Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2018-2019 Mellon Grand Classics Season

June 6, 7, 8 and 9, 2019

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR
MICHAEL RUSINEK, CLARINET
NANCY GOERES, BASSOON
CHRISTINA LANDSHAMER, SOPRANO
JENNIFER JOHNSON CANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO
WERNER GURA, TENOR
SHENYANG, BASS
MENDELSSOHN CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH
MATTHEW MEHAFFEY, DIRECTOR

JONATHAN LESHNOFF — Double Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon

I. Slow
II. Waltz
III. Fast

Mr. Rusinek
Ms. Goeres

WORLD PREMIERE
COMMISSIONED BY THE PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN — Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, "Choral"

I. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
II. Molto vivace — Presto — Molto vivace
III. Adagio molto e cantabile
IV. Finale, with soloists and chorus: Presto — Allegro assai — Allegro assai vivace

Ms. Landshamer
Ms. Cano
Mr. Gura
Shenyang
Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh

PROGRAM NOTES BY JONATHAN LESHNOFF AND DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

JONATHAN LESHNOFF

Double Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon (2018)

Jonathan Leshnoff was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey on September 8, 1973, and resides in Baltimore, Maryland. His works have been performed by more than 65 orchestras worldwide in hundreds of orchestral concerts. He has received commissions from Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Nashville, and Pittsburgh. His Double Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon was commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony and co-commissioned by the Greenwich Village Orchestra and International Wolfegg Concerts of Wolfegg, Germany. These performances mark the world premiere. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.
Performance time: approximately 20 minutes.

Distinguished by *The New York Times* as "a leader of contemporary American lyricism," composer Jonathan Leshnoff is renowned for his music's striking harmonies, structural complexity, and powerful themes. The Baltimore-based composer's works have been performed by more than 65 orchestras worldwide in hundreds of orchestral concerts. He has received commissions from Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Nashville, and Pittsburgh. Leshnoff's compositions have also been performed by classical music's most celebrated artists, including Gil Shaham, Johannes Moser, Joyce Yang and, Manuel Barrueco.

Leshnoff has been ranked among the most performed living composers by American orchestras in recent seasons, and upcoming seasons are comparably active with musical activity and collaborations. Highlights for the 2018-2019 season include the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's premiere of Leshnoff's Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's premiere of Leshnoff's Suite for Cello, Strings, and Timpani featuring the eminent cellist Johannes Moser, and the start of a multi-year residency with the Fairfax Symphony. Orchestras from the Knoxville Symphony to the Colorado Springs Philharmonic also perform works from Leshnoff's robust *ouevre*.

Leshnoff's discography includes five albums to date, with four on the Naxos American Classics label. In May 2019, Naxos released an all-Leshnoff recording featuring the Nashville Symphony performing his popular concert opener *Starburst*, his Guitar Concerto with Jason Vieaux, and his recently premiered Symphony No. 4, "Heichalos" featuring the Violins of Hope. Among his earlier featured recordings on the Naxos American Classics label are his Violin Concerto No. 1 with Charles Wetherbee and the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, selected among Naxos' Top 40 CDs the year of its release; and his Symphony No. 1, conducted by Michael Stern with the IRIS Chamber Orchestra along with Leshnoff's chamber music. An all-Leshnoff recording of the Atlanta Symphony performing Leshnoff's Symphony No. 2 and *Zohar* oratorio was released in November 2016. In December 2017, the recent band arrangement of Leshnoff's Clarinet Concerto was featured with Philadelphia Orchestra principal Ricardo Morales in a recording with the United States Marine Band.

Celebrated by *Fanfare* magazine as "the real thing," Leshnoff's music has been lauded by *Strings Magazine* as "distinct from anything else that's out there" and by *The Baltimore Sun* as "remarkably assured, cohesively constructed and radiantly lyrical." Leshnoff's catalog is vast, including several symphonies and oratorios in addition to numerous concerti, solo, and chamber works. Leshnoff is a Professor of Music at Towson University.

When writing a concerto, I have to write with the soloists front and center in my mind. This contrasts with symphonic works where I speak directly through the orchestra without any intermediary. The concerto, however, is about the soloists and I must funnel musical ideas through the solo instruments' capacities and idiosyncrasies. This dilemma is compounded in a double concerto where my job is not only to communicate through one instrument, but also to consider how the two instruments combine and interact. After much study and consideration, I discovered that there were some magical combinations that the clarinet and bassoon can make with each other. I found that the bassoon can be very plaintive

and resonant in its higher register, and that mixing that sound with the timbre of the clarinet yields some remarkable qualities. I also explored the extremes in register of both instruments.

The concerto is in three movements. The first is slow and contemplative and explores the sweetness of the bassoon's higher register. The concerto opens with placid strings and the bassoon playing a high melancholy theme before the clarinet enters and expands the sonic horizon. The brief second movement is a jocular waltz with exciting rhythms. The third movement is fast and pulsing, characterized by both instruments passing off a motive with surprising accents in the rapid tempo. After a lyrical theme is presented by each soloist, the concerto closes triumphantly with virtuosic runs.

This concerto, written in 2018, was commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and co-commissioned by the Greenwich Village Orchestra and International Wolfegg Concerts of Wolfegg, Germany.

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, "Choral" (1822-1824)

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770, and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. He composed his Symphony No. 9 in D minor, "Choral" from 1822-1824, and it was premiered in Vienna at the Kärntnertor Theater with Michael Umlauf conducting on May 7, 1824. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the work at Carnegie Hall in New York, NY with conductor Emil Paur in February 1907, and most recently performed it with music director Manfred Honeck in June 2015. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion and strings.
Performance time: approximately 65 minutes.

"I've got it! I've got it! Let us sing the song of the immortal Schiller!" shouted Beethoven to Anton Schindler, his companion and eventual biographer, as he burst from his workroom one afternoon in October 1823. This joyful announcement meant that the path to the completion of the Ninth Symphony — after a gestation of more than three decades — was finally clear.

Friedrich Schiller published his poem *An die Freude* ("*Ode to Joy*") in 1785 as a tribute to his friend Christian Gottfried Körner. By 1790, when he was twenty, Beethoven knew the poem, and as early as 1793 considered making a musical setting of it. Schiller's poem appears in his notes in 1798, but the earliest musical ideas for its setting are found among the sketches for the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, composed simultaneously in 1811-1812. Though these sketches are unrelated to the finished *Ode to Joy* theme — that went through more than 200 revisions (!) before Beethoven was satisfied with it — they do show the composer's continuing interest in the text and the gestating idea of setting it for chorus and orchestra. The Seventh and Eighth Symphonies were finished by 1812, and Beethoven immediately started making plans for his next composition in the genre, settling on the key of D minor but getting no further. It was to be another dozen years before he could bring this vague vision to fulfillment.

The first evidence of the musical material that was to figure in the finished Ninth Symphony appeared in 1815, when a sketch for the theme of the Scherzo emerged among Beethoven's notes. He took up his draft again in 1817, and by the following year much of the Scherzo had been sketched. It was also in 1818 that he considered including a choral movement, but not as the finale: his tentative plan called for voices in the slow movement. With much still unsettled, Beethoven was forced to lay aside this rough symphonic scheme in 1818 because of ill health, the distressing court battle to secure custody of his nephew, and other composing projects, notably the monumental *Missa Solemnis*.

The awesome *Missa* dominated Beethoven's life for over four years. By the end of 1822, the *Missa* was finished except for the scoring and some minor revisions, so Beethoven was again able to take up the symphony sketches and resume work. The chronology of these compositions — the great *Mass* preceding the Symphony — was vital to the creation of the Symphony, and is indispensable to understanding the last years of Beethoven's creative life. American critic Irving Kolodin wrote, "The Ninth owes to the *Missa Solemnis* the philosophical framework, the ideological atmosphere, the psychological climate in which it breathes and has its existence.... Unlike the *Missa*, however, it is a celebration of life, of man's earthly possibilities rather than his heavenly speculations." The 1822 sketches show

considerable progress on the Symphony's first movement, little on the Scherzo, and, for the first time, some tentative ideas for a choral finale based on Schiller's poem.

At this point in the creation of the work, in November 1822, a commission from the London Philharmonic Society for a new symphony arrived. Beethoven accepted it. For several months thereafter, he envisioned two completely separate works: one for London, entirely instrumental, to include the sketched first movement and the nearly completed Scherzo; the other to use the proposed choral movement with a German text, which he considered inappropriate for an English audience. He took up the "English Symphony" first, and most of the opening movement was drafted during the early months of 1823. The Scherzo was finished in short score by August, eight years after Beethoven first conceived its thematic material; the third movement was sketched by October. With the first three movements nearing completion, Beethoven found himself without a finale. His thoughts turned to the choral setting of *An die Freude* lying unused among the sketches for the "German Symphony," and he decided to incorporate it into the work for London, language not withstanding. The "English Symphony" and the "German Symphony" had merged. The Philharmonic Society eventually received the symphony it had commissioned — but not until a year after it had been heard in Vienna.

Beethoven had one major obstacle to overcome before he could complete the Symphony: how to join together the instrumental and vocal movements. He pondered the matter during his summer stay in Baden in 1823, but had not resolved the problem when he returned to Vienna in October. It was only after more intense work that he finally hit upon the idea of a recitative as the connecting tissue. A recitative — the technique that had been used for generations to bridge from one operatic number to the next — that would be perfect, he decided. And the recitative could include fragments of themes from earlier movements — to unify the structure. "I've got it! I've got it!" he shouted triumphantly. Beethoven still had much work to do, as the sketches from the autumn of 1823 show, but he at last knew his goal. The composition was completed by the end of the year. When the final scoring was finished in February 1824, it had been nearly 35 years since Beethoven first considered setting Schiller's poem.

The Ninth Symphony begins with the interval of a barren open fifth, suggesting some awe-inspiring cosmic void. Thematic fragments sparkle and whirl into place to form the riveting main theme. A group of lyrical subordinate ideas follows. After a great climax, the open fifth intervals return to begin the highly concentrated development section. A complete recapitulation and an ominous coda arising from the depths of the orchestra bring this eloquent movement to a close. The form of the second movement is a combination of scherzo, fugue and sonata that exudes a lusty physical exuberance and a leaping energy; the central trio is more serene in character but forfeits none of the contrapuntal richness of the Scherzo. The *Adagio* is one of the most sublime pieces that Beethoven, or anyone else, ever wrote, and its solemn profundity is enhanced by being placed between two such extroverted movements as the Scherzo and the finale. Formally, this movement is a variation on two themes, almost like two separate kinds of music that alternate with each other.

The majestic closing movement is divided into two large parts: the first instrumental, the second with chorus and soloists. Beethoven chose to set about two-thirds of the original 96 lines of Schiller's poem, and added two lines of his own for the baritone soloist as a transition to the choral section. A shrieking dissonance introduces the instrumental recitative for cellos and basses that joins together brief thematic reminiscences from the three preceding movements. The wondrous *Ode to Joy* theme appears unadorned in the low strings, and is the subject of a set of increasingly powerful variations. The shrieking dissonance is again hurled forth, but this time the ensuing recitative is given voice and words by the baritone soloist. "Oh, friends," he sings, "no more of these sad tones! Rather let us raise our voices together, and joyful be our song." The song is the *Ode to Joy*, presented with transcendent jubilation by the chorus. Many sections based on the *Ode* follow, some martial, some fugal, all radiant with the glory of Beethoven's vision.

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Baritone

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!	O friends, not these sounds!
Sondern lasst uns	Rather let us
angenehmere anstimmen,	sing more pleasing songs,
und freudenvollere.	full of joy.

Baritone and Chorus

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,	Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,

Tochter aus Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder
was die Mode streng geteilt;
alle Menschen werden Brüder
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

daughter of Elysium,
drunk with fire, we enter,
Divinity, your sacred shrine.
Your magic again unites
all that custom harshly tore apart;
all men become brothers
beneath your gentle hovering wing.

Quartet and Chorus

Wem der grosse Wurf gelungen,
eines Freundes Freund zu sein,
wer ein holdes Weib errungen,
mische seine Jubel ein!
Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele
sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
weinend sich aus diesem Bund!
Freude trinken alle Wesen
an den Brüsten der Natur,
alle Guten, alle Bösen
folgen ihre Rosenspur.
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
und der Cherub steht vor Gott!

Whoever has won in that great gamble
of being friend to a friend,
whoever has won a gracious wife,
let him join in our rejoicing!
Yes, even if there is only one other soul
he can call his own on the whole earth!
And he who never accomplished this,
let him steal away weeping from this company!
All creatures drink of joy
at Nature's breast,
All men, good and evil,
follow her rose-strewn path.
Kisses she gave us and vines,
a friend, faithful to death;
desire was even given to the worm,
and the cherub stands before God!

Tenor and Chorus

Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,
laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
freudig wie ein Held zum Siegen.

Joyously, just as His suns fly
through the splendid arena of heaven,
run, brothers, your course
gladly, like a hero to victory.

Chorus

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder
was die Mode streng geteilt;
alle Menschen werden Brüder
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,
daughter of Elysium,
drunk with fire, we enter,
Divinity, your sacred shrine.
Your magic again unites
all that custom harshly tore apart;
all men become brothers
beneath your gentle hovering wing.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Über Sternen muss er wohnen.

Be embraced, ye millions!
This kiss is for the entire world!
Brothers, above the canopy of stars
surely a loving Father dwells.
Do you bow down, ye millions?
Do you sense the Creator, World?
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!
Above the stars must He dwell.

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum.

Joy, brilliant spark of the gods,
daughter of Elysium,
drunk with fire, we enter,
Divinity, your sacred shrine.

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Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!

Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
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Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Brüder! Brüder!
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Do you bow down, ye millions?
Do you sense the Creator, World?
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!
Brothers! Brothers!
Above the canopy of stars
surely a loving Father dwells.

Quartet and Chorus

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deine Zauber binden wieder
was die Mode streng geteilt;
alle Menschen werden Brüder
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
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Tochter aus Elysium!

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