Season 2016-2017

Thursday, February 23, at 8:00
Friday, February 24, at 2:00
Saturday, February 25, at 8:00

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor
Peter Richard Conte Organ
Vanessa Vasquez Soprano
Chrystal E. Williams Mezzo-soprano
Jonas Hacker Tenor
André Courville Bass-baritone

Brahms/ trans. Glanert Selections from Eleven Chorale Preludes, Op. 122
I. "Mein Jesu, der du mich" (orchestra)
II. "Herzliebster Jesu" (organ only)
VIII. "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" (organ only)
IX. "Herzlich tut mich verlangen" (orchestra)
X. "Herzlich tut mich verlangen" (organ only)
XI. "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen" (organ only)
III. "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen" (orchestra)
(world premiere of orchestral transcriptions—commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra)

Bach Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich," BWV 150
I. Sinfonia
II. Chorus: "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich"
III. Aria: "Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt"
IV. Chorus: "Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit"
V. Aria (Trio): "Zedern müssen von den Winden"
VI. Chorus: "Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn"
VII. Chorus: "Meine Tage in dem Leide"
Davyd Booth, organ

Intermission

Brahms Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Andante moderato
III. Allegro giocoso—Poco meno presto—Tempo I
IV. Allegro energico e passionato—Più allegro

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 50 minutes.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM. Visit WRTI.org to listen live or for more details.

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 inspiring the future and 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 connection to the Orchestra's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics 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 continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with its loyal patrons at its home in 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, all of which create greater access and engagement with classical music as an art form.

The Philadelphia Orchestra serves as a catalyst for cultural activity across Philadelphia's many communities, building an offstage presence as strong as its onstage one. With Nézet-Séguin, a dedicated body of musicians, and one of the nation's richest arts ecosystems, the Orchestra has launched its **HEAR** initiative, a portfolio of integrated initiatives that promotes **H**ealth, champions music **E**ducation, eliminates barriers to **A**ccessing the orchestra, and maximizes impact through **R**esearch. The Orchestra's award-winning Collaborative Learning programs 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.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, The Philadelphia Orchestra is a global ambassador for Philadelphia and for the US. Having been the first American orchestra to perform in China, in 1973 at the request of President Nixon, the ensemble today boasts a new partnership with Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Shanghai Oriental Art Centre, and in 2017 will be the first-ever Western orchestra to appear in Mongolia. The Orchestra annually performs at Carnegie Hall while also enjoying summer residencies in Saratoga Springs, NY, and Vail, CO. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit www.philorch.org.

Music Director


Chris Lee

Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is now confirmed to lead The Philadelphia Orchestra through the 2025-26 season, an extraordinary and significant long-term commitment. Additionally, he becomes music director of the Metropolitan Opera beginning with the 2021-22 season. Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of the Orchestra. His intensely collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm 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 fifth season include an exploration of American Sounds, with works by Leonard Bernstein, Christopher Rouse, Mason Bates, and Christopher Theofanidis; a Music of Paris Festival; and the continuation of a focus on opera and sacred vocal works, with Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Mozart's C-minor Mass.

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 was also principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and 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. He continues fruitful recording relationships with the Rotterdam Philharmonic on DG, EMI Classics, and BIS Records; the London Philharmonic for the LPO label; and the Orchestre Métropolitain for ATMA Classique. In Yannick's inaugural season The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to the radio airwaves, with weekly Sunday afternoon broadcasts on WRTI-FM.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada, *Musical America*'s 2016 Artist of the Year, Canada's National Arts Centre Award, the Prix Denise-Pelletier, and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec in Montreal, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, NJ.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit www.philorch.org/conductor.

Soloists

In 1989 **Peter Richard Conte** was appointed Wanamaker Grand Court Organist at what is now the Macy's Department Store in downtown Philadelphia—the fourth person to hold that title since the organ was inaugurated in 1911. He performs concerts twice daily, six days each week, on the largest fully-functioning musical instrument in the world. He is also principal organist of Longwood Gardens and, since 1991 choirmaster and organist of Saint Clement's Church in Philadelphia. Mr. Conte is highly regarded as a skillful performer and arranger of organ transcriptions. He has been featured several times on National Public Radio and on ABC television's *Good Morning America* and *World News Tonight.* He has two radio shows: *The Wanamaker Organ Hour,* which airs on the first Sunday of each month at 5 PM and can be heard at WRTI.org; and on each Wednesday evening at 7 PM his Grand Court concert is streamed live on YesterdayUSA.com. Mr. Conte performs extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada and has appeared as a featured artist at American Guild of Organists' National and Regional Conventions. He has performed with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philly Pops, and with numerous orchestras around the country.

Colombian-American soprano **Vanessa Vasquez** is the 2016 top prizewinner of several prestigious international competitions, including the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation, the Giulio Gari Foundation, and the Loren L. Zachary Society. She recently won the Philadelphia district for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and competes in the regional finals this year. As a current third-year resident artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA), she has performed the roles of Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto,* Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro,* Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* and Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème.* In her second year at AVA she won the James Parkinson Opera Foundation First Prize and the Walter and Alice Strine, Esqs., Audience Prize, and she was the First Prize winner of the Vocal Arts DC Art Song Competition. In 2016 she also won First Prize and the Audience Choice award in Phoenix Opera's Southwest Vocal Competition in her hometown. In January Ms. Vasquez sang with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the Academy of Music 160th Anniversary Concert. She makes her Orchestra subscription debut with these current performances.

Soloists

Vanessa Briceño Photography

Mezzo-soprano **Chrystal E. Williams** is a winner of Astral's 2014 National Auditions and is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut. Upcoming performances include Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with Boston Modern Orchestra Project; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Springfield Symphony; Bach's *Magnificat* with the New Jersey Master Chorale; and a return to the role of Rebecca in *Charlie Parker's Yardbird,* a co-production with Hackney Empire and English National Opera. She recently performed the role of Publia and covered the role of Arsace in Rossini's *Aureliano* at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts; gave concerts with the Norrköping Symphony in Sweden; debuted with Washington National Opera as Elizabeth Keckley/Coretta Scott King in Glass's *Appomattox;* and returned to the Birmingham Opera Company as Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas.* A recent graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts, she founded the Chrystal E. Williams Scholarship in 2004 to help students wishing to pursue a career in the performing arts. The scholarship is funded in part by her concert, "An Evening with Chrystal E.," held each June in Norfolk, Virginia. Ms. Williams appears courtesy of Astral Artists.

Scott Suchman

A native of Wisconsin, tenor **Jonas Hacker** is completing his fourth and final year at the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) in Philadelphia. In the summer of 2016 he appeared as a Filene Young Artist with Wolf Trap Opera, singing Sospiro in Gassmann's comic opera *L'opera seria.* Performance highlights this season include the role of George Gibbs in Rorem's *Our Town* with Fresno Grand Opera and Townsend Opera; a return to Washington Concert Opera to sing Jaquino in Beethoven's *Leonore* (the original version of *Fidelio*); the role of Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at AVA; and a return to Wolf Trap as Bastianello and Lambent in Musto's *Bastianello.* Active in both opera and oratorio, he made his debut with the Columbus Symphony in 2016 singing Obadiah in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* under the baton of Rossen Milanov. He appeared as tenor soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with The Philadelphia Orchestra's SingIN event in 2014 and sang the complete *Messiah* with the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra in 2012. Mr. Hacker was part of the Glimmerglass Festival Young Artist Program in 2015 and made his professional operatic debut that same year with Annapolis Opera as Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte.*

Soloist

Bass-baritone **André Courville** is in his final year as a resident artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. This season's roles include Raimondo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the Speaker in Mozart's *The Magic Flute,* the Old Servant in Rubinstein's *The Demon*, and Mephistopheles in Boulanger's *Faust and Helen.* Other important roles at AVA have included Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Mephistopheles in Gounod's *Faust*, Archibaldo in Montemezzi's *L'amore dei tre re,* and Mustafà in Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers.* In 2014 he made debuts at Carnegie Hall in Opera Orchestra of New York's production of Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*, with the Caramoor International Music Festival as Monterone in Verdi's *Rigoletto,* and with the Milwaukee Symphony as Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni.* In 2013 he sang Marquis d'Obigny in Santa Fe Opera's production of Verdi's *La traviata* as a member of the Apprentice Singer Program. Other operatic roles include Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Colline in Puccini's *La bohème,* and Don Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte.* Mr. Courville is a native of Louisiana. These current performances mark his Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1709
Bach
Cantata
No. 150

Music
Handel
Agrippina
Literature
Pope
Pastorals
Art
Crespi
The Flea
History
Russians defeat Swedes at Battle of Poltava

1885
Brahms
Symphony
No. 4

Music
Franck
Symphonic Variations
Literature
Haggard
King Solomon's Mines
Art
Van Gogh
The Potato Eaters
History
Galton proves individuality of fingerprints

1896
Brahms
Eleven Chorale Preludes

Music
Strauss
Also sprach Zarathustra
Literature
Chekhov
The Sea Gull
Art
Leighton
Clytie
History
Utah becomes a state

Among great composers Johannes Brahms was unusually aware of, and fascinated by, the history of music. For him the music of J.S. Bach proved an enduring passion and inspiration. Today's concert begins with selections from Brahms's final composition: Eleven Chorale Preludes. He wrote them during the last summer of his life and in the wake of the death of his closest friend, Clara Wieck, widow of his mentor Robert Schumann. These Bach-inspired pieces call upon Lutheran hymn melodies as the basis for brief organ compositions. Today we hear four in their original organ version featuring the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ and three others in the world premiere performances of new orchestrations by German composer Detlev Glanert.

The Philadelphia Orchestra concludes its chronological survey of Brahms's magisterial four symphonies. He based the last movement of his Fourth Symphony on the last movement of Bach's Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" (For You, Lord, Is My Longing). On this concert we have the rare opportunity to hear the Symphony paired with the Cantata.

While the two Brahms compositions today are late works, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" is one of Bach's earliest, perhaps even the very first of his hundreds of cantatas. The last movement is a chaconne, meaning that the underlying harmonic pattern is repeated again and again. This is what Brahms borrowed in his loving look back to Bach and as well to Robert and Clara Schumann, who had introduced him to the music of the Baroque master when he was 20.

The Music

Selections from Eleven Chorale Preludes (orchestral transcriptions by Detlev Glanert)

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

A composer's last work holds a special position and interest. Be it a four-minute song (Schubert's "Die Taubenpost"), a vast opera (Wagner's *Parsifal*), or an unfinished project (Mozart's Requiem), there is often a valedictory quality, a sense of summing up. Johannes Brahms wrote his last composition during the final summer of his life, in 1896, in what were somber circumstances. His closest friend, Clara Wieck, widow of his mentor Robert Schumann, died on May 20, leaving him devastated. After her burial in Bonn (travel delays thwarted him attending the funeral in Frankfurt), he returned to one of his favorite vacation spots in the mountainous resort of Bad Ischl, where he composed Eleven Chorale Preludes for organ. At age 63 Brahms's own health was rapidly declining and he sensed time was limited. In the fall he was diagnosed with liver cancer, in February suffered a stroke, and in early April died. Although he played the Chorale Preludes through for some friends, they were only published five years later as Op. 122.

Looking to the Past Brahms did not end his career with a grand final statement but rather with something more modest in scope and written for a rather unexpected instrument. As a great pianist he had composed a large quantity of keyboard music, but it had been 40 years since he had finished a piece for organ. Choosing to write chorale preludes nevertheless somehow seems a fitting conclusion for his career and perhaps an homage to the Schumanns who had helped introduce him at age 20 to the music of J.S. Bach. There has rarely been a composer who was so historically aware and engaged. Brahms had studied early music his entire life, looking back as far as the Middle Ages, but particularly to the Renaissance and Baroque eras. He counted musicologists among his friends and advisors, was involved with editions of early music, and amassed a large library of manuscripts, scores, and books. Looking to the past, especially to Bach, was typically Brahmsian, as we hear as well with the Fourth Symphony later on the program today.

The chorale prelude is a Baroque genre in which a single chorale strophe forms the basis for a brief organ

Brahms composed the Eleven Chorale Preludes for organ in 1896. Detlev Glanert transcribed them for orchestra in 2016.

These are the world premiere performances of the Glanert transcriptions.

Glanert scored the work for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons; contrabassoon; four horns; two trumpets; three trombones; timpani; and strings.

The selection on today's concert runs approximately 22 minutes in performance.

composition in imitative counterpoint that leads to the congregation singing the hymn tune. Since the Lutheran chorale melodies have German texts, such pieces can be considered a kind of non-vocal program music. While Brahms rarely indulges in "word-painting," that is explicitly trying to illustrate a particular word with the music, he does seek to capture the moods behind the chorales. The texts he selected largely concern themes of death and eternity.

Although Brahms wrote several pieces with biblical texts, including his recent Four Serious Songs, he rejected organized religion. His great *German Requiem* does not use the traditional Latin words for the Mass for the Dead, but rather consoling passages from Luther's translation of the Bible. Composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg wrote a somewhat critical review of the Four Serious Songs in which he characterized them as "not only undogmatic, but unbelieving." Informing his friend of his new Chorale Preludes, Brahms remarked "I will shortly be sending you some little things that you can attack for their 'unChristian thinking' in your new journal."

A Closer Look On the concert today we hear seven of Brahms's Eleven Chorale Preludes, four in their original organ version and the other three in the world premiere performances of orchestrations by Detlev Glanert (b. 1960), one of the most prolific and often performed German composers active today. **"Mein Jesu, der du mich"** (My Jesus Calls to Me; No. 1 for orchestra), the longest and most imposing of the collection, unfolds as an austere three-voice fugue. **"Herzliebster Jesu"** (Blessed Jesus; No. 2 for organ) is slow, dark, and noble, followed by the sweet **"Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen"** (Behold, a Rose is Blooming; No. 8 for organ).

Two of the chorale melodies Brahms used appear twice in the complete set of 11 (3 and 11; 9 and 10), so in these instances we are not hearing the same piece of music but rather two of Brahms's takes on the same words. His bold setting of **"Herzlich tut mich verlangen"** (My Heart Is Filled with Longing; No. 9 for orchestra) contrasts with a more soothing one (No. 10 for organ). **"O Welt, ich muss dich lassen"** (O World, I Must Leave You; No. 11 for organ) were probably the last notes Brahms wrote. The selection today concludes with his earlier setting of the same text (No. 3 for orchestra).

—Christopher H. Gibbs

The Music

Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich"

Johann Sebastian Bach
Born in Eisenach, March 21, 1685
Died in Leipzig, July 28, 1750

Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel, born within a month of one another in adjoining eastern German provinces about 100 miles apart, are the preeminent late Baroque composers whose names have never faded. During their lifetimes, however, Handel was far more famous, successful, and cosmopolitan. Bach's career was relatively provincial and his greatness took much longer to be widely recognized. One consequence is that among his vast catalogue of works it is often not known when, where, or even if he wrote a particular piece. Some scholars speculate, for example, that his Toccata and Fugue in D minor, a signature piece for The Philadelphia Orchestra in Leopold Stokowski's celebrated orchestration, may actually not be by Bach.

Sermons in Music Handel focused much of his career on writing Italian operas and English oratorios for audiences in London. Bach's career centered around church jobs, beginning as an organist in the German town of Arnstadt and ending with more than a quarter century of service in Leipzig, where he was director of music for the city's five main churches. He composed the majority of his cantatas for weekly use in Sunday services. The assignment was akin to writing a musical sermon, to meditate musically on the relevant scripture reading for a given week.

It is unclear how many cantatas Bach composed in total—about 200 survive of the perhaps 300 he may have written. One of the major achievements of 20th-century musicology, based on the study of the manuscripts and parts, was figuring out more securely their chronology. The number assigned in the 19th century to "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" (For You, Lord, Is My Longing) was 150, which would suggest it is a later Leipzig cantata; it now seems it came very early, when Bach was working in Arnstadt, and may actually be his very first. (The only surviving score comes from a posthumous copy by one of Bach's last students; again some scholars speculate the cantata may not be by him.)

A Closer Look As is typical in many of Bach's sacred cantatas, the seven brief movements in "Nach dir, Herr,

Bach composed the "Nach dir, Herr" cantata around 1709.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work.

The score calls for bassoon; strings (violins, cellos, basses); keyboard continuo; soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass vocal soloists; and a four-part choir (in these performances the vocal soloists will also be acting as the chorus).

Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.

verlanget mich" employ different kinds of music. After an opening **Sinfonia** for a spare instrumental ensemble, rich with chromaticism suggestive of suffering, choral movements with texts drawn from verses of Psalm 25 alternate with movements that provide a Christian commentary by an anonymous poet. The chorus, which at these concerts will be performed by the vocal soloists, sings the second movement, "**Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich"** (For You, Lord, Is My Longing), beginning with a slow section that continues the lamenting mood of the sinfonia before moving to a fast fugal part.

There follows a soprano aria, "**Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt"** (But I Am and Remain Content) featuring a prominent violin obliggato. As throughout the cantata, there are many instances of "word painting" in which Bach illustrates the meaning of a word; for example, there is a large interval separating *Tod* (death) and *Höll* (Hell). The central movement is the choral "**Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit"** (Lead Me in Your Truth), again cast as a slow prelude and lively fugue. The fifth movement, **"Zedern müssen von den Winden"** (Cedars Must, before the Winds) is a trio for solo alto, tenor, and bass, begun and accompanied throughout by an intense perpetual motion cello continuo. The last two movements are choral, **"Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn"** (My Eyes Look Always Toward the Lord) leads to the concluding **"Meine Tage in dem Leide"** (My Days Spent in Suffering). The form here is a chaconne, meaning that the underlying harmonic pattern is repeated again and again. This is the pattern that Brahms, who subscribed to the first complete critical edition of Bach's music as it was being released, used as the basis for the last movement of his Fourth Symphony that closes the program today.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

II. Chorus

Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich.
Mein Gott, ich hoffe auf dich.
Laß mich nicht zuschanden werden,
daß sich meine Feinde nicht freuen über mich.
(Psalm 25:1-2)

For you, Lord, is my longing.
My God, I hope in you.
Let me not be put to shame,
so that my enemies may not rejoice over me.

III. Aria
Soprano

Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt,
obgleich hier zeitlich toben
Kreuz, Sturm, und andre Proben,
Tod, Höll, und was sich fügt.
Ob Unfall schlägt den treuen Knecht,
Recht ist und bleibet ewig Recht.

But I am and remain content,
although here for a time there rage
cross, storm, and other trials,
death, Hell, and what is ordained.
Even if misfortune strikes your faithful servant,
right is and remains always right.

IV. Chorus

Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit und lehre mich;
denn du bist der Gott, der mir hilft,
täglich harre ich dein.
(Psalm 25:5)

Lead me in your truth and teach me:
for you are the God who helps me,
every day I wait on you.

V. Aria (Trio)
Mezzo-soprano, Tenor, and Bass

Zedern müssen von den Winden
oft viel Ungemach empfinden,
oftmals werden sie verkehrt.
Rat und Tat auf Gott gestellet,
achtet nicht, was widerbellet,
denn sein Wort ganz anders lehrt.

Cedars must before the winds
often feel much hardship,
often they are overturned.
Thought and action entrust to God,
pay no attention to what howls against you,
for his word teaches otherwise.

VI. Chorus

Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn;
denn er wird meinen Fuß aus dem Netze ziehen.
(Psalm 25:15)

My eyes look always toward the Lord;
for he will pull my foot out of the net.

VII. Chorus

Meine Tage in dem Leiden
endet Gott dennoch zur Freuden;
Christen auf den Dornenwegen
führen Himmels Kraft und Segen.
Bleibet Gott mein treuer Schutz,
achte ich nicht Menschentrutz;
Christus, der uns steht zur Seiten.
Hilft mir täglich sieghaft streiten.

My days spent in suffering
God ends nevertheless with joy;
Christians on the thorny ways
are led by Heaven's strength and blessing.
If God remains my faithful protection,
I do not care for men's spite.
Christ, who stands at our side,
helps me every day to strive victoriously.

The Music

Symphony No. 4

Johannes Brahms

Haydn composed over 100 symphonies, Mozart some 50, but the most celebrated 19th-century composers dramatically scaled back on such quantity. Beethoven's formidable nine upped the stakes. The Romantic celebration of originality meant that each new work now carried extraordinary weight. While Mozart had written his first symphony at the age of eight, Beethoven held off until age 29. Many subsequent 19th-century composers waited well into their careers to produce a symphony.

After Robert Schumann more or less discovered the 20-year-old Brahms in 1853, writing a glowing review that praised him as the new musical messiah, all eyes and ears were on the young composer. Brahms felt under phenomenal pressure to produce an impressive first symphony. He made various false starts and it ultimately took him until age 43 to complete the Symphony No. 1 in C minor. Following the premiere of that glorious work in 1876 the celebrated conductor Hans von Bülow hailed it as "Beethoven's Tenth." Brahms's next symphony, a quite different work in a sunny D major, came quickly the next year. The Symphony No. 3 in F major dates from 1883 and he began the Fourth the following summer.

A Final Symphony Brahms composed the Symphony over the course of two summers in the resort of Mürzzuschlag, not far southwest from Vienna. From the outset he had the idea of ending the work with a passacaglia, a Baroque procedure in which a musical theme is constantly repeated; specifically he wanted to use as its basis the theme of the last movement from Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata No. 150, which we heard on the first half of today's concert. Brahms composed the first two movements of the Symphony in 1884 and then the fourth and third (apparently in that order) the following summer.

Brahms was acutely aware that the Fourth Symphony was different from his earlier efforts. With his typical self-deprecating humor, he compared the work to the sour cherries found in the Alpine region in which he was composing. He wrote to Bülow, with whose formidable court orchestra in Meiningen he often performed, that "a

few entr'actes are lying here—what [taken] together is usually called a symphony." But Brahms worried "about whether it will reach a wider public! That is to say, I fear that it tastes of the native climate—the cherries here do not get sweet, you would not eat them!"

Initial Reactions As was often his practice, Brahms sought the opinion of trusted colleagues to whom he sent the score and eventually played through the piece with composer Ignaz Brüll in a version for two pianos. In early October 1885 he assembled a group of friends, among them the powerful critic Eduard Hanslick, conductor Hans Richter, and his future biographer Max Kalbeck. After the first movement concluded there was no reaction—Hanslick remarked that the experience was like being beaten "by two terribly clever people," which dissipated some of the tension. The next day Kalbeck suggested scrapping the third movement entirely and publishing the finale as a separate piece.

Despite some polite praise Brahms realized that most of his friends were lukewarm on the piece; he may well have felt that until it was played by an orchestra its true effect could not really be judged. Bülow put the Meiningen ensemble at the composer's disposal: "We are yours to command." Brahms could test out the piece, see what he might want to change, and then present the premiere. The event on October 25, 1885, turned out to be a triumph—each movement received enthusiastic applause and the audience attempted, unsuccessfully, to have the brief third-movement scherzo repeated. Over the next month the new work was presented on tour in various cities in Germany and the Netherlands.

The first performance in Brahms's adopted hometown of Vienna took place in January 1886 with Richter conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. Hanslick was now enthusiastic and compared the work to a "dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back." On the opposing side, Hugo Wolf, who took time off from composing great songs to write scathing reviews, lambasted the "musical impotence" of the Symphony and declared that "the art of composing without ideas has decidedly found in Brahms its worthiest representative." Another notable Viennese performance came a decade later, with Richter again at the helm, in what proved to be the 63-year-old Brahms's last public appearance; he died of liver cancer a month later. As Florence May, an English pianist who wrote a biography of Brahms, recalled:

Brahms composed his Symphony No. 4 from 1884 to 1885.

The Symphony has been a favorite piece of Philadelphia Orchestra conductors from its first appearance, in January 1902 with Fritz Scheel. The work last appeared on subscription concerts in November 2014, with Susanna Mälkki.

The Orchestra has recorded the piece five times: in 1931 and 1933 with Leopold Stokowski for RCA; in 1944 and 1967 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS (the latter later released on EMI); and in 1988 with Riccardo Muti for Philips.

Brahms scored the Symphony for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 40 minutes.

A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the "artists'" box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. The demonstration was renewed after the second and the third movements, and an extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting audience, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar and yet in present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go. Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there shrunken in form, with lined countenance, strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that they were saying farewell.

A Closer Look Although Brahms thought of beginning the first movement (**Allegro non troppo**) with a brief chordal introduction, he ultimately decided to cut these measures and launch directly into the opening theme, a series of limpid two-note sighs consisting of descending thirds and ascending sixths that bind the movement together. The following **Andante moderato** opens with a noble horn theme that yields to a magnificently adorned theme for the strings. The tempo picks up in the sparkling third movement (**Allegro giocoso**), a scherzo in sonata form that gives the triangle a workout.

As mentioned, Brahms initially had the idea of the final movement (**Allegro energico e passionato**) using the Baroque technique of a passacaglia or chaconne (the terms are often used interchangeably). He slightly altered a ground bass progression from the final chorus of Bach's Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" (For You, Lord, Is My Longing) over which he built a mighty set of 30 variations and coda. In 1877 Brahms had made a piano transcription for left hand alone of Bach's D-minor Chaconne for solo violin, which provided a model here, as did the last movement of Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. The variations, often presented in pairs, begin with a bold statement based on Bach's theme. Despite a section in major, the movement gradually builds in its tragic force to a thrilling conclusion.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

BWV: The thematic catalogue of all the works of J.S. Bach. The initials stand for *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* (Bach-Works-Catalogue).

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

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

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

Ground bass: A continually repeated bass phrase of four or eight measures

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

Obbligato: Literally, "obligatory." A term that refers to an essential instrumental part that is not to be omitted.

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

Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.

Perpetual motion: A musical device in which rapid figuration is persistently maintained

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.

Sinfonia: A short introductory instrumental piece

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.

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Energico: With vigor, powerfully

Giocoso: Humorous

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Passionato: Impassioned, very expressive

Presto: Very fast

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Meno: Less

Non troppo: Not too much

Più: More

Poco: Little, a bit