Chicago Symphony Orchestra
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Pierre Boulez Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus
Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

These violin concerto performances have been enabled by the Paul Ricker Judy Fund.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Tuesday, June 2, 2015, at 6:30

Afterwork Masterworks

**Ludovic Morlot** Conductor

**Jennifer Koh** Violin

**Clyne**

*The Seamstress*

JENNIFER KOH

World premiere

CSO commission

**Beethoven**

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55 (*Eroica*)

Allegro con brio

Marcia funebre: Adagio assai

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Finale: Allegro molto

There will be no intermission.

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The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to WBBM Newsradio 780 and 105.9FM for its generous support as a media sponsor of the Afterwork Masterwork series.

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Hector Berlioz
Born December 11, 1803, La Côte-Saint-André, Isère, France.
Died March 8, 1869, Paris, France.

Les francs-juges Overture, Op. 3

Berlioz introduced his *Les francs-juges* overture at a concert he put together in order to win the admiration of the actress Harriet Smithson, with whom he had fallen in love—and who would be the subject of his blockbuster *Symphonie fantastique* in another two years. Neither their romance nor Berlioz’s first opera, *Les francs-juges*, would survive, but the overture quickly became a popular success, and it is still often played. It is the only part of the opera Berlioz saved intact and published—the first orchestral work by a composer who would quickly transform the history of instrumental music.

Berlioz set his sights on the opera stage early in his career. It was his close friend, Humbert Ferrand, who suggested the subject and wrote the text for *Les francs-juges* (often rendered as “the judges of the secret court,” but more usefully translated as “the self-appointed judges”). Like other so-called rescue operas in vogue at the time, Ferrand’s libretto is a medieval tale, set deep in the dark forests, of a political prisoner who is saved from a chamber of secret judges by his fiancée. Berlioz wrote the opera quickly in the summer and early autumn of 1826. Then, to his dismay, major opera theaters throughout Europe rejected it, one after another. Even once Berlioz revised the score in 1829 and 1833—by then his was a name to reckon with—he still failed to stir up any enthusiasm for producing it. Berlioz ultimately gave up on *Les francs-juges*. He recycled portions—most famously turning a brassy march into the hair-raising March to the Scaffold in the *Symphonie fantastique*—and salvaged only the overture, which he published independently as a concert piece. He destroyed the rest of the score.

Berlioz’s overtures were the first of his works to reach a large public. They were published early in his career and widely performed, even when his larger compositions were slow to catch on. Within a decade of its composition, the overture to *Les francs-juges* was played not only in France, but also in London, Berlin, Vienna, and Saint Petersburg. Berlioz conducted it often on his own concerts and on tour. From the majestic brass statements at the opening to the urgent fast music that follows, the overture is quirky, distinctive, cheeky—Berlioz dares to combine the fast and slow portions near the climax—and quite like anything known in music at the time. If it were not done with such assurance, technical skill, and orchestral wizardry, it might be dismissed as the work of a fearless newcomer, which, in fact, Berlioz was at the time. Written scarcely a year after Beethoven’s death, *Les francs-juges* suggests that a new chapter in music had already begun.
In 2008, Anna Clyne spotted an old violin in a dusty case, leaning up against a pile of vinyl records in the basement of a thrift shop in Oxford, England. A European baroque-style instrument, dating from the late 1800s, with an elaborate hand-carved lion’s head scroll, it was a bargain at £5.99 (about $9), and Clyne snapped it up. Clyne’s mother had just recently died at the time. In ways that are both personal and musical, the violin has accompanied Clyne ever since. The Seamstress, her new violin concerto that is being premiered this week—the latest product of her five years as the Chicago Symphony’s Mead Composer-in-Residence—marks the end of a journey, a stretch of six years writing a large body of music for the violin. Chicago audiences have already heard Prince of Clouds, performed here in December of 2012, a double violin concerto that pays homage to the teacher-student lineage of the soloists for whom it was composed (Jaime Laredo and this week’s soloist, Jennifer Koh), and at the same time to Bach’s famous concerto for two violins. This past September, Clyne released The Violin, a DVD collaboration with visual artist Josh Dorman that is a suite of pieces for solo, duet, and multitrack violins. The Seamstress, the biggest work in this chapter of Clyne’s career, is the capstone.

Clyne’s violin journey has taken her from England, where her friend, violin maker Bruno Guastalla, restored her new instrument in exchange for composition lessons, to Brooklyn, where she bartered for violin lessons from Neil Dufallo and Amy Kauffman by offering to write a violin duet for them to play. Then, as a way of remembering her mother, Clyne decided to write six more violin pieces; she composed one each evening leading up to the day of the first anniversary of her mother’s death. (Something she could not have foreseen at the time: The Seamstress was finished on the sixth anniversary, to the day.)

In 2010, after having been picked by Riccardo Muti as one of the Chicago Symphony’s new resident composers, Clyne moved to Chicago and eventually rented a studio in the Fine Arts Building, where she composed a number of new works, including Night Ferry, her first commission from the CSO. While exploring the city, she discovered the Old Town School of Folk Music, and she began to take old-time fiddle classes there, and, later, Irish fiddle classes. “There’s something about folk music that resonates deeply within me,” Clyne recently said. “Perhaps it’s from my combination of English, Irish, and Polish roots, and also growing up in a home where the music heard was predominantly folk music of that time, along with artists such as The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Fleetwood Mac.”

The solo violin melody that opens The Seamstress came to Clyne as she played her violin, trying out different ideas until she found this tune, as unassuming as a folk song. Even though she explored other ways of starting the piece, she kept returning to this music, which lays the groundwork for the whole concerto. “In beginning with this simple melody—the violinist alone on the stage—I also came back to an idea I had several years previously,” Clyne says, “The Seamstress, a one-act ballet that would open with a seamstress alone

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**The Seamstress, for Violin and Orchestra**

**COMPOSED**

2015

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

These are the world premiere performances.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

solo violin, two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, vibraphone, snare drum, suspended sizzle cymbal, crotales, bass drum, tam-tam, glockenspiel, laptop, harp, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**

25 minutes
Anna Clyne on *The Seamstress*

I MADE my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world’s eyes
As though they’d wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there’s more enterprise
In walking naked.

—William Butler Yeats

*The Seamstress* is an imaginary one-act ballet. Alone on the stage, the seamstress is seated, unraveling threads from a beautiful cloth laid gently over her lap. Lost in her thoughts, her mind begins to meander and her imagination spirals into a series of five tales that range from love to despair, and that combine memory with fantasy.
on the stage.” Clyne already had a sense that the piece would unfold as a sequence of tales “that range from love to despair and that combine memory with fantasy.” The image of a seamstress unraveling threads of memory reminded her of a poem by William Butler Yeats she had read many years before that begins “I made my song a coat.” With that in mind, the new concerto started to come together naturally—Clyne writes “in order,” working from beginning to end—with each idea growing out of the previous one, linked by sparse pizzicato sections—the “image/sound of the unpicking of stitches.”

It is not surprising that Clyne’s new concerto was generated in part by the idea of an imaginary ballet, because she regularly works with choreographers, and because the act of collaboration—with filmmakers and video artists, as well—has long characterized her method of composing. With Night Ferry, her first big orchestral score, which was written for the CSO and Riccardo Muti to premiere here in February 2012, Clyne chose for the first time to “collaborate” with herself, as she put it, by painting on her studio wall, to jump-start the composition process. This time, as Clyne was composing The Seamstress, she kept imagining how the music could be complemented by dance, and she hopes it will one day be choreographed (several choreographers have already expressed interest).

Perhaps because of the unconventional way the concerto was conceived, it does not follow the standards of concerto form, but unfolds as a dialogue between soloist and orchestra that favors conversation over showy solo display. Clyne also weaves the violin line in and out of the orchestral fabric, so that at times it completely disappears, as one thread among many. After working closely with Koh on Prince of Clouds, Clyne wanted to emphasize her dynamic versatility—“her ability to play music with such tenderness, but then also with such fire, grit, and earthiness.” The Seamstress is the third work Clyne has written for Koh, following Prince of Clouds and Rest These Hands, an arrangement of movements from The Violin.

The Yeats poem that helped shape the concerto also surfaces in the music. Clyne had used the verse once before, when she incorporated it into an interlude between two songs that she wrote as a student at the Manhattan School of Music. At the time, she asked a friend of hers, a Dubliner, to record Yeats’s lines. “There’s a lyricism in the Irish accent that I have always loved,” Clyne said. “I remember listening to my grandmother and my Auntie Gretta, who were from County Monaghan in Ireland, as a child and being drawn to the musicality of their voices.” For The Seamstress, she turned to the composer Irene Buckley, originally from Cork, Ireland, to record the poem, both in a whisper and in full voice. Clyne then spliced, layered, and manipulated Buckley’s recordings to add another layer to the music. (In one section where the woodwinds have rests to breathe, Clyne also incorporates the sounds of Buckley’s prerecorded breathing.)

Clyne was something of a newcomer to the world of orchestral music when she began her Chicago residency in 2010, and she has turned the experience into a great exploration of the orchestra and its literature, attending rehearsals and concerts, discovering new pieces and composers, getting to know individual musicians in the orchestra and in the community, learning how to create new sounds with traditional instruments. Clyne came to know and love Chicago—she even wrote a Chicago “street portrait,” A Wonderful Day, incorporating the voice of Wooly Barber, a homeless man she heard singing on Michigan Avenue—but her music has a wide reach these days. She has been profiled in The New York Times and was the subject of a Miller Composer Profile concert in New York last month. She was commissioned to write Masquerade to open the famous Last Night of the Proms concert in August 2013—the CSO will play the piece in November under Marin Alsop, who led the premiere—and she is working on a piece for a hundred cellos to be performed at the Hollywood Bowl next May. The Seamstress will receive its South American premiere in São Paulo in July.
Ludwig van Beethoven
Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany.
Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria.

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55 (Eroica)

The story of how the Eroica Symphony got its title is nearly as famous as the music itself. We know that Beethoven intended to name his third symphony for Napoleon Bonaparte and his fight against political tyranny, that he tore up the title page in a fit of rage when he learned that Napoleon had appointed himself emperor, and that he opted for the title Sinfonia eroica (Heroic symphony) instead. The subtexts—idealism and disillusionment, personal greed and the lust for power, the struggle between art and politics, among others—are intense, and they have come to overshadow one of the most remarkable, even revolutionary works of art we have. A century after Beethoven, Toscanini tried to restore reason, famously brushing aside a hundred years of connotations: “Some say it is Napoleon, some Hitler, some Mussolini. For me it is simply Allegro con brio.”

Beethoven had been contemplating a symphony inspired by General Bonaparte since 1798. Most of the music was composed in the summer of 1803, only months after Beethoven wrote his most revealing nonmusical work—the Heiligenstadt Testament—a painful confirmation of worsening deafness and thoughts of suicide. It was one of the lowest points in a life that understood despair only too well. The composition of an important and substantial new symphony was Beethoven’s great rallying cry—a heroic act in itself. The first draft was probably completed by November 1803. Beethoven’s extensive sketches, nicely preserved and often studied, confirm that the new symphony gave its composer a lot of trouble. In May 1804, when the news reached Vienna that Napoleon had declared himself emperor, Beethoven felt betrayed. According to the account later written by his student Ferdinand Ries, when he broke the news to Beethoven, the composer “went to the table, took hold of the title page by the top, tore it in two, and threw it to the floor.”

What Ries didn’t mention was that Beethoven’s own motives were sometimes suspicious themselves. Although Beethoven had long intended to name the symphony after Bonaparte, he quickly dropped that plan when he learned that Prince Lobkowitz would pay him handsomely for the same honor. Later, after he had ripped up the title page, Beethoven temporarily recanted when he realized that a Bonaparte symphony would be just the thing for his upcoming trip to Paris.

In 1806, when it came time to publish the E-flat major symphony, Beethoven suggested “Sinfonia eroica, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man,” without mentioning...
Napoleon. Beethoven’s last reputed words on the subject, full of the anger and resentment he surely felt, came later, after Napoleon’s victory at Jena: “It’s a pity I do not understand the art of war as well as I do the art of music. I would conquer him!” History doesn’t tell us what, if anything, Napoleon thought of Beethoven’s music. When Cherubini, whom he did admire, once suggested that Napoleon knew no more about music than he knew of battle, the emperor immediately stripped him of his offices and power, leaving him with virtually no income.

The Eroica is perhaps the first great symphony to have captured the romantic imagination. It’s not as openly suggestive as the later Pastoral, with its bird calls and thunderstorm, nor as specific as the Ninth, with its unmistakable message of hope and freedom. But to the Viennese audience at the first performance, on April 7, 1805, Beethoven’s vast and powerful first movement and the funeral march that follows must have sounded like nothing else in all music. We’re told that a man in the gallery shouted down: “I’ll give another Kreutzer if the thing will only stop!” Audiences then, just as today, brought certain expectations to the concert hall, and knowing the length of a piece is one of them. But Beethoven’s Allegro con brio was longer—and bigger, in every sense—than any other symphonic movement at the time (the first movement of Mozart’s Prague Symphony comes the closest). It’s also a question of proportion, and Beethoven’s central development section, abounding in some truly monumental statements, is enormous.

It has been suggested that Beethoven was writing without themes at the beginning of the first movement; the comment is not meant disparagingly, but as proof that the essence of Beethoven’s language is not melody, but tension and movement. Donald Tovey insisted that many of Beethoven’s themes “can be recognized by their bare rhythm without quoting any melody at all.” The very opening of the Eroica consists of no more than two E-flat major chords, played forte, followed by the cellos jumping back and forth over the notes of an E-flat triad. The first exceptional event comes when the cellos stumble on C-sharp, a note we never expected to hear, and one that opens unforeseen vistas only seven bars into the piece. From there, Beethoven continues to spread his wings, even settling comfortably in the very remote key of E minor just moments before he whisks us back to the E-flat major chords with which he began. Beethoven’s writing, in the most expansive piece he had yet composed, is tight and closely unified. Although analysts often point out the unprecedented use of a new theme in the development section, it’s not unique (see Mozart’s Symphony no. 33), nor is the theme truly new.

Ries was perhaps the first person to be misled by the “premature” entry of the horn four bars before the start of the recapitulation, and he lost Beethoven’s respect forever when he rushed up to tell him that the player had come in at the wrong place. It’s one of Beethoven’s little jokes, all the more effective for being told at a whisper. The coda is as big and important as a movement.

The title page for the Eroica Symphony, showing where Beethoven deleted the dedication to Napoleon
in itself, but something of this stature is needed to bring us back to earth before we move on.

The Adagio is a funeral march of measured solemnity, pushed forward by the low rumble of the basses, like the sound of muffled drums. Beethoven raised some eyebrows by placing the funeral music so early in the symphony, but this is music, not biography, and chronology is beside the point. The two interludes are particularly moving—the first because it casts a sudden ray of sunlight on the grim proceedings; the second, because it carries the single thread of melody into a vast double fugue of almost unseemly magnificence. The music ends with some consolation, but even more grief.

Beethoven's funeral music gives way to a brilliant (though often very quiet) scherzo, just as the prisoners in Fidelio emerge from the dungeon into the blinding daylight. Here, the modest minuet of Haydn and Mozart has become something truly symphonic in scope.

Beethoven's finale is a set of variations on a theme he had used several times before, principally in his ballet The Creatures of Prometheus. This is an unusually complex and multifaceted piece of music. It's not just the conclusion, but the culmination, of all that came before. Beethoven begins with a simple, unattached bass line before introducing the theme itself. The variety and range of style are extraordinary: a fugue on the bass line, a virtuoso showpiece for flute, a swinging dance in G minor, an expansive hymn. Beethoven moves from one event to the next, making their connections seem not only obvious, but inevitable. Some of it is splendid solemnity, some high humor, and Beethoven touches on much in between. A magnificent coda, which continues to stake out new territory even while wrapping things up, ends with bursts of joy from the horns.

Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.