

# Season 2014-2015

Thursday, February 26, at  
8:00

Friday, February 27, at 2:00

Saturday, February 28, at  
8:00

## The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Robert Spano** Conductor

**Benjamin Beilman** Violin

**Debussy/** "The Sunken Cathedral," from Preludes *40/40*  
**orch. Stokowski**

**Higdon** Violin Concerto *40/40*

I. 1726

II. Chaconni

III. Fly Forward

### Intermission

**Higdon** *blue cathedral*

**Debussy** *Iberia*

I. Through Streets and Lanes

II. The Fragrances of the Night—

III. Morning of a Feast-Day

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes.

*40/40* designates a work that is part of the 40/40 Project, which features pieces not performed on subscription concerts in at least 40 years.

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

# The Philadelphia Orchestra



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

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

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

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

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

# Music Director

Chris Lee



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

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

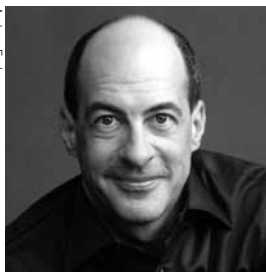
Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Deutsche Grammophon (DG) enjoy a long-term collaboration. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with a CD on that label of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* and Leopold Stokowski transcriptions. He continues a fruitful recording relationship with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

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

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

# Conductor

Andrew Eccles



Conductor, pianist, composer, and pedagogue **Robert Spano** is now in his 14th season as music director of the Atlanta Symphony. This imaginative conductor has quietly been responsible for nurturing the careers of numerous classically trained composers and conductors, and his commitment to American contemporary music is reflected in the Atlanta School of Composers. As music director of the Aspen Music Festival and School, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students, including Aspen's American Academy of Conducting.

Mr. Spano has led Atlanta Symphony performances at Carnegie Hall (2014-15 marks his ninth consecutive season as a guest of the venue); Lincoln Center; and the Ravinia, Ojai, and Savannah music festivals. His guest conducting engagements include the New York, Los Angeles, and La Scala philharmonics; the San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, and BBC symphonies; and the Cleveland and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1991. He has also led opera productions at the Royal Opera Covent Garden, the Welsh National Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and the 2005 and 2009 Seattle Opera productions of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. Recent performance highlights include the premiere of his *Hölderlin Songs* with soprano Susanna Phillips and a collaboration with the Atlanta-based dance company glo for performances of his new solo piano work, *Tanz III*. Mr. Spano conducted the world premiere in Ojai of Steven Stucky's *The Classical Style*, based on the Charles Rosen book with libretto by pianist and writer Jeremy Denk, which was reprised at Carnegie Hall in December. Other season highlights include three world premieres with the Atlanta Symphony and a tour with the Curtis Institute of Music Orchestra, including the premiere of Jennifer Higdon's Viola Concerto, written for Roberto Díaz.

Mr. Spano's recordings for Telarc, Deutsche Grammophon, and ASO Media have received six Grammy awards. He is currently on the faculty at Oberlin Conservatory and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, Emory University, the Curtis Institute, and Oberlin. He is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame.

# Soloist



Benjamin Beilman

Violinist **Benjamin Beilman** is the recipient of the prestigious 2014 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, a 2012 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a 2012 London Music Masters Award. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2009 at the Mann Center. This season he debuts with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony and appears with the Orchestra of St. Luke's in his debut at Alice Tully Hall. Future recitals include performances at the Berlin Philharmonie, the Louvre in Paris, and London's Wigmore Hall.

Last season Mr. Beilman made his debut with the San Francisco Symphony playing the Mendelssohn Concerto and performed in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium with the New York Youth Symphony. He also made his Carnegie Hall recital debut at Weill Hall in a program that included the premiere of a new work by David Ludwig, commissioned for him by Carnegie Hall. Mr. Beilman's other recent appearances include performances with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Detroit and Fort Worth symphonies. Past recital appearances include the University of Florida Performing Arts, the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Ravinia's Rising Stars Series, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Abroad, Mr. Beilman has appeared as soloist with the London Philharmonic and Stanisław Skrowaczewski, the Tonhalle Orchestra and Neville Marriner, the Malaysian Philharmonic and Hans Graf, and the Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

As First Prize Winner of the 2010 Montreal International Musical Competition and winner of the People's Choice Award, Mr. Beilman recorded Prokofiev's complete violin sonatas on the Analekta label in 2011. He has been heard on NPR's *Performance Today* and *From the Top*, WQXR's *McGraw-Hill Financial Young Artists Showcase*, and WFMT's *Impromptu*. He studied at the Music Institute of Chicago, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Kronberg Academy. Mr. Beilman plays the Guarneri del Gesù, Cremona, 1735 ex-Mary Portman, on loan from Clement and Karen Arrison through the generous efforts of the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1908**

**Debussy**

*Iberia*

**Music**

Bartók

String Quartet

No. 1

**Literature**

Forster

*A Room with  
a View*

**Art**

Vlaminck

*The Red Trees*

**History**

Ford

produces first

Model "T" car

**1910**

**Debussy**

"The Sunken  
Cathedral"

**Music**

Stravinsky

*The Firebird*

**Literature**

Baum

*The Emerald*

*City of Oz*

**Art**

Léger

*Nues dans le  
forêt*

**History**

China

abolishes

slavery

**1999**

**Higdon**

*blue cathedral*

**Music**

Gubaidulina

*Johannes-*

*Passion*

**Literature**

Allende

*Daughter of*

*Fortune*

**Art**

Bourgeois

*Maman*

**History**

The euro is

introduced

This concert pairs Philadelphia's own Jennifer Higdon, one of today's leading composers, with one of her personal favorites: Claude Debussy.

Higdon trained at the Curtis Institute of Music (where she now teaches) and although The Philadelphia Orchestra has given many performances of her compositions, this week marks the first time here for her Violin Concerto, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2010.

Higdon has described some of her associations with an earlier composition, *blue cathedral*, which was commissioned by Curtis to celebrate its 75th anniversary: "Blue—like the sky. Where all possibilities soar. Cathedrals—places of thought, growth, spiritual expression, serving as a symbolic doorway into and out of this world."

While Higdon offers listeners visions of a soaring edifice in the ether, the opening work today emerges from the depths of the sea. Debussy's "The Sunken Cathedral" was inspired by the Medieval legend of a mythic structure that was submerged in water but would on occasion be revealed. Debussy originally composed the work for piano in his first set of Preludes but we hear it in Leopold Stokowski's evocative orchestration.

The concert concludes with Debussy's *Iberia*, a musical travelogue inspired by the music and culture of Spain. The three-part piece—"Through Streets and Lanes," "The Fragrances of the Night," and "Morning of a Feast-Day"—is itself part of the composer's larger triptych entitled *Images*.

# The Music

## “The Sunken Cathedral” from Preludes



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

Debussy strongly rejected the word that most came to be associated with his music: Impressionism. The term was first applied to the visual arts. In the 1870s a French critic used it derisively in response to Claude Monet's *Impression: Sunrise*, whereupon the painter decided to appropriate the name that came to characterize an entire movement. Together with colleagues such as Manet, Degas, and Renoir, Monet still painted representational images, but he and the "Impressionists" boldly turned away from the realism of French academic and salon painters. Debussy harbored similar aims for music: "I am trying in some way to do 'something different'—an effect of reality—what some imbeciles call 'Impressionism,' a term that is utterly misapplied, especially by the critics."

In his Preludes for piano Debussy decided to place titles at the end of each of the 24 pieces, perhaps not wanting to prejudice the innocent pianist on a first encounter with the music. The strategy offers something of a clue concerning his attitude toward program music, which was not fiercely realistic. Rather what he offers is "an effect"—ok, an impression. The evocative titles he chose for the Preludes include "Dead Leaves," "Fireworks," "Footsteps in the Snow," "Mists," and "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair."

**A Mysterious Prelude** A prelude, as the word suggests, is something that is "played before." Sometimes it introduces a piece, as in a prelude to an opera. During the Baroque period preludes often initiated dance suites or were the first part of a pair. We think, for example, of the preludes and fugues of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the one quite free, almost improvisatory, and the other strict and rule bound. In the 19th century preludes frequently became independent pieces, the most famous being the set by Chopin, Op. 28, which like Bach's before him (and sets by Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich later), were written in every one of the major and minor keys. Debussy's two sets of preludes are not systematic in their tonal planning but nonetheless also total 24 pieces. He composed the first set unusually quickly between December 1909 and February 1910 and the second followed some three years later.

Debussy composed his first set of Preludes, of which "The Sunken Cathedral" is the 10th, between 1909 and 1910.

Leopold Stokowski was on the podium for the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of "The Sunken Cathedral" in his own orchestration, in February 1926. He was also the conductor of the most recent subscription performances of the piece, in October 1935.

Stokowski's orchestration calls for four flutes (III and IV doubling piccolo), three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, tam-tam), two harps, celesta, organ, and strings.

"The Sunken Cathedral" has been recorded twice by the Orchestra, both in Stokowski's orchestration: in 1930 with Stokowski for RCA and in 1995 with Wolfgang Sawallisch for EMI.

Performance time is approximately eight minutes.

"The Sunken Cathedral," the 10th prelude in the first set, is rather unusual in that it is tied to a specific story. According to legend, in the Middle Ages the magnificent cathedral in the mythic city of Ys on the coast of Brittany was submerged in the sea as punishment for the sins of some of the townspeople. But at certain times the sunken cathedral would emerge from underwater only to disappear again. Although Debussy did not spell out a program he provided the title and gave some revealing interpretative markings in the score. The piano original seems to evoke the sea, the mystery of the cathedral, the chiming of bells and chanting of priests, as well as the spectacle of the appearance and disappearance of the mighty edifice. Some of these qualities are brought out even more in Leopold Stokowski's orchestration we hear today.

There is a particularly important French tradition of orchestrating keyboard pieces, of composers wanting to expand the palette from the colors available on the piano or organ to the full glory of the modern orchestra. Maurice Ravel's orchestration of Musorgsky's *Pictures from an Exhibition* is the most well-known example. Debussy participated in this tradition by orchestrating his own piano pieces as well as those of others, such as the first and third of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies*. Many composers have since orchestrated Debussy's music, beginning with Ravel and André Caplet. There have been various orchestrations of his piano Preludes, some singly but also of the entire two books. Leopold Stokowski orchestrated a tremendous variety of pieces, most famously organ works by Bach (he was himself an organist before taking up conducting). He was drawn to Debussy's piano compositions several times.

**A Closer Look** Debussy's initial interpretive markings for "The Sunken Cathedral" are "profoundly calm" and "in a mist sounding softly." The music begins with a big no-no of music theory, so-called parallel fifths, moving slowly, with a chant-like effect associated with the music of the Middle Ages. The piece gradually builds as the cathedral is revealed—the score is marked "emerging from the fog little by little." In the middle the music modulates to a brighter major key and builds in volume to a mighty *fortissimo*. Stokowski's orchestration underlines the sounds of bells chiming. Just as the cathedral has emerged so too it disappears, with the music returning to the calm and soft opening.

—Christopher H. Gibbs



# The Music

## Violin Concerto

J.D. Scott



**Jennifer Higdon**  
**Born in Brooklyn, New**  
**York, December 31, 1962**  
**Now living in Philadelphia**

"Fly Forward," the title of the third movement of Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto, well describes her career. Born in Brooklyn in 1962 to artist parents who moved to Atlanta and later to Seymour, Tennessee, Higdon discovered music after finding a beat-up flute in her attic at the age of 15 and teaching herself to play it. She played flute in her high school marching band and attended Bowling Green University where she received a degree in flute performance. Higdon began formal composition lessons when she was 21 with Wallace DePue and continued at the Curtis Institute of Music and at the University of Pennsylvania with Ned Rorem and George Crumb, among others. After completing her doctoral degree in composition, she began teaching at Curtis where she currently holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in Composition Studies.

**A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Work** Higdon is one of the most performed and recorded composers of her generation. In 2010 she won a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for her Percussion Concerto, co-commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, and a Pulitzer Prize for her Violin Concerto, an award she shares with other prominent living American composers, among them John Adams and Steve Reich and her teachers Rorem and Crumb. The Pulitzer Committee cited the Concerto as a "deeply engaging piece that combines flowing lyricism with dazzling virtuosity." It is accessible and challenging all at once, and Higdon said after one of its numerous performances, "If you don't know a thing about classical music, I think the [Violin] concerto will speak to you."

Composers through time have mined the violin concerto for inspiration—Vivaldi penned about 230 of them, including his ubiquitous *Four Seasons*. Niccolò Paganini entranced 19th-century audiences at his violin-paloozas. The Modernist violin concertos of Schoenberg and Shostakovich require staggering stamina and focus. In recent compositions, Thomas Adès (2005), Magnus Lindberg (2006), Esa-Pekka Salonen (2009), and Gabriel Prokofiev (2014), grandson of Sergei, have grappled with the violin concerto's customary fast-slow-fast succession of movements, dustups between the soloist and orchestra, and remarkably knotty solo passages. Composed in 2008,

*Higdon's Violin Concerto was composed in 2008.*

*The first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the Concerto was this past Wednesday, at the LiveNote Nights concert.*

*The score calls for solo violin, two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes (II doubling English horn), two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, Chinese suspended cymbal, crotales, glockenspiel, knitting needles, marimba, rutes, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbals), harp, and strings.*

*Performance time is approximately 30 minutes.*

Higdon's Violin Concerto is fiendishly challenging.

If Brahms had his Joseph Joachim, Higdon has her Hilary Hahn. The two met in 1996 at Curtis. The two decided to collaborate on a concerto and Higdon quipped, "Hilary's technique is so superior that all things are possible," and "I can daydream anything, and Hilary can execute it." Higdon recalls sending "Hilary each movement as I finished it to see if she had any requests. She didn't. She just said, 'It's my job to learn the piece.' It was quite a staggering experience." It took four months for Hahn to learn it and she has admired it ever since. Hahn is the Concerto's dedicatee.

**A Closer Look** Commissioned by the Indianapolis, Toronto, and Baltimore symphonies, and the Curtis Institute, Higdon's Violin Concerto is in three movements. As she explains, "The first movement, entitled **1726**, happens to be the street address of the Curtis Institute of Music, where I first met Hilary as a student in my 20th-Century Music class." She continues, "An exceptional student, Hilary devoured the information in the class and was always open to exploring new musical languages and styles. Curtis is also the place where I met Ben [Beilman], who participated in the first reading of the piece. As Curtis was also a primary training ground for me as a young composer, it seemed an appropriate tribute." About the composition, Higdon notes, "To tie into this title, I make extensive use of the intervals of unisons, 7ths, and 2nds throughout this movement."

The second movement, **Chaconni**, which Higdon describes as calm and pensive, "comes from the word 'chaconne.'" She explains that a "chaconne is a chord progression that repeats throughout a section of music. In this particular case, there are several chaconnes, which create the stage for a dialogue between the soloist and various members of the orchestra. The beauty of the violin's tone and the artist's gifts are on display here."

As for the third movement, **Fly Forward**, Higdon observes that it "seemed like such a compelling image, that I could not resist the idea of having the soloist do exactly that. Concerti throughout history have always allowed the soloist to delight the audience with feats of great virtuosity, and when a composer is confronted with a real gift in the soloist's ability to do so, well, it would be foolhardy not to allow that dream to become a reality." Higdon's dream has also become a reality in her inspiring ascent to classical music stardom.

—Eleonora M. Beck

# The Music

## *blue cathedral*

Sarah R. Bloom



**Jennifer Higdon**

Educated at the Curtis Institute of Music and the University of Pennsylvania, composer, conductor, and flutist Jennifer Higdon has been a strong presence on the Philadelphia music scene, and her colorful and imaginative music has attracted attention worldwide. Her compositions are often inspired by imagery from the outside world, be it scenes from the city or from nature or from meditations on matters of the spirit.

She is also quite able to compose music that is just about music. In 2002 Philadelphians heard the premiere in this hall of her rambunctious Concerto for Orchestra, a Centennial Commission of The Philadelphia Orchestra, a performance described by one enthusiastic critic as "Bartók ... at warp speed." As early as 1995, one of her first orchestral works, *Shine*, a commission of the Oregon Symphony, earned praise for its vitality and mastery of orchestration, and major symphony orchestras across the globe have come knocking on her door with commissions. She has also contributed valuable works in other genres, particularly for chorus and for chamber ensembles, often featuring the flute.

Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, with *blue cathedral* being one of the most performed contemporary orchestral works in the entire repertoire, having received over 550 performances since its premiere in 2000. She is currently writing an opera based on Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*, which is scheduled to be premiered in August 2015 by Santa Fe Opera. It was co-commissioned by Opera Philadelphia, which will present the work in February 2016, and by the Minnesota Opera.

Higdon composed (or as she likes to say, "completed") *blue cathedral* in 1999, fulfilling a commission from the Curtis Institute of Music Symphony, where she currently holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in Composition Studies. Although her own composition teachers included George Crumb and Ned Rorem, in this piece she seems most of all a descendant of the "fervent" school of American symphonists in the 1940s, with their passionate string melodies and wind solos that seem to express the

loneliness of the individual in a vast landscape. Not for nothing did the conductor Robert Spano (Higdon's former teacher) pair this piece with symphonic works by Barber and Copland in his recording of it with the Atlanta Symphony. Another American composer-conductor of that era, Howard Hanson, seems to be the godfather of this piece's rich sonorities and sliding triad chords with a modal flavor. However, other features of the piece are very much of our time, particularly Higdon's creative use of many colors of percussion.

—David Wright

**In the Composer's Words** As for what Higdon was aiming to express in this music, she has spoken eloquently about that herself.

Blue—like the sky. Where all possibilities soar. Cathedrals—places of thought, growth, spiritual expression, serving as a symbolic doorway into and out of this world. Blue represents all potential and the progression of journeys. Cathedrals represent a place of beginnings, endings, solitude, fellowship, contemplation, knowledge, and growth. As I was writing this piece, I found myself imagining a journey through a glass cathedral in the sky. Because the walls would be transparent, I saw the image of clouds and blueness permeating from the outside of this church. In my mind's eye the listener would enter from the back of the sanctuary, floating along the corridor amongst giant crystal pillars, moving in a contemplative stance. The stained-glass windows' figures would start moving with song, singing a heavenly music. The listener would float down the aisle, slowly moving upward at first and then progressing at a quicker pace, rising towards an immense ceiling which would open to the sky. As this journey progressed, the speed of the traveler would increase, rushing forward and upward. I wanted to create the sensation of contemplation and quiet peace at the beginning, moving towards the feeling of celebration and ecstatic expansion of the soul, all the while singing along with that heavenly music.

These were my thoughts when the Curtis Institute of Music commissioned me to write a work to commemorate its 75th anniversary. Curtis is a house of knowledge—a place to reach towards that beautiful expression of the soul which comes through music. I began writing this piece at a unique juncture

*Higdon composed blue cathedral in 1999.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra's other subscription performances of the piece were in November/December 2003, with Rossen Milanov, and in November 2007, with Stéphane Denève.*

*Higdon has scored the piece for two flutes (I doubling piccolo), one oboe, one English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, one timpani, percussion (bass drum, bell tree, chimes, crotales, glockenspiel, marimba, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, two tam-tams, tom-tom, two triangles, vibraphone), one harp, piano/celeste, eight crystal glasses, Chinese bells, and strings*

*The work runs approximately 14 minutes in performance.*

in my life and found myself pondering the question of what makes a life. The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue Higdon, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make in our lives, crossing paths with so many individuals singularly and collectively, learning and growing each step of the way. The piece represents the expression of the individual and the group—our inner travels and the places our souls carry us, the lessons we learn, and the growth we experience. In tribute to my brother, I feature solos for the clarinet (the instrument he played) and the flute (the instrument I play). Because I am the older sibling, it is the flute that appears first in this dialogue. At the end of the work, the two instruments continue their dialogue, but it is the flute that drops out and the clarinet that continues on in the upward-progressing journey.

This is a story that commemorates living and passing through places of knowledge and of sharing and of that song called life.

# The Music

## *Iberia*



**Claude Debussy**

Claude Debussy gave the title *Images* (Pictures) to three works: two sets of solo piano pieces (1905 and 1908) and the orchestral triptych of which “Iberia” is the central piece. *Images* for orchestra was composed between 1905, immediately following the success of *La Mer*, and 1912, the same year that saw the composition of Debussy’s ballet and final orchestral score, *Jeux*. “Gigues,” the first of *Images*’ three panels, was the last to be written (1909-12), while the finale, “Spring Rounds,” and the central panel, “Iberia,” were composed roughly side by side during the years 1905-09. “Iberia,” the largest and best known of the set, is often performed by itself.

It was a pivotal time in the composer’s life. After an unhappy first marriage, he was newly wed to Emma Bardac. For their baby daughter, the adored Chou-Chou, Debussy penned the *Children’s Corner* Suite, a set of children’s piano pieces intended for Chou-Chou’s later use. “Iberia” was in progress at the same time, and was completed on Christmas Day 1908, two days after the premiere of *Children’s Corner*. Its premiere followed on February 20, 1910, conducted Gabriel Pierné.

**Impressionism or Symbolism?** “Iberia” is a triptych within the larger triptych of *Images*, and consists of the following parts: **Through Streets and Lanes**, **The Fragrances of the Night**, and **Morning of a Feast-Day**. Listening to these evocations of all things Spanish, with their castanets and Moorish-sounding melodies, one might think Debussy had immersed himself in lengthy travels to Andalusia and Valencia, spent hours viewing Goya at the Prado, and hiked the Pyrenees with Basque-speaking guides. In fact, the Frenchman had made exactly one 24-hour trip to Spain, specifically to the border town of San Sebastian for the purpose of seeing a bullfight. And why not? When he composed his symphony of the sea, *La Mer*, in 1905, Debussy’s entire experience of the subject was limited to two crossings of the English Channel.

Impressionism, the aesthetic mode of which Debussy was accused, was an inaccurate label that the composer himself detested. In a recent essay, the conductor Leon Botstein proposed that Symbolism, not Impressionism,

*Iberia was composed from 1906 to 1908.*

*The first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the piece took place in January 1928, with Frederick Stock conducting. Most recently on subscription it was heard in November 2012, with Stéphane Denève conducting.*

*The Orchestra has recorded Iberia twice: in 1941 with Arturo Toscanini for RCA and in 1951 with Eugene Ormandy for CBS.*

*The score calls for an orchestra of three flutes (III doubling piccolo II), two piccolos, two oboes, English horn, three clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (chimes, castanets, snare drum, tambourine, xylophone), two harps, celesta, and strings.*

*Iberia lasts approximately 20 minutes in performance.*

was an aesthetic closer to the reality of what Debussy was after. As an Impressionist, Debussy might really have had to drink in more of the atmosphere of Spain or more of the feeling of the ocean in order to do those works justice. But to a Symbolist, such “subjects” were not important in and of themselves, only as elements the artist could rearrange to make an artwork that was an emblem of a certain inner experience. It was not the literal sea or the actual Spain that was important, but the feelings roused when the sea or Spain was thought of.

**High Praise from a Native Spaniard** The orchestral *Images*, by the way, might be subtitled “Three Nations,” since “Gigues” quotes English folksong and “Spring Rounds” draws on French folksong. Yet the Spanish character of “Iberia” is due wholly to Debussy’s invention: Not a single folk source is quoted. This did not stop the great Spanish composer Manuel de Falla from praising the piece as “permeated by the music of Spain,” by which Falla meant the melodic gestures, harmonies, and rhythms typical of his country. He continued:

Debussy created spontaneously, I might even say unconsciously, such Spanish music as might be envied him—who did not really know Spain—by many others who knew her only too well. We might say that Debussy had taken to new lengths our knowledge of the modal possibilities of our music already revealed in our teacher Felipe Pedrell’s essays. But while the Spanish composer to a large extent uses authentic popular material in his music, the French master avoids them and creates a music of his own, selecting only the parts which have inspired him and only the essence of the fundamental elements. This working method, always praiseworthy among native composers, acquires still greater value when practiced by those who write music that is, as it were, foreign to them.

But now I want to proclaim loudly that, if Debussy has used Spain as the keystone of one of the most beautiful facets in his work, he has paid us back so generously that it is Spain who is today his debtor.

—Kenneth LaFave

# March

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