Thursday, May 1, 2014, at 8:00  
Friday, May 2, 2014, at 1:30  
Saturday, May 3, 2014, at 8:00

**Christoph von Dohnányi** Conductor  
**Paul Lewis** Piano

**Lutosławski**  
*Musique funèbre*

**Beethoven**  
Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37  
Allegro con brio  
Largo  
Rondo: Allegro  

**INTERMESSION**

**Tchaikovsky**  
Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 (*Pathétique*)  
Adagio—Allegro non troppo  
Allegro con grazia  
Allegro molto vivace  
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

The appearance of Paul Lewis is endowed in part by the Johnson & Livingston Families Fund for Piano Performance.  
This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
When Lutosławski’s Concerto for Orchestra was first performed in 1954, it was immediately compared to Béla Bartók’s landmark score of the same name. Lutosławski’s was the first important concerto for orchestra composed in the shadow of Bartók’s 1943 masterwork, and, at the time, that appears to have inspired rather than intimidated Lutosławski. Although he would later dismiss the work as immature and unrepresentative—“I wrote as I was able, since I could not yet write as I wished”—the concerto helped launch his international career. But it was with his next major work, dedicated to Bartók’s memory—this Musique funèbre (Funeral music) for string orchestra—that Lutosławski found his own voice.

“For me this is the beginning of a new period,” Lutosławski said at the time of the premiere in 1958. “This is my first word spoken in a language new to me, but it is certainly not my last one.”

As the American critic Everett Helm reported in The Musical Quarterly after the work was played in Warsaw at the International Festival of Contemporary Music that same year, the score “employs twelve-tone technique in a personal idiom and in a fashion that the composer has worked out over a number of years.” From that point on, the way that Lutosławki freely incorporated the techniques and gestures of strict twelve-tone music into his own highly individual language proved to be one of the miracles of late twentieth-century music. The Funeral Music, then, is at once a farewell to Bartók and his musical world, and, at the same time, Lutosławski’s own calling card.

The score unfolds in four connected phases, beginning with a funeral cortège and building, in intensity and rhythmic complexity, toward a great, sustained, triple-forte chord containing all twelve tones. It is a fierce and alarming blow, from which the music never fully recovers, and in the epilogue, silence carries as much weight as the notes themselves.
Ludwig van Beethoven
Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany.
Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria.

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37

We’re not certain that Beethoven and Mozart ever met. Their names were mentioned in the same breath as early as 1783, when Beethoven’s first composition teacher, Christian Gottlob Neefe, wrote these words in the earliest public notice of his promising pupil: “This youthful genius is deserving of help to enable him to travel. He would surely become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were he to continue as he has begun.”

Neefe was suggesting that, with proper sponsorship, his young pupil could tour the music capitals and entertain kings with his dazzling keyboard talent—like most musicians, Neefe assumed that Mozart would make his reputation as a virtuoso performer, not as a composer. Neefe didn’t live long enough to understand how limited his view was, but he did see his prize student take the first steps to becoming not a second Mozart, but more importantly, the mature Beethoven.

It’s likely that these two great composers did meet early in 1787, when the sixteen-year-old Beethoven made his first trip from his native Bonn to Vienna, to breathe the air of a sophisticated musical city. Beethoven stayed no more than two weeks, and he may even have taken a few lessons from Mozart before his teacher was suddenly called home by the news of his mother’s failing health. There is, however, no mention of Mozart in a letter Beethoven wrote at the time.

When late in 1792, Beethoven returned to Vienna, where he would stay for the rest of his life, it was to study with Haydn, for Mozart lay in an unmarked grave. We can sense disappointment in the famous words Count Waldstein inscribed in the album that served as a farewell gift from Beethoven’s friends:

You are going to Vienna in fulfillment of your long-frustrated wishes. The Genius of Mozart is still mourning and weeping over the death of her pupil. She found a refuge but no occupation with the inexhaustible Haydn; through him she wishes once more to form a union with another. With the help of assiduous labor you shall receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands.

Beethoven arrived in Vienna in the second week of November 1792. He quickly realized that Haydn had little to teach him and took comfort in the fact that he was welcome in the same homes where Mozart was once popular.

To Beethoven, Vienna was Mozart’s city. The first music he published there was a set of variations for violin and piano on “Se vuol ballare” from Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro. In March 1795, he played Mozart’s D minor

COMPOSED
1800; sketches date to the mid-1790s

FIRST PERFORMANCE
April 5, 1803, Vienna. With the composer as soloist

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 16 & 17, 1910, Orchestra Hall. Ernest Hutcheson as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
December 8, 9 & 10, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Jeremy Denk as soloist, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting

July 11, 2013, Ravinia Festival. Emanuel Ax as soloist, Christoph von Dohnányi conducting

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
34 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION
solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

CSO RECORDINGS
1959. Gary Graffman as soloist, Walter Hendl conducting. RCA
1983. Alfred Brendel as soloist, James Levine conducting. Philips

CADENZAS
Beethoven

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piano concerto (K. 466) at a concert organized by the composer’s widow Constanze. (He later wrote cadenzas for it as well, the only concerto by Mozart he so honored.) And on April 2, 1800, at his historic first public concert, Beethoven included a symphony by Mozart on the program, which also was supposed to have introduced his brand new piano concerto (his third) in C minor. For reasons that we will never know, however, Beethoven played one of his earlier concertos instead.

This C minor piano concerto is one of a handful of works in which the spirits of Mozart and Beethoven convene. To suggest, as some writers do, that Beethoven modeled his concerto after Mozart’s own C minor piano concerto (K. 491) is to confuse the deepest kind of artistic inheritance with plagiarism. The choice of key certainly can’t be taken as a homage to Mozart, for Beethoven seemed unable to get C minor out of his system at the time. (Think of the *Pathétique* Sonata, or, a bit later, the funeral march from the *Eroica* Symphony, the *Coriolan* Overture, and, of course, the Fifth Symphony.) Obviously, Beethoven remembered Mozart’s C minor concerto when he was writing his own—they share too many musical details for sheer coincidence. According to a popular anecdote, Beethoven and the pianist Johann Cramer were walking together when they heard the finale of the Mozart concerto coming from a nearby house; Beethoven stopped and exclaimed: “Cramer, Cramer! We shall never be able to do anything like that!”

But in his own C minor concerto, Beethoven does something far more remarkable: he writes music that pays tribute to this great masterpiece and, at the same time, transcends the Mozartean model. It was conceived in a complimentary, rather than a competitive spirit. Mozart’s untimely death spared Beethoven a head-on rivalry with the one composer he worshiped, leaving him to make his own way in Vienna. (He hardly knew that Schubert existed, even though they lived in the same city for years; once, when asked to name the greatest living composer other than himself, he suggested Luigi Cherubini—although it took him a moment to come up with anyone.)

Even nineteenth-century listeners, who thought Mozart a lightweight and Beethoven a quarrelsome revolutionary, heard the resemblance in this music—both in its details as well as its spirit and sensibility. Certainly the way the soloist continues to play right after the first movement cadenza up to the final bar can be found only in K. 491 among all of Mozart’s piano concertos. Beethoven’s opening theme, too, tosses a glance at Mozart’s. But on the big issues—how the music moves forward, the way it approaches the turning points in its progress—there is less agreement. As Donald Tovey pointed out, Beethoven doesn’t yet seem to have figured out what Mozart always understood—that you shouldn’t give too much away before the soloist enters and the drama really begins. There are touches of pure Beethoven, like the unannounced entry of the timpani just after the cadenza—a complete surprise, even though it has been thoughtfully prepared by a main theme that imitates the beating of a drum every time it appears.

There’s nothing Mozartean about Beethoven’s choice of key for the central slow movement: E major, with its key signature of four sharps, is bold and unexpected in a concerto in C minor, with three flats. For a moment the first E major chord, given to the piano alone, seems all wrong, as if the soloist’s hands have landed in the wrong place; at the same time, it’s fresh and irresistible. Where Mozart generally wrote andante or adagio, Beethoven dictates largo. Deliberately paced and magnificently expansive, this is the first great example of a new kind of slow movement. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, composers would profit from remembering this music, although it’s arguable that no one after Beethoven ever thought of anything like the lovely, fully blossomed romanticism of the duet for flute and bassoon over plucked strings and piano arpeggios midway through.

The way Beethoven glances over the final double bar of this movement at the opening of the finale also is new. The two movements aren’t yet literally connected, as they will be in later music, but Beethoven uses all of his wit and wisdom to carry us from one to the next. He capitalizes on the fact that G-sharp is the same note on the keyboard as A-flat, and he uses that note to pivot from the remote world of E major back to C minor. Our ears easily make the connection, and the rondo finale races forward, full of pranks and good humor.
Having convinced his listeners (and himself, perhaps) that E major is no stranger to C minor, Beethoven returns to the key of his slow movement in the middle of the finale as if it were the most logical move of all. Beethoven recovers C minor again, but, after a brief cadenza, he tears off at a gallop into C major, where he has been headed all along.

It's not clear why this concerto, evidently designed for Beethoven's first Vienna concert in April 1800, wasn't performed that night. Perhaps it simply wasn't ready. The manuscript suggests that last-minute changes were still being made before its premiere on April 5, 1803, when Beethoven also introduced his new Second Symphony and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. Even then, the music was more firmly fixed in Beethoven's mind than on the page. Ignaz von Seyfried, the new conductor at the Theater an der Wien, agreed to turn pages for Beethoven, only to discover that it was easier said than done:

I saw almost nothing but empty leaves, at most on one page or another a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me and scribbled down to serve as clues for him. He played nearly all of the solo part from memory since, as was so often the case, he had not had time to put it all down on paper. He gave me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of the invisible passages, and my scarcely concealable anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly, and he heartily laughed at the jovial supper which we ate afterwards.

Nearly a year later, Beethoven finally got around to writing down the piano part for a performance given by his student Ferdinand Ries, who provided his own cadenza.

The first reviewer of the Third Concerto commented that the piece should succeed "even in places like Leipzig, where people were accustomed to hearing the best of Mozart's concertos." He continued, suggesting that this music would always require a capable soloist who, in addition to everything one associates with virtuosity, has understanding in his head and a heart in his breast—otherwise, even with the most impressive preparation and technique, the best things in the work will be left behind.

Those are wise words, particularly from a man working in a field that to this day expects sound judgments on new music heard cold. What no critic could predict is that this concerto, rooted in the previous century and a pioneer in its own, would continue to speak as strongly and directly to the centuries that followed. ■
Piotr Tchaikovsky
Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia.
Died November 6, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 (Pathétique)

Five days after he conducted the premiere of this symphony, Tchaikovsky drank a glass of unboiled water, a careless move that year in Saint Petersburg, where countless cases of cholera had recently been reported. He died four days later. When the symphony was performed for a second time the following week, the hall was draped in black and a bust modeled after the composer’s death mask was prominently displayed. An eleven-year-old boy, who would soon become Russia’s most celebrated composer, attended that concert with his father, the great baritone Fyodor Stravinsky. Little Igor, whose own music would eventually refute everything Tchaikovsky’s glorified, understood, even at the time, the magnitude of this loss—not just to his family (his father was famous for his interpretations of several Tchaikovsky roles) but to the larger music world as well.

At the time he died, Tchaikovsky was one of the great figures in music: he was at the peak of his creative powers, and he was both famous and beloved far beyond his native Russia. His death came as a shock (he was only fifty-three) and the suspicious circumstances surrounding his fatal illness, coupled with the tragic tone of his last symphony—curiously titled Pathétique—produced a mystique about the composer’s last days that still persists today. In 1979, the Russian émigré musicologist Alexandra Orlova published a now-infamous article proposing that Tchaikovsky had in fact committed suicide by poison, on the orders of his fellow alumni of the School of Jurisprudence, to cover up his alleged affair with the nephew of Duke Stenbock-Thurmara. For a time in the 1980s, suicide and homosexuality replaced the quaint old tale of cholera and drinking water, and, as Tchaikovsky’s obituary was rewritten, the Pathétique Symphony became the chief musical victim in this tabloid tale. Even Tchaikovsky’s biographer, David Brown, writing in the sacrosanct Grove, accepted Orlova’s theory. But in recent years scholars have wisely backed off—evidence is almost totally undocumented—and a number of musicologists, including the biographer Alexander Poznansky, have refuted Orlova convincingly.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of the Pathétique Symphony are dramatic and mysterious, if less lurid than pulp fiction. In December 1892, Tchaikovsky abruptly decided to abandon work on a programmatic symphony in E-flat major on

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<th>COMPOSED</th>
<th>MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME</th>
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<tr>
<td>February–August 1893</td>
<td>January 13, 14, 15 &amp; 16, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Juanjo Mena conducting</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
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<td>FIRST PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>July 31, 2011, Ravinia Festival. James Conlon conducting</td>
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<td>October 28, 1893, Saint Petersburg. With the composer conducting</td>
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<td>FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES</td>
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<td>1957. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA</td>
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<td>1998. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Teldec</td>
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INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, strings
which he had been struggling for some time—“an irreversible decision,” he wrote, “and it is wonderful that I made it.” But the failure of the new symphony left Tchaikovsky despondent and directionless, and he began to fear that he was “played out, dried up,” as he put it. (“I think and I think, and I know not what to do,” he wrote to his nephew Bob Davydov, whose friendship and encouragement would help see him through this crisis.) Although he felt that he should give up writing “pure music, that is, symphonic or chamber music,” within two months he had begun the symphony that would prove to be his greatest—and his last.

Renewed—and relieved—by the old, familiar joy of composing, Tchaikovsky wrote frantically. Within four days, the first part of the symphony was complete and the remainder precisely outlined in his head. “You cannot imagine what bliss I feel,” he wrote to Bob on February 11, 1893, “assured that my time has not yet passed and that I can still work.” The rest went smoothly and the symphony was completed, without setbacks, by the end of August.

Tchaikovsky conducted the premiere of his new symphony on October 16 in Saint Petersburg. The audience—all Saint Petersburg—rose and cheered when the composer appeared on stage. But after the symphony, the applause was half-hearted; the crowd didn’t know what to make of this sober, gloomy music. Leaving the concert hall, Tchaikovsky complained that neither the audience nor the orchestra seemed to like the piece, although two days later he decided that “it is not that it wasn’t liked, but it has caused some bewilderment.”

The morning after the premiere, the composer told his brother Modest that the symphony needed a title. (Tchaikovsky had originally thought of calling it the Program Symphony.) Modest first suggested Tragic and then Pathétique, which in Russian carries a meaning closer to passionate, full of emotion and suffering. Tchaikovsky agreed at once, and in his brother’s presence wrote on the first page the title that “remained forever,” as Modest later recalled, although the composer himself soon had second thoughts. (Tchaikovsky’s publisher, who knew the marketing value of a good title, ignored the composer’s urgent request that it simply be printed as Symphony no. 6.)

Like the abandoned E-flat major symphony, the new B minor score was programmatic, but, as he wrote to Bob, “with such a program that will remain a mystery to everyone—let them guess.” Bob was only the first to ponder, in vain, the meaning of this deeply personal work. (And even he, to whom Tchaikovsky would ultimately dedicate the score, couldn’t draw a satisfactory answer from the composer except that it was “imbued with subjectivity.”)

Tchaikovsky carried his program with him to the grave. Cryptic notes scribbled among his sketches at the time refer to a symphony about life’s aspirations and disappointments—but another manifestation of the central theme of both Swan Lake and Eugene Onegin, and, in fact, the great theme of the composer’s life: the painful search for an ideal that is never satisfied.

As scholars have learned more about Tchaikovsky’s unfulfilled homoerotic passion for his nephew Bob—a mismatch of youth and middle age, and a tangle of sexual persuasions in a society fiercely intolerant of homosexuality—the temptation to read this symphony as the composer’s heartbreaking confession of a painful, repressed life has inevitably proved irresistible.

In the inexhaustibly expressive, but sufficiently ambiguous language of music, Tchaikovsky could tell the story of his life—honestly and unsparingly—without ever giving up its secrets. The abstract nature of music has, arguably, never been so fearlessly tested.

The temptation to read something tragic into this score is as old as the music itself. Even
the composer, who didn’t want to divulge his meaning, admitted before the premiere that it had something of the character of a requiem. (The trombone incantations in the first movement actually quote a Russian Orthodox chant for the dead.) And surely the first audience was stunned—or bewildered, as Tchaikovsky noted—by the unconventionally slow and mournful finale, trailing off into silence at the end, with just cellos and basses playing pppp. When Tchaikovsky died so suddenly and violently on the heels of the premiere, the symphony became identified at once, perhaps inextricably, with its composer’s death. By the memorial performance on November 6, the *Russian Musical Gazette* had already determined that the symphony was “indeed a sort of swan song, a presentiment of imminent death.” (More than a century later, Orlova’s devotees were to make much of the slowly fading final pages as a depiction of suicide.)

The score itself, though perhaps dulled by familiarity, is one of Tchaikovsky’s most inspired creations. All of its true masterstrokes are purely musical, not programmatic. It begins uniquely, with the sound of a very low bassoon solo over murky strings. (This slow introduction is in the “wrong” key, but eventually works its way into B minor.) The entire first movement sustains the tone, although not the tempo, of the somber opening. The soaring principal theme, to be played “tenderly, very songfully, and elastically,” is one of Tchaikovsky’s greatest melodies. (Tchaikovsky carefully directs the emotional development of this rich and expansive tune all the way down to a virtually unprecedented thread of sound, marked pppppp.) The recapitulation reorder and telescopes events so that the grand and expressive melody, now magically rescored, steals in suddenly and unexpectedly, to great effect.

The central movements are, by necessity, more relaxed. The first is a wonderful, singing, undanceable waltz, famously set in 5/4 time. (There’s a real waltz, in 3/4, in Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony.) The second is a brilliant, dazzlingly scored march, undercut throughout by a streak of melancholy.

The finale begins with a cry of despair, and although it eventually unveils a warm and consoling theme begun by the violins against the heartbeat of a horn ostinato, the mood only continues to darken, ultimately becoming threatening in its intensity. In a symphony marked by telling, uncommonly quiet gestures—and this from a composer famous for bombast—a single soft stroke of the tam-tam marks the point of no return. From there it is all defeat and disintegration, over a fading, ultimately faltering pulse.

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