

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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Thursday, June 7, 2012, at 8:00

Friday, June 8, 2012, at 8:00

Trevor Pinnock Conductor

Stefan Jackiw Violin

Pavel Gomziakov Cello

Kristian Bezuidenhout Piano

Debussy

Marche écossaise

Beethoven

Triple Concerto in C Major, Op. 56

Allegro

Largo

Rondo alla polacca

STEFAN JACKIW

PAVEL GOMZIAKOV

KRISTIAN BEZUIDENHOUT

INTERMISSION

Mendelssohn

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56 (*Scottish*)

Andante con moto—Allegro un poco agitato—

Vivace ma non troppo—

Adagio—

Allegro vivacissimo—Allegro maestoso assai

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is most grateful to Judy Istock, CSO Life Trustee, for her generous support as lead sponsor of the *Keys to the City* Piano Festival. The festival receives additional generous support from The Chicago Community Trust, Dan J. Epstein Family Foundation, Mr. & Mrs. Paul G. Gignilliat, Joe and Madeleine Glossberg, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France.
Died March 25, 1918, Paris, France.

Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire

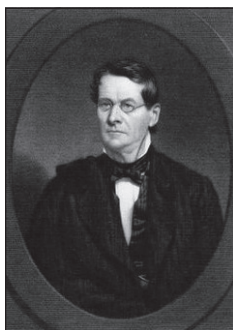
Young composers don't turn down commissions. So Debussy—still in his twenties, with all his great works ahead of him, and struggling to make ends meet—immediately accepted an

oddball request from a Scottish general, Meredith Read, to write a march on a traditional bagpipe melody. According to the legend repeated in the early Debussy literature, the composer and the general, unable to speak each other's language, negoti-

ated the deal in one of Debussy's favorite Paris cafés (or bars—the details vary), with the writer

Alphonse Allais acting as their translator. John Meredith Read, however, was an American diplomat and lawyer who served as the U.S. consul general for France from 1868 to 1873. Although his French may have been rusty by 1890, when he and Debussy sat down to work out their arrangement, Allais probably joined them as a drinking companion rather than as an interpreter.

General Read, who was descended from the ancient counts of Ross, asked Debussy to make an arrangement of an old clan melody that had been played by a band of pipers before battle and on festival days. Debussy complied with a colorful march for piano, four-hands (the original title was *Marche des anciens Comtes de Ross*—March of the ancient counts of Ross). The piece, which was composed



John Meredith Read

COMPOSED

1890, piano four-hands;
1893–1908, orchestra

FIRST PERFORMANCE

January 16, 1910, Nancy,
France

FIRST CSO

PERFORMANCE

November 18, 1910,
Orchestra Hall. Frederick
Stock conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

October 28, 1932,
Orchestra Hall. Frederick
Stock conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two
oboes and english horn, two
clarinets, two bassoons,
four horns, two trumpets,
three trombones, timpani,
percussion, harp, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

7 minutes

quickly in 1890, is by no means a work of Debussy's apprentice years. That same spring, he began the *Suite bergamasque* for piano, which includes as the third of its four movements *Claire de lune*, one of his most beloved works. And the following year, he began the *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun* that is one of the defining works not only of his career but also of musical modernism.

An orchestral version of the piano march was announced as part of a concert to be given in Paris in

May of 1894, but Debussy evidently wasn't done scoring the piece and it was pulled from the program. By the time the full orchestral version of the piece, now simply called *March écossaise* (Scottish march), was completed in 1908, Debussy was famous as the composer of *La mer* and the opera *Pelleas and Melisande*. The march is a little known footnote to the important French tradition of orchestral pieces that began as piano music, including most of Ravel's orchestral output and Debussy's own *Images*. ■



Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany.

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria.

Concerto for Piano, Violin, Cello, and Orchestra in C Major, Op. 56 (Triple Concerto)

On August 26, 1804, Beethoven wrote to his publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, offering “my oratorio; a *new grand symphony*; a concertante for violin, violoncello, and pianoforte with full orchestra; three new sonatas for pianoforte solo The title of the symphony is really *Bonaparte*.”

What an astonishing output Beethoven lumped together—the prodigious harvest of just one season, from the end of 1803 into the first weeks of the following summer—and it’s hard for us today to believe that Breitkopf didn’t jump at it. The symphony is, of course, the one we now call *Eroica*, at Beethoven’s insistence, and the story of how Napoleon won an empire but lost a symphony is as famous as the music itself.

We know a great deal about the symphony. But the history of the

“concertante” for three soloists and orchestra—the work we have come to call the Triple Concerto for sheer convenience—is sketchy. From the start it has been overshadowed, not just by the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas or the *Eroica* Symphony, with which it is contemporary, but by Beethoven’s other concertos—the three for piano that precede it and the two for piano and one for violin that follow.

There is little doubt that the man behind the Triple Concerto was the archduke Rudolph, who began studying piano with Beethoven in 1803. Rudolph was just a teenager and only moderately talented, but he had money and a title (he was the son of Emperor Leopold II), both of which would prove useful to Beethoven in time. He became a good and loyal friend, one of the few Beethoven could always

COMPOSED

1803–04

FIRST PERFORMANCE

May 1808, Vienna, Austria

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 12, 1900, Auditorium Theatre. Leopold Godowsky, piano; Emil Baré, violin; Bruno Steindel, piano; Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

September 17, 1999, Orchestra Hall (Opening Night). Pinchas Zukerman, violin; Lynn Harrell, cello; William Eddins conducting from the keyboard

July 7, 2007, Ravinia Festival. Menahem Pressler, piano; Daniel Hope, violin; Antonio Meneses, cello; James Conlon conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo violin, cello, and piano; one flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

34 minutes

count on during his stormy career. Rudolph was a respectable pianist, although he was never much of a composer, a pity since he was the only composition student Beethoven ever took on. His name will live as long as Beethoven's music is played: he is the archduke of the *Archduke* Trio and the hero of the *Lebewohl* (Farewell) Piano Sonata; the Fourth and Fifth piano concertos are dedicated to him.

This concerto was the first musical product of their friendship, and Rudolph apparently played the piano solo at the first performance. We know virtually nothing of that event, including the date. And we don't know why Beethoven chose to write a concerto for this unprecedented solo trio, unless that was Rudolph's suggestion as well. The idea of a concerto for more than one soloist was extremely popular in the late eighteenth century (the most famous is Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* for violin and viola), but Beethoven's idea of using the common piano trio as his solo ensemble was something of a novelty.

The work was viewed as an oddity and was rarely performed during the composer's lifetime—Beethoven never played it, even though he often championed his other concertos from the keyboard. Like the *Choral Fantasy* (for piano solo, chorus, and orchestra), it is an unconventional hybrid that requires unusual performing forces. In the last century, Donald Tovey suggested that if we didn't know that Beethoven had written this concerto, we wouldn't be so hard on it. The more perfect examples of the

composer's fourth and fifth piano concertos or the violin concerto encourage our criticism. But Tovey points out that those pieces could never have been written without the Triple Concerto. It is, in his words, a "study" for these other more important and successful works. It is not an isolated experiment—a dead end—but a stepping stone to greater things.

The Triple Concerto raises problems that would have defeated a lesser composer. There is, first of all, the peculiar challenge of writing for not one solo instrument but for three, each a virtuoso in its own right. And although Beethoven had often written for the combination of piano, violin, and cello—his op. 1 is a set of piano trios—he had never before contemplated how to integrate that ensemble with an orchestra.

Beethoven finds a way to treat his soloists both as a trio and as individuals, although, for reasons that may never be clear, it is the cello that continually takes the lead.

With the *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven broke ground for a first movement of unprecedented scale. Two efforts of 1804, the *Waldstein* Sonata and this concerto, carry that spaciousness into the realm of the piano sonata and the concerto. The first movement of the Triple



**Rudolph von Habsburg,
Beethoven's student
and friend**

Concerto is long, although this is due not only to the expanding musical universe, but to problems inherent in writing for three soloists: Beethoven often states a theme twice, once for piano alone, and then again for violin and cello playing as a pair, doubling the dimensions of entire passages.

Tovey believed that “the true solution of an art problem is often first achieved on the largest possible scale.” And here, in his largest first movement to date, Beethoven makes real headway with the problem that had plagued each of his three previous concertos—how to conceive the opening orchestral exposition so that it presents the important material but saves the heart of the drama for the second exposition, which introduces the soloist. There are also other advances. (If it were not for the extraordinary opening measures of the concertos that follow—the Fourth Piano Concerto with its unaccompanied piano solo; the *Emperor*, with its heroic cadenza; and the Violin Concerto, with its solo timpani—the beginning of the Triple Concerto would appear in all

the music history books.) Beethoven begins quietly, with the cellos and basses of the orchestra—who seem to be trying out the theme—and then gradually works up to a full-voice statement of his big C major tune. It is a dramatic touch, and a disarmingly low-key beginning for a piece of such obvious grandeur.

As in the *Waldstein* Sonata, Beethoven follows substance with brevity. The slow movement has barely spread out its generous cello melody, to which the violin and piano add their own thoughts, before the cello leads the music directly into the genial polonaise that launches the finale. The proportions are unexpected and shift from slow movement into finale so quickly that the dance is well under way before we can get our bearings. After a few leisurely swings around the polonaise tune, the violin suddenly takes off running—allegro and in 2/4 rather than the prevailing 3/4—sweeping everyone along to a brilliant conclusion. The slightest suggestion of a cadenza for the solo trio and a return to the original tempo surface just before the final cadences. ■



Felix Mendelssohn

Born February 3, 1809, Hamburg, Germany.

Died November 4, 1847, Leipzig, Germany.

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56 (*Scottish*)

Among Mendelssohn's earliest teachers was Johann Gottlob Samuel Rösel, a landscape painter who thought his bright young pupil might make his living painting and drawing rather than writing and performing music. From an early age, Mendelssohn displayed many talents: he wrote poetry, sketched madly, and, as we more readily remember, began composing early enough to write two enduring masterpieces as a teenager (the Octet and the Overture to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Mendelssohn did not lose his fondness for landscape painting once his musical talent began to overshadow his other gifts, although he drew his most famous pictures in music.

Travel always ignited Mendelssohn's inspiration. In 1823, after a family vacation in Switzerland, the fourteen-year-old

composer used Swiss folk songs in two string symphonies. He made his first important solo journey in 1829 at his parents' urging, and it too produced musical benefits.

Mendelssohn left Berlin on April 10, 1829, to join his friend Karl Klingemann in England. While in London, Mendelssohn found time to play four concerts before the two set off for Edinburgh. In Scotland, he met Sir Walter Scott—Mendelssohn had read all his novels—and enjoyed a bagpipe competition. On July 30, 1829, the first idea for this *Scottish* Symphony came to him. He and Klingemann had gone to Holyrood, the obligatory tourist attraction where Mary, Queen of Scots supposedly fell in love with the poor Italian lutenist David Rizzio, who subsequently was murdered by the queen's husband. Mendelssohn wrote home:

COMPOSED

1829–1831; 1842

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 3, 1842, Leipzig. The composer conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

January 1, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

October 31, 2009, Orchestra Hall. Sir Andrew Davis conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

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

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

43 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1947. Artur Rodzinski conducting. RCA

1979. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London (video)

1985. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London



Karl Klingemann, Mendelssohn's friend and traveling companion on his visit to Scotland. Drawing by Wilhelm Hensel

We went, in the deep twilight, to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved. There is a little room to be seen there, with a winding staircase leading up to it. That is where they went up and found Rizzio in the little room, dragged him out, and three chambers

away is a dark corner where they killed him. The adjoining chapel is now roofless; grass and ivy grow abundantly in it; and before the ruined altar Mary was crowned queen of Scotland. Everything around is

broken and moldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe I found the beginning of my Scotch symphony there today.

Where tourists today take photos with their mobile

phones, Mendelssohn jotted down the melody that would

preserve this moment for his symphonic scrapbook.

Felix and Karl were quickly off to see other sites, including Fingal's Cave in the Hebrides, where he wrote out another famous melody as it came to him. In a letter dated later that year, he said, "The 'Scotch' symphony and all the Hebrides matter is building itself up step by step." In 1830, after a short visit back home in Berlin, Mendelssohn made another trip, this time to Italy (at the suggestion of Goethe, whom he had befriended when he was twelve and the great poet seventy-two), where he was sidetracked by the beginning of an Italian symphony. From Rome he wrote that two symphonies were "haunting his brain," as he put it, and later that they had begun to assume more definite shape. (He managed to find time to complete *The Hebrides Overture* while in Rome.)

Work on the *Italian Symphony* progressed rapidly and it was the first to be finished. "The Scottish symphony alone is not yet quite to my liking," he wrote to his sister Fanny in February 1831. "If any brilliant idea occurs to me, I will seize it at once, quickly write it down, and finish it at last." Either Mendelssohn ran out of brilliant ideas, which seems unlikely given his track record, or else life intervened, because it was another ten years before he picked up the unfinished score and swiftly brought it to a conclusion. It was the last symphonic work he completed. By then, this symphony meant more to him than scenery, and by the time



Felix's sister Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)

of the first performance in March 1842, Mendelssohn had dropped its *Scottish* nickname. Indeed, to unsuspecting audiences, there is nothing overtly “Scottish” about the music. (In his review, Robert Schumann mistakenly believed this was Mendelssohn’s *Italian* Symphony and wrote how its beauty made him regret that he had never gone to Italy!) Mendelssohn had sworn off nationalistic music ever since visiting Wales, where he was driven mad by harps and hurdy-gurdies at every turn, incessantly playing Welsh melodies—“vulgar, out-of-tune trash.”

We are probably safe in detecting the mists of the Scottish highlands in Mendelssohn’s haunted opening measures, for this is the music conceived in the deep twilight at Holyrood. Mendelssohn cautioned against dramatic readings, but how many listeners still find bagpipes, Gaelic melodies, and highland flings in this symphony? There are four movements, played without pause. A snatch of the slow introduction returns at the end of the first movement to lead us toward the high gymnastics of the scherzo that follows. Only a flicker of light separates that movement from the first doleful chords of the Adagio; later the finale also breaks in without warning.

There are many exquisite touches. The opening introduction, with its swelling wind chords, colored at

first only by the sound of violas, contains some of Mendelssohn’s most expressive and profound music. The body of the movement, in sonata form, sustains the sense of urgency and drama. Near the end of the development section, the cellos begin a broad new melody, accompanied only by a scattering of chords, that carries into the recapitulation, adding a wonderful counterpoint to the main theme. The scherzo is a model of lightness and grace at lightning speed, even when the entire orchestra joins the dance, *fortissimo*. The slow movement, one of Mendelssohn’s many songs without words, is interrupted several times by fierce martial music suggesting that the finale is assembled and waiting on the horizon. Even Mendelssohn admitted that his A minor finale is warlike. Although two themes do battle each other, the contest throughout remains civilized and ultimately fades to a peaceful truce. The grand conclusion comes unannounced, with a switch to A major and 6/8 time, and a majestic, affirmative new theme waving the flag of victory. ■

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