



Symphony Parnassus

STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR

3 P.M. SUNDAY, JAN. 28, 2024
TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO
2023-24 SEASON – PROGRAM 2

“The best of the Bay Area’s community musicians” —Michael Tilson Thomas

Longtime San Francisco residents may remember Symphony Parnassus’s ancestor, the Doctors’ Symphony, which began in 1965 when a few doctors’ chamber groups coalesced for the first time into an orchestra. Lyn Giovanniello, a recent member of our string bass section, was drafted by the Doctors’ Symphony to be their first conductor. The group met regularly and presented concerts at what was then UC Hospital through the 1970s. Almost a decade after that organization folded, biophysics graduate student and amateur cellist Jonathan Davis re-established it as the more community-oriented UCSF Orchestra. He obtained funding from UCSF and started giving concerts in the UCSF Gym in 1989. Davis was able to tap an enthusiastic, supportive pool of both amateur and professional musicians from the faculty, staff and student body of UCSF as well as the local community. The UCSF Orchestra quickly grew, attracted large audiences, and earned a reputation for outstanding performances.

After six years at the orchestra’s helm, Jonathan Davis moved to Boston to pursue his career, and Jeremy Swerling was named music director. Two years later, the orchestra elected Stephen Paulson as its third music director. After being cut from UCSF’s budget in 1999, the orchestra was reorganized as a nonprofit entity with the name Symphony Parnassus, to honor its roots in San Francisco’s Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Symphony Parnassus continues to attract top musical talent from the local community. In addition to members of the UCSF community, the orchestra now includes corporate executives, IT specialists, engineers, scientists and educators, as well as music students and professionals.

Over the years, Symphony Parnassus has collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianist Robin Sutherland, violist Geraldine Walther, oboist William Bennett and sopranos Lisa Vroman and Hope Briggs. Ballet legend Rudolph Nureyev made his West Coast conducting debut with our orchestra. Famed jazz saxophonist and composer John Handy premiered his *Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra* with us. With its focus on local soloists, composers and visual artists, Symphony Parnassus continues to play a unique and vital role in the Bay Area’s arts community.

For further information, please contact us at:

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first concert of 2024! Symphony Parnassus has a proud history of showcasing the talents of local composers and soloists alongside beloved classics. Well, today’s new work will surely be one for the books.

We are thrilled to be premiering the concerto *Transitions* for electric bassoon and orchestra by Bay Area bassoonist Paul Hanson. As you will read in his bio, Paul has worked with many top musicians, including Bela Fleck, Jon Batiste and Ray Charles, and his musical chops and ideas are remarkable. I am particularly proud and touched that he created this boundary-pushing bassoon concerto, and that Symphony Parnassus will be premiering it for you today.

To complement this concerto, we will begin the concert with Milhaud’s *Creation of the World*, one of the first pieces of classical music to adopt and quote jazz. Beethoven’s delightful Symphony No. 4 rounds out our program.

Our concert presents three centuries of contemporary classics: Milhaud’s and Hanson’s similarly groundbreaking works were composed exactly 100 years apart, in 1923 and 2023 respectively, and Beethoven’s Fourth, from 1807, was still quite contemporary in 1823.

This is sure to be an unforgettable concert. How many people can say they’ve heard an electric bassoon concerto?

Thank you so much for your support.

Stephen Paulson
Music Director

**UPCOMING
CONCERT**



3 P.M. SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024
Taube Atrium Theater, San Francisco

www.SymphonyParnassus.org

PROGRAM

3 p.m. Sunday, January 28, 2024

Taube Atrium Theater

401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102

Stephen Paulson, conductor

DARIUS MILHAUD (1892–1974)

La Création du Monde, Op. 81a (1923)

17 minutes

PAUL HANSON (b. 1961)

“Transitions” Electric Bassoon Concerto (1923)

Paul Hanson, soloist

19 minutes

— *Intermission* —

15 minutes

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60 (1806)

I. Adagio – Allegro vivace

II. Adagio

III. Scherzo-trio: Allegro vivace

IV. Allegro ma non troppo

33 minutes

MUSICIANS

Violin I

Isabel Tannenbaum,

Concertmaster

Helene Grotans

Nigel Le

Michelle Lee

Drew Mendinueto

Denisse Morales-Rodriguez

Yanzhao Yang

Andrew Zhang

Michelle Zhang

Violin II

Adrienne Barry

Jonathan Eldridge

Elana Estrin

Yeonjun Lee

Janet Li

Melissa Normoyle

Andre Turati

Jakob Zwiener

Viola

Hélène Wickett,

Principal

Nick Blanchard

Grace Hala'ufia

Frances Gregor

Allison Li

Alex Long

Claire Morrow

Merle Rabine

Shawn Tahata

Zhimin Zhao

Cello

Jen Mathers,

Principal

Jonathan Atkins

Leo Baluk

Brian Colfer

Zhenya Farrington

Margaret Moores

Kate Robertson

Bass

Joseph Taylor,

Principal

Jim McManus

Flute

Darcy Mironov,

Principal

Jenna Mauro

Winslow Taub

Piccolo

Winslow Taub

Oboe

Jenna Simon,

Co-Principal

John Quinlan,

Co-Principal

Clarinet

Kyle Beard,

Principal

Joseph Romano

Bass Clarinet

Kyle Beard

Bassoon

Noah Cort,

Principal

Sarah Smith

Horn

John DeGiglio,

Principal

Ruth Wilson

Trumpet

Jay Shuler,

Principal

Franklin Davis

Trombone

Ravi Sahae

Timpani/Percussion

Christian F. Howes

Rio Nickerson

Piano

Peter Hwang

Alto Saxophone

Michael Beale

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices prior to the performance.



Stephen Paulson has been the music director of Symphony Parnassus since 1998. Devoted to creating the best possible experience for both players and audience, he has led the ensemble through a wide variety of repertoire, drawing on the classical canon as well as new compositions. A student of George Cleve, Paulson has appeared as a guest conductor with members of the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony and the New World Symphony.

Paulson joined the San Francisco Symphony as principal bassoonist in 1977. Since his 1978 solo debut, he has been a frequent soloist with the symphony, performing with conductors such as Kurt Masur, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christopher Hogwood and Helmuth Rilling. In 1995, he was one of four SFS musicians invited by Sir Georg Solti to perform with the World Orchestra for Peace, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2009, he was invited to be a mentor and participant in the world's first YouTube Symphony Orchestra Summit at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is also featured in the documentary series *Keeping Score*, created by Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony.

In 2011, Symphony Parnassus performed Paulson's own *Bassoon Concerto* with soloist Steven Dibner, SFS associate principal bassoonist.

Paulson has been a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1978 and has given master classes at schools around the world, including the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. He has taught and performed at many summer festivals, including Aspen, the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Music at Kirkwood and Music in the Vineyards.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Paulson studied bassoon with K. David Van Hoesen and Mordechai Rechtman and composition with Samuel Adler. From 1970 to 1977, he served as co-principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Prior to that, he was principal bassoonist with the Rochester Philharmonic from 1968 to 1970.

Paul Hanson's musical journey is a testament of fearless dedication to craft and creativity. Over the last 20 years, Paul has rewritten the rulebook and set new standards for what is possible on bassoon, this most classical of woodwind instruments.

Hanson's repertoire encompasses musical elements from all modern styles of improvised music. Paul uses his expansive knowledge from his roots as a classical bassoonist and experience as a jazz saxophonist to rewrite what is possible on the bassoon. His explorations have transcended limitations and created new possibilities—all while making music of the highest quality. He is the world's leading jazz bassoonist.



In 2008 Paul was invited to create his own role as electric improvising bassoonist in Cirque Du Soleil's ZED—a resident show at Tokyo Disney Resort. This unique creation performed 380 shows a year from 2008-2011. To this day, Cirque Du Soleil auditions bassoonists because of the ZED role Paul helped develop and create.

Paul has traveled throughout Europe, Japan, South America and the United States. He has appeared as a bassoonist at Carnegie Hall, the North Sea Jazz Festival, the Brno Jazz Festival in the Czech Republic, the Montreux Jazz Festival, the Berlin Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, the Ravinia Festival, the Leverkusener Festival, the INTERLINK festival in Japan, the California Edge Festival 2005 and at numerous NAMM shows in Los Angeles and Nashville.

Early in his career, Paul found success as a funk and jazz saxophonist. He performed as a saxophonist with Cirque Du Soleil in the popular show *Saltimbanco* in South America. Additionally, he has performed with Tower of Power, Eddie Money, the Temptations, Boz Scaggs, and Peter Apfelbaum.

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DARIUS MILHAUD***La Création du Monde, Op. 81a*
(1923)**

French composer, conductor and professor Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) was one of the most prolific composers of the 20th century, with 443 published works to his credit. He had a bold, individual style pioneering bitonality and polychords, and deeply influenced by American jazz and Brazilian folk music. Born of a Provençal Jewish family, Milhaud began his music studies on violin, later turning to composition. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Paul Dukas, André Gedalge, and Charles Widor, and privately with Vincent D'Indy. In his twenties he served as secretary to the eminent poet and dramatist Paul Claudel, who was then France's ambassador to Brazil; during World War I they spent two years in Rio de Janeiro. In 1922, on his first trip to America, Milhaud got to hear jazz played in Harlem by its original masters, which made a great impact on his music. The next year, he completed his ballet *La Création du Monde* (The Creation of the World), which featured jazz idioms. In the early 20s, music critic Henri Collet designated Milhaud as one of "Les Six." As Milhaud later wrote, "Collet chose six names absolutely arbitrarily, those of Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc, Tailleferre and me, simply because we knew each other and we were pals, and appeared on the same musical programs, no matter if our temperaments and personalities were not all the same. Auric and Poulenc followed ideas of Cocteau, Honegger followed German Romanticism, and myself Mediterranean lyricism." In 1940, with his wife Madeleine and son Daniel, Milhaud fled France just ahead of the Nazi invasion. They settled in Oakland, California, where Milhaud secured a teaching post at Mills College. His students there included jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck and popular songwriter Burt Bacharach, as well as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, William Bolcom and Peter Schickele. Milhaud's advice to Bacharach was: "Don't be afraid of writing something people can remember and whistle." From 1947 to 1971, Milhaud alternated teaching years between the Paris Conservatoire and Mills College. He died in Geneva, Switzerland in 1974.



Nowhere was the Jazz Age's impact on avant-garde composers greater than in Paris in the 1920s. Visiting American jazz musicians like Sam Wooding's Band were all the rage; so was African-American singer-dancer Josephine Baker, who had a cult following in the nightclubs of Montmartre, where Milhaud lived. Black exoticism in dance and music was embraced by in-the-know Parisians. Les Six all experimented with jazz rhythms and sonorities. They socialized frequently at the Gaya Bar, where Milhaud listened to his Conservatoire classmate, pianist Jean Wiener (1896-1982), play "negro music," also called *le tumult noir* (the black noise). Milhaud first became fascinated with jazz on a junket to London with

Claudel's entourage in 1920 when he heard Billy Arnold's Novelty Jazz Band. He was drawn to the music's rhythmic freedom: "Their constant use of syncopation in the melody was done with such contrapuntal freedom as to create the impression of an almost chaotic improvisation, whereas in fact, it was something remarkably precise." He became obsessed with jazz on his 1922 trip to New York City, writing: "This authentic music had its roots in the most remote elements of the black soul, in vestigial African traces perhaps. It moved me so that I could not detach myself from it." Milhaud spent many evenings listening to the Leo Reisman Band and to Paul Whiteman's orchestra. He took many trips to Harlem to hear black musicians play in clubs unfrequented by white musicians, and he took home a collection of Black Swan "race" records which he played again and again. Milhaud was deeply impressed by Maceo Pinckard's musical comedy show *Liza*, noting that "the singers were accompanied by a flute, a clarinet, two trumpets, a trombone, a complicated percussion section played by one man, a piano, and a string quintet." This string quintet included a string bass, and an alto saxophone replaced the viola. This unique instrumentation was carried over into Milhaud's next major work, *La Création du Monde*.

Milhaud's *Création du Monde* was the first and remains the best jazz piece from a classical European composer. —Dave Brubeck

Upon his return to France in April of 1923, Milhaud received a commission for a new ballet from Rolf de Maré for his Ballets Suédois, and immediately began collaborating with other artists on the new work. In his 1949 autobiography, *Notes Without Music*, he wrote: "At last in *La Création*, I had the opportunity I had been waiting for to use those elements of jazz to which I had devoted so much study. I adopted the same orchestra used in Harlem, 17 solo instruments, and I made wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling." (The ballet's instrumentation is two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, horn, two trumpets, trombone, alto saxophone, timpani, tambourine, cowbell, wood blocks, cymbals, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, Provençal tambourine, bass drum with cymbal, piano, two violins, cello and bass.) Milhaud was fortunate in securing a collaborative team equal to his talent and inspiration. The eminent painter Fernand Léger designed the costumes and sets, and Jean Börlin choreographed. For the scenario, Milhaud turned to Blaise Cendrars, who drew his themes from African folklore. Cendrars had just published *Anthologie Nègre*, a collection of African myths, in 1921. Some of these myths told of the creation of the world, so this was the chosen theme. Cendrars's staging illustrated it very colorfully with giant deities, magic spells, huge trees uprooting themselves and impregnating the ground with their fruit from which new trees suddenly appeared, their leaves becoming animals; male and female dancers emerging and dancing the dances of desire and mating, then melting away to leave one couple, united by love, alone on the stage.

"The Creation of the World emerges not as a flirtation but as a real love affair with jazz." —Leonard Bernstein

PROGRAM NOTES

La Création du Monde, now much more frequently performed as a concert piece than as a ballet, is seventeen minutes of music illustrating five scenes. An overture, slow and mysterious, provides thematic material for the rest of the ballet. It features a sinuous melody played by alto saxophone, with interjections from trumpets and trombone; near the end of its three-and-a-half minutes it reaches a shattering climax. Next comes a very rhythmic jazz fugue portraying *The Chaos Before Creation*. Beginning with quiet commotion—an asymmetric rhythmic tattoo played by piano and percussion—the fugue subject, a series of short blues licks, is introduced by contrabass, followed by trombone, alto sax and trumpet. The commotion increases as a high clarinet shouts the fugue subject over what soon becomes “everybody trying to yell over each other.” At its climax, the music suddenly melts down into the next scene: *The Making of Life*, where slow, ruminative melodic lines for clarinet, flute, oboe and horn (underlined by a cello slowly uttering the fugue subject) accompany the lifting of darkness and the gradual unfolding of plants and trees, and towards the end, insects, birds and beasts. A rise in excitement leads to *The Creation of Man and Woman*, with a loudly syncopated and exuberant dance tune that eventually subsides into episodes of sweetness. The clarinet’s seductive dance-song announces *Man and Woman’s Desire*; several descriptive episodes ensue, including a hot trumpet solo and a reprise of music from the overture, the dance tune and the jazz fugue. In the final scene, their kiss and consummation are accompanied by serene oboe and saxophone lines followed by flutes fluttering on the fugue subject, and a tender farewell from the saxophone.

La Création du Monde was first staged at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on October 25, 1923. The critics at the premiere didn’t know what to make of it, but the American response ten years later was much more enthusiastic. Milhaud recalled the reviews as “denouncing my music as frivolous and more suitable for a restaurant or a dance hall than for the concert hall. Ten years later, those same self-anointed critics were discussing the philosophy of jazz and learnedly declaring that *La Création du Monde* was the best of my works.”

Program notes by Franklin Davis

PAUL HANSON

“Transitions” Electric Bassoon Concerto (2023)

–Dedicated to Stephen Paulson

Composer and bassoonist extraordinaire Paul Hanson was born in San Francisco in 1961. In 1969 he moved to Berkeley, then in 2008 to Tokyo for a four-year gig with Cirque du Soleil, and finally to American Canyon in 2012, where he lives now. At only 3 years of age he started playing guitar. He quit his guitar studies at age 9, then took up the clarinet in 4th grade. In 6th grade



he added the saxophone, and in 10th grade the bassoon. While at Berkeley High, he took bassoon lessons from Oakland Symphony principal Gregory Barber, and played in the Berkeley Unified School District’s famous jazz program led by Phil Hardymon and Dick Whittington. In 1981-82 he studied with Matthew Ruggiero at New England Conservatory, and in 1982-85 he was Stephen Paulson’s student at SFCM. He has also studied bassoon with Steven Dibner. Some of his performing credits as improvising bassoonist since the 1980s include Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Billy Cobham, Jon Batiste’s American Symphony, Wayne Shorter, Ray Charles, The Klezmerim, Cirque du Soleil, Taylor Eigsti and many other jazz and crossover artists.

In early 2023, Paul Hanson had just returned from a performing tour in Germany with the new idea of bringing his styles of jazz and crossover playing into the classical world. During a conversation with Stephen Paulson, Hanson broached the idea of writing a bassoon concerto to play with Symphony Parnassus, and Paulson was all aboard with it. So, in February, Hanson set about creating a groundbreaking concerto for electric bassoon and orchestra, and finished the piece in May. Shaping the present and future of music has always been Hanson’s game as an innovator in musical performance. With this concerto, he hopes to pave the way for a new era of bassoonists who embrace electronics in performance, contributing to a growing repertoire of artistic innovation in classical music.

Hanson writes: “In any style, the bassoon is a remarkable melodic instrument of character. After decades of taking the bassoon into all kinds of jazz, fusion, funk, rock, world music and contemporary musical genres, I’ve been hungering for an opportunity to bring the bassoon back to the orchestra as a solo instrument. With this concerto I am doing that, both acoustically and augmented with electronic musical effects such as are found in a guitarist’s pedalboard. These effects enhance and extend the instrument’s capabilities. I am extremely honored to collaborate with my San Francisco Conservatory of Music bassoon instructor Stephen Paulson in the premiere performance of this concerto.”

Hanson lists George Gershwin, John McLaughlin, McCoy Tyner, Paul McCandless and Ralph Towner as his main influences in the composition of his new concerto. In particular, he was inspired by the harmonic and rhythmic ideas of early 1970s jazz fusion in the *Birds of Fire* album by John McLaughlin’s Mahavishnu Orchestra. His melodic ideas were inspired by the 1999 album *Oregon in Moscow* by the seminal chamber jazz group Oregon, led by composers Ralph Towner and Paul McCandless.

Transitions is in three movements that spill into each other, creating the sensation of one long piece with contrasting sections. It begins simply, in a Tranquillo tempo, with woodwinds in octaves intoning a sustained E. Quiet violins emerge from this and begin to fan out on long, consonant chords joined by the lower strings, supporting a leisurely conversation between the amplified solo bassoon and a solo clarinet. The bassoon proceeds to calmly outline a melody that rises gradually in both pitch and intensity. As the last languid phrase finishes, the solo bassoon jumps headlong into a dizzying series of running sixteenth notes in a fast tarantella meter.

PROGRAM NOTES

(The seeming superhuman speed of these notes is made possible by an electronic echo circuit.) The strings then set up a triple-meter backdrop over which the bassoon rhapsodizes, first by itself, then hand-in-hand with violins. A new section begins, with solo bassoon again embarking on a long, virtuosic sixteenth note run joined by quiet string chords and woodwind motifs. The interplay of strings and bassoon creates a hemiola effect, overlapping a fast 6/8 meter with a slower 3/4 feel. Then comes the First Solo Cadenza, where the solo bassoon employs a harmonizer circuit to produce a double-stop a fifth below each note. About a minute in, a shimmering echo effect is temporarily added. Strings then have their own rhythmically robust episode that eventually disintegrates into short motifs. A long-held string chord takes us into Movement 2: a *Larghetto Cantabile*, wherein the solo bassoon stretches a new, jazz ballad-like melody over slowly undulating string chords and pizzicato bass. The call-and-response that follows resembles a little musical game of hide and seek, played by a funky-sounding bassoon and stiff-sounding strings; when they finally find each other, they play together for awhile. Solo bassoon suddenly breaks the momentum with a dazzlingly mercurial flurry of notes—the Second Cadenza. This sends the orchestra into Movement 3, *Kithairon*, named for the primordial Greek mountain god and summoning his unshakable strength and permanence. Strings set up a series of accented hemiola rhythms (8th note triplets over a duple meter). Solo bassoon and woodwinds begin to trade licks, then rise together in 7/8 time over the strings' solid rhythm tattoo. An even more insistently rhythmic episode leads to heavily accented beats in the strings, while bassoon and woodwinds, later joined by high violins, repeat ever-intensifying falling riffs. A sudden stop signals the Coda (*Largo*), recapping the concerto's relaxed beginning with its calmly rising melodic lines. The orchestra reaches its final rest on a quieting F major chord, while the solo bassoon plays a last electronic arabesque that echoes and evaporates into silence.

The score of *Transitions* bears a dedication to Maestro Stephen Paulson. It calls for solo bassoon (electronically enhanced), 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (2nd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, and strings, and it times out at about nineteen minutes.

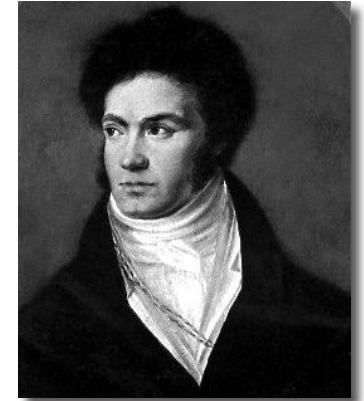
Program notes by Franklin Davis and Paul Hanson

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No.4 in B-flat major, Op. 60 (1806)

Ludwig von Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770 and died in Vienna, Austria in 1827. From the age of 25 he called Vienna, the music capital of Europe, his home. Mentored by masters including Haydn and Salieri, he quickly rose to notoriety as a pianist and composer. His nine symphonies stand as monuments of artistic achievement for the ages. The "Eroica" Symphony (No. 3) of 1804 and the Fifth Symphony of 1808 blazed new paths, powerfully expressing human emotions, and sparking the Romantic era in both music and the arts in general. Between these two, he composed a more conservative, but no less novel, symphony which

more closely follows classical norms, and in many ways pays homage to his teacher Haydn. Composer Robert Schumann characterized the Fourth Symphony as "a slender Grecian maiden between two Nordic giants." Hector Berlioz, who idolized Beethoven and wrote extended essays on the symphonies, noted, "The general character of this score is either lively, alert and gay, or of a celestial sweetness."



Beethoven wrote his Fourth Symphony during the summer and fall of 1806, while staying at the estate of Count Franz von Oppersdorff in upper Silesia, far from the bustle of Vienna. Oppersdorff insisted that all persons in his employ be proficient on a musical instrument, and so maintained an excellent orchestra, which Beethoven enjoyed immensely, dedicating the new symphony to his host. The Fourth Symphony received its first performance at a private concert in March of 1807 at the residence of Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz in Vienna, along with his first three symphonies, and the premieres of the Fourth Piano Concerto (with Beethoven as soloist) and the Coriolan Overture.

The first movement's *Adagio* opening is music of mystery, dark and ambiguous. A slowly descending melody in B-flat minor leads to nothing but loose ends, searching, and finally coming to rest on a quiet half-cadence. The darkness of this introduction raises expectations of a tragic drama to follow, but this is simply Beethoven's first joke on us. A brief transition leads to a big surprise: several sudden, blazing full-orchestra chords spark the galloping, playful energy of the main *Allegro vivace*. We are immediately treated to a series of happy, snappy melodies, all tumbling forth, one upon the other. These melodies are memorable, but the way Beethoven uses them to control momentum is most impressive, as they all serve to push the music forward. The development section of this sonata form movement boasts a wonderful flute solo, as well as some fetching new melodic material. It leads via a quiet transition back to an energetic recapitulation and an emphatic ending.

The beautiful *Adagio* that follows, one of only three such slow movements in all of Beethoven's symphonies (*Adagios* also appear in the Second and Ninth Symphonies), features a heartbeat-like rhythmic tattoo first heard in the second violins, and later in passionate orchestral tuttis led by trumpets and timpani. As Berlioz so aptly described it, "It seems to elude analysis. Its form is so pure and the expression of its melody so angelic and of such irresistible tenderness that the prodigious art by which this perfection is attained disappears completely. From the very first bars we are overtaken by an emotion which, towards the close, becomes so overpowering in its intensity that only amongst the giants of poetic art can we find anything to compare with this sublime page of the giant of music."

Continued on page 14

PROGRAM NOTES

Beethoven calls the third movement a *Menuetto*, but the joke is again on us, as it is actually one of his most boisterous scherzos — “a jokey mixture of bluster and sly humor,” according to Antony Hopkins. With its fast-leaping melodic motifs, rugged syncopations, slippery diminished arpeggios, sudden harmonic and dynamic shifts, and tossing-about of melodic phrases among the players, this scherzo stands in skittering contrast to its own suave, legato trio. But this trio’s underlying rhythmic tension won’t allow it to completely relax, and as soon as its themes have been stated, it quickly revs back up to scherzo velocity. In a form novel for its time, Beethoven juxtaposes scherzo and trio twice over, yielding an ABABA form, instead of the traditional ABA.

On its heels follows a perpetual-motion Finale that virtually itches with excitement. Except for a few brief “rest stops” where the music gracefully coasts for a bit, the running sixteenth notes of the initial melody appear everywhere, propelling the music forward like a locomotive under full steam. In the development section, the sixteenth-note theme takes wrong turns and “crashes” a few times before quietly switching back to the right track. At one comical point, a suddenly exposed solo bassoon virtuosically scurries for cover. Near the end, the musical juggernaut finally chugs to a halt. The main theme cautiously creeps in, peers around, and stretches itself out ever so slowly, but is suddenly cut short by the orchestra’s exuberant rush to the finish.

As Haydn so often does in his late symphonies, Beethoven instills his Fourth Symphony with jocular good humor and plenty of surprises. Whoever gets to know this music soon falls in love with it. The symphony is scored for one flute, pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and timpani, and strings.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

Symphony Parnassus would like to thank these individuals and organizations for their support:

Paul Hanson *Composer and Soloist*

Michael Beale *Program Designer*

Franklin Davis *Program Annotator*

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Symphony Parnassus



SPRING CONCERT

3p.m. Sunday, April 14, 2024

Taube Atrium Theater

401 Van Ness Avenue, 4th Floor

SARN OLIVER

Violin Concerto (World Premiere)

Sarn Oliver, soloist

AARON COPLAND

Symphony No. 3

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