

# Season 2015-2016

**Thursday, January 28, at  
8:00**

**Friday, January 29, at 2:00**

**Saturday, January 30, at  
8:00**

## The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Yannick Nézet-Séguin** Conductor  
**Leif Ove Andsnes** Piano

**Webern** *Im Sommerwind*, idyll for large orchestra

**Schumann** Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54  
I. Allegro affettuoso  
II. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso—  
III. Allegro vivace

### Intermission

**Brahms** Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73  
I. Allegro non troppo  
II. Adagio non troppo—L'istesso tempo, ma  
grazioso  
III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino)—Presto  
ma non assai—Tempo I—Presto ma non  
assai—Tempo I  
IV. Allegro con spirito

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

The January 30 concert is sponsored by the  
**Louis N. Cassett Foundation.**

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

Please join us immediately following the January 29 concert for a free Chamber Postlude, featuring members of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Mozart** Adagio in F major, K. 580a, for English horn, two violins, and cello

**Elizabeth Starr Masoudnia** English Horn

**William Polk** Violin

**Kerri Ryan** Violin

**Yumi Kendall** Cello

**Françaix** Quartet, for English horn, violin, viola, and cello

I. Allegro vivace

II. Andante tranquillo

III. Vivace assai

IV. Andantino

V. Allegro giocoso

**Elizabeth Starr Masoudnia** English Horn

**William Polk** Violin

**Kerri Ryan** Viola

**Yumi Kendall** 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 two celebrated CDs on the prestigious 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 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, The Philadelphia Orchestra today 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 serves as a catalyst for cultural activity across Philadelphia's many communities, as it builds an offstage presence as strong as its onstage one. The Orchestra's award-winning Collaborative Learning initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUp concerts, free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad. 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**, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and he has renewed his commitment to the ensemble through the 2021-22 season. His 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. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that under his baton, "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better." Highlights of his fourth season include a year-long exploration of works that exemplify the famous Philadelphia Sound, including Mahler's Symphony No. 8 and other pieces premiered by the Orchestra; a Music of Vienna Festival; and the continuation of a commissioning project for principal players.

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling 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 two CDs on that label; the second, Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with pianist Daniil Trifonov, was released in August 2015. He continues fruitful recording relationships 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 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 appointments as Companion of the Order of Canada and Officer of the National Order of Quebec, a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, Canada's National Arts Centre Award, the Prix Denise-Pelletier, Musical America's 2016 Artist of the Year, and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, and Westminster Choir College.

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

# Soloist



Ozgar Altayrak

Norwegian pianist **Leif Ove Andsnes** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1997 at the Academy of Music and last appeared with the ensemble in 2012. He gives recitals and plays concertos in major concert halls all over the globe, performing with the world's foremost orchestras. An avid chamber musician, he served as co-artistic director of the Risør Festival of Chamber Music for nearly two decades, and was music director of California's 2012 Ojai Music Festival. He was inducted into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame in July 2013.

Highlights of the 2015-16 season include the release of *Concerto—A Beethoven Journey*, a documentary by award-winning British director and filmmaker Phil Grabsky that chronicles Mr. Andsnes's "Beethoven Journey," an epic four-season focus on the composer's music for piano and orchestra, which took him to 108 cities in 27 countries for more than 230 live concerts. In addition to these current performances, highlights of the season also include U.S. appearances with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony; European performances with the Bergen and Munich philharmonics, the Tonhalle and Gewandhaus orchestras, and the London Symphony; major European and North American solo recital tours with a program of Beethoven, Debussy, Chopin, and Sibelius; and a tour of Brahms's three piano quartets with his frequent musical partner, violinist Christian Tetzlaff, together with violist Tabea Zimmermann and cellist Clemens Hagen. This summer Mr. Andsnes launches the inaugural Rosendal Chamber Music Festival in Norway.

Mr. Andsnes now records exclusively for Sony Classical. His previous discography comprises more than 30 discs for EMI Classics spanning repertoire from the time of Bach to the present day. He has been nominated for eight Grammys and awarded many international prizes, including six *Gramophone* awards. His recordings of the music of his compatriot Edvard Grieg have been especially celebrated. Born in Karmøy, Norway in 1970, Mr. Andsnes studied at the Bergen Music Conservatory under Jiří Hlínka. He currently lives in Bergen and in June 2010 achieved one of his proudest accomplishments to date, becoming a father for the first time. His family expanded in May 2013 with the welcome arrival of twins.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1841**

**Schumann**

Piano Concerto

**Music**

Rossini

Stabat Mater

**Literature**

Browning

*Pippa Passes*

**Art**

Courbet

*The Forest in*

*Autumn*

**History**

Braid discovers

hypnosis

**1877**

**Brahms**

Symphony

No. 2

**Music**

Saint-Saëns

*Samson and*

*Delilah*

**Literature**

James

*The American*

**Art**

Homer

*The Cotton*

*Pickers*

**History**

Edison invents

the phonograph

**1904**

**Webern**

*Im*

*Sommerwind*

**Music**

Puccini

*Madame*

*Butterfly*

**Literature**

Chekhov

*The Cherry*

*Orchard*

**Art**

Matisse

*Luxe, calme, et*

*volupté*

**History**

Work begins on

Panama Canal

The Philadelphia Orchestra's Music of Vienna festival concludes with three lushly Romantic compositions.

Anton Webern earned his place in music history as an influential Modernist who wrote pointillistic pieces untethered to tonality. At the very start of his career, however, before he became one of Arnold Schoenberg's most famous students, he wrote pieces in an unabashedly late-Romantic style. At age 20 he composed a richly orchestrated tone poem called *Im Sommerwind* (In the Summer Wind), a piece that was only discovered some 60 years later, long after this death. The Philadelphians gave its world premiere in 1962 with Eugene Ormandy conducting.

Robert Schumann made several attempts in his late teens to write a piano concerto but he kept getting sidetracked by other projects. In 1841 he composed a one-movement Fantasy for piano and orchestra. He had recently married the brilliant piano virtuoso Clara Wieck and around that time he decided to expand the piece to a full three-movement concerto, which she premiered in 1845.

Robert and Clara were crucial mentors for the young Johannes Brahms and both of them encouraged him to compose symphonies. Robert died just a few years after they first met, but Clara remained a life-long friend and muse. The concert today concludes with Brahms's radiant Second Symphony, which had its premiere in Vienna in 1877.

# The Music

## *Im Sommerwind*



**Anton Webern**  
**Born in Vienna,**  
**December 3, 1883**  
**Died in Mittersill, Austria,**  
**September 15, 1945**

Born to one of Austria's most prominent families, Anton "von" Webern lived to see World War I weaken his family's noble privilege, the inflation of the 1920s erode its wealth, and the plague of Nazism decimate its prestige. Having survived the privations of World War II, in the final hours of that conflict he was shot to death by an American soldier—in a bizarre incident that was apparently an accident.

Webern became one of the most influential musical figures of the century, important not just as a link between Arnold Schoenberg and Modernism but also as a creator of splendid music, much of which took the form of delicate miniatures. (Some of his pieces are barely a minute long.) In the tradition of Paul Klee's fragile squiggles, Webern was 20th-century music's proof that "Less is More," and his chamber-like minimalism exerted a profound influence on the avant-garde of the 1950s and '60s.

Nevertheless he began as a traditionalist, as had his mentor. Schoenberg held nothing but deepest reverence for the music of the past, from Bach to Brahms, and his foremost pupils, Webern and Alban Berg, inherited this reverence. As possibly the most conventional of the three, in fact, Webern had begun his career as a musicologist, with a University of Vienna doctorate on Renaissance choral music. Like Schoenberg, he embarked on his career as a composer immersed in a post-Wagnerian tonal language—with liberal influences from Strauss's tone poems and Mahler's early symphonies.

**The Missing Link** The decisive event in Webern's turnaround was his encounter with Schoenberg, under whose tutelage he fully embraced atonal and later 12-tone composition. But before he began this apprenticeship around 1905, he was composing with a lushness that hardly gives a hint of the spare, pointillistic style that would characterize his later music. Among his last works still anchored in tonality were the Five Songs after Poems by Richard Dehmel and the Passacaglia, Op. 1. Most original of all, though, was the tone poem *Im Sommerwind* (In the Summer Wind), composed in summer 1904, just months before he began lessons with Schoenberg. With its transparent string writing, shifting chromatic harmonies, and economical counterpoint, this 13-minute impression

*Im Sommerwind* was composed in 1904.

*Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra performed the world premiere of the piece at a three-day Webern Festival at the University of Washington in 1962. It was heard most recently on subscription in January 2009, led by Donald Runnicles.*

*The Orchestra made the world premiere recording of the work in 1963 with Ormandy for CBS.*

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

*Performance time is approximately 13 minutes.*

of a poem by Bruno Wille (1860-1928) is Webern's most notable contribution to the ecstatic subjectivism of post-Romanticism.

The work was unearthed only in 1961, when the scholar Hans Moldenhauer discovered it and other unknown Webern pieces in the possession of the composer's daughter (a collection now at the University of Washington). It received its premiere the following year at the first International Webern Festival in Seattle, performed by Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra. Since then it has been admired for its intrinsic beauty and studied for its interest as a "missing link" in Webern's career, "at the juncture between conservative and progressive influences," as Moldenhauer has written.

**A Closer Look** *Im Sommerwind* was composed during an idyllic summer spent at Pregelhof, the Webern family's enormous country estate in the Austrian district of Carinthia. "We stayed there very happily during our summer vacations and also at Easter," Webern's sister later wrote of these halcyon days in pre-World War I Europe. "We spent the whole day in the meadows, fields, and forest. We made excursions into the surrounding countryside, riding in a small wagon which we took turns pulling. My brother had as much fun at this as the other children who often came visiting." Pregelhof's almost magical charm remained an inspiration to the composer for many years. Like Beethoven before him, Webern often made musical sketches as he strolled outdoors, and he scribbled bits of *Im Sommerwind* into the pocket music notebooks that he carried with him.

The work's almost mystical depiction of nature was inspired by Wille's poem of the same title, which Webern had been reading during the summer of 1904—and doubtless also by the sheer beauty of the natural setting. In spirit the poem approaches the pantheism of Wagner's *Parsifal*: nature as a singular "being" that borders on deity. Around 1900 such ideas began emanating from Vienna, and the poet, philosopher, and naturalist Wille was one of this movement's leading proponents.

Webern uses the poem as a sort of spiritual springboard, rather than trying to represent Wille's poem programmatically. The composition's rhythmic gestures are partly derived from Strauss and the late Romantics, and its structure takes us through an arch, from D major, through related keys, and with a return to D. At the work's climax the full orchestra lurches into a waltz-like triple meter.

—Paul J. Horsley



***In the Summer Wind*** [excerpted]

The gentle summer breezes blow  
and young bullocks nod their heads and sway,  
and shaggy pine-tops bend to and fro;  
as from their tender, slender light-green  
bosom comes a resinous scent  
and the soft air floats above, intoxicated.  
Suddenly the whole world  
opens up to us far and wide  
in sunny bright cerulean blue;  
and far away, white bands of clouds  
and far away, the waving wheat  
and green, green meadows. ...  
Here could I rest, here would I watch—  
as the sweet acadia-tree  
atremble in the gentle breeze  
strews its blossoms all about.  
Oh, rye-stalks bending back and forth  
how soft they whisper, and how they  
    endlessly wave  
into the melting blue horizon!  
And already many heads bow down in  
    silver-green.  
Others bloom and smell like fresh-baked  
    bread.  
Between them bloom  
bright poppies, flaming-red  
and dark-blue cyclamen.  
But up above  
through the blue ether  
float billows of clouds  
like mountains half gold, half gray.  
And behold, the sun spreads her radiant fan  
of silver-silk  
coquettishly around.  
Then she appears once more  
from out of her robe of clouds  
and her white limbs  
glisten, and spray  
blinding golden dust  
upon the meadows where  
forget-me-nots bloom smilingly  
and yellow ranunculus  
and brick-red sorrel.  
Oh, thou raging, storming whirlwind!  
Like a freedom-shout, like an organ-chord  
dost thou assail my ear

and cool my brow,  
as thou wastest around me  
like the foaming wave  
that laps the coastal rock. ...  
Oh, thou seething, turbulent wind!  
Now thou seething, turbulent wind!  
Now thou diest down  
so mild, so kind ...  
murmuring, whispering, fanning.  
Art thou now troubled  
by the sun's bright smile?  
Even thy whispering now goes down. ...

# The Music

## Piano Concerto



**Robert Schumann**  
**Born in Zwickau, Saxony,**  
**June 8, 1810**  
**Died in Endenich (near**  
**Bonn), July 29, 1856**

Writing in 1839 as the editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Robert Schumann complained of the relative dearth of recently composed works for piano and orchestra: "Since the founding of this journal, we have reported on nearly every new piano concerto; in the past six years, hardly 16 or 17 have appeared, a tiny number in comparison with earlier times." Observing that recent advances in piano construction and technique had opened new vistas for composers and performers alike, Schumann summed up the attitude of many of his contemporaries as follows: "We pianists don't need help from anyone else; our instrument is most effective when it's heard alone." Still, he looked forward to the arrival on the musical scene of "a genius who will show us in a new and brilliant way how to combine the orchestra with the piano such that pianists, taking the lead, can display the riches of their instrument while the orchestra is allowed to act as more than a mere bystander." Within a few years, Schumann himself would prove to be one of those geniuses who managed to unite piano and orchestra in a genuinely novel way.

**False Starts** Well before bemoaning the fate of the piano concerto, Schumann had already tried his hand several times at the genre, going back to his teenage years in the late 1820s. The surviving materials for an unfinished concerto in F major are rather more extensive and came at a crucial divide in his musical career: Having drafted portions of the concerto in 1830, the year in which he firmly decided to become a concert pianist, he apparently lost interest in the composition sometime in 1832, when an incurable weakness in the middle finger of his right hand forced him to abandon his plans for a life as a performing artist.

Schumann's next attempt at writing a piano concerto dates from 1839 during a sojourn in Vienna, where he had temporarily settled in hopes of finding a new base of operation for his journal and a broader market for his solo piano compositions. There he drafted a first movement for a piano concerto in D minor.

Obviously dissatisfied with the piece, he required another two years before finally arriving at the ideal balance

between pianistic display and musical integrity. This brings us to 1841, his so-called symphonic year, which saw the creation of two symphonies, in B-flat major (Op. 38) and D minor (published in a thoroughly revised version as Op. 120); the Overture, Scherzo, and Finale (Op. 52); and a single-movement *Phantasie* in A minor for piano and orchestra. Four years later Schumann revised the *Phantasie*, and, probably acting on the advice of his publisher Breitkopf and Härtel, added a slow movement and finale. The result was what we now know as the Piano Concerto in A minor.

Like so many of Schumann's piano works, the Concerto was conceived for his wife, Clara Wieck-Schumann, the soloist for its warmly applauded, though sparsely attended premiere on December 4, 1845, in Dresden. Clara was both interpreter and, even more important, muse, a role she had assumed for over a decade by the time Schumann completed his Piano Concerto. Indeed, in some ways, the work hearkens back to the very beginnings of their relationship. Aficionados of Clara's own compositions will hear echoes of *her* youthful Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 7)—completed in 1835 under the watchful eyes of both Schumann and her father—in the much later work of her husband.

**A Closer Look** According to the critic who reviewed the premiere of Schumann's Piano Concerto for a leading journal, the piece was governed by a unifying *Grundidee*, or basic idea. In fact the work features a number of "basic ideas," the most elemental of which is surely the orchestra's opening hammerstroke, which finds a complement in the four hammerstrokes that bring the first movement to a close. What the critic had in mind, however, was probably what happens just after the soloist's pointed response to the initial gesture in the orchestra: a plaintive melody in the oboe supported by the other winds. Dispensing with the customary preview in the form of a long orchestral introduction, Schumann immediately passes the idea to the pianist, who soon proceeds to refract it through a shifting kaleidoscope of musical moods. In the course of the movement (**Allegro affettuoso**), we hear the melody in a variety of guises: as a noble hymn, a dreamy nocturne for piano in dialogue with the winds, and then as a passionate rhapsody. In the cadenza—which Schumann wrote out note-for-note rather than entrusting it to the soloist's improvisational skills—the melody emerges with some urgency from a haze of trills. And finally, at the very end of the movement, Schumann

Schumann composed his *Piano Concerto from 1841 to 1845*.

*Raoul Pugno, the French composer, pianist, and friend of Debussy and Franck, was soloist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the Schumann Concerto, in January 1903; Fritz Scheel conducted. The most recent subscription performances by the Orchestra were in March 2010 with pianist Benedetto Lupo and Vladimir Jurowski.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra recorded Schumann's Piano Concerto in 1956 and 1964, both for CBS and both with Rudolf Serkin and Eugene Ormandy.*

*In addition to the solo piano, Schumann scored the work for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.*

*The Concerto runs approximately 30 minutes in performance.*

restores the tune to the winds, transforming it into an impish march. Thus in Schumann's hands, the conventional concerto form is replaced by a more integrated conception based on a succession of thematically related character portraits.

The second movement **Intermezzo (Andantino grazioso)**, opens with an intimate dialogue for piano and strings, evoking a world of innocence and wide-eyed wonder not too far distant from that of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. With the entrance of an expansive melody in the cellos, however, naïveté gives way to heartfelt expression. The piano and orchestra eventually resume their earlier dialogue, which soon dissolves into distant echoes of the plaintive melody from the first movement. Then, with an irresistible surge, the music plunges headlong into the dance-like finale. (Schumann's sketches indicate how long and hard he labored on this transitional passage, even though it only lasts a dozen bars or so.)

One of Schumann's most high-spirited creations, the last movement (**Allegro vivace**) is pervaded by sparkling humor from beginning to end. Both of its main themes—the first muscular and acrobatic, the second playful but elegant—enact a kind of rhythmic tug-of-war between quick triple time and a pattern moving precisely half as fast: a feature that the early reviewer who advised against trying to perform the Concerto without a conductor must surely have had in mind. Another humorous touch comes about midway through the movement, where Schumann interrupts a school-bookish fugue with a new dance tune shared by winds and piano.

First championed by Clara Schumann in the 1850s and '60s, her husband's Piano Concerto soon became a staple of every leading pianist's repertoire. Its impact on the future direction of concerto composition was equally profound. Edvard Grieg's enthusiasm for Schumann's songs (he once put them on a par with "world literature") was equaled only by his high regard for the Piano Concerto, which he chose as the model for his own concerto in the same key. Nor was Grieg alone. Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky are just some of the many composers who fell under the spell of the impassioned and eloquent reverie of Schumann's Piano Concerto.

—John Daverio

# The Music

## Symphony No. 2



**Johannes Brahms**  
**Born in Hamburg, May 7,**  
**1833**  
**Died in Vienna, April 3,**  
**1897**

Robert Schumann's prophetic review in 1853 hailing the 20-year-old Johannes Brahms as the savior of Western music is well known. His effusive praise, however, may have had the unintended consequence of delaying a first symphony from the young genius. Schumann and everyone else wondered when Brahms would write one, what it would be like, and how he would answer one of the most pressing aesthetic questions of the day: the best way to write a symphony after the towering achievements of Beethoven. Berlioz, Liszt, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and other composers came up with their own varying answers. Brahms's was eagerly awaited.

But he kept delaying. Soon after receiving Schumann's benediction, he started to write a symphony, but ultimately diverted the music to other pieces. Two orchestral serenades, Opp. 11 and 16, came fairly close to being full-fledged symphonies, and there are comparable aspirations evident in his unusually symphonic First Piano Concerto and the great "Haydn" Variations of 1873, which must have boosted his confidence in proving his orchestral prowess. In the end it took some 23 years before Brahms finished writing his magnificent Symphony No. 1 in C minor, a work immediately hailed as "Beethoven's Tenth" by the celebrated conductor Hans von Bülow.

**Unidentical Twins** After all the angst of producing that work, his Second Symphony had no such protracted birth pangs; its labor was relatively quick and easy. Brahms may have felt liberated to some degree from the burden of expectations set up so long ago by Schumann and turned to writing quite a different kind of symphony the second time around. Throughout his career he frequently created works in contrasting pairs. The First and Second symphonies may be considered such an instance of unidentical twins. They present an intriguing juxtaposition of gravity and cheer, which some have interpreted as a glimpse of the two sides of Brahms's personality. As the composer had said of another pair of works, the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture*: "One laughs, the other weeps."

Brahms wrote the Second Symphony between June and October 1877, while also correcting the proofs of the First

Symphony and making a four-hand piano arrangement of that work. His physical surroundings apparently inspired him, as he began composing amidst the breathtaking beauty of the Wörthersee, a lake nestled in the Carinthian Alps of southern Austria (Mahler would later find inspiration there as well) and completed it in Lichtental near Baden-Baden. He informed his friend, the powerful Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, that the Symphony was “so cheerful and lovely that you will think it especially for you or even your young lady! That’s no great feat, you will say, Brahms is a smart fellow and the Wörthersee virgin soil, with so many melodies flying around that you must be careful not to tread on any.”

The composer eventually sent the work to his good friend Theodor Billroth, a prominent Viennese physician, who responded: “I have already completely immersed myself in this piece, and it has given me many a happy hour. I cannot tell which movement is my favorite; I find each one magnificent in its own way. A cheerful, carefree mood pervades the whole, and everything bears the stamp of perfection and of the untroubled outpouring of serene thoughts and warm sentiments.”

**Late Idyll** Such descriptions of the Second as sunny, warm, even pastoral (similar therefore to Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, which contrasted so with his famous Fifth, or to Dvořák’s Sixth Symphony) have been attached to the work from the beginning. But the piece also has its more somber moments, specifically in the first two movements. A conductor wrote to Brahms two years after the Symphony appeared to inquire about the dark tone that intrudes in the first movement with the trombones and timpani. The composer explained that “I would have to confess that I am, by the by, a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us, that in my works—possibly not entirely without intent—this Symphony is followed by a small essay on the great ‘Why.’ If you do not know it [the motet “Why is the Light Given to the Hard-pressed?”] I will send it to you. It throws the necessary sharp shadows across the light-hearted symphony and perhaps explains those trombones and drums.” Musicologist Reinhold Brinkmann has explored what he calls the “Late Idyll” represented in this not-so-straightforward work.

After the popular and critical success of the First Symphony, which had its premiere in the relatively provincial Karlsruhe, Brahms was emboldened to premiere his Second in Vienna. Hans Richter was enlisted to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic for the first performance scheduled

*Brahms composed his Symphony No. 2 in 1877.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra's first performance of the Symphony was in December 1900, under Fritz Scheel's direction. The most recent performances on the Orchestra's subscription concerts were in April 2013, with Donald Runnicles on the podium.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra has recorded Brahms's Second Symphony four times: with Leopold Stokowski in 1929 for RCA Victor; with Eugene Ormandy in 1939 for RCA Victor; with Ormandy in 1953 for CBS; and in 1988 with Riccardo Muti for Philips. A live recording from 1995 with Wolfgang Sawallisch is also available by digital download.*

*The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings.*

*The Symphony runs approximately 40 minutes in performance.*

for early December 1877, but, as Walter Frisch has noted, "in one of those little ironies of music history, it had to be postponed until December 30 because the players were so preoccupied with learning Wagner's *Rheingold*."

**A Closer Look** The ear may be drawn, at the beginning of the first movement (**Allegro non troppo**), to the musical ideas presented by the woodwinds and brass, but the primary building block of the entire Symphony comes before, with the first four notes intoned in the lower strings: D, C-sharp, D, A. The movement is rich in melodic ideas, including a brief allusion to Brahms's song from the same time (and in the same key) "Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenzel!" (Love Is So Lovely in Spring), Op. 71, No. 1.

The second movement (**Adagio non troppo**) is the least sunny and exhibits the "Brahmsian fog" of which critics commented during the composer's time, with the dark sonorities of its instrumental palette and the thickness of the orchestration. The third movements of Brahms's symphonies typically serve as a kind of intermezzo; that of the Second Symphony merges elements of the minuet (**Allegretto grazioso**) and the scherzo (**Presto ma non assai**). The final movement (**Allegro con spirito**) begins with a soft and mysterious theme that suddenly bursts into a *fortissimo* statement with great energy and forward drive.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

# Musical Terms

## GENERAL TERMS

**Atonality:** A term used to describe music that is not tonal, especially organized without reference to key or tonal center

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

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

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

**Counterpoint:** A term that describes the combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

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

**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

**Minimalism:** A style of composition characterized by an intentionally simplified rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic vocabulary

**Minuet:** A dance in triple time commonly used up to the beginning of the 19th century as the lightest movement of a symphony

**Op.:** Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output

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

**Scherzo:** Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo in triple time, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

**Tone poem:** A type of 19th-century symphonic piece that is based upon an extramusical idea, either poetic or descriptive

**Trill:** A type of embellishment that consists, in a more or less rapid alternation, of the main note with the one a tone or half-tone above it

**12-tone:** 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

**Tonic:** The keynote of a scale

## THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

**Adagio:** Leisurely, slow

**Affettuoso:** Tenderly, with feeling

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

**Allegro:** Bright, fast

**Andantino:** Slightly quicker than walking speed

**Con spirito:** With spirit

**Grazioso:** Graceful and easy

**L'istesso tempo:** At the same tempo

**Presto:** Very fast

**Vivace:** Lively

## TEMPO MODIFIERS

**Ma non assai:** But not much

**Non troppo:** Not too much

**Quasi:** Almost

## DYNAMIC MARKS

**Fortissimo (ff):** Very loud



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