Jaap van Zweden Conductor
Matthias Goerne Baritone

Schubert, orch. Spindler
An Sylvia, D. 891

Strauss, orch. Heger
Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op. 29, No. 1
First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

Strauss
Das Rosenband, Op. 36, No. 1

Strauss
Freundliche Vision, Op. 48, No. 1

Schubert, orch. Brahms
Greisengesang, D. 778
First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

Strauss, orch. Heger
Heimliche Aufforderung, Op. 27, No. 3

Strauss
Ruhe, meine Seele, Op. 27, No. 1
First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert performances

Schubert, orch. Reger
Im Abendrot, D. 799
First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert performances

Strauss, orch. Heger
Allerseelen, Op. 10, No. 8

Schubert, orch. Webern
Tränenregen FROM Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795, No. 10
First Chicago Symphony Orchestra subscription concert performances

Strauss
Morgen!, Op. 27, No. 4

MATTHIAS GOERNE

(continued)
INTERMISSION

Beethoven
Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67
Allegro con brio
Andante con moto
Allegro—
Allegro—Presto

These performances are generously sponsored by the Randy and Melvin Berlin Family Fund for the Canon.
Saturday's concert is sponsored by Walgreens.
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to 93XRT and RedEye for their generous support as media sponsors of the Classic Encounter series.
This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Franz Schubert
Born January 31, 1797, Himmelpfortgrund, northwest of Vienna, Austria.
Died November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria.

Richard Strauss
Born June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany.
Died September 8, 1949, Garmisch, Germany.

Selected Songs

Working at opposite ends of the nineteenth century, these two great composers are the bookends of history’s most astonishing outpouring of songs during the heyday of the German lied. Even during his lifetime, Franz Schubert was called the King of Song. He wrote songs throughout his career, sometimes almost daily (in 1815, the peak of his productivity, he composed 145 songs alone), and sometimes with an almost casual ease (one song is said to have been written spontaneously on the back of a beer-garden menu). By the end of his tragically short life, he had left us more than six hundred in all. According to a popular story, perhaps apocryphal, when Beethoven, Schubert’s only true musical peer in Vienna at the time, was shown several of Schubert’s songs only days before he died, he said, “Truly in Schubert there is a divine spark.” Beethoven was among the first of the important composers to recognize Schubert’s genius in these small, intimate pieces, which look deeper into the human soul than anyone

Songs by Franz Schubert

AN SYLVIA, D. 891; ORCH. SPINDLER
COMPOSED
July 1826
FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 6 & 7, 1895, Auditorium Theatre. Marguerite Hall as soloist, Theodore Thomas conducting (anonymous orchestration)

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE
August 2, 2009, Ravinia Festival. Matthias Goerne as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting (anonymous orchestration)

INSTRUMENTATION
flute, clarinet, strings

GREISENGESANG, D. 778; ORCH. BRAHMS
COMPOSED
by June 1823
FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
These are the first Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances.

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three trombones, strings

IM ABENDROT, D. 799; ORCH. REGER
COMPOSED
1824 or February 1825
FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
July 12, 1987, Ravinia Festival. Hermann Prey as soloist, James Levine conducting (Reger)

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE
August 2, 2009, Ravinia Festival. Matthias Goerne as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting (Reger)

INSTRUMENTATION
flute, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, timpani, strings

TRÄNENREGEN FROM DIE SCHÖNE MÜLLERIN, D. 795, NO. 10; ORCH. WEBERN
COMPOSED
October–November 1823
FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
August 2, 2009, Ravinia Festival. Matthias Goerne as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting (Webern)

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, strings
before had dared. Later in the century, several composers—including Johannes Brahms, Max Reger, and even the avant-garde miniaturist Anton Webern—chose to orchestrate Schubert’s piano parts, transforming music written for the home into powerful concert fare, as it is tonight. In their orchestrations, each of these three composers translates the implications of Schubert’s vividly descriptive piano writing into his own distinctive sound world. (The opening song on this program, Schubert’s setting of Shakespeare’s words, was orchestrated by Matthias Spindler, a European record producer and arranger.)

Schubert’s greatest gift, demonstrated in each of the four songs on this program, is to find the apt musical expression for the text he picked—to absorb the poem in his music. A century after Schubert’s death, the revolutionary composer Arnold Schoenberg confessed that even when he did not know the poem Schubert set, he “grasped the content, the real content, perhaps even more profoundly than if I had clung to the surface of the mere thoughts expressed in words.”

### Songs by Richard Strauss

#### TRAUM DURCH DIE DÄMMERUNG, OP. 29, NO. 1; ORCH. HEGER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSED</th>
<th>FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES</th>
<th>INSTRUMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>These are the first Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances.</td>
<td>two flutes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, trombone, harp, strings</td>
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#### DAS ROSENBAND, OP. 36, NO. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSED</th>
<th>FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES</th>
<th>INSTRUMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>April 1 &amp; 2, 1904, Auditorium Theatre.</td>
<td>two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, two horns, strings</td>
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#### FREUNDLICHE VISION, OP. 48, NO. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSED</th>
<th>FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES</th>
<th>MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>INSTRUMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>December 18, 1921, Auditorium Theatre.</td>
<td>October 3, 2009, Orchestra Hall.</td>
<td>two flutes, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claire Dux as soloist, Richard Strauss conducting</td>
<td>Renée Fleming as soloist, Paavo Järvi conducting</td>
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#### HEIMLICHE AUFFORDERUNG, OP. 27, NO. 3; ORCH. HEGER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSED</th>
<th>MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>INSTRUMENTATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>July 28, 2007, Ravinia Festival.</td>
<td>two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, harp, strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nikolai Schukoff as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting</td>
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</table>
Richard Strauss wrote his first song, a Christmas piece, in 1870, the year he turned six. He died nearly eighty years later with an unfinished song on his desk. In all he wrote some two hundred, including the *Four Last Songs* composed in his final year. Like Schubert, Strauss at first wrote his songs for voice and piano, but after his marriage in 1894 to Pauline, a soprano, he began to orchestrate some of his best and most popular ones so that she could perform with him when he guest conducted orchestras around the world. When they came to Chicago in April 1904, Pauline sang seven of her husband's songs with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Richard's baton, including two—*Das Rosenband* and *Morgen!*—that Matthias Goerne performs this week. (Pauline, no longer in her vocal prime, received carefully worded reviews, emphasizing her interpretive skills over technique, but finding no fault with her gown, “an elaborate creation of creamy lace and silk, which was distinctly becoming to her.”)

The songs on tonight’s program, in orchestral versions by Strauss himself and by his contemporary, the conductor Robert Heger, include the popular and impassioned *Allerseelen*, which comes from Strauss’s first mature collection of songs, written in 1885. *Freundliche Vision*, the latest song included, was considered revolutionary when it was composed in 1900 because its glorious voice part, which now seems so characteristic of Strauss’s art, moves almost independently from the accompaniment. In between come several of Strauss’s most beloved songs: *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, allegedly written in a Schubert-like outpouring of a mere twenty minutes; the lovely *Der Rosenband*, which was conceived from the start with orchestra in mind; *Heimliche Aufforderung*, composed as a wedding present for Pauline and presented in a set along with the majestic *Ruhe, meine Seele*, and *Morgen!*, its vocal line beginning almost as an afterthought and then blossoming in unforgettable ways.

### Songs by Richard Strauss (continued)

#### RUHE, MEINE SEELE, OP. 27, NO. 1

**COMPOSED**
1894

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE**
July 15, 1965, Ravinia Festival.
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf as soloist, Seiji Ozawa conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE**
July 5, 1992, Ravinia Festival.
Jessye Norman as soloist, James Levine conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, celesta, strings

#### ALLERSEELEN, OP. 10, NO. 8; ORCH. HEGER

**COMPOSED**
1895

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
October 26 & 27, 1939, Orchestra Hall. Rose Pauly as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**
December 6 & 7, 1951, Orchestra Hall. Todd Duncan as soloist, Rafael Kubelik conducting

Nikolai Schukoff as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**
two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, strings

#### MORGEN!, OP. 27, NO. 4

**COMPOSED**
1894

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
April 1 & 2, 1904, Auditorium Theatre. Pauline Strauss de Ahna as soloist, Richard Strauss conducting

August 9, 1941, Ravinia Festival.
Helen Traubel as soloist, Pierre Monteux conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**
July 19, 2008, Ravinia Festival.
Kiri Te Kanawa as soloist, James Conlon conducting

October 3, 2009, Orchestra Hall.
Renée Fleming as soloist, Paavo Järvi conducting

**CSO PERFORMANCE, THE COMPOSER CONDUCTING**
December 18, 1921, Auditorium Theatre. Claire Dux as soloist, Richard Strauss conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**
three horns, harp, strings

For more on Strauss in Chicago, visit cso.org/fromthearchives/Strauss150.
AN SYLVIA, D. 891
Was ist Sylvia, saget an,
daß sie die weite Flur preist?
Schön und zart seh’ ich sie nahn,
auf Himmelsgunst und Spur weist,
daß ihr alles untertan.

Ist sie schön und gut dazu?
Reiz labt wie milde Kindheit;
ihrem Aug’ eilt Amor zu,
dort heilt er seine Blindheit
und verweilt in süßer Ruh’.

Darum Sylvia, tön, o Sang,
der holden Silvia Ehren;
jeden Reiz besiegt sie lang,
den Erde kann gewähren:
Kränze ihr und Saitenklang!

TO SYLVIA, D. 891
Who is Sylvia, tell me,
that all our swains commend her?
Fair and tender I see her approach;
a sign of heaven’s favor is that
all are subject to her.

Is she beautiful as well as kind?
Refreshing are her gentle childlike charms;
Cupid to her eyes hastens
to cure him of his blindness,
and lingers in sweet repose.

Then, O song, resound to Sylvia,
to fair Sylvia’s glory;
she long since has acquired every grace
that earth can bestow:
to her bring garlands and the sound of strings!

Eduard von Bauernfeld (1802–1890),
from Shakespeare’s Two Gentlemen of Verona,
act 4, scene 2

TRAUM DURCH DIE DÄMMERUNG, OP. 29, NO. 1
Weite Wiesen im Dämmergrau;
die Sonne verglomm, die Sterne ziehn,
nun geh’ ich hin zu der schönsten Frau,
weit über Wiesen im Dämmergrau,
tief in den Busch von Jasmin.

Durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land;
ich gehe nicht schnell, ich eile nicht;
mich zieht ein weiches samtenes Band
durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land,
in ein blaues, mildes Licht.

DREAM THROUGH THE TWILIGHT, OP. 29, NO. 1
Broad meadows in the gray twilight;
the sun’s light extinguished, the stars brought
to light.
Now I go there to the loveliest woman,
far over the meadow in the gray twilight,
deep into the jasmine bush.

Through the gray twilight into the land of love,
I do not walk quickly, I do not hurry;
I am drawn by a soft, velvet thread
through the gray twilight into the land of love,
into a blue, gentle light.

Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865–1910)

DAS ROSENBAND, OP. 36, NO. 1
Im Frühlingsschatten fand ich sie,
da band ich Sie mit Rosenbändern:
sie fühlt’ es nicht und schlummerte.

Ich sah sie an; mein Leben hing
mit diesem Blick an ihrem Leben:
ich fühlt’ es wohl und wußt’ es nicht.

THE ROSE RIBBON, OP. 36, NO. 1
In spring shade I found her,
and bound her with rosy ribbons:
she did not feel it, and slumbered on.

I looked at her; my life hung
with that gaze on her life:
I felt it well, but knew it not.
Doch lispelt’ ich ihr sprachlos zu
und rauschte mit den Rosenbändern.
Da wachte sie vom Schlummer auf.

Sie sah mich an; ihr Leben hing
mit diesem Blick an meinem Leben,
und um uns ward’s Elysium.

Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803)

FREUNDLICHE VISION, OP. 48, NO. 1

Nicht im Schlafe hab’ ich das geträumt,
hell am Tage sah ich’s schön vor mir:
eine Wiese voller Margeritten;
tief ein weißes Haus in grünen Büschen;
Götterbilder leuchten aus dem Laube.
Und ich geh’ mit Einer, die mich lieb hat,
ruhigen Gemütes in die Kühle
dieses weißen Hauses, in den Frieden,
der voll Schönheit wartet, daß wir kommen.

Otto Julius Bierbaum

GREISENGESANG, D. 778

Der Frost hat mir bereifet des Hauses Dach;
doch warm ist mir’s geblieben im Wohngemach.
Der Winter hat die Scheitel mir weiß gedeckt;
doch fließt das Blut, das rote,
durchs Herzgemach.

Der Jugendflor der Wangen, die Rosen sind
gegangen, all gegangen einander nach—
wo sind sie hingegangen? ins Herz hinab: 
da blühn sie nach Verlangen, wie vor so nach.

Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)

FROST HAS COVERED THE ROOF OF MY HOUSE, D. 778

Frost has covered the roof of my house,
but I have stayed warm in the living room.
Winter has covered the crown of my head
with white;
yet blood flows—red blood—through my
heart’s chamber.

Have all the joyous streams in the world dried up?
Yet a quiet brook still flows through my breast.
Have all the nightingales in the meadow
been silenced?
Yet here with me in the silence, one is awake.

It sings: “Lord of the house! lock your gate,
so that the cold world does not come into
your chamber.
Shut out the raw breath of reality,
and give roof and room only to the fragrance
of dreams!”
HEIMLICHE AUFFORDERUNG, OP. 27, NO. 3
Auf, hebe die funkelnde Schale empor
zum Mund,
und trinke beim Freudenmahle dein
Herz gesund.
Und wenn du sie hebst, so winke mir heimlich zu,
dann lächle ich und dann trinke ich still wie
du . . .

Und still gleich mir betrachte um uns das Heer
der trunknen Zecher—verachte sie nicht zu sehr.

Nein, hebe die blinkende Schale, gefüllt
mit Wein,
und lass beim lärmdenden Mahle sie
glücklich sein.

Doch hast du das Mahl genossen, den
Durst gestillt,
dann verlasse der lauten Genossen
festfreundes Bild,
und wandle hinaus in den Garten
zum Rosenstrauch,
dort will ich dich dann erwarten nach
altem Brauch.

Und will an die Brust dir sinken, eh’ du’s gehofft,
und deine Küsse trinken, wie ehmals oft,
und flechten in deine Haare der Rose Pracht.
O komm, du wunderbare ersehnte Nacht!

SECRET INVITATION, OP. 27, NO. 3
Raise the sparkling cup to your mouth,
and drink, at this joyous feast, your heart
to health.
And when you raise it, then signal to me secretly,
then I will smile and then I will drink, silently as
you . . .

And, silent like me, observe the multitude
about us
of drunken chatterers—dISEA them not
too much.
No, raise the twinkling cup, filled with wine,
and let them, at their noisy feast, be happy.

But when you have taken your meal, quenched
your thirst,
then leave the loud company’s festively
happy scene,
and wander out in the garden, to the rosebush—
there will I await you, as is our long-time custom.

And I will sink upon your breast, before you
know it,
and drink in your kisses, as I often have before,
and braid in your hair the rose’s splendor.
O come, you wondrous, longed-for night!

John Henry Mackay (1864–1933)

RUHE, MEINE SEELE OP. 27, NO. 1
Nicht ein Lüftchen regt sich leise,
sanft entschlummert ruht der Hain;
durch der Blätter dunkle Hülle
stiehlt sich lichter Sonnenschein.

Ruhe, ruhe, meine Seele,
deine Stürme gingen wild,
hat getobt und hast gezittert,
wie die Brandung, wenn sie schwillt.

Diese Zeiten sind gewaltig,
bringen Herz und Hirn in Not,
ruhe, ruhe, meine Seele,
und vergiss, was dich bedroht!

REST, MY SOUL, OP. 27, NO. 1
Not a breeze stirs lightly,
softly sleeping rests the grove;
through the leaves’ dark veil
steals bright sunshine.

Rest, rest, my soul,
Your storms have been turbulent,
you have raged and you have trembled,
like the surf, when it swells.

These times are powerful,
bringing heart and mind affliction—
rest, rest, my soul,
and forget what threatens you.

Karl Friedrich Henckell (1864–1929)
**IM ABENDROT, D. 799**

O wie schön ist deine Welt,
Vater, wenn sie golden strahlet!
Wenn dein Glanz herniederfällt,
und den Staub mit Schimmer malet,
wenne das Rot, das in der Wolke blinkt,
in mein stilles Fenster sinkt!

Könnt’ ich klagen, könnt’ ich zagen?
Irre sein an dir und mir?
Nein, ich will im Busen tragen
deinen Himmel schon allhier.
Und dies Herz, eh’ es zusammenbricht,
trinkt noch Glut und schlürft noch Licht.

**IN THE EVENING GLOW, D. 799**

O how beautiful is your world,
Father, when it shines golden!
When your radiance descends,
and paints lustrous the dust,
when the red, gleaming in the cloud,
sinks into my quiet window!

Could I complain, lose heart,
doubt you, and myself?
No, your heaven will I carry
here, in my bosom.
And this heart, before it fails,
shall still drink in your glow and lap up
your light.

---

**ALLERSEELEN, OP. 10, NO. 8**

Stell’ auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,
die letzten roten Astern trag’ herbei,
und laß uns wieder von der Liebe reden,
wie einst im Mai.

Gib mir die Hand, daß ich sie heimlich drücke,
und wenn man’s sieht, mir ist es einerlei,
gib mir nur einen deiner süßen Blicke,
wie einst im Mai.

Es blüht und duftet heut’ auf jedem Grabe,
ein Tag im Jahr ist ja den Toten frei,
komm an mein Herz, daß ich dich wieder habe,
wie einst im Mai.

**ALL SOULS’ DAY, OP. 10, NO. 8**

Set on the table the fragrant mignonettes,
bring in the last red asters,
and let us speak of love again,
as once in May.

Give me your hand, that I may press it in secret,
and if people see it, I do not care;
give me but one of your sweet looks,
as once in May.

Today it blossoms and smells sweet on each grave
for one day of the year the dead are free;
come to my heart, that I may have you again,
as once in May.

---

Karl Lappe (1773–1843)

Hermann von Gilm (1812–1864)
**TRÄNENREGEN FROM DIE SCHÖNE MULLERIN, D. 795, NO. 10**

Wir saßen so traulich beisammen
im kühlen Erlendach,
wer schauten so traulich zusammen
hinab in den rieselnden Bach.

Der Mond war auch gekommen,
die Sternlein hinterdrein,
und schauten so traulich zusammen
in den silbernen Spiegel hinein.

Ich sah nach keinem Monde,
nach keinem Sternenschein,
Ich schaute nach ihrem Bilde,
nach ihren Augen allein.

Und sahe sie nicken und blicken
herauf aus dem seligen Bach,
die Blümlein am Ufer, die blauen,
sie nickten und blickten ihr nach.

Und in den Bach versunken
der ganze Himmel schien,
und wollte mich mit hinunter
in seine Tiefe ziehn.

Und über den Wolken und Sternen
die rieselte munter der Bach,
und rief mit Singen und Klingcn:
“Geselle, Geselle, mir nach!”

Da gingen die Augen mir über,
da ward es im Spiegel so kraus;
sie sprach: “Es kommt ein Regen,
ad’ ich geh’ nach Haus.”

**MORGEN!, OP. 27, NO. 4**

Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen,
und auf dem Wege, den ich gehen werde,
wird uns, die Glücklichen, sie wieder einen
inmitten dieser sonnenatmenden Erde . . .

Und zu dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen,
werden wir still und langsam niedersteigen,
und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes
Schweigen . . .

**TOMORROW!, OP. 27, NO. 4**

And tomorrow the sun will shine again,
and on the path where I shall walk,
it will unite us, the happy ones, again,
in the midst of this sun-breathing earth . . .

And to the broad, blue-waved shore,
we shall quietly and slowly descend;
mute, into each other’s eyes gazing,
and upon us sinks the muted silence of
happiness . . .

MORGEN!, OP. 27, NO. 4

Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen,
und auf dem Wege, den ich gehen werde,
wird uns, die Glücklichen, sie wieder einen
inmitten dieser sonnenatmenden Erde . . .

Und zu dem Strand, dem weiten, wogenblauen,
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And to the broad, blue-waved shore,
we shall quietly and slowly descend;
mute, into each other’s eyes gazing,
and upon us sinks the muted silence of
happiness . . .

Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827)

**SHOWER OF TEARS FROM THE FAIR MILLER-MAID, D. 795, NO. 10**

We sat together in such harmony
beneath the cool canopy of alders,
and in harmony gazed down
into the rippling brook.

The moon had appeared too,
and then the stars.
They gazed down in harmony
into the silvery mirror.

I did not look at the moon;
I did not look at the stars.
I gazed only at her reflection,
and her eyes.

I saw them nod and gaze up
from the happy brook;
the little blue flowers on the bank
nodded and glanced at her.

The whole sky seemed
immersed in the brook
and sought to drag me down
into its depths.

Above the clouds and stars
the brook rippled merrily,
and called me with its singing and ringing:
“Friend, follow me!”

Then my eyes filled with tears
and the mirror became blurred.
She said: “It’s about to rain.
Goodbye! I’m going home.”

John Henry Mackay
Ludwig van Beethoven
Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany.
Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

This is the symphony that, along with an image of Beethoven, looking agitated and disheveled, has come to represent greatness in music. In fact, many people know only the very opening seconds, just as they may remember vividly and accurately no more than the Mona Lisa’s smile, or the first ten words of Hamlet’s soliloquy. It’s hard to know how so few notes, so plainly strung together, could become so popular. There are certainly those who would argue that this isn’t even Beethoven’s greatest symphony, just as the Mona Lisa isn’t Leonardo’s finest painting—Beethoven himself preferred his Eroica to the Fifth Symphony. And yet, it’s hardly famous beyond its merits, for one can’t easily think of another single composition that in its expressive range and structural power better represents what music is all about.

Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony has spoken forcefully and directly to many listeners—trained and untrained—over the years; we each listen and understand in our own way. We can probably find ourselves somewhere here, among the characters of E.M. Forster’s Howard’s End:

Whether you are like Mrs. Munt, and tap surreptitiously when the tunes come—of course not so as to disturb the others; or like Helen, who can see heroes and shipwrecks in the music’s flood; or like Margaret, who can only see the music; or like Tibby, who is profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee; or like their cousin, Fräulein Mosebach, who remembers all the time that Beethoven is “echt Deutsch”; or like Fräulein Mosebach’s young man, who can remember nothing but Fräulein Mosebach: in any case, the passion of your life becomes more vivid, and you are bound to admit that such a noise is cheap at two shillings.

That is why we still go to concerts, and, whether we see shipwrecks or hear dominant sevenths, we may well agree, when caught up in a captivating performance, “that Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man.”

COMPOSED
1804–1808

FIRST PERFORMANCE
December 22, 1808; Vienna, Austria

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
October 16 & 17, 1891, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting (inaugural concerts)
July 18, 1936, Ravinia Festival. Willem van Hoogstraten conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 5, 2007, Ravinia Festival. James Conlon conducting
June 14, 15, 16, 17 & 19, 2012, Orchestra Hall. Riccardo Muti conducting
January 18, 2014, Philharmonie, Luxembourg. Riccardo Muti conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
36 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS
1944. Désiré Defauw conducting. CSO (From the Archives, vol. 17: Beethoven)
1959. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA
1961. George Szell conducting. VAI (video)
1968. Seiji Ozawa conducting. RCA
1990. Sir Georg Solti conducting. CBS/Sony (video)
For a while, this piece was somewhat overshadowed by the Ninth Symphony, which seemed to point the way to the rest of the nineteenth century and emboldened generations of composers to think differently of the symphony, or of music in general. But the Fifth has never really lost its appeal. Robert Schumann, whose musical predictions have often come true, wrote that “this symphony invariably wields its power over men of every age like those great phenomena of nature . . . . This symphony, too, will be heard in future centuries, nay, as long as music and the world exist.” It is surely no coincidence that Theodore Thomas, the first music director of the Chicago Symphony, picked this symphony to conclude the Orchestra’s inaugural concert in 1891, as well as the concert given in 1904 to dedicate Orchestra Hall. “I care not from what the station in life come the thousands who sit before me,” Thomas once told a reporter. “Beethoven will teach each according to his needs.”

A familiarity earned by only a handful of pieces in any century has largely blunted much of the work’s wild power for our ears today. And, knowing the many works that couldn’t have been written without this as their example has blinded us to the novelty of Beethoven’s boldest strokes: the cross-reference between the famous opening and the fortissimo horn call in the scherzo, the way the scherzo passes directly—and dramatically—into the finale, and the memory of the scherzo that appears unexpectedly in the finale—all forging the four movements of the symphony into one unified design. The idea of a symphony tracing the journey from strife to victory is commonplace today, but Beethoven’s Fifth was an entirely new kind of symphony in his day.

There’s no way to know what the first audience thought. For one thing, that concert, given at the Theater an der Wien on December 22, 1808, was so inordinately long (even by nineteenth-century standards), and jammed with so much important new music, that no one could truly have taken it all in. J.F. Reichardt, who shared a box with Prince Lobkowitz, later wrote: “There we sat from 6:30 till 10:30 in the most bitter cold, and found by experience that one might have too much even of a good thing.”

Reichardt and Lobkowitz stayed till the end, their patience frequently tried not by the music—to which these two brought more understanding than most—but by the performance, which was rough and unsympathetic. Surely some in the audience that night were bowled over by what they heard, though many may well have fidgeted and daydreamed, uncomprehending, or perhaps even bored. Beethoven’s was not yet the most popular music ever written, and even as great a figure as Goethe would outlive Beethoven without coming to terms with the one composer who was clearly his equal. As late as 1830, Mendelssohn tried one last time to interest the aging poet in Beethoven’s music, enthusiastically playing the first movement of the Fifth Symphony at the piano. “But that does not move one,” Goethe responded, “it is merely astounding, grandiose.”

Take the celebrated opening, which Beethoven once, in a moment he surely regretted, likened to Fate knocking at the door. It is bold and simple, and like many of the mottoes of our civilization, susceptible to all manner of popular treatments, none of which can diminish the power of the original. Beethoven writes eight notes, four plus four—the first ta-ta-ta-TUM falling from G down to E-flat, the second from F to D. For all the force of those hammer strokes, we may be surprised that only strings and clarinets play them. Hearing those eight notes and no more, we can’t yet say for certain whether this is E-flat major or C minor. As soon as Beethoven continues, we hear that urgent knocking as part of a grim and driven music in C minor. But when the exposition is repeated, and we start over from the top with E-flat major chords still ringing.
in our ears, those same ta-ta-ta-TUM patterns sound like they belong to E-flat major. That ambiguity and tension are at the heart of this furious music—just as the struggle to break from C minor, where this movement settles, into the brilliance of C major—and will carry us to the end of the symphony.

If one understands and remembers those four measures, much of what happens during the next thirty-odd minutes will seem both familiar and logical. We can hear Fate knocking at the door of nearly every measure in the first movement. The forceful horn call that introduces the second theme, for example, mimics both the rhythm and the shape of the symphony’s opening. (We also can notice the similarity to the beginning of the Fourth Piano Concerto—and, in fact, ideas for both works can be found in the same sketchbooks, those rich hunting grounds where brilliance often emerges in flashes from a disarray matched by the notorious condition of the composer’s lodgings.)

Although the first movement is launched with the energy and urgency of those first notes, its progress is stalled periodically by echoes of the two long-held notes in the first bars; in the recapitulation a tiny, but enormously expressive oboe cadenza serves the same purpose. The extensive coda is particularly satisfying not because it effectively concludes a dramatic and powerful movement, but because it uncovers still new depths of drama and power at a point when that seems unthinkable.

The Andante con moto is a distant relative of the theme and variations that often turn up as slow movements in classical symphonies. But unlike the conventional type, it presents two different themes, varies them separately, and then trails off into a free improvisation that covers a wide range of thoughts, each springing almost spontaneously from the last. The sequence of events is so unpredictable, and the meditative tone so seductive, that, in the least assertive movement of the symphony, Beethoven commands our attention to the final sentence.

Beethoven was the first to notice his scherzo’s resemblance to the opening of the finale of Mozart’s great G minor symphony—he even wrote out Mozart’s first measures on a page of sketches for this music—but while the effect there is decisive and triumphant, here it is clouded with half-uttered questions. Beethoven begins with furtive music, inching forward in the low strings, then stumbling on the horns, who let loose with their own rendition of Fate at the door. At some point, when Beethoven realized that the scherzo was part of a bigger scheme, he decided to leave it unfinished and move directly, through one of the most famous passages in music—slowly building in tension and drama, over the ominous, quiet pounding of the timpani—to an explosion of brilliant C major. Composers have struggled ever since to match the effect, not just of binding movements together—that much has been successfully copied—but of emerging so dramatically from darkness to light. The sketchbooks tell us that these fifty measures cost Beethoven considerable effort, and, most surprisingly, that they weren’t even part of the original plan. Berlioz thought this transition so stunning that it would be impossible to surpass it in what follows. Beethoven, perfectly understanding the challenge—and also that of sustaining the victory of C major once it has been achieved—adds trombones (used in symphonic music for the first time), the piccolo, and the contrabassoon to the first burst of C major and moves forward towards his final stroke of genius.

That moment comes amidst general rejoicing, when the ghost of the scherzo quietly appears, at once disrupting C major with unexpected memories of C minor and leaving everyone temporarily hushed and shaken. Beethoven quickly restores order, and the music begins again as if nothing has happened. But Beethoven still finds it necessary to end with fifty-four measures of the purest C major to remind us of the conquest, not the struggle.

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