

Season 2017-2018

Thursday, November 30,
at 7:30
Saturday, December 2,
at 8:00

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Donald Runnicles Conductor

Vaughan Williams Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

Mozart Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504 (“Prague”)
 I. Adagio—Allegro
 II. Andante
 III. Presto

Intermission

Humperdinck/ from *Hansel and Gretel*, Suite for
arr. Abad Orchestra:
 I. Prelude
 III. The Witch’s Ride
 IV. In the Forest
 VII. Crackle Waltz and Pantomime

Wagner Overture to *Tannhäuser*

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 50 minutes.

The November 30 concert is sponsored by
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The Philadelphia Orchestra

Jeffrey 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 **Health**, champions music **Education**, eliminates barriers to **Accessing** the orchestra, and maximizes

impact through **Research**. 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 the third music director of the Metropolitan Opera beginning with the 2021-22 season, and from 2017-18 is music director designate. Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His intensely 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.”

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling talents of his generation. He is in his 10th and final season as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In summer 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. 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 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 a 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 philorch.org/conductor.

Conductor

Simon Pauly



Donald Runnicles is the general music director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, and principal guest conductor of the Atlanta Symphony. He was recently named conductor emeritus of the BBC Scottish Symphony, having served as its chief conductor from 2009 to 2016. A beloved Philadelphia Orchestra collaborator, he made his debut in 2005 and has led the ensemble on numerous occasions, including its 2013 Tour of China. Mr. Runnicles enjoys close and enduring relationships with several of the most significant opera companies and orchestras and is especially celebrated for his interpretations of Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire.

In addition to these current performances, highlights of Mr. Runnicles's 2017-18 season include Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle at the San Francisco Opera and a return to the Metropolitan Opera to conduct Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. He also guest conducts the Dallas, National, BBC Scottish, and Toronto symphonies; the Tonhalle Orchestra; the Staatskapelle Dresden; and two subscription weeks at the Sydney Symphony. Opera productions abroad include the world premiere of Aribert Reimann's *L'Invisible* and a new production of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Richard Strauss's *Salome* at the Hannover Staatstheater. Mr. Runnicles's previous posts include music director of the San Francisco Opera (1992-2009), during which he led world premieres of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic* and Conrad Susa's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*.

Mr. Runnicles's extensive discography includes recordings of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Mozart's Requiem, Orff's *Carmina burana*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. His recording of Wagner arias with tenor Jonas Kaufmann and the Deutsche Oper Berlin Orchestra won the 2013 *Gramophone Award* for best vocal recording, and his recording of Janáček's *Jenůfa* with the orchestra and chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin was nominated for a 2015 Grammy award. Mr. Runnicles was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 2004 and holds honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1786

Mozart

Symphony
No. 38

Music

Dittersdorf
*Doctor und
Apotheker*

Literature

Bourgoyne
The Heiress

Art

Reynolds
*The Duchess of
Devonshire*

History

Shays Rebellion

1845

Wagner

Overture to
Tannhäuser

Music

Berlioz
*The Damnation
of Faust*

Literature

Mérimée
Carmen

Art

Ingres
*Portrait of
Countess
Haussonville*

History

Texas and
Florida admitted
as states

1910

**Vaughan
Williams**

Fantasia on a
Theme by
Thomas Tallis

Music

Stravinsky
The Firebird

Literature

Forster
Howard's End

Art

Modigliani
The Cellist

History

Du Bois founds
NAACP

This concert spans time, space, and reality, beginning with the celebrated English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. In the early 20th century, Vaughan Williams looked for inspiration back to early English music, such as that of the 16th-century composer Tallis, as well as sideways to folk music. His marvelous fantasy is scored for string quartet solo and double string orchestra.

Prague loved Mozart's music and the composer rewarded the city with the premieres of some of his greatest pieces, including *Don Giovanni*. His Symphony No. 38 is known as the "Prague" because Mozart premiered it there on his first trip to the magical city in 1787.

The name Engelbert Humperdinck is remembered today as the composer of a marvelous fairy-tale opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, and because an English pop singer from the 1960s, Arnold George Dorsey, adopted it as his stage name. Tonight we hear orchestral excerpts from the opera, beginning with its brilliant Prelude, moving on to the wild "Witch's Ride," and ending with a visionary pantomime of angels guarding the lost siblings in the scary, witch-infested woods.

Humperdinck revered Richard Wagner and at age 25 showed up unannounced on the composer's doorstep to introduce himself. He became an assistant helping to prepare Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*. The concert ends with the Overture to an earlier Romantic opera by Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, whose subtitle is "The Song Contest on the Wartburg." The title character struggles between the allures of Venus, the goddess of love, and the sacrificial love of the chaste Elizabeth.

Listen to The Philadelphia Orchestra on SiriusXM's Symphony Hall, Channel 76.

The Music

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis



Ralph Vaughan Williams
Born in Down Ampney,
Gloucestershire,
October 12, 1872
Died in London, August 26,
1958

One of the marks of greatness is the ability of an artist to revere what has gone before—a humility in the face of genius. In music this can take many forms: It was the impulse that inspired the *tombeaux* of the Baroque period (homages to a deceased master), or the “variations on a theme” of a past composer, or even the 20th-century idea of “recomposition” (such as Schoenberg’s orchestration of Brahms’s G-minor Piano Quartet). Each of these recognizes the art of something preexisting, while trying to create something new and unique from it.

A Devotion to English Folk Music It might seem ironic that one of Great Britain’s leading composers, creator of excellent symphonies and choral works, is best known in American concert halls (at least) for music based on tunes not of his own creation. Ralph Vaughan Williams is familiar to many through works like the Variations on “Dives and Lazarus” or the Variations on “Greensleeves.” Those works were expressions of the composer’s devotion to what he called the “common stem” of English folk music, which to varying degrees permeates nearly all of his music—including works not overtly derived from folk tunes.

The piece that opens tonight’s concert represents the other major strain of Vaughan Williams’s reverence for the past, namely his admiration for masters of previous centuries. The 16th-century English composer Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-85) was a gentleman in Henry VIII’s royal chapel, a revolutionary composer much emulated by subsequent generations. In 1567 he composed a set of choral pieces illustrating the modes for the Archbishop of Canterbury’s *Metrical Psalter*.

While editing the *English Hymnal* in 1906, Vaughan Williams became intimate with the third of these, “Why Fumeth in Fight,” which in the hymnal is set to Addison’s text “When, rising from the bed of death.” Some years later, in 1910, the composer revisited this tune, writing what would become not only his first major orchestral work, but also one of his most significant works in any genre.

A Closer Look The *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, with elements both of variation and of the “fantasy,”

Vaughan Williams composed the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis in 1910.

Leopold Stokowski conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the piece in October 1926. The most recent appearance on subscription concerts was in May 2009, led by David Robertson.

The Fantasia has been recorded twice by the Philadelphians, both with Eugene Ormandy: in 1963 for CBS and in 1970 for RCA.

The work is scored for an orchestra of solo string quartet and two string orchestras.

Performance time is approximately 15 minutes.

is a free rumination on the original tune, in which each repetition seems to heighten and intensify the mood. Scored for string quartet solo and double string orchestra, possibly in emulation of Elgar's Introduction and Allegro for orchestra and quartet of 1905, it initially presents three separate themes (including one the composer had used in 1905 in his choral work *Bright Is the Ring of Words*), before setting off on five episodic variants of these themes. The Tallis theme is only suggested at the outset, *pizzicato* in low strings; later it arrives in full splendor, in Tallis's original nine-voice scoring. After a series of sonorous climaxes, the work concludes with a final restatement of the three subjects.

—Paul J. Horsley

The Music

Symphony No. 38 (“Prague”)



Wolfgang Amadè Mozart
Born in Salzburg,
January 27, 1756
Died in Vienna,
December 5, 1791

As greatly as Mozart yearned to leave his native Salzburg and live in Vienna, which he eventually succeeded in doing in 1781, his final decade in the capital city was not uniformly happy. At first his music was widely performed and praised, and his skills as a pianist equally lauded, but opportunities declined in the second half of the 1780s, due partly to war and inflation. Mozart never won the broad public recognition or the official position he deserved. As he is said famously to have remarked when he was appointed Court Kammermusicus (chamber musician), he was paid “too much for what I do, too little for what I can do.”

Beloved in Prague But Mozart enjoyed enthusiastic triumphs elsewhere: most notably in Prague, the Bohemian capital and the Austrian Empire's second largest city. His first visit in January 1787 was announced in a local newspaper and hopes expressed that he would perform in public (“discerning inhabitants of Prague will surely assemble in large numbers”). For his part, Mozart reported that everyone was whistling tunes from *The Marriage of Figaro*, which he conducted there, and that he was showered with honors. A week after his arrival he obliged public demand by presenting a concert on which he offered a major new piece, the Symphony in D major. It became known as the “Prague,” a work he had finished just the month before and probably not yet performed in public. On the same concert he also dazzled the audience with extensive piano improvisations, including one on a favorite aria from *Figaro*. His month-long stay in Prague was so successful that later that year he rewarded the city with a special present: the premiere of *Don Giovanni*, which he returned to conduct himself in October.

The love affair between Mozart and Prague continued and the composer made further trips (it was about a three-day journey of 150 miles from Vienna) before he died at age 35; the last time was in 1791 to conduct the premiere of this final opera, *La clemenza di Tito*. A few years after his death, the “Prague” Symphony was heard at an all-Mozart concert. A local critic commented:

It is easy to imagine how full the hall was, if one knows Prague's artistic sense and its love for Mozart's

Mozart composed the “Prague” Symphony in 1786.

Fritz Reiner was on the podium for the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the Symphony, in December 1927. The most recent subscription appearance of the work was in February 2015, with Concertmaster David Kim leading from his chair.

The Symphony is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 26 minutes.

music. Mozart’s widow and son both wept tears of grief at their loss, and of gratitude towards a noble nation. Thus this evening was fittingly and admirably devoted to an act of homage to merit and genius; it was a rewarding feast for sensitive hearts and a small tribute to the unspeakable delight that Mozart’s divine tones often drew from us. From many a noble eye there flowed a silent tear for this well-loved man! It is as though Mozart had composed especially for Bohemia; nowhere is his music better understood and executed than in Prague, and even out in the country it is universally popular.

A Closer Look The “Prague” Symphony was Mozart’s most serious and ambitious work in the genre to date, and came following a three-year hiatus after his “Linz” Symphony, No. 36. (Audiences and record collectors often wonder what happened to No. 37, which it turns out was written primarily by Michael Haydn; Mozart only contributed the slow introduction to its opening movement.) The genre of the symphony, which historically had primarily been geared toward entertainment, was becoming more substantial and serious. Mozart’s new attitude, further realized in his miraculous final three symphonies from the summer of 1788, is evident in the rich orchestration, the weighty introduction to the first movement, and in the absence of a minuet. Most of his symphonies display the traditional four movements, but here he seems to question the vestige of older Baroque suites and dispenses with a dance movement altogether.

The extended **Adagio** introduction of the first movement, lasting some three minutes, immediately indicates the ambition of the Symphony. (Unlike Haydn, Mozart relatively rarely used slow introductions.) It leads to a syncopated **Allegro** theme that bears some resemblance to the principal theme of the Overture to *The Magic Flute* with its insistent repeated notes and it undergoes elaborate contrapuntal development of great intensity. The second movement **Andante** is in G major and a 6/8 meter with alluring use of chromatic scales to give color. Mozart the great composer of comic opera is fully evident in the breathless concluding **Presto**, which is back in D major and more straightforward and carefree than the earlier two movements. The Prague audience no doubt delighted in the similarity of the principal theme with the brief duet “Aprite presto” sung by Susanna and Cherubino in Act II of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The Music

Orchestral Selections from *Hansel and Gretel*



Engelbert Humperdinck
Born in Siegburg,
Germany, September 1,
1854
Died in Neustrelitz,
September 27, 1921

More than one wag has called Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* Wagner's greatest opera. One can appreciate the joke: The piece, beginning with the marvelous prelude that owes a considerable debt to that of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, is filled with Wagnerian touches, but instead of grand German mythology it explores a German fairy tale.

In 1876 the 21-year-old Humperdinck attended the first Bayreuth Festival that saw the premiere of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and was mesmerized. He was already a promising talent, trained at the Cologne Conservatory and winner of nearly every prize in sight. One of them—the Mendelssohn Scholarship—earned him time in Italy where one day he showed up unannounced on Wagner's doorstep to introduce himself, a brief visit that he later called “one of the most exciting and uplifting moments of my life.” Wagner went on in 1881 to enlist the young musician to help with preparations for the premiere of *Parsifal* and for some 20 months they worked closely together as Humperdinck wrote out the full orchestral score of Wagner's last opera.

A German Fairy Tale Wagner died less than a year later and Humperdinck, still in his 20s, searched for what to do next as a composer, teacher, critic, and conductor. He was particularly attracted to opera, but was intimidated by Wagner's legacy and monumental works. A new path opened in 1890 when his sister, Adelheid, asked him to write some songs to accompany a show she had written for her children based on the fairytale of Hansel and Gretel as related by the Brothers Grimm. (She succeeded in making the plot much less grim than the original telling.) Humperdinck next extended the modest domestic entertainment into a *Singspiel*—an opera with spoken dialogue—and eventually, in 1893, into a full-scale opera.

No less than Richard Strauss, who thought it a masterpiece, conducted the enormously successful premiere that December in Weimar. Its popularity quickly spread across Europe and beyond. (The American premiere came in New York in 1895.) Prominent conductors, including Gustav Mahler, championed the

Hansel and Gretel was composed from 1890 to 1893.

The first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of any music from the opera was on January 18, 1911, when Carl Pohlig conducted the Overture, "Crackle Waltz," and "Witch's Ride" on a Pops Concert. The entire opera was performed by the Orchestra in December 1934/January 1935, led by Alexander Smallens, and again in December 1954, led by Eugene Ormandy.

The "Children's Prayer" was recorded by the Orchestra and Ormandy in 1965 for CBS.

The score for the Suite calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, castanets, cymbals, glockenspiel, tam-tam, tambourine, thunder machine, triangle), harp, and strings.

Performance time of tonight's excerpts is approximately 26 minutes.

piece, which seemed to offer a new kind of musical theater different from Wagnerian profundity, the everyday life of the lower classes explored in contemporaneous Italian *verismo* operas, or the froth of popular operettas. Humperdinck's next theater piece, *Königskinder* (King's Children; 1897) was also a fairy tale, as was his third, based on the Sleeping Beauty story (*Dornröslein*, 1902).

During the early 19th century, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected the oral tradition of German folklore and published many tales that have since inspired countless theatrical, musical, and cinematic adaptations, albeit usually in kinder, gentler versions. Disney films certainly benefited from the brother's efforts. We owe to them the transmission of the stories of Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, and many others. They published their version of Hansel and Gretel in 1812.

A Closer Look In the adaptation by Humperdinck's sister the siblings are sent off by their mother into the woods to look for food after a pitcher of milk is accidentally spilt. They stumble on a sumptuous gingerbread house and take a bite. The owner, the Witch, decides to fatten up Hansel and bake him. Gretel tricks her into showing her how to use the oven, pushes her in, and when it explodes all the previously captured gingerbread children come back to life. The parents appear to bring their lost children home and all express gratitude with the final moral: "When in need or dark despair, God will surely hear our prayer."

Tonight we hear orchestral excerpts from the opera, beginning with the well-known **Prelude**, which Humperdinck called "Children's Life." It presents some of the principal musical themes from the opera in contrasting moods, from lively dances to the children's evening prayer, which serves as the frame. Wagnerian elements are forecasted in the orchestration, harmonic language, use of *leitmotifs*, and contrapuntal ingenuity, similar to Wagner's *Meistersinger*. **The Witch's Ride**—a sort of Halloween "Ride of the Valkyries," serves as the prelude to the second act. Other sections are the atmospheric **In the Forest** and the **Crackle Waltz and Pantomime**, which follows the children's prayer as 14 angels surround them in a comforting dream vision.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

The Music

Overture to *Tannhäuser*



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

It seems that Wagner had strong views on nearly every topic (not limited, unfortunately, to musical matters) and was uninhibited in expressing them in voluminous writings, as well as orally for others to record. He felt that opera had become disastrously degraded, mere entertainment, and that the contemporary German scene was almost as bad as the Italian and French. One of the many components of the operatic experience was the issue of how to begin: the overture. In an essay he wrote and published in Paris at age 27, Wagner set forth his perspective on the history, aesthetics, and future of the overture. At first they acted merely as a prologue, so that even in a wonderful composition like Handel's *Messiah*, the overture bears no relation to what follows. Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, Weber, and a few others created more successful ones, including masterpieces like Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3*. But the most recent history he felt was one of decline. They had degenerated into mere potpourris of catchy tunes that would follow during the show, not much different from what we expect today in a Broadway musical.

Wagner argued that the overture should “reproduce the characteristic idea of the drama by the intrinsic means of independent music. ... In a very weighty sense the composer plays the part of a philosopher, who seizes nothing but the *idea* in all phenomena.” Wagner had not realized this ideal in his own first attempts, which tended more to the medley model. His earliest operas—*Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot*, and *Rienzi*—were ultimately omitted from the approved Wagner canon of works that are mounted at the famed Wagner festival in Bayreuth. His next three operas, the first ones admitted to his ultimate legacy, all have magnificent overtures (or preludes, the term Wagner preferred when the music proceeded without interruption into the first act): *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*. While each uses musical material that plays an important role in the opera, they are constructed so as to highlight the larger metaphysical point of the work, to capture the “drama’s leading thought,” not merely to preview the best tunes.

Venerable Pleasures and Sacred Redemption Wagner began sketching *Tannhäuser* in 1839, while living in Paris. After writing his own libretto (as he did for all of his operas),

he composed the music from the summer of 1843 to January 1845, and tackled the Overture last, completing the entire work on April 13, 1845. The opera was premiered in Dresden that year and underwent various revisions before its publication in 1860. The following year Wagner extensively altered the opening of the opera, as well as some other sections, for an ill-fated production in Paris. He made final changes for a production in Vienna in 1875, and shortly before his death eight years later told his wife, Cosima, that he still owed the world a *Tannhäuser*. He was never entirely happy with it, and productions today must choose between the so-called Dresden and Paris versions. In the latter, the Overture is cut short and leads directly into the opera's opening scene, a bacchanal. The Dresden version is heard tonight.

The opera explores the legend of the medieval knight Tannhäuser and his struggles between the forces of sensuality, represented by Venus, the goddess of love, and of sacred piety, embodied in the chaste Elizabeth. Venus inhabits the realm of the Venusberg, surrounded by graces, cupids, and nymphs. Elizabeth is niece to the Landgrave of Thuringia, and a dignified presence in his court.

Wagner combined various sources to tell his own unique version of the story, a fact reflected in the opera's dual title, *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg* (Tannhäuser and the Song Contest on the Wartburg). "I added the title of the legend that I combined with the Tannhäuser myth," Wagner wrote, "although originally they had nothing to do with each other." Tannhäuser, like Orpheus before him, is a supreme lyric musician whose ability to compose and sing songs is unsurpassed. The middle section of the Overture prominently features his paeon to Venus. After leaving the Venusberg, Tannhäuser is told that he must seek forgiveness in Rome. But the Pope provides no easy grace and it is only through Elizabeth's redeeming love and death that Tannhäuser is freed from his sensual bonds and can himself die in peace.

A Closer Look An instrumental sextet consisting of pairs of clarinets, bassoons, and horns softly intone a devotional melody to open—the tune is the hymn sung by the pilgrims on their return from Rome, which conveys a mood of penitence. The words of the chorus, as heard in the final act, begin "The grace of God to the sinner is given, his soul shall live with the angels in heaven." Warmly rich strings take up the melody, which eventually builds to a loud and full orchestral statement. While the woodwind and brass instruments play the chorale-like pilgrims' hymn, the upper

Tannhäuser was composed from 1843 to 1845.

Fritz Scheel was the conductor for the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the *Tannhäuser Overture*, in February 1903. The most recent subscription performances were in May 2002 with *Wolfgang Sawallisch*.

The Philadelphians have recorded the *Overture* seven times: in 1921, 1929, and 1937 for RCA with *Leopold Stokowski*; in 1953, 1959, and 1964 for CBS with *Eugene Ormandy*; and in 1973 for RCA with *Ormandy*. All except the 1921 and 1964 recordings also included the "Venusberg Music."

The score calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (cymbals, tambourine, triangle), and strings.

The piece runs approximately 14 minutes in performance.

strings have a wonderful ornamental effect of cascading triplets. The first section concludes with the original sextet presenting the simple and pious pilgrims' theme.

The contrasting allegro that follows represents the secular world of venereal delights. The music is playful, wild, and fantastical, as well as extremely sensual in its repetitive statements of themes that mount in intensity and ardor. Eventually we hear the music associated with *Tannhäuser's* song to *Venus*—one could say his hymn to her—which commences: "Praise be to Love for pleasure never ending; Love by whose power man's heart is set ablaze!" The middle section of the *Overture* alternates between various musical ideas associated with the *Venusberg* (including a solo violin passage for the goddess herself) and an even more passionate restatement of the hero's hymn to *Venus*. *Wagner* again uses strings to ornamental effect, but while it was the higher violins for the sacred world, the rambunctious lower strings accompany the secular realm. The sensual world reaches an orchestral climax with a battery of percussion (cymbals, tambourine, triangle), before returning to the pilgrims' chorus, now in 4/4 rather than 3/4 meter, to conclude.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Aria: An accompanied solo song (often in ternary form), usually in an opera or oratorio

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

Contrapuntal: See counterpoint

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

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

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

K.: Abbreviation for Köchel, the chronological list of all the works of Mozart made by Ludwig von Köchel

Leitmotif: Literally "leading motif." Any striking musical motif (theme, phrase) characterizing or accompanying one of the

actors, or some particular idea, emotion, or situation in a drama.

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

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

Pizzicato: Plucked

Rondo: A form frequently used in symphonies and concertos for the final movement. It consists of a main section that alternates with a variety of contrasting sections (A-B-A-C-A etc.).

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

Singspiel: A type of German opera established during the 18th century; usually light and characterized by spoken interludes

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.

Suite: A set or series of pieces in various dance forms

Syncopation: A shift of rhythmic emphasis off the beat

Ternary: A musical form in three sections, ABA, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

Tonality: The orientation of melodies and harmonies towards a specific pitch or pitches

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

Triplet: A group of three equal notes to be performed in the time of two of like value in the established rhythm

Verismo: Literally "realism." A post-Romantic operatic style associated with Italian composers such as Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, and Puccini and marked by melodramatic, often violent plots with characters drawn from everyday life.

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Adagio: Leisurely, slow

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Presto: Very fast

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