), all playing in the highest register. Discrete pairs of flutes and oboes add to the radiant texture. This is meant to depict the Holy Grail, which Wagner described as "the precious goblet from which long ago the Savior drank farewell to his apostles, which afterwards caught his blood as he suffered on the cross out of love for his brothers, and which was thought to have been lovingly preserved ever since as a source of imperishable love. This sacred vessel had been for some time removed from unworthy humanity when a host of angels from on high returned it to a band of devotedly loving men who lived withdrawn from the world."

The Prelude unfolds as one great gesture, a grand orchestral crescendo that builds to a powerful brass chorale punctuated by cymbal crashes—the unveiling of the Grail—and then ultimately returns to the soft opening music to conclude. Wagner often performed the Prelude as a separate concert piece and in a program note explained the trajectory of the music: "Out of the clear blue ether of the sky there seems to condense a wonderful yet at first hardly perceptible vision; and out of this there gradually emerges, ever more and more clearly, an angelic host bearing in its midst the sacred Grail."

—Christopher H. Gibbs

# The Music

## Violin Concerto



**Alban Berg**  
**Born in Vienna, February 9,**  
**1885**  
**Died there, December 24,**  
**1935**

Berg loved gossip, secrets, and codes, and the Vienna in which he lived during the first decades of the 20th century afforded ample opportunities to satisfy these interests. This was the Vienna of Mahler and Schoenberg, and also of Freud, Wittgenstein, Klimt, Schnitzler, Kraus, and so many other artistic and intellectual luminaries. They seem all to have known one another, and often to have known one another's business. Mahler had an intensive four-hour psychoanalytic session with Freud after he discovered his young wife Alma's affair with the architect Walter Gropius. Schoenberg's wife left him and took up with the brilliant painter Richard Gerstl, who killed himself at age 25 when she decided to return home. Berg had more than his share of romantic escapades, beginning with an illegitimate child fathered at age 17 with a domestic servant (about which, more later).

All this may seem irrelevant to the miraculous music Berg composed, but the culture in which he lived and worked profoundly affected him. Moreover, some of the gossip he knew about others, and the secrets he had himself, found their way into his music. His Chamber Concerto (1923-25), for example, is dedicated to his teacher, Schoenberg, on his 50th birthday. In it, Berg encrypts his own name, along with that of Schoenberg and Anton Webern, and in the second movement even incorporates a musical depiction of Mathilde Schoenberg's illness after she left Gerstl and returned to Schoenberg. These composers were also fascinated by numerology, and that left traces on their music. Freud's close friend Wilhelm Fliess concocted a wild theory about numbers and life cycles (women are 28 and men 23) and this plays a role in Berg's Violin Concerto, the first part of which uses 28 and the second part 23 as guiding numbers.

**Requiem for Manon** The Concerto, Berg's last finished composition (he did not live to complete the opera *Lulu*), honors the death of Manon Gropius, the 18-year-old daughter of Alma Mahler with her second husband. At least that is what the famous dedication—"To the Memory of an Angel"—declares. Berg also referred to the Concerto as a "Requiem for Manon." "Berg loved my daughter as if she were his own child, from the beginning of her life,"

wrote Alma Mahler Gropius later. “She became more and more beautiful as she grew into young adulthood. When [theater director] Max Reinhardt saw her, he asked if I would allow her to play the part of the First Angel in the *Grosses Welttheater* at Salzburg. But before anything could be arranged she was stricken with infantile paralysis ... and she died on Easter Day of 1935. She never did play the angel, though in reality she became one.”

In recent years, however, scholars have argued that secrets lurk in this Concerto as well: that Berg alluded to his illegitimate child from many years earlier, as well as to his more recent love affair with Hanna Fuchs-Robettin. Their 10-year relationship began in 1925 and ended with Berg’s death. News of this relationship came as a surprise to many because it is utterly at odds with the picture of domestic bliss painted by Berg’s widow, Helene.

**A Modernist Classic** Berg wrote the Violin Concerto in a surge of inspiration during the spring and summer of 1935. Earlier that year, while consumed with *Lulu*, he was approached by the American violinist Louis Krasner about writing a concerto. Krasner felt that Berg’s lyrical style, placed in the context of a standard violin concerto, would “further the cause” of 12-tone music among the concert-going public. He later recalled how Berg resisted the idea, at first, stating he was “not a violin composer”; but Krasner persisted. During the four months of the work’s inception, Krasner visited the composer at his summer home on the Wörthersee, Carinthia—near Brahms’s favorite vacation spot—and spent hours improvising on the violin. This was the conscientious composer’s way of getting to know the kinds of violin passagework available to him.

The orchestration of the piece took Berg less than a month, and by mid-August the Concerto was ready. But soon afterward he fell gravely ill, in late 1935, from an infection that appears to have stemmed from an insect bite. He died a few weeks later, on Christmas Eve. Webern, scheduled to conduct the Concerto’s premiere at a music festival in Barcelona in April, found himself unable to lead such a moving piece so soon after the death of his close friend and colleague. He led two of the rehearsals and then abandoned the podium, leaving the final rehearsal, and the performance on April 19, to Hermann Scherchen.

**A Closer Look** Each of the Concerto’s two movements is divided into two parts. The bipartite first movement is often said to represent, programmatically, two aspects of young Manon’s character: the lovely, lyrical first

Berg composed his *Violin Concerto* in 1935.

Louis Krasner, the dedicatee and original soloist for the Barcelona premiere of the *Concerto*, was also on hand for the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work, in November 1937; Leopold Stokowski was the conductor. Most recently Leonidas Kavakos was the soloist in December 2006, under Christoph Eschenbach's baton.

A 1969 performance of the *Concerto* with Leonid Kogan and Eugene Ormandy can be found in The Philadelphia Orchestra: The Centennial Collection (Historic Broadcasts and Recordings from 1917-1998).

The score calls for solo violin, two flutes (both doubling piccolo), two oboes (II doubling English horn), three clarinets (III doubling alto saxophone), bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, gong, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle), harp, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

section (**Andante**) representing her elegant beauty and sensitivity, the scherzando second section (**Allegretto**) standing for a certain sort of bubbly Viennese gaiety. It is difficult to imagine a more appealing use of the 12-tone technique than in this dancing, gently virtuosic *Allegretto*, which is variously marked *rustico* and *wienerisch*. Near the end of the first part, Berg alludes to a Carinthian folksong, "Ein Vogel auf'm Zwetschgenbaum" (A Bird on the Plum Tree Has Awakened Me). The melody is introduced by the French horns and taken up by the trumpets before migrating to the soloist. There is reason to believe that thoughts of Manon evoked associations with Berg's own illegitimate daughter, Albine, the progeny of his teenage liaison with a servant girl who worked for the composer's family during the summer holidays.

The second movement begins with a dramatically charged **Allegro**, the dense, rhapsodic section that builds through an intricate, cadenza-like passage to an explosive fortississimo climax—the culmination of the entire *Concerto*, which Berg has marked *Höhepunkt* (climax) to make it clear exactly where we are. This ushers in the last section (**Adagio**), a denouement in which the solo violin intones the last four pitches of the 12-tone row, which, as it happens, are the first notes of Johann Rudolf Ahle's chorale "Es ist genug" (It is Enough), a melody used by J.S. Bach in his Cantata No. 60, *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort* (O Eternity, thou thund'rous word). Four clarinets alternate with the soloist in presenting the phrases of the four-part chorale, in Bach's harmonization. Berg inscribes the score with the hymn text, at the point where each phrase appears: "It is enough! Lord, if it pleases you, release my soul! Now I bid you good night, O world! My Jesus comes: I journey toward my heavenly home. With assurance I travel there, in peace. My great sorrow remains down there, on earth. It is enough." It is a magical effect: Traditional tonality comes to sound strange within Berg's expressive serial surroundings. He has succeeded, perhaps more than any 12-tone composer, in successfully fusing elements of form and content, of purely theoretical constructs with pure musical expression. In many respects, he is just as much Mahler's true Viennese heir, as he is more obviously Schoenberg's.

—Christopher H. Gibbs/Paul J. Horsley

# The Music

## *Atmosphères*



**György Ligeti**  
**Born in Dicsöszentmárton,**  
**Transylvania, May 28, 1923**  
**Died in Vienna, June 12,**  
**2006**

After initial studies at the Klausenburg Conservatory, György Ligeti completed his training at the Franz Liszt Conservatory in Budapest in the late 1940s. Like Béla Bartók before him, he developed a keen interest in folk music, which he collected and studied. He taught for awhile at the Liszt Conservatory, but found that he had to consign to the “bottom drawer” many of the pieces he composed: “In Communist Hungary it was impossible even so much as to dream of having them performed. People living in the West cannot begin to imagine what it was like in the Soviet empire, where art and culture were strictly regulated as a matter of course.”

Two months after the Hungarian uprising in October 1956 Ligeti and his wife fled to Austria. He lived in Berlin, Hamburg, and Vienna until his death in 2006. The upheavals in his life account for the delay in the appearance of his first substantial orchestral compositions, most notably *Atmosphères*, which was premiered at the Donaueschingen Festival in October 1961. The work was widely performed and exerted enormous influence on other composers, although Ligeti himself quickly moved on to writing other kinds of works.

**Music of the Spheres** Many listeners were first exposed to Ligeti’s music in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The film arrived in theaters in April 1968 and memorably included not only the opening of Richard Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*, but also four pieces by Ligeti: his Requiem, *Lux aeterna*, *Aventures*, and *Atmosphères*. The use was not authorized, as Ligeti later explained in an interview:

I wasn’t involved. Nobody involved me. They took the music from my recordings. I knew nothing about it. When I heard about the film I wrote MGM and producer Stanley Kubrick. They wrote back: “You should be happy. With this movie you have become famous in America.” I wrote back: “I am not happy. You took my music and did not pay me.” But I didn’t want to sue. I am not so commercial. Lawyers met. In the end I got \$3,500.

*Atmosphères* was composed in 1961.

The only Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the piece were in December 1965, conducted by Seiji Ozawa, and in April 2008, with Robert Minczuk.

The work is scored for four flutes (all doubling piccolo), four oboes, four clarinets (IV doubling E-flat clarinet), three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, two pianos, and strings.

*Atmosphères* runs approximately nine minutes in performance.

**A Closer Look** Most orchestral compositions written over the past three centuries derive their principal musical interest from melody, rhythm, and harmony. *Atmosphères* concentrates on tone color, texture, dynamics, and density. A precedent for the work is “Farben” (Colors), the third of Arnold Schoenberg’s Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16 (1909).

Ligeti’s fantastic deployment of instruments produces the most unexpected and unusual sounds, all the while shifting textures and playing with the listener’s sense of time. *Atmosphères* makes use of what the composer calls “micropolyphonic” procedures, which are “complex interwoven textures,” in this instance taken to an extreme: “The piece contains absolutely no rhythmic or melodic motif, its form consisting exclusively of transformations of tone color and dynamics.” He has compared the process to the “changing pattern of a kaleidoscope.”

The large orchestra is divided into so many individual parts that every player in essence becomes a soloist. The piece opens with a 59-note tone cluster spread over nearly six octaves and lasting a minute. The music begins to shift: “Changes and modifications of the overall pattern are the most important feature,” Ligeti notes. The most abrupt change happens near the middle of the work, when the instruments veer off into a piercingly high register and the music then suddenly dives to the very lowest murmurings of the strings.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

# The Music

## *La Mer*



**Claude Debussy**  
Born in St. Germain-en-Laye, August 22, 1862  
Died in Paris, March 25, 1918

In a letter to André Messager dated September 12, 1903, Claude Debussy announced, "I am working on three symphonic sketches entitled: 1. 'Calm Sea around the Sanguinaires Islands'; 2. 'Play of the Waves'; 3. 'The Wind Makes the Sea Dance'; the whole to be titled *La Mer*." In a rare burst of autobiography, he then confided, "You're unaware, maybe, that I was intended for the noble career of a sailor and have only deviated from that path thanks to the quirks of fate. Even so, I have retained a sincere devotion to the sea." Debussy points out to Messager the irony that he is working on his musical seascape in landlocked Burgundy, but declares, "I have innumerable memories, and those, in my view, are worth more than a reality which, charming as it may be, tends to weigh too heavily on the imagination."

But the quirks of fate, of which Debussy wrote so lightly in 1903 led him back to the sea over and over again in the two years that elapsed between this letter and the premiere of *La Mer* on October 15, 1905, performed in Paris by the Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Camille Chevillard.

**"Symphonic Sketches"** During his lifetime and after, critics labeled Debussy as an "Impressionist," associating him with the then-radical but now beloved painters Monet and Renoir. Debussy protested that he was not merely an Impressionist but a Symbolist like Maurice Maeterlinck, whose play *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) he had transformed into an opera, or his friend Pierre Louÿs, whose poems he set in the voluptuous song cycle *Chansons de Bilitis* (1898). Despite the suggestive titles of his pieces, Debussy was at least as much a "literary" composer as he was a "visual" one.

By insisting that his publisher, Jacques Durand, place a stylized picture of a wave by the great Japanese artist Hokusai on the cover of *La Mer*, Debussy indicated implicitly that his score was not merely a seascape painted rapidly from prosaic reality nor a pantheistic rhapsody, but rather an evocation of those elemental forces that the sea itself symbolizes: birth (in French, the word for the sea, *mer*, is a homonym for the word for mother, *mère*); desire (waves endlessly lapping the shore, forever unsatisfied); love (all-enveloping emotion in which the lover is completely

*La Mer* was composed from 1903 to 1905.

*Carl Pohlig conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of La Mer, in January 1911. The most recent subscription performances were under the direction of Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos in October 2013. In between the work has been heard numerous times, with such conductors as Fritz Reiner, Pierre Monteux, Artur Rodzinski, Ernest Ansermet, George Szell, Charles Munch, Carlo Maria Giulini, André Previn, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, and Valery Gergiev.*

*The Philadelphians have recorded the work four times: in 1942 for RCA with Arturo Toscanini; in 1959 for CBS with Eugene Ormandy; in 1971 for RCA with Ormandy; and in 1993 for EMI with Riccardo Muti.*

*Debussy scored La Mer for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, tam-tam, and triangle), two harps, celesta, and strings.*

*Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.*

submerged); and, of course, death (dissolution into eternity).

Furthermore, as was evinced in his choice of a Japanese print for the score's cover, Debussy went to considerable trouble to differentiate his work from the aesthetics of the Impressionist painters. Although its subtitle has puzzled critics over the years, Debussy knew exactly what he was doing when he called *La Mer* a series of "symphonic sketches." "Symphonic" because of the sophistication of the processes involved in generating the musical materials, but the word "sketches" is not used in the sense of something rapidly executed or unfinished, but rather to denote a clearly delineated line drawing, nothing remotely "Impressionistic."

**A Closer Look** Writing shortly after the premiere of *La Mer*, the critic Louis Laloy noted, "in each of these three episodes ... [Debussy] has been able to create enduringly all the glimmerings and shifting shadows, caresses and murmurs, gentle sweetness and fiery anger, seductive charm and sudden gravity contained in those waves which Aeschylus praised for their 'smile without number.'" The slow, tenebrous, and mysterious opening of the first "sketch," which Debussy ultimately called **From Dawn to Midday at Sea**, contains all of the thematic motifs that will pervade the rest of the entire score, just as in a Beethovenian symphony. The resemblance to the German symphonic tradition essentially ends there, however, for only the most evanescent lineaments of sonata form, with its contrasting themes and development section, can be discerned flickering behind Debussy's complex formal design. There is no formal section devoted exclusively to development in *La Mer* because Debussy develops incessantly from the very first notes.

The second of the "sketches," **Play of the Waves**, is constructed from tiny mosaic-like thematic and harmonic fragments, a process that anticipates the extraordinary subtlety of Debussy's last completed orchestral score, *Jeux* (1912-13), in which the "games" are more explicitly erotic. The final "sketch," **Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea**, begins in storm and, rising to grandeur, concludes with an orgasmic burst of enveloping, oceanic rapture.

—Byron Adams

# Musical Terms

## GENERAL TERMS

**Cadenza:** A passage or section in a style of brilliant improvisation, usually inserted near the end of a movement or composition

**Cantata:** A multi-movement vocal piece consisting of arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses and based on a continuous narrative text

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

**Chord:** The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

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

**Coda:** A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

**Development:** See sonata form

**Diatonic:** Melody or harmony drawn primarily from the tones of the major or minor scale

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

**Fifth:** An interval of five diatonic degrees

**Harmonic:** Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

**Harmony:** The combination of simultaneously sounded

musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

**Octave:** The interval between any two notes that are seven diatonic (non-chromatic) scale degrees apart

**Polyphony:** A term used to designate music in more than one part and the style in which all or several of the musical parts move to some extent independently

**Rhapsody:** Generally an instrumental fantasia on folksongs or on motifs 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

**Serialism:** Music constructed according to the principle pioneered by Schoenberg in the early 1920s, whereby the 12 notes of the scale are arranged in a particular order, forming a series of pitches that serves as the basis of the composition and a source from which the musical material is derived

**Sonata form:** The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development,

and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda. The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated with modifications.

**Tonic:** The keynote of a scale

**Triad:** A three-tone chord composed of a given tone (the "root") with its third and fifth in ascending order in the scale

**12-tone:** See serialism

## THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

**Adagio:** Leisurely, slow

**Andante:** Walking speed

**Allegretto:** A tempo between walking speed and fast

**Allegro:** Bright, fast

**Rustico:** Rustic, plain, simple

**Scherzando:** Playfully

**Wienerisch:** Viennese

## DYNAMIC MARKS

**Crescendo:** Increasing volume

**Fortissimo (ff):** Very loud