

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2017-2018 Mellon Grand Classics Season

September 22, 23 and 24, 2017

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR
CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF, VIOLIN

JOHN ADAMS

Lollapalooza

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 77

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

Mr. Tetzlaff

Intermission

BORIS PIGOVAT

... therefore choose life ...

WORLD PREMIERE

Commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in honor of
Manfred Honeck's Tenth Anniversary as Music Director

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78, "Organ"

I. Adagio — Allegro moderato — Poco adagio

II. Allegro moderato — Presto — Maestoso

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

JOHN ADAMS

Lollapalooza (1995)

John Adams was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on February 15, 1947, and currently resides in the Bay Area, California. He composed *Lollapalooza* in 1995, and it was premiered by Birmingham, England on November 10, 1995 by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Simon Rattle. These performances mark the Pittsburgh premiere, following two performances on the 2017 European Festivals Tour, and is one of ten pieces that will be performed by the orchestra for the first time this season. The score calls for two piccolos, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, piano and strings.

Performance time: approximately 7 minutes

John Adams is one of today's most acclaimed composers. Audiences have responded enthusiastically to his music, and he enjoys a success not seen by an American composer since the zenith of Aaron Copland's career: a recent survey of major orchestras conducted by the League of American Orchestras found John Adams to be the most frequently performed living American composer; he received the University of Louisville's distinguished Grawemeyer Award in 1995 for his Violin Concerto; in 1997, he was the focus of the New York Philharmonic's Composer Week, elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and named "Composer of the Year" by *Musical America Magazine*; he has been made a *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture; in 1999, Nonesuch released *The John Adams Earbox*, a critically acclaimed ten-CD collection of his work; in 2003, he received the Pulitzer Prize for *On the Transmigration of Souls*, written for the New York Philharmonic in commemoration of the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, and was also recognized by New York's Lincoln Center with a two-month retrospective of his work titled "John Adams: An American Master," the most extensive festival devoted to a living composer ever mounted at Lincoln Center; from 2003 to 2007, Adams held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall; in 2004, he was awarded the Centennial Medal of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences "for contributions to society" and became the first-ever recipient of the Nemmers Prize in Music Composition, which included residencies and teaching at Northwestern University; he was a 2009 recipient of the NEA Opera Award; he has been granted honorary doctorates from the Royal Academy of Music (London), Juilliard School and Cambridge, Harvard, Yale and Northwestern universities, honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa, and the California Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts.

"*Lollapalooza* was composed in 1995," Adams wrote, "as a fortieth birthday present for [the English conductor] Simon Rattle, who has been a friend and collaborator for many years. The term 'lollapalooza' has an uncertain etymology, and just that vagueness may account for its popularity as an archetypical American word. It suggests something big, large, oversized, not unduly refined. H.L. Mencken suggests it may have originally meant a knockout punch in a boxing match. I was attracted to it because of its internal rhythm: da-da-da-DAAH-da. Hence, in my piece, the word is spelled out in the trombones and tuba, C-C-C-E-flat-C (emphasis on the E-flat) as a kind of *idée fixe* [i.e., recurring idea]. The 'lollapalooza' motive is only one in a profusion of other motives, all appearing and evolving in a repetitive chain of events that moves this dancing behemoth along until it ends in a final shout by the horns and trombones and a terminal thwack on timpani and bass drum."

JOHANNES BRAHMS

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

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833, and died in Vienna on April 3, 1897. He composed his Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra in 1878, and it was premiered in Leipzig by Joseph Joachim and the Gewandhaus Orchestra under the direction of Brahms on New Year's Day, 1879. The Pittsburgh Symphony premiered the work at Carnegie Music Hall with soloist Luigi von Kunits and conductor Emil Paur on December 9, 1904. Most recently, Manfred Honeck led a performance with soloist Augustin Hadelich on September 27, 2015. The score calls for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

Performance time: approximately 40 minutes

"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 on 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 through 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 two Hungarian-born violinists who played 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.

BORIS PIGOVAT

... therefore choose life ... (2017)

Boris Pigovat was born Odessa, Ukraine on October 26, 1953, and currently resides in Israel. He composed *...therefore choose life...* in 2017 on a commission from the Pittsburgh Symphony in honor of Manfred Honeck's 10th season as music director. These performances mark the world

premiere of the piece. The PSO previously performed *Lux Aeterna* from Pigovat's *Requiem* at East Liberty Presbyterian Church with violist Tatjana Mead Chamis and Manfred Honeck as part of Music for the Spirit. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, celesta, harp and strings.

Performance time: approximately 10 minutes

Boris Pigovat was born on October 26, 1953 in Odessa, Ukraine and studied at the Gnessin Music Institute in Moscow. From 1978 to 1990, he lived in Tajikistan, where he taught at the local Institute of Arts, served as consultant to the Composer's Union, and conducted the orchestra of folk regional instruments of the Tajikistan Broadcasting Corporation. He emigrated to Israel in 1990, where he completed his doctoral degree at Bar-Ilan University in 2002. Pigovat's compositions — two symphonies, concerted works for harp, clarinet, violin, viola and percussion, many shorter pieces for orchestra and for concert band, several choral compositions (most notably the oratorio *Jeremiah's Lamentations*), chamber works and solo compositions for piano, harp and guitar; his *Music of Sorrow and Hope* (2011) was commissioned and premiered by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Zubin Mehta at the IPO's 75th Anniversary Festival — have been performed widely in Israel, America, Europe, Asia and New Zealand. In 1988, Pigovat received the Special Distinction Diploma of the Budapest International Composers Competition for his *Musica Dolorosa No. 2* for Trombone Quartet. His 1995 *Requiem: The Holocaust* for Viola and Orchestra, which was premiered in Kiev at a concert in memory of the victims of the Babi Yar tragedy, won the Prize of ACUM (Society of Authors, Composers & Music Publishers in Israel), and in 2000 received the Prize of the Prime Minister of State of Israel. (Babi Yar is the name of a deep ravine near Kiev. Soon after their occupation of Kiev in September 1941, hundreds of German soldiers were killed by mines planted by the Russians. As a reprisal, the Germans rounded up all the Jews in the city, herded them to Babi Yar, and systematically machine-gunned them to death. It is estimated that some 70,000 were killed in two days at Babi Yar. Thousands more — Jews, Ukrainians, Russians — died there during the two years of the German occupation.) In 2005, Pigovat's *Song of the Sea* for Symphonic Wind Band won his second ACUM Award. His music has been recorded on the Naxos and Atoll labels.

Pigovat composed ... *therefore choose life* ... in 2017 on a commission from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in honor of the tenth anniversary of Manfred Honeck as the ensemble's Music Director. Rather than a traditional note about this work for its premiere, Pigovat has offered just a single Biblical verse — Deuteronomy 30:19 — whose profound humanity could not better frame this music for the parlous times through which our world seems to often to be passing: *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78, "Organ" (1886)

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris on October 9, 1835, and died in Algiers on December 16, 1921. He composed his Symphony No. 3 in C minor, "Organ" in 1886, and it was premiered in London with Saint-Saëns conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra on May 19, 1886. The Pittsburgh Symphony premiered the piece at Syria Mosque with conductor Lukas Foss on April 3, 1970, and most recently performed it in Heinz Hall on December 9, 2012 with Leonard Slatkin. The score calls for piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, organ, piano (four hands) and strings.

Performance time: approximately 34 minutes

"There goes the French Beethoven," declared Charles Gounod to a friend as he pointed out Camille Saint-Saëns at the Paris premiere of the "Organ" Symphony. This was high praise, indeed, and not without foundation. Though the depths of feeling that Beethoven plumbed were never accessible to Saint-

Saëns, both musicians largely devoted their lives to the great abstract forms of instrumental music — symphony, concerto, sonata — that are the most difficult to compose and the most rewarding to accomplish. This was no mean feat for Saint-Saëns.

The Paris in which Saint-Saëns grew up, studied and lived was enamored of the vacuous stage works of Meyerbeer, Offenbach and a host of lesser lights in which little attention was given to artistic merit, only to convention and entertainment. Berlioz tried to break this stranglehold of mediocrity, and earned for himself a reputation as an eccentric, albeit a talented one, whose works were thought unperformable and probably best left to the pedantic Germans anyway. Saint-Saëns, with his love of Palestrina, Rameau, Beethoven, Liszt and, above all, Mozart, also determined not to be enticed into the *Opéra Comique* but to follow his calling toward a more noble art. To this end, he established with some like-minded colleagues the *Société Nationale de Musique* in 1871 to perform the serious concert works of French composers. The venture was a success, and did much to give a renewed sense of artistic purpose to the best Gallic musicians.

Saint-Saëns produced a great deal of music to promote the ideals of the *Société Nationale de Musique*, including ten concertos and various smaller works for solo instruments and orchestra, four tone poems, two orchestral suites and five symphonies, the second and third of which were unpublished for decades and discounted in the usual numbering of these works. The last of the symphonies, the No. 3 in C minor, is his masterwork in the genre. Saint-Saëns placed much importance on this composition. He pondered it for a long time, and realized it with great care, unusual for this artist, who said of himself that he composed music “as an apple tree produces apples,” that is, naturally and without visible effort. “I have given in this Symphony,” he confessed, “everything that I could give.”

Of the work's construction, Saint-Saëns wrote, “This Symphony is divided into two parts, though it includes practically the traditional four movements. The first, checked in development, serves as an introduction to the *Adagio*. In the same manner, the scherzo is connected with the finale.” Saint-Saëns clarified the division of the two parts by using the organ only in the second half of each: dark and rich in Part I, noble and uplifting in Part II. The entire work is unified by transformations of the main theme, heard in the strings at the beginning after a brief and mysterious introduction. In his “Organ” Symphony, Saint-Saëns combined the techniques of thematic transformation, elision of movements and richness of orchestration with a clarity of thought and grandeur of vision to create one of the masterpieces of French symphonic music.