

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIRST SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Music Director

Pierre Boulez Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Tuesday, May 15, 2012, at 1:30

Thursday, May 17, 2012, at 8:00

Jaap van Zweden Conductor

Gene Pokorny Tuba

Shostakovich

Chamber Symphony for Strings in C Minor, Op. 110a

Largo—

Allegro molto—

Allegretto—

Largo—

Largo

Vaughan Williams

Tuba Concerto

Prelude: Allegro moderato

Romanza: Andante sostenuto

Finale (Rondo all tedesca): Allegro

GENE POKORNY

INTERMISSION

Beethoven

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Poco sostenuto—Vivace

Allegretto

Presto

Allegro con brio

This evening's concert is generously sponsored in part by the Audrey Love Charitable Foundation.

Wednesday, May 16, 2012, at 6:30 (Afterwork Masterworks, performed with no intermission)

Jaap van Zweden Conductor

Gene Pokorny Tuba

Shostakovich Chamber Symphony for Strings in C Minor, Op. 110a

Vaughan Williams Tuba Concerto in F Minor

Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

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

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906, Saint Petersburg, Russia.
Died August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia.

Chamber Symphony for Strings in C Minor, Op. 110a

In the summer of 1960, Shostakovich went to Dresden to write the score for a new film by the director Lev Arnshtam. *Five Days, Five Nights* tells the story of eight Soviet soldiers who are charged with tracking down the priceless Dresden art treasures stolen by the Nazis under orders from Goebbels. The film, Arnshtam later told *The New York Times*, focuses on a German painter, wounded during combat, “who feels that art should depict suffering and therefore a measure of life.”

“Everything there was very well set up for me to work,” Shostakovich wrote to his lifelong friend, the Leningrad literary critic Isaak Glikman, as soon as he returned from Dresden. “Conditions for composing were ideal . . . However, try as I might I was unable to compose the film music, even in rough. And instead I wrote a quartet that’s of no use to anybody and full of ideological flaws.” The quartet, composed

in just three days, is his Eighth, and it is one of the most powerful and personal works of twentieth-century art—a score that, behind its dark and troubled façade, is unmistakably autobiographical—a true measure of life.

Publicly, Shostakovich said the quartet was inspired by the sight of Dresden—“He walked among the ruins of Dresden, shaken by the scenes of devastation,” Arnshtam remembered—and that he decided to dedicate the score to “the memory of the victims of fascism and war,” a line that ran atop the published score. But his letter to Glikman tells another side of the story:

I’ve been thinking that when I die, it’s hardly likely that anybody will ever write a work dedicated to my memory. So I have decided to write one myself. The dedication could be printed on the cover: “Dedicated to the memory of the composer of this quartet.”

COMPOSED

1960, as String Quartet no. 8. Arrangement for string orchestra by Rudolf Barshai and approved by Shostakovich

ONLY PREVIOUS CSO PERFORMANCES

March 6-8, 2008, Orchestra Hall. Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

22 minutes

The autobiographical nature of the music was hardly secret, for, as Shostakovich told Glikman, the main theme of the quartet, boldly stated in the opening measures and woven into nearly every page of the score, consists of his initials, D, S, C, H [see sidebar, below]. Anyone who knew Shostakovich's catalog would also recognize, scattered throughout the quartet, quotations from his other works, including his First Symphony, his breakaway composition written thirty-five years earlier; the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which had famously invoked Stalin's fury in 1936; and the First Cello Concerto, composed for Mstislav Rostropovich just one year before the quartet.

"The pseudo-tragic side of this quartet," Shostakovich wrote to Glikman, "is so powerful that when I was writing it, tears flowed as freely as water passed after a few beers. Since coming home, I've tried to play it through twice, but again the tears started flowing." Written as five connected movements, the quartet as a whole is a kind of lament.

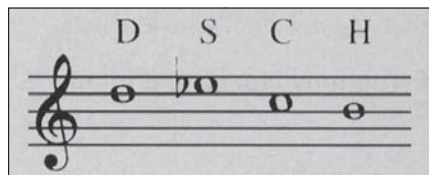
The first movement, a measured elegy, is a fugato based entirely on the four-note motif of Shostakovich's musical monogram, interrupted by fragments of his First Symphony. The brutal force of the second movement—it interrupts the opening *Largo* without warning—recalls the composer's famous war music, particularly that of the Eighth Symphony, and concludes with the great surging theme from one of his most celebrated works, the Second Piano Trio. The middle movement is a sour waltz, a kind of dance of death. The fourth is an amazing collage—the opening chords, like gunshots, recalling the grand, slashing chords of Siegfried's funeral march; a haunting melody sung by Katerina in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*; hints of the *Dies irae* chant for the dead; a popular Russian folk dirge, "Tormented by Grievous Bondage," which ends, pointedly, with Shostakovich's own initials lightly etched in the music. The last movement, slow and desolate yet filled with intimate asides, is too numb even for recollection—there are no quotations here, just the hollow sound of inconsolable sorrow.

SHOSTAKOVICH'S MUSICAL MONOGRAM

In several compositions, beginning with the First

Violin Concerto of 1948, Shostakovich spells out his initials in musical notation. This four-note motif is derived from the German

transliteration of the composer's own name, D. SChostakowitsch. In German notation, E-flat is called "es" and B-natural is H. Thus, DSCH is D, E-flat, C, B. The tradition for this kind of musical signature dates back at least to the time of Bach.



The entire quartet has the sense of a confession, or, perhaps, more appropriately, a requiem. According to Shostakovich's friend Lev Lebedinsky, the composer was so distraught after he returned from Dresden with the finished quartet in his luggage that he bought a bottle of sleeping pills, talked about suicide, and spoke of the score as his last work. (Lebedinsky removed the pills and gave them to the composer's son Maxim.) After a few days, his spirits lifted; he eventually returned to the routines of his daily life—and to writing music, including the incidental music for *Five Days, Five Nights*.

The day of Shostakovich's funeral, in August 1975, fifteen

years after that summer, the Eighth String Quartet was performed to honor the memory of the composer, as Shostakovich himself had prophesied. "It was his farewell to life," Lebedinsky said later.

In the Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti, completed shortly before his death, Shostakovich set these words by the sixteenth-century artist:

I am as though dead
But as a comfort to the world
With thousands of souls,
I live on
In the hearts of all
loving people.
That means I am not dust,
Mortal decay does not
touch me. ■



Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born October 12, 1872, Gloucestershire, England.

Died August 26, 1958, London, England.

Tuba Concerto

From the beginning of his career, in the first years of the twentieth century, Ralph Vaughan Williams was seen as a composer rooted in the past. His first significant large-scale work, the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* composed in 1910, is indebted to the music of his sixteenth-century predecessor and to the great English tradition. His entire upbringing was steeped in tradition—he was related both to the pottery Wedgwoods and Charles Darwin. (“The Bible says that God made the world in six days,” his mother told him. “Great Uncle Charles thinks it took longer: but we need not worry about it, for it is equally wonderful either way.”) He became a serious student of English folk song and edited the *English Hymnal*.

Even the experience of studying with Ravel in 1908, which clearly

enhanced his understanding of color and sonority, only served to sharpen his own individual style and to ground him more firmly in the sensibilities of his musical heritage. (Years later, Ravel would call him “the only one of my pupils who does not write my music.”) In fact, Vaughan Williams was one of the first composers of the new century who managed to forge a strong personal style almost exclusively from the materials of the past. “My advice to young composers,” he wrote, “is learn your own language first, find out your own traditions, discover what you want to do.”

Despite his reputation as a traditionalist, in the last decade of his life Vaughan William showed a great interest in unusual instruments and sonorities, and in shining the spotlight on instruments not known for their solo roles. In

COMPOSED

1953–54

FIRST PERFORMANCE

June 13, 1954, London, England

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 27, 1968 (Popular concert), Orchestra Hall. Arnold Jacobs, tuba; Morton Gould conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

December 11, 1978 (Special concert) Orchestra Hall. Arnold Jacobs, tuba; Henry Mazer conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo tuba, two flutes and piccolo, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

12 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1977. Arnold Jacobs, tuba; Daniel Barenboim conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

A 1978 performance with Arnold Jacobs, tuba, and Henry Mazer conducting is included on *From the Archives*, vol. 2.

1951, he composed a Romance for harmonica, strings, and piano, for the harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler. A vibraphone and wind machine figure prominently in the *Sinfonia antartica* of 1953. In his Eighth Symphony, finished in 1956, he wrote an important part for vibraphone, and his final Ninth Symphony includes a flugelhorn and three saxophones. He treated these instruments not as novelties but as sources of unexplored expressive and technical potential.

The idea of writing a concerto for bass tuba was not Vaughan Williams's, but came as a request from Philip Catelinet, the principal tuba of the London Symphony Orchestra—the orchestra the composer himself had conducted in the premiere of his first great success, the Thomas Tallis Fantasy, in 1910. The new concerto was intended to honor the orchestra's fiftieth anniversary celebration. Vaughan Williams immediately embraced the idea and began a serious study of an instrument for which he had so often written without thinking of its complete soloistic possibilities. He began the concerto shortly after finishing an arrangement of the Old Hundredth psalm tune that was performed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey in June of 1953.

At that time, the tuba (a regular member of symphony orchestras for scarcely a century), had been given prominent cameo roles in several major works, including Wagner's *Ring* cycle, Ravel's orchestration of *Pictures from an Exhibition*, several tone poems by Richard Strauss,

The Rite of Spring, *The Planets*, and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. Vaughan Williams himself had worked a tuba solo into the scherzo of his F minor symphony in the 1930s. But no major composer had put it center stage in a concerto-like setting.

Written in the three conventional movements of concerto tradition, and comfortably anchored in the key of F minor, Vaughan Williams's score is, nonetheless, a pioneering work—not just the first important tuba concerto, but, above all, a piece that demands unprecedented virtuosity and expression from this unlikely solo instrument. At the age of eighty-two, Vaughan Williams proved himself a true explorer. He seemed determined to show sides of this grand instrument that music lovers were not used to hearing, realizing that, despite its cumbersome appearance, the tuba actually is an instrument capable of surprising agility (the cadenza at the end of the first movement includes highly florid writing, enormous leaps, and wide dynamic shifts through the tuba's full range), and also that it is capable of warm, poetic lyrical playing (the second movement Romanza is a lovely, expansive aria).

Vaughan Williams and Catelinet were in frequent contact throughout the composition of the score. This is one of the great collaborative concertos (following the tradition of Joachim and Brahms working closely on the latter's Violin Concerto), in the sense of a composer wanting to push the boundaries of the instrument but

needing at the same time to know what was, in fact, playable, and what was not. The premiere in the Royal Festival Hall in London, with Catelinet as the soloist and Sir John Barbirolli conducting, was a triumph, although Catelinet's own self-effacing appraisal of his playing would suggest otherwise:

“It appeared to me, in that hall, that I gave out a sound similar to that of a sick cow,” he later wrote in his article, “The Truth about the Vaughan Williams Tuba Concerto.” Many works showcasing the tuba have been written since, but Vaughan Williams's brilliant score remains *the* tuba concerto. ■

Symphony Center Information



The use of still or video cameras and recording devices is prohibited in Orchestra Hall.



Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses. PLEASE NOTE: Some programs do not allow for latecomers to be seated in the hall.



Please use perfume, cologne, and all other scented products sparingly, as many patrons are sensitive to fragrance.



Please turn off or silence all personal electronic devices (pagers, watches, telephones, digital assistants).



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Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Note: Fire exits are located on all levels and are for emergency use only. The lighted Exit sign nearest your seat is the shortest route outdoors. Please walk—do not run—to your exit and do not use elevators for emergency exit.

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Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany.

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria.

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Here is what Goethe wrote after the first met Beethoven during the summer of 1812:

His talent amazed me; unfortunately, he is an utterly untamed personality, who is not altogether in the wrong in holding the world to be detestable, but surely does not make it any the more enjoyable either for himself or for others by his attitude.

We're told that the two men walked together through the streets of Teplitz, where Beethoven had gone for the summer, and exchanged cordial words. When royalty approached, Goethe

stepped aside, tipping his hat and bowing deeply; Beethoven, indifferent to mere nobility, walked on. This was a characteristic Beethoven gesture: defiant, individual, strongly humanitarian, intolerant of hypocrisy—and many listeners find its essence reflected in his music. But before confusing the myth with the man, consider that, throughout his life, Beethoven clung to the “van” in his name because it was so easily confused with “von” and its suggestion of lofty bloodlines.

Without question, Beethoven's contemporaries thought him a complicated man, perhaps even the utterly untamed personality Goethe found him. He was a true eccentric, who adored the elevated

COMPOSED

1811–April 13, 1812

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 8, 1813, Vienna.
The composer conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

November 28, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT PERFORMANCE

June 15, 2010, Orchestra Hall. Bernard Haitink conducting

CSO RECORDINGS

1955. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA
1971. Carlo Maria Giulini conducting. Angel
1974. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London
1988. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

A 1954 performance [for television] conducted by Fritz Reiner was released by VAI, and a 1979 performance conducted by János Ferencsik is included on *Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the Twentieth Century: Collector's Choice*.

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

36 minutes

term *Tondichter* (poet in sound) and refused to correct a rumor that he was the illegitimate son of the king of Prussia, but looked like a homeless person (his outfit once caused his arrest for vagrancy). There were other curious contradictions: he was disciplined and methodical—like many a modern-day concertgoer, he would rise early and make coffee by grinding a precise number of coffee beans—but lived in a squalor he alone could tolerate. Certainly modern scholarship, as it chips away at the myth, finds him ever more complex.

We don't know what Goethe truly thought of his music, and perhaps that's just as well, for Goethe's musical taste was less advanced than we might hope (he later admitted he thought little of Schubert's songs). The general perception of Beethoven's music in 1812 was that it was every bit as difficult and unconventional as the man himself—even, perhaps, to most ears, utterly untamed.

This is our greatest loss today. For Beethoven's widespread familiarity—of a dimension known to no other composer—has blinded us not only to his vision (so far ahead of his time that he was thought out of fashion in his last years), but to the uncompromising and disturbing nature of the music itself.

His Seventh Symphony is so well known to us today that we can't imagine a time that knew Beethoven, but not this glorious work. But that was the case when the poet and the composer walked together in Teplitz in July 1812.

Beethoven had finished the A major symphony three months earlier—envisioning a premiere for that spring that did not materialize—but the first performance would not take place for another year and a half, on December 8, 1813.

That night in Vienna gave the rest of the nineteenth century plenty to talk about. No other symphony of Beethoven's so openly invited interpretation—not even his Sixth, the self-proclaimed *Pastoral* Symphony, with its bird calls, thunderstorm, and frank evocation of something beyond mere eighth notes and bar lines. To Richard Wagner, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was “the apotheosis of



The Incident at Teplitz. Goethe bows to passing royalty, while Beethoven walks on.

the dance.” Berlioz heard a *ronde des paysans* in the first movement. (Choreographers in our own time have proven that this music is not, however, easily danceable.) And there were other readings as well, most of them finding peasant festivities and bacchic orgies where Beethoven wrote, simply, *vivace*.

The true significance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is to be found in the notes on the page—in his distinctive use of rhythm and pioneering sense of key relationships. By the time it's over, we can no longer hear the ordinary rhythm of a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note in the same way again, and—even if we have no technical terms to explain it—we sense that our basic understanding of harmony has been turned upside down.

Take Beethoven's magnificent introduction, of unprecedented size and ambitious intentions. He begins decisively in A major, but at the first opportunity moves away—not to the dominant (E major) as historical practice and textbooks recommended, but to the unlikely regions of C major and F major. Beethoven makes it clear that he won't be limited to the seven degrees of the A major scale (which contains neither C- nor F-natural) in planning his harmonic itinerary. We will hear more from both keys, and by the time he's done, Beethoven will have convinced us not only that C and F sound comfortably at home in an A major symphony, but that A major can be made to seem like the visitor! But that comes later in his scheme.

First we move from the spacious vistas of the introduction into the joyous song of the Vivace. Getting there is a challenge Beethoven relishes, and many a music lover has marveled at his passage of transition, in which stagnant, repeated E's suddenly catch fire with the dancing dotted rhythm that will carry us through the

entire movement. The development section brings new explorations of C and F, and the coda is launched by a spectacular, long-sustained crescendo that is said to have convinced Weber that Beethoven was "ripe for the madhouse."

The Allegretto is as famous as any music Beethoven wrote, and it was a success from the first performance, when a repeat was demanded. At the indicated tempo, it is hardly a slow movement, but it is sufficiently slower than the music that precedes it to provide a feeling of relaxation.

By designing the Allegretto in A minor, Beethoven has moved one step closer to F major; he now dares to write the next movement in that unauthorized, but by now familiar, key. And he can't resist rubbing it in a bit, by treating A major, when it arrives on the scene, not as the main key of the symphony, but as a visitor in a new world. We don't need a course in harmony to recognize that Beethoven has taken us through the looking glass, and that everything is turned on its head.

To get back where we belong, Beethoven simply shatters the glass with the two fortissimo chords that open the finale and ushers us into a triumphant fury of music so adamantly in A major that we forget any past harmonic digressions. When C and F major return—in the development section, they sound every bit as remote as they did in the symphony's introduction, and we sense that we have come full circle. ■

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