

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
2015-2016 Mellon Grand Classics Season

September 25, 26 and 27, 2015

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR  
AUGUSTIN HADELICH, VIOLIN

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH      Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 for  
Unaccompanied Violin in D minor, BWV 1004  
*Arranged for String Orchestra by Hideo Saito*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN      Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93  
I.      Allegro vivace e con brio  
II.      Allegretto scherzando  
III.      Tempo di minuetto  
IV.      Allegro vivace

Intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS      Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Opus 77  
I.      Allegro non troppo  
II.      Adagio  
III.      Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace  
**Mr. Hadelich**

## PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born 21 March 1685 in Eisenach, Germany; died 28 July 1750 in Leipzig

Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 for Unaccompanied Violin in D minor, BWV 1004 (ca. 1720)

Arranged for String Orchestra by HIDEO SAITO

Born 23 May 1902 in Tokyo; died 18 September 1974 in Tokyo

PREMIERE OF WORK: unknown

THESE PERFORMANCES MARK THE PSO PREMIERE

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 13 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: strings

Though it is known that Johann Sebastian Bach composed his three Sonatas and three Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin before 1720, the date on the manuscript, there is not a letter, preface, contemporary account or shred of any other documentary evidence extant to shed light on the genesis and purpose of these pieces. They were written when Bach was director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig, and represent the pinnacle of achievement in the unaccompanied string repertory. The greatest single movement among these works, and one of the most sublime pieces Bach ever created, is the majestic Chaconne that closes the Partita No. 2 in D minor, an ancient variations form in which a short, repeated chord pattern is decorated with changing figurations and elaborations. Bach subjected his eight-measure theme to 64 continuous variations, beginning and ending in D minor but modulating in the center section to the luminous key of D major. The noted Bach scholar Philipp Spitta wrote of the Chaconne, "From the grave majesty of the beginning to the 32nd notes which rush up and down like the very demons; from the tremulous arpeggios that hang almost motionless, like veiling clouds above a dark ravine ... to the devotional beauty of the D major section, where the evening sun sets in a peaceful valley: the spirit of the master urges the instrument to incredible utterances. This Chaconne is a triumph of spirit over matter such as even Bach never repeated in a more brilliant manner."

The grand vision of the Chaconne has inspired numerous arrangements for other musical forces, including Mendelssohn's addition of a piano accompaniment to the violin original for an 1840 performance with Ferdinand David (his concertmaster at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, for whom Mendelssohn wrote his Violin Concerto), Ferruccio Busoni's reworking for piano solo, Brahms' version for piano left hand, Joachim Raff's transcription for full orchestra, and Hideo Saito's version for string orchestra. Hideo Saito, one of Japan's most influential musicians, was born in Tokyo in 1902 into the family of a professor of English-language studies who was the first to compile a comprehensive English-Japanese dictionary. Father Saito insisted that all nine of his children learn Western instruments, so Hideo started on mandolin but switched to cello at age sixteen. After studying in Germany from 1922 to 1927, Saito returned home and was appointed principal cellist of the New Symphony Orchestra and also appeared as a soloist. Following two more years of intensive study in Berlin with Emanuel Feuermann, Saito resumed his position with the NSO and became interested in conducting when Joseph Rosenstock was named the ensemble's director in 1936 and took him on as a protégé. Saito left the NSO in 1941 to devote himself to conducting and teaching, leading several professional orchestras and co-founding the Toho Gakuen School of Music after the Second World War, a pioneering institution in Japanese music education that counts conductors Seiji Ozawa and Eiji Oue, violist Nobuko Imai and the founding members of the Tokyo String Quartet among its graduates. Hideo Saito taught cello and conducting at the school and served as its President from 1958 to 1960; he died in 1974 while preparing the Toho Gakuen Orchestra for a major international tour.

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born 16 December 1770 in Bonn; died 26 March 1827 in Vienna.

Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93 (1811-1812)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Vienna, 27 February 1814; Redoutensaal; Ludwig van Beethoven, conductor  
PSO PREMIERE: 6 November 1896; Carnegie Music Hall; Frederic Archer, conductor  
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 26 minutes  
INSTRUMENTATION: woodwinds, horns and trumpets in pairs, timpani and strings

In early October 1812, the *Linzer Musikzeitung* carried the following announcement: "We have had the long-wished-for pleasure of having in our metropolis for several days the Orpheus and greatest musical poet of our time...." This "Orpheus" was Beethoven, and he had descended on Linz as the last stop in a summer spent taking the waters at Karlsbad, Franzensbrunn and Töplitz in an attempt to relieve various physical ailments. His interest in Linz, however, extended beyond the mineral baths into the private life of his younger brother, Johann. It seems that Johann had acquired a housekeeper, one Therese Obermeyer, and that her duties extended to, as the composer's biographer Thayer put it, "something more." Perhaps as much from jealousy as from moral indignation, the bachelor Beethoven did not approve of either the situation or this particular female (he later dubbed her "Queen of the Night"), and he took it upon himself, Thayer continued, "to meddle in the private concerns of his brother, which he had no more right to do than any stranger." He stirred up a terrific row over this matter, and, after taking his concern to the local authorities, actually was awarded a decision to have Therese thrown out of town. Johann had had about enough by this time, and the upshot of all of Ludwig's intrusions was that his younger brother married the housekeeper after all.

Beethoven had been installed in an attractive room in Johann's house overlooking the Danube and the surrounding countryside upon his arrival, and he worked on the Eighth Symphony throughout all this unnecessary domestic kerfuffle. Not the slightest hint of the turmoil crept into the music, however. It is the most humorous and "unbuttoned," in the composer's own description, of all his symphonies. At that time in his life (he was 42), Beethoven was immensely fond of a certain rough fun and practical jokes, and Sir George Grove believed that "the Eighth Symphony, perhaps more than any other of the nine, is a portrait of the author in his daily life, in his habit as he lived; the more it is studied and heard, the more will he be found there in his most natural and characteristic personality." Certainly this work presents a different view of Beethoven than do its immediate neighbors, and it is this very contrast that helps to bring the man and his creations more fully into focus.

The compact sonata form of the opening movement begins without preamble. The opening theme (F major), dance-like if a bit heavy-footed, appears immediately in vigorous triple meter. The second theme, built on short sequentially rising figures, enters in the surprising tonality of D major, but quickly rights itself into the expected key of C major. The closing group consists of a strong two-beat figure alternating with a swaying, legato line for the woodwinds. The development is concerned with a quick, octave-skip motive and a rather stormy treatment of the main theme. This central section ends with one of the longest passages of sustained *fortissimo* in the entire Classical literature to herald the recapitulation with a great wave of sound. The long coda comes close to being a second development section in its mood and thematic manipulation. The second movement is a sonatina — a sonata form without a development section — based on a ticking theme in the woodwinds (actually an imitation of the metronome recently invented by Beethoven's friend Johann Nepomuk Mälzel) and an impeccable music-box melody presented by the violins. The third movement abandons the scherzo of Beethoven's other symphonies and returns to the archaic dance form of the minuet; its central trio features horns and clarinets over an arpeggiated accompaniment in the cellos. The length of the finale almost equals that of the preceding three movements combined, and it carries significant importance in the work's total structure because of the diminutive size of the internal movements. In mood, it is joyous, almost boisterous; in form, it is sonata-allegro, with enough repetitions of the main theme thrown in to bring it close to a rondo. The extensive coda occupies more time than the development, and maintains the Symphony's bustling energy and high spirits to the end.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born 7 May 1833 in Hamburg; died 3 April 1897 in Vienna.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Opus 77 (1878)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Leipzig, New Year's Day 1879; Gewandhaus; Gewandhaus Orchestra; Johannes Brahms, conductor; Joseph Joachim, soloist

PSO PREMIERE: 9 December 1904; Carnegie Music Hall; Emil Paur, conductor; Luigi von Kunits, soloist

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 44 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings

"The healthy and ruddy colors of his skin indicated a love of nature and a habit of being in the open air in all kinds of weather; his thick straight hair of brownish color came nearly down to his shoulders. His clothes and boots were not of exactly the latest pattern, nor did they fit particularly well, but his linen was spotless.... [There was a] kindliness in his eyes ... with now and then a roguish twinkle in them which corresponded to a quality in his nature which would perhaps be best described as good-natured sarcasm." So wrote Sir George Henschel, the singer and conductor who became the first Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, of his friend Johannes Brahms at the time of the composition of his Violin Concerto, when Brahms, at 45, was coming into the full efflorescence of his talent and fame. The twenty-year gestation of the First Symphony had finally ended in 1876, and the Second Symphony came easily only a year later. He was occupied with many songs and important chamber works during the mid-1870s, and the two greatest of his concertos, the B-flat for piano and the D major for violin, were both conceived in 1878. Both works were ignited by the delicious experience of his first trip to Italy in April of that year, though the Piano Concerto was soon laid aside when the Violin Concerto became his main focus during the following summer. After the Italian trip, he returned to the idyllic Austrian village of Pörschach (site of the composition of the Second Symphony the previous year), where he composed the Violin Concerto for his old friend and musical ally, Joseph Joachim.

The first movement is constructed along the lines of the Classical concerto form, with an extended orchestral introduction presenting much of the movement's main thematic material before the entry of the soloist. The last theme, a dramatic strain in stern dotted rhythms, ushers in the soloist, who plays an extended passage as transition to the second exposition of the themes. This initial solo entry is unsettled and anxious in mood and serves to heighten the serene majesty of the main theme when it is sung by the violin upon its reappearance. A melody not heard in the orchestral introduction, limpid and almost a waltz, is given out by the soloist to serve as the second theme. The vigorous dotted-rhythm figure returns to close the exposition, with the development continuing the agitated aura of this closing theme. The recapitulation begins on a heroic wave of sound spread throughout the entire orchestra. After the return of the themes, the bridge to the coda is made by the soloist's cadenza. With another traversal of the main theme and a series of dignified cadential figures, this grand movement comes to an end.

The rapturous second movement is based on a theme that the composer Max Bruch said was derived from a Bohemian folk song. The melody, intoned by the oboe, is initially presented in the colorful sonorities of wind choir without strings. After the violin's entry, the soloist is seldom confined to the exact notes of the theme, but rather weaves a rich embroidery around their melodic shape. The central section of the movement is cast in darker hues, and employs the full range of the violin in its sweet arpeggios. The opening melody returns in the plangent tones of the oboe accompanied by the widely spaced chords of the violinist.

The finale is an invigorating dance whose Gypsy character pays tribute to the two Hungarian-born violinists who played such important roles in Brahms' life: Eduard Reményi, who discovered the talented Brahms playing piano in the bars of Hamburg and first presented him to the European musical community; and Joseph Joachim. The movement is cast in rondo form, with a scintillating tune in double stops as the recurring theme. This movement, the only one in this Concerto given to overtly virtuosic display, forms a memorable capstone to one of the greatest concerted pieces of the 19th century. As John Horton wrote, "That Brahms should have ventured upon a Violin Concerto in D with the sound of Beethoven's, as interpreted by Joachim, in his ears was in itself an act of faith and courage; that he should have produced one of such originality, sturdily independent of its mighty predecessor yet worthy to stand beside it, is one of the triumphs of Brahms' genius."