

# BOSTON PHILHARMONIC 40TH ANNIVERSARY 80TH BIRTHDAY

**BENJAMIN ZANDER**  
CONDUCTOR

**OCTOBER 2018**

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**GLINKA**

Overture to *Ruslan  
and Lyudmila*

**DVOŘÁK**

Concerto for Cello  
and Orchestra

**BRAHMS**

Symphony No. 1

**BENJAMIN**

**ZANDER**  
conductor

**JONAH**  
**ELLSWORTH**

cello

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**BENJAMIN ZANDER**  
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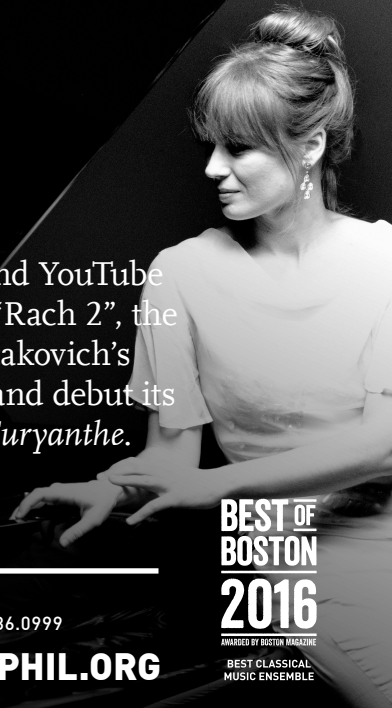
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## HISTORY OF THE ORCHESTRA

In 1979, ninety-six enthusiastic players, professionals, students, amateurs, a dynamic, probing conductor named Benjamin Zander, and an impassioned donor and amateur musician named Seymour Rothchild joined together to found the Boston Philharmonic. Today, the musicians represent the original spirited blend and account for the passion, high level of participation, and technical accomplishment for which this ensemble is celebrated. The professionals maintain the highest standard, the students keep the focus on training and education, and the gifted amateurs—including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and computer programmers—remind everybody that music-making is an expression of enthusiasm and love.

The Boston Philharmonic’s message rings loud and clear—music making is a privilege and a joy, and above all, a collaborative adventure. The orchestra’s season includes performances at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall, Sanders Theatre at Harvard University and the historic Symphony Hall. The Philharmonic performs with a wide range of soloists from highly gifted performers at the start of their international careers such as Stefan Jackiw, Gabriela Montero, Jonah Ellsworth and George Li, to world-famous artists like Yo-Yo Ma, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Russell Sherman, Kim Kashkashian and Alisa Weilerstein, and legendary masters such as Ivry Gitlis, Denes Zsigmondy, Georgy Sandor, Leonard Shure and Oscar Shumsky.

The Philharmonic has released five critically acclaimed recordings, including works by Stravinsky, Beethoven, Mahler, Shostakovich and Ravel. Among many other reviews of extravagant praise, Classic CD magazine gave the Boston Philharmonic’s recording of Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring the highest rank of all available recordings. Of Mahler’s Symphony No. 6, American Record Guide wrote: “This joins the Rattle and the two Bernstein recordings as the finest on record...All the glory to Zander and his semi-professional orchestra, for the sixth is probably Mahler’s most difficult and complex symphony...All things considered, when I reach for a recording of the sixth to play for my own pleasure, it will most likely be this one.”

Boston Philharmonic concerts have long been a two-part experience; each performance is preceded by one of Benjamin Zander’s illuminating and entertaining pre-concert lectures, which prepare listeners to understand the ideas and the structure of the music they are about to hear. The Philharmonic’s commitment to reaching and educating a wide audience is maintained by its Music Without Boundaries program, which raises money to provide subscriptions for school-age students and to distribute tickets through local charities. To further engage new and uninitiated listeners, the Boston Philharmonic continues a long tradition of weeknight Discovery Series performances, which incorporate Benjamin Zander’s lecture into the concert by introducing each piece as it is played.

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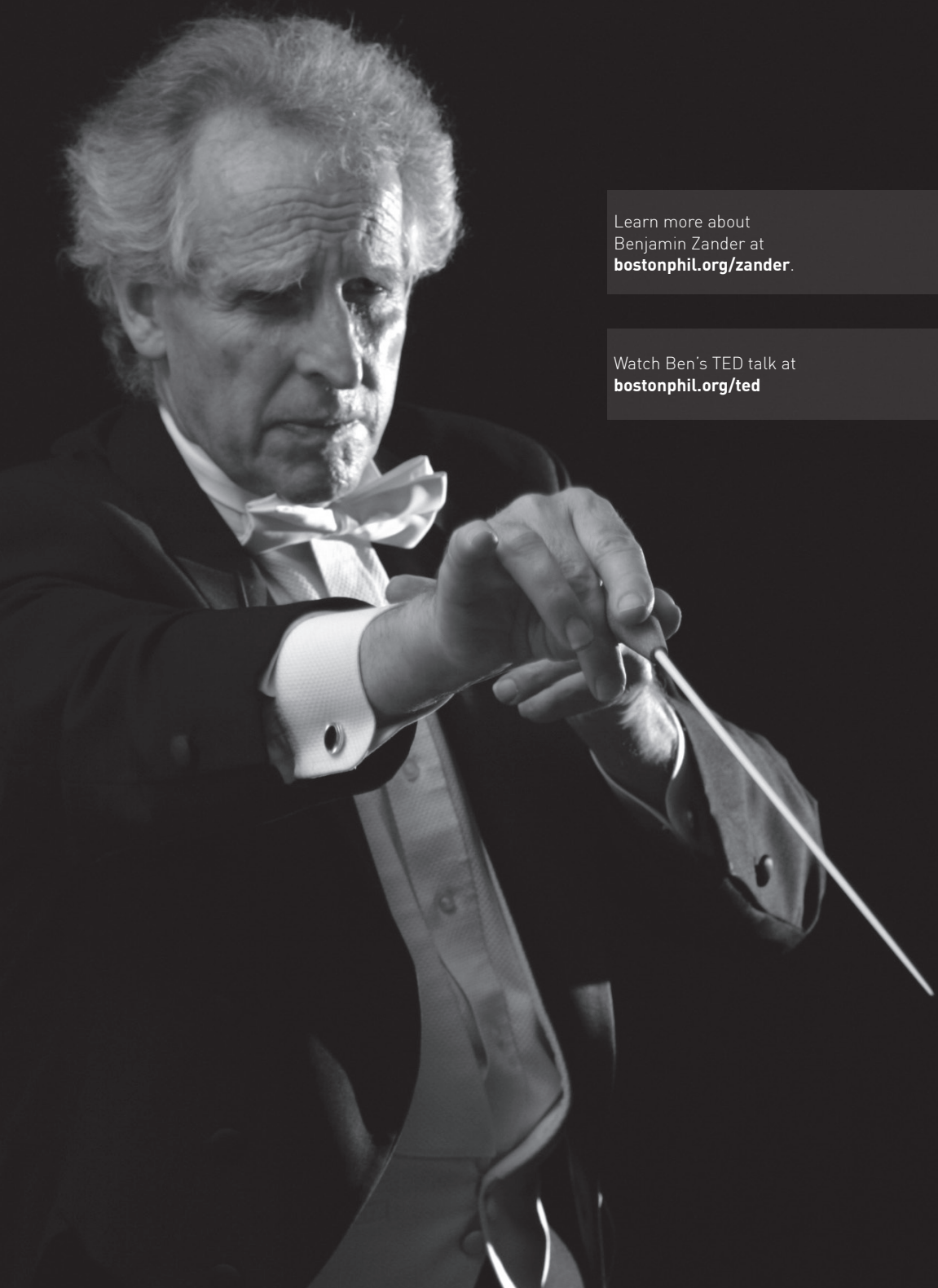
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Photo by Koren Reyes

## BENJAMIN ZANDER CONDUCTOR

For the past 50 years, Benjamin Zander has occupied a unique place as a master teacher, deeply insightful and probing interpreter, and as a profound source of inspiration for audiences, students, professional musicians, corporate leaders, politicians, and more. He has persistently engaged well-informed musical and public intellectuals in a quest for insight and understanding into the western musical canon and the underlying spiritual, social, and political issues that inspired its creation.

Zander founded the Boston Philharmonic in 1979 and has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras around the world. His performances have inspired thousands of musicians, renewed their sense of idealism, and shed fresh, insightful, and sometimes provocative light on the interpretation of the central symphonic repertoire of the 19th and 20th centuries. Critics and the public have been united in their praise of Zander's interpretations of the central repertory.

For 25 years, Zander has enjoyed a unique relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra, recording a series of Beethoven and Mahler symphonies. *High Fidelity* named the recording of Mahler's 6th as 'the best classical recording' of 2002; the 3rd was awarded 'Critic's Choice' by the German Record Critics' Award Association; the Mahler 9th, Mahler 2nd, and Bruckner 5th recordings were nominated for Grammy awards.

In 2012, Zander founded the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (BPYO), which draws young musicians from the entire northeastern US to its weekly rehearsals and high-profile performances in Boston. This tuition-free orchestra tours regularly, and has performed in Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw, and the Berlin Philharmonie, among others. Over the past two summers, the BPYO toured South America and Europe.

From 1965-2012, Zander was on the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), where he taught Musical Interpretation, and conducted the Youth Philharmonic and Conservatory orchestras. He was the founding Artistic Director of the NEC's joint program with The Walnut Hill School for the Performing Arts. Zander led the NEC Youth Philharmonic on fifteen international tours and made several documentaries for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). His interpretation class, "Interpretations of Music: Lessons for Life," is being presented this season in partnership with the Boston Public Library once a month at the Central Library in Copley Square. They are free and open to the public, as well as made available online where they are viewed by tens of thousands of people around the world.

Zander enjoys an international career as a leadership speaker, with several keynote speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos and at TED. The best-selling book, *The Art of Possibility*, co-authored with leading psychotherapist Rosamund Zander, has been translated into eighteen languages.

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Jeffrey Louie  
Emilie Campanelli  
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Ceren Turkmenoglu  
Rachel Orth  
Yu Chia Hsu  
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Brian Urra Nuñez  
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# BOSTON PHILHARMONIC 40TH ANNIVERSARY 80TH BIRTHDAY

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## CONCERT PROGRAM

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2018 AT 7:00 PM**

SANDERS THEATRE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2018 AT 8:00 PM**

JORDAN HALL, NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2018 AT 3:00 PM**

SANDERS THEATRE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Benjamin Zander, *conductor*

**GLINKA** Overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila*

**DVOŘÁK** Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104

Allegro

Adagio, ma non troppo

Finale: Allegro moderato – Andante – Allegro vivo

Jonah Ellsworth, cello

### INTERMISSION

**BRAHMS** Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Un poco sostenuto-Allegro-Meno allegro

Andante sostenuto

Un poco allegretto e grazioso

Adagio—Piú Andante—Allegro non troppo ma con brio—

Piú allegro

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This organization is funded, in part, by the  
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# PROGRAM NOTES

## MIKHAIL GLINKA

### OVERTURE TO *RUSLAN AND LUDMILA*

**BORN:**

June 1, 1804

**DIED:**

February 15, 1857

**WORK COMPOSED:**

1837-1852

**WORK PREMIERED:**

November 27, 1842 in Bolshoi Kamennyi Theatre, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Glinka is the pioneer explorer, the Columbus, of Russian music in the nineteenth century. There had long been much musical activity at the Russian court in St. Petersburg, but it had always been imported from Italy or Germany or France, and even the native composers adopted the styles of Western Europe. It was Glinka who showed the way to creating a musical style that took into account native Russian modes of melody and rhythm, derived from folk song and from the very language itself. He thus became the banner-bearer for all native Russian composers. Indeed, Tchaikovsky accorded him a special place in his personal pantheon. In his home (now a museum), Tchaikovsky kept all of his musical scores in one large bookcase, with two exceptions: separate from all the others, in an honored bookcase of his own, he kept the complete works of his two favorite composers – Mozart and Glinka.

Glinka's two major contributions in this regard are the operas *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*. The latter was composed over an extended period (1837-1842), owing to personal and professional difficulties, but when he finally submitted the score to the imperial theaters in March 1842, it was accepted immediately without question. The premiere was troubled by illness among the singers and by the fact that the opera – an iconic fairytale – is dramatically incoherent, but its music contains much that is glorious. Two of its principal musical ideas form the material on which Glinka based his popular overture. Even though we rarely hear the entire opera, the overture has been a hit from the beginning, rich with brilliant scoring, energetic tunes, and the evocation of all things Russian.

## ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

### CELLO CONCERTO IN B MINOR

**BORN:**

September 8, 1841

**DIED:**

May 1, 1904

**WORK COMPOSED:**

1894–1895

**WORK PREMIERED:**

March 19, 1896 in London by the Philharmonic Society, conductor Antonin Dvorak and cellist Leo Stern



Dvořák began the first movement of his Cello Concerto in New York on 8 November 1894. Unusually for him, he worked on sketches and the full score simultaneously, beginning the latter on 18 November. He completed the work “Thanks be to God on 9 February 1895, on the day our [son] Otáček’s birthday, Saturday in the morning at half past eleven.” On the last page of the autograph there is a note in Dvořák’s hand: “I finished the Concerto in New York, but when I returned to Bohemia I changed the end completely to the way it stands here now. Pisek, 11 June 1895.” His wife’s sister, Josefina Kaunitzová, with whom he had once been deeply in love, had died, and the new sixty measure coda was his response to her death. Dvořák intended his Cello Concerto for Hanus Wihan and dedicated it to him, but the first performance was given by Leo Stern with the London Philharmonic Society at Queen’s Hall, London, under the composer’s direction on 19 March 1896.

In the spring of 1891, Dvořák, in Prague, received a letter from Jeannette Thurber in New York, inviting him to assume the directorship of the National Conservatory of Music, which she had founded in 1885. Dvořák was far from sure whether New York was a good idea for him, but Mrs. Thurber was a determined woman. She was an idealist who wanted the National Conservatory to be an institution where gifted students of all races might study, and she imagined Dvořák founding an American school of composition. Married to a wholesale



## PROGRAM NOTES

grocer, Mrs. Thurber also had some money, even after she and her husband had lost \$1.5 million dollars in an attempt to start an English language opera company in competition with the newly established Metropolitan Opera.

She was persuasive, and on 27 September 1892, Dvořák, his wife, and their eldest daughter and eldest son arrived in Hoboken on the S.S. Saale. Within a few days they were installed in an apartment on East 17th Street, and three weeks later Dvořák conducted his three concert overtures, *In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival*, and *Othello*, in Mr. Carnegie's Music Hall that had been opened absurdly far uptown on 57th Street a year and a half before. Dvořák had already begun his teaching, coaching, and conducting duties at the Conservatory.

America was a mixed experience for Dvořák. He was homesick, and sometimes, because the Thurbers were still in recovery from their National Opera Company debacle, the salary checks did not come in punctually. But he had some serious students, enjoyed being lionized, had great pleasure conducting his music with excellent orchestras in Chicago and New York, and made some interesting new friends, including the conductor Anton Seidl and the composer and cellist Victor Herbert. He quickly figured out where to watch trains, always an important delight to him, though not entirely easy because in New York you cannot get on a station platform without a ticket; he also learned where to look at pigeons to remind him of those had had raised at home. And he added a new hobby: watching the great steamers depart for Europe, something that must have both stimulated and assuaged his homesickness.

Best of all was the long summer vacation in 1893 at the Bohemian colony at Spillville in northeast Iowa, where the father of his assistant and secretary, Joesph Kovařík, was a schoolteacher, organist, and choirmaster. (The cemetery behind Saint Wencesla's Church in the little town is full of Kovaříks.) The four younger children joined the family for this adventure. Dvořák delighted in hearing Czech spoken all around him and partaking of the familiar food and games. He was refreshed by his early morning walks along the Turkey River, loved hearing birds again—he once declared that he had “studied with the birds, flowers, trees, God, and myself”—and enjoyed taking over Kovařík's organist duties. According to local legend, the summer was, at its end, troubled for the strict paterfamilias when his eldest daughter, Otilie, called Otilka, fell in love with Big Moon, a Native American, but in every other way it was a happy and productive time in which Dvořák composed the *American Quartet*, Opus 96, and the *E-flat-major Quintet*, Opus 97.

Dvořák was already under contract to stay in New York for 1893-1894; after that, not without some difficulty, Mrs. Thurber persuaded him to return for a third year. When he sailed to Europe in April 1895, on the same S.S. Saale that had brought him the first time, it was for good and without regret, though as late as August 1897 Mrs. Thurber was still trying to get him back. Her conservatory survived some years into the new century.

Aside from the two masterpieces of chamber music he composed in Spillville, the principal works of this American sojourn of Dvořák's were the *Symphony from the New World*, the once-immensely popular *Violin Sonata in G*, and the *Biblical Songs*, Opus 99. A second stay in New York yielded the *Cello Concerto*, like the *New World Symphony* a work of dark and troubling eloquence.

On 9 March 1894, Dvořák went to Brooklyn to hear Victor Herbert, then principal cellist at the Metropolitan Opera, give the first performance of his own *Cello Concerto No. 2* with Anton Siedl and the New York Philharmonic. Herbert had been the first cellist at the memorable premiere of the *New World Symphony* in December 1893, which Seidl had conducted. Reminiscing in 1922, Herbert wrote that “after I played my (2nd) *Cello-Concerto* in one of the Philh. Concerts—Dr. Dvořák came back to the ‘Stimm-Zimmer’ [tuning room]—threw his arms around me, saying before many members of the orchestra: *famos! [splendid!] famos! ganz famos!*”

Several times, Dvořák had been asked for a concerto by his friend Hanuš Wihan, founder and cellist of the Czech String Quartet. Hearing Herbert's *Concerto* nudged Dvořák into thinking seriously about that project. The warmhearted, melodious, and beautifully composed piece appealed to him immediately, and, having always been distrustful of the cello's upper range, which he found thin and nasal, he was impressed when Herbert, who managed high-flying passages elegantly and wrote plenty of them for himself, showed Dvořák that he had been wrong on that point.

It was eight months before Dvořák began his own *Concerto*, a period that included five months at home in Prague. In 1865 he had written a *Cello Concerto* in A major but had never bothered to orchestrate that unsatisfactory piece. (It is occasionally heard in a high-handed performing edition made in the 1920s by the German composer Günther Raphael.) Now, just as Dvořák had encouraged Joseph Joachim to give him advice and to suggest and even make revisions in his *Violin Concerto* in 1879, he now leaned on Wihan for technical assistance. He was,

## PROGRAM NOTES

however, less docile now than fifteen years before, and there was some friction, particularly concerning a fifty-nine measure cadenza Wihan inserted into the finale. Writing to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, Dvořák allowed for the addition of easier alternatives for certain passages, but otherwise made it clear that he would give Simrock this work “only if you promise not to allow anybody to make changes—Friend Wihan not excepted—without my knowledge and consent—and also not the cadenza Wihan has added to the last movement.”

A reconciliation was achieved easily enough, but a series of misunderstandings over dates between Dvořák and the Secretary of the Philharmonic Society of London made it impossible for Wihan to undertake the premiere of the concerto, which had meanwhile been dedicated to him. Wihan played the work for the first time in 1899 with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra under Willem Mengelberg and later performed it on several occasions under the composer’s direction.

The Cello Concerto is not so much a greeting from America, like the New World Symphony, as a look homeward. The first movement includes two of Dvořák’s most memorable themes. The one at the beginning bears some of the characteristics of funeral music—the heavy, dotted rhythm and the somber colors of low clarinet, joined by bassoons, with a penumbral accompaniment of violas, cellos, and basses—and so anticipates the elegiac mood of the close of the finale. Michael Beckerman believes that the theme deliberately alludes to the third movement of Brahms’s German Requiem, “Lord, teach me to know the number of my days.” This melody lends itself to a wonderful series of oblique, multifaceted harmonizations. The other, more lyrical, is as beautiful a French horn solo as exists in the repertory. Dvořák admitted that he himself could not hear it without emotion.

The solo cello makes a commanding entrance—hair-raising in the 1937 Casals recording—in a passage Dvořák marks *quasi improvvisando* and sets over strangely mixed major and minor harmonies. The cello gets its turn at the horn theme, the soloist all too often demonstrating that he has less taste than the horn player. That great melody is not something for development, and so it is the first theme that furnishes the material for the quite short but densely composed central section of the movement. The most wondrous moment comes when the cello, now in a very remote key (A-flat minor), muses over the first theme, and together with the flute, transforms it into a song of ecstatic and deeply sad lyricism. Since we have been given so much of the first theme in the development, Dvořák launches the recapitulation with the horn theme, now begun fortissimo by the violins and

woodwinds but immediately taken over by the solo cello. A technically terrifying scale in octaves introduces this triumphal homecoming. The movement ends with jubilant fanfares.

The adagio begins in tranquility, but this mood is soon broken by an orchestral outburst that introduces a quotation from one of Dvořák’s own songs, sung by cello in its high register and with tearing intensity. The song, the first of a set of Four Songs, Opus 82, composed in 1887-1888, is *Kěž duch můj sám* (Leave me alone). It was a special favorite of Dvořák’s sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzová. Thirty years earlier, Dvořák had been deeply in love with the then sixteen-year-old Josefina Čermáková, an aspiring actress to whom he gave piano lessons. The love was not returned, and Dvořák eventually married Josefina’s younger sister Anna. Something of the old feeling remained, and the song intruded on the Concerto when the news of Josefina’s illness reached Dvořák in New York. Josefina died 27 May 1895, a month after Dvořák’s return to Prague, and it was in her memory that Dvořák added the coda—elegiac and agonized—to which he did not want Wihan to add his cadenza. Here is how Dvořák described this passage: “The Finale closes gradually diminuendo, like a sigh, with the reminiscences of the first and second movements—the solo dies down to *pp*, then swells again, and the last bars are taken up by the orchestra and the whole concludes in a stormy mood. That is my idea, and I cannot depart from it.”

Dvořák had been skeptical about writing a concerto for cello, but thanks at least in part to Victor Herbert, he had overcome his inhibition—fortunately, since it remains the most beautiful one we have. Robert Hausmann, the cellist of the Joachim Quartet, played Dvořák’s Concerto for Brahms at his apartment in 1897 and told both D.F. Tovey and Brahms’s occasional piano student and future biographer, Florence May, that the dying composer had said, “Why on earth didn’t I know one could write a cello concerto like this? If I’d only known, I’d have written one long ago!” By then, Brahms had actually known the Concerto for a good year, having done the proofreading on it for his and Dvořák’s publisher, Fritz Simrock, early in 1896, and he had written to Simrock then that “cellists can be grateful to your Dvořák for bestowing on them such a great and skillful work.”

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# PROGRAM NOTES

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

**SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MINOR,  
OPUS 68**

**BORN:**

May 7, 1833 in Hamburg

**DIED:**

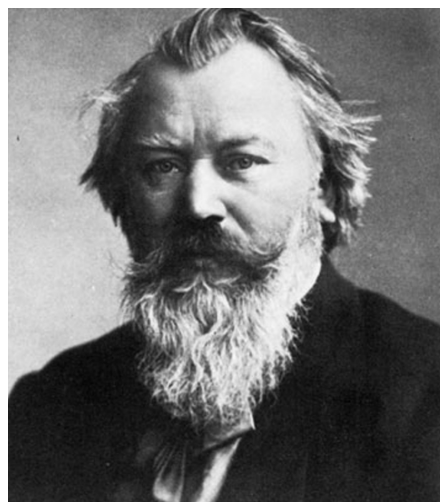
April 3, 1897 in Vienna

**WORK COMPOSED:**

1855 to 1876

**WORK PREMIERED:**

November 4, 1876, in Karlsruhe  
conducted by Felix Otto Dessoff



The first signs of the Symphony No. 1 date from 1862 in the form of a sketch for the main theme of the first movement copied by Clara Schumann in a letter to the violinist, conductor, and composer Joseph Joachim. Another sketch survives from 1868. Brahms does not seem to have begun to put the entire work together in earnest until about 1874; he finished it in the summer of 1876 at the resort of Sassnitz in the North German Baltic islands. Otto Dessoff conducted the premiere at Karlsruhe, Baden, on 4 November 1876. Numerous performances that season led to further revisions, particularly in the second and third movements, before the score finally appeared in print in 1877.

On 1 July 1862, Clara Schumann wrote to Joseph Joachim:

The other day Johannes sent me—imagine my surprise!—the first movement of a symphony with the following bold opening:



the first movement of a symphony with the following bold opening: That is rather strong, but I have become used to it. The movement is full of wonderful beauties, and the themes are treated with a master that is becoming more and more characteristic of him. It is all interwoven in a most interesting fashion and at the same time it bursts forth absolutely spontaneously. One enjoys it in great drafts without being reminded of all the work there is in it.

The Allegro of the First Symphony still began that way when Brahms completed the piece fourteen years later—“rather strong” and, as the composer put it to Carl Reinecke, then the conductor at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, “not exactly loveable.” By then the symphony had acquired an introduction and had undergone who knows what other changes. Brahms disliked having the unauthorized peek into his workshop, and he forestalled posthumous trespasses by destroying the sketches and the preliminary versions of virtually all of his major works. What we know about the often long and troubled compositional process of Brahms’s works we must learn or infer from his correspondence (and occasionally the letters that friends like Clara Schumann and Joachim wrote to each other).

Brahms had begun to write a symphony in 1854, but that work eventually turned into his First Piano Concerto. The years passed. He composed two string sextets, two piano quartets, a piano quintet, a horn trio, a cello sonata, piano variations on themes by Handel and Paganini, variations on a theme by Schumann and a book of waltzes for piano duet, A German Requiem, the Alto Rhapsody, the Song of Destiny, motets, part songs, duets, the Liebeslieder Waltzes for vocal quartet with piano duet accompaniment, many albums of lieder. . .

On 22 February 1873, his publisher, Fritz Simrock, asked: “Aren’t you doing anything many more? Am I not to have a symphony from you in ’73 either? Not to mention the quartets and so many other things with which you are so stingy?” Quartets, yes. That year Simrock received the two that make up Opus 51. There was even an orchestral work, his first in fourteen years, the Variations on a Theme

## PROGRAM NOTES

by Haydn, which was introduced that November in Vienna, and with unequivocal success. But only the year before, Brahms, haunted by the ghost of Beethoven, as were so many nineteenth-century composers, had said: “I shall never write a symphony! You can’t have any idea what it’s like always to hear such a giant marching behind you!”

The next three years brought some glorious songs, including *Dämmerung senkte sich von oben*, *Auf dem See*, *Regenlied*, and *Dein blaues Auge*; then another set of *Liebeslieder*, a third string quartet, and the great C-minor Piano Quartet, Opus 60, which we may well see as the last act of preparation before facing down the giant.

Brahms was forty-three when he finished putting himself through the torment of first-symphony birth pangs. Mozart had managed it at nine, and among other teenage and subteen debutants we can find Prokofiev (eleven), Mendelssohn (twelve), and Schubert and Glazunov (both fifteen). Typically composers take that step in their twenties—from Schuman and Rachmaninoff, who were twenty-two, through Dvořák, Franz Schmidt, Ives, Copland, Stravinsky, William Schuman, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, Haydn, Nielsen, Mahler, and Tippett, on to Beethoven, who was twenty-nine. Sessions, Havergal Brain, Sibelius, Harris, Vaughan Williams, Bruckner, and Kancheli were in their thirties. Walter Piston was forty-three, like Brahms, and so was John Harbison. Two major symphonists waited even longer, Elgar and Martinů, who were both fifty-one.

It is hard to know what conclusions to draw from such a list. Martinů, for example, came to the genre late partly because his interests had lain in other directions, but when he came to America at fifty, conductors began asking him for symphonies. Piston waited because he was skeptical about opportunities to get such pieces performed. Also, some composers face life with more nerve than others. Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Schubert were not boys given to fretting, but Bruckner, Brahms, and Elgar were worriers in excelsis. Besides, for the history-minded Brahms, symphony was not just another genre among many, but rather the genre in which a composer had to prove himself if he wanted to be taken seriously as a claimant to a place in the great tradition (or The Great Tradition).

One of the forms Brahms’s worrying took was that even in his forties, long after it was practical or in any way appropriate, he still entertained the idea from time to time that he ought to have a regular job as a conductor somewhere. In 1876 he was offered the post of music director in Düsseldorf. He did not go, but the thought was on his mind (or he pretended it was) enough for him to write to his friends

the surgeon Theodor Billroth that at least one good thing had come out of the plan, “namely that I have arrived at the decision to come out with a symphony. . . . I just think I ought to offer the Viennese something presentable by way of farewell.”

It was a characteristically roundabout way of admitting to himself that he was ready to deal with that giant and write a symphony. The giant had died six years before Brahms was born, but his shadow fell the length of the nineteenth century and some way beyond. Schubert already had a sense of that when, hardly into his twenties and after six symphonies, he made up his mind to break a path “zur großen Sinfonie,” meaning a symphony in the Beethoven manner. What he began in the Unfinished and achieved, boldly and completely, in the Great C-major added mightily to the challenge for the next generation.

Beethoven is all over Brahms’s First Piano Concerto, the score into which Brahms channeled his energies he had hoped to devote to his first essay in symphony: the choice of the Ninth Symphony key of D minor, the rhetorical stance, the wild Hammerklavier Sonata trills, the modeling (as Donald Tovey points out) of the finale on the one in the C-minor Piano Concerto. For that matter, Brahms’s real first Symphony is still within earshot of the giant’s echoing footsteps, and it was not for nothing that Hans von Bülow called it the Beethoven Tenth. To write a C-minor symphony with a triumphant C-major conclusion was anything other than a trivial decision, and Brahms knew just what he was about when, at the great arrival in C major, he evoked the Ode to Joy.

Beethoven’s fist-shaking C-minor gestures and sheer physical energy are vividly present in the Allegro that Brahms sent—in some form or other—to Clara Schumann in 1892. So much in the introduction speaks in a new voice: the hardness that results from the way the lines move in contrary motion (composed respectively, as it were, from the similar “hard” beginning of the Allegro); the way the strings, swinging up and down on G’s and E-flats, insist on this strangely ambiguous C-minor chord that has no C in it; even the “medium” tempo. What a wonderful stroke of expressive and structural imagination it was that made Brahms sense that the “beginning” he had sent to Clara was no beginning at all but a release, a resolution, the articulation with untrammelled energy of an idea darkly forming itself during the introduction.

The music reaches a point of high tension; then the oboe and the cellos, in a more lyric mood, coax the music forward to a moment of expectant hush. This is harshly broken by a firmly rapped out C, the keynote. The introduction is over,

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the allegro has begun. In the introduction, Brahms set phrases covering a broad gamut against tight chromatic lines; as we have already seen, he continues that contrast in the Allegro. Something else he carries over from the introduction—and I refer to the way we hear the piece, not the older in which Brahms composed it—is the series of wide-ranging arpeggios on G and E-flat. Almost immediately he arrives at an arresting feature of marked profile, a sequence of plunging sevenths and sixths in fortissimo. These set abrupt punctuation marks to many sentences, and even the second theme, begun by the oboe and somewhat—only somewhat—calmer in mood, is permeated by them. Three descending notes introduced by the violas, marcato against pizzicato chords, generate a firestorm of energy that brings the exposition to its close.

In one respect this excited close is highly original. Usually when a sonata-form movement is in minor, the exposition will end in a relative major. Here, for a movement in C minor, that would be E-flat major: however, Brahms rings a change on this convention by going to E-flat minor. Brahms asks for the exposition to be repeated. The turn back entails what may be the most startling harmonic progression in all of his music. A few conductors revel in this coup de théâtre; many dislike what they hear as a disagreeably jarring change of key and move straight into the development.

The move forward into the development is also managed by a dramatic turn of harmony, but one not so “strong,” to borrow Frau Schumann’s adjective. The emphatic E-flats and G-flats at the close of the exposition are suddenly reinterpreted as D-sharps and F-sharps. This allows the music to plunge into B major, thus opening a harmonic window whose existence we had not suspected at all.

As the strings sweep up and down what have now become the familiar arpeggios we first heard in the introduction, the energy continues unabated. Suddenly, though, the music sinks to pianissimo, initiating a long voyage through dense thickets. A couple of times there is clarity, as when mists part to reveal, for a moment, a sought-for landmark. More of the time, this is music of searching, of struggle. Once in rehearsal, I heard Herbert Blomstedt ask the musicians to think of flowers straining to break through concrete. The bass trends more and more to settle on or near the dominant, G: the moment of homecoming is being prepared. The forward motion is powerful, but so is the harmonic resistance. Tension builds to enormous heights; Brahms’s sense of timing is consummate. Finally the breakthrough: the home key and the main theme make a triumphant reentry. The events of the recapitulation correspond clearly to those of the exposition.

Toward the end, the music builds to one final great cresting, which subsides into the brief but spacious, perfectly timed coda. How did this movement end when Clara Schumann first saw it? Were the seventeen measures of coda an afterthought that came along with the introduction? As it now stands, the coda is a wonderful recapitulation by suggestion. We tend to think of it as music that returns us to the introduction, but in fact just a few touches suffice to create that impression: the return to a slower tempo (just *meno allegro*, not necessarily the *poco sostenuto* of the beginning, though you would not guess this from what most conductors do here), the pulsing drum, the first notes of the passage in contrary motion, and finally the incomplete broken chord. We first hear the woodwinds play this arpeggio; then it is gloriously resolved as the strings climb up a sonorous and complete chord of C major.

The first chord of the Andante sounds miraculously fresh: E major is a long way from the C-minor/major world we have just left. Brahms learned that from Beethoven (whose Third Piano Concerto presents the same relationship between its first and second movements), and they had both learned it from Haydn. Everything else is equally fresh: the triple meter, the clear, diatonic harmony, above all the serene mood. It is characteristic of Brahms to arrange matters so that the beginning of his first melody can serve as bass to accompany the new theme in the oboe. This leads to blazingly impassioned music for the first violins, into which they draw the seconds and violas. From this grows another oboe melody, like music from a Bach cantata but from the perspective of 150 years later.

In her letter to Joachim about the Allegro, Clara Schumann commented on how skillfully Brahms had managed the transition from the development into the recapitulation. Assuming that it was then the way it is now, one can only agree: Brahms sweeps you home and into C minor excitingly and with splendid élan. But how much more special is the veiled entrance into the recapitulation of the Andante: ambiguous harmonies blur the moment, as do the pianissimo drumroll and the unexpected off-beat entrance of the woodwinds. We listen more to the lovely curve of the violins’ and violas’ slow arabesque than to the flutes and oboes and clarinets who carry the melody, and we seem to become aware of the moment of recapitulation only in retrospect. This is Brahms “at his Brahms-most,” as the Boston music critic and Boston Symphony program annotator William Foster Apthorp liked to say. The second theme makes a final appearance in a magical scoring for solo violin, oboe, and horn, but it is the violin alone, with a faraway remembrance of pulsing drums, that sings the movement to its tranquil close. The perfection of form is the result of a severe reworking after the first performance.

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Beethoven's scherzos were quite a bit faster than the minuets from which they had evolved, though it is undoubtedly true that symphonic minuets were played more quickly in the eighteenth century than through most of the twentieth. Brahms, on the other hand—perhaps with Schumann's Rhenish Symphony as a model—slowed these movements down again. His allegretto here, neither slow nor fast, is in the gentile, lightly sentimental mood we encounter often in his intermezzi for piano. The pulse for the middle section continues the same, but it seems faster because the rhythmic subdivisions are smaller. The way the middle section softly haunts the coda is a lovely Brahmsian touch.

Harmonically, the third movement was the same distance from the second as the second from the first. Now another step of the same size carries us from the third movement's key of A-flat to C, the key of the finale, of the first movement, and of the whole symphony. It is C minor at first, and there is a darkness, a strangeness, a mood of mystery we have not encountered since the symphony's introduction. Marked *adagio*, it is also the first truly slow music in the symphony. In part, the minor harmonies and the character of the gestures are what make the music mysterious, but what also contributes powerfully to this effect is the way Brahms juxtaposes highly disparate elements in quick succession.

The movement begins with an outcry similar in character to the music with which the symphony begins. This is followed by an accelerating passage for plucked strings. Both these ideas are immediately repeated in dramatically condensed form. Next, a swirling, syncopated music rises to an urgent climax. A sudden parting of the storm clouds reveals, in major, a horn call that is luminously continued in the flute. Bassoons and trombones declaim a solemn phrase that could come from a hymn. The horn call is heard again, half as long as before, but more elaborate because another horn, flute, oboe, and clarinet add a series of overlapping imitations. It will be the task of the finale to integrate this diversity of material into a cohesive movement, something Brahms will accomplish with sovereign command and stunning originality.

Now comes the *Allegro* and, with it, the tune, in Brahmsian understated *poco forte*. This melody both deeply personal and greatly in debt to the Beethoven Ninth, is an expansion and clarification of the outcry that began the movement. Brahms's response when people offered to point out that Beethoven resemblance was entirely appropriate: "Any ass can hear that."

A contrasting melody, *dolce* and *animato*, leads to a rise in temperature and to music that approaches the first movement in agitation. A return of the grand

melody starts the development. As before, the dynamic marking is only *poco forte*, but this time Brahms asks to have it played with breadth (*largamente*). He also gives it a wonderful new sound. Earlier it was played by the first violins accompanied by the other strings with two horns and bassoons; now cellos along with horns and bassoons in alternation join the violins, and the full orchestra (except the trombones) accompanies. Enjoy the melody now: it will not return, at least not whole.

Brahms actually continues as though he meant to give us the melody once more, in a new key, E-flat, but he abandons it almost immediately. The pizzicatos from the introduction appear in ghost form and insist on attention. Fragments of the great melody—specifically, its second, third, fourth, and fifth notes—stay in the air. The mood becomes ever more restless and excited. The surprising vehicle for this heightening is a musical idea that we first met in an atmosphere of sovereign calm, the luminous horn call from the introduction. With violent rhythmic dislocations, this theme propels the music into the recapitulation. Nothing is more exciting than the one beat of silence—it is a downbeat at that—just before the horn call returns, *fortissimo* and with the passionate quality that was always latent in it now fully realized.

The recapitulation itself is fiercely compressed, the most notable point of compaction being the omission of the great "Beethoven Ninth" theme. First, the tensions generated in the preceding couple of minutes of the development are released in a passage of spacious broadening and calming. From this, Brahms moves directly into the graceful *dolce*-and-*animato* theme. Shimmering string tremolandos remind us of the introduction, and we hear the first few notes, but only the first few notes of the "Beethoven" melody. Then Brahms accelerates into a driving coda, at whose high point the solemn hymnal phrase from the introduction blazes its way across the stage in a final triumphant transformation.

For his successors, Beethoven was a presence both scary and inspiring. Schubert responded with self-confidence. Brahms was neurotic, but when at last he brought himself to move, he moved surely. Joachim, writing to him in March 1877 from Cambridge, England, where he had just introduced the First Symphony, refers to it as a piece that "really gets to people." That has not changed.

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# ARTIST PROFILE

## JONAH ELLSWORTH, CELLIST

Jonah Ellsworth has been hailed as one of the greatest cellists of his generation. He has won critical acclaim for his concerto performances with the Boston Symphony, Maui Chamber Orchestra, Akron Symphony, Johnstown Symphony, Boston Philharmonic, Jacksonville Symphony, Symphony by the Sea, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, New Bedford Symphony, and NEC Philharmonia, among others. Ellsworth has been referred to as “a kind of unrepentant Tannhäuser” and “a player to watch,” by The Boston Globe and Clevelandclassical.com. The Boston Musical Intelligencer wrote that he is “fearless, [with a] complete range of expressive richness” and “definitely a player to watch.” These praises were earned after performances of the Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto with the Boston Philharmonic, the Dvořák Cello Concerto with the Akron Symphony, and his performance of Strauss’s Don Quixote with the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (BPYO).

Ellsworth was a participant at Marlboro Music Festival during the summers of 2014-2016 and has been a guest at Rockport Chamber Music Festival.

When Ellsworth performed Strauss’s Don Quixote with conductor Benjamin Zander and the BPYO in Prague, former Boston Globe critic Richard Dyer wrote “Ellsworth’s grasp of what the notes mean, of the stories they tell, of the

feeling behind and within the notes, is firm, and very deep. His playing of some of the quieter episodes, the yearning that Don Q feels for the idealized Dulcinea, was profoundly moving, and there was plenty of rambunctiousness as he tilted against windmills and scattered sheep. And he plays the death sigh of Don Quixote as tenderly and movingly as I have ever heard it – it is with a profound content that this Don Quixote leaves this life, and not with a sigh of regret.” Also on this same tour, Ellsworth performed the Dvořák Concerto in Basel, Switzerland. The following is Dyer’s comparison of this performance to that of Natalia Gutman (a legendary Russian cellist who was also soloist with BPYO on this tour): “Ellsworth’s performance was the more mature, serene and centered, and he played with technical mastery, imagination, passion and deep feeling and he was fearless, despite the fact that moments before the concert his cello was knocked over and the bridge was cracked.”

His performance of the Tchaikovsky’s Rococo Variations with YPO in Slovakia prompted the critic from The Boston Musical Intelligencer to write, “... Any praise of Jonah’s technical abilities is likely to be an understatement. He is completely assured and intensely musical; each of the variations had a distinctive character and tone color... This is a young man on the verge of an international career.”

Ellsworth was a prize winner in the 2017 Hudson Valley String Competition, a finalist in the 2011 Stulberg International String Competition in Michigan and received the top prize from the Harvard Musical Association in 2012. He appeared on the PBS TV show of the “From the Top” taped live in Carnegie Hall in New York City which has been broadcast on PBS stations nationwide. Ellsworth has studied with Lawrence Lesser at New England Conservatory and Peter Wiley at Curtis Institute of Music. Other teachers include Andrew Mark and Natasha Brofsky. He has attended the Steans Institute at Ravinia, Meadowmount Music School, Greenwood Music Camp, and Orford Arts Center in Canada.

Ellsworth joined the world renowned Boston Trio in the spring of 2016 and will be performing in prestigious venues in California and Florida this season, as well as making his Carnegie Hall debut with them.



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