Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2019-2020 Mellon Grand Classics Season

December 6 and 8, 2019

OSMO VÄNSKÄ, CONDUCTOR
AUGUSTIN HADELICH, VIOLIN

CARL NIELSEN — *Helios Overture*, Opus 17

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART — Concerto No. 2 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 211
- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Rondeau: Allegro

Mr. Hadelich

Intermission

THOMAS ADÈS — Violin Concerto, "Concentric Paths," Opus 24
- I. Rings
- II. Paths
- III. Rounds

Mr. Hadelich

JEAN SIBELIUS — Symphony No. 3 in C major, Opus 52
- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto
- III. Moderato — Allegro (ma non tanto)

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

CARL NIELSEN

Helios Overture, Opus 17 (1903)

Carl Nielsen was born in Odense, Denmark on June 9, 1865, and died in Copenhagen on October 3, 1931. He composed his Helios Overture in 1903, and it was premiered by the Danish Royal Orchestra conducted by Joan Svendsen on October 8, 1903. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of the work. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and strings.
Performance time: approximately 12 minutes.

On September 1, 1889, three years after graduating from the Copenhagen Conservatory, Nielsen joined the second violin section of the Royal Chapel Orchestra, a post he held for the next sixteen years while continuing to foster his reputation as a leading figure in Danish music. His reputation as a composer grew with his works of the ensuing decade, most notably the Second Symphony and the opera *Saul and David*, but he was still financially unable to quit his job with the Chapel Orchestra to devote himself fully to composition. It was therefore with considerable excitement that he signed a contract with the prestigious publishing firm of Wilhelm Hansen early in 1903 that would provide him with a regular income and the chance, two years later, to leave behind his performing chores. Fortune smiled again that year on the Nielsens, when the composer's wife, Anne Marie, a gifted sculptress, was awarded the Ancker Fellowship. The couple celebrated their flourishing careers with a stay in Greece, where they took rooms overlooking the Aegean Sea and Carl found a studio at the Odeion Conservatory in Athens. His immersion in the ancient Greek culture and the beneficent climate inspired him to compose a concert overture depicting the sun's traversal of the heavens.

Nielsen headed the *Helios Overture* with the following legend: "Silence and darkness — then the sun climbs in joyous paean of praise — wanders its golden path — sinks tranquilly into the sea." The work opens with a spacious slow introduction that rises from an anticipatory hum in the deep bass and soft rising calls in the horns to encompass the full orchestra to depict the dawn. Trumpet fanfares lead to the main body of the composition, a quick-tempo, sonata-form construction with a heroic main theme pronounced by the violins and a lyrical subsidiary melody initiated by the cellos. The center of the work is occupied by a spirited *fugato*. The main theme returns in a grand setting before a passage of atmospheric, slow-moving chords suggests the twilight. The work ends with a brief, quiet reference to the music of the introduction to indicate the descent of night.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Concerto No. 2 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 211 (1775)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He composed his Concerto No. 2 in D major for Violin and Orchestra in 1775, and it was premiered in Salzburg with Mozart himself as soloist that same year. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the concerto at the Fulton Theatre in Pittsburgh with conductor Michael Lankester and soloist Janet Sung in April 1985, and most recently performed it with conductor Manfred Honeck and soloist Gil Shaham in January 2010. The score calls for two oboes, two horns and strings.
Performance time: approximately 21 minutes.

Just as Haydn brought the form of the symphony to its mature perfection, so Mozart nurtured the genre of the concerto. When Mozart was young, concertos were abundant, but the older ones — Italianate for the most part, à la Vivaldi — were, with their *moto perpetuo* rhythms and *ritornello* form, in the outdated manner of the Baroque era. The more recent examples of the genre were a stylistic grab bag of the old characteristics and such modern techniques derived from the emerging sonata form as contrasting themes and structural recapitulations. It took a genius the stature of Mozart to channel these

musical streams into a viable architectonic model for the Classical concerto, one attuned both to the refined sensibilities of the waning 18th century as well as to the established tradition of the concerto as a conversation — or, perhaps, a competition — between soloist and orchestra. The road to such majestic balance of form and content as is displayed by a work like the A major Piano Concerto of 1786 (K. 488) was more than a few paces long, even for Mozart, and the steps, indeed, were literal. He collected musical idioms during his boyhood travels wherever he went — England, Germany, France, Italy — seeking out and absorbing the local styles while confounding the natives with his amazing abilities as pianist, violinist and composer. It is not difficult to trace influences in Mozart's music. They are abundant, from his earliest clavier pieces to the unfinished *Requiem*. What is gratefully beyond our understanding is the manner in which he transmuted these quotidian gestures of 18th-century music into an artistic treasure that is beyond compare.

The violin concertos are a case in point. Since these five works were all produced during five months in 1775, it might at first appear that they were the offspring of a quintuple birth, but such was not the case. Each one of the series represents an important advance over its predecessor, demonstrating an intense and immediate re-evaluation of the form for each new piece by the 19-year-old Mozart. By the time he wrote his last two violin concertos (K. 218 and 219), he had not only reached his own artistic maturity but had also solved most of the stylistic problems of the concerto form. The Concerto No. 2 is, then, not only a composition of felicity and charm in its own right, but also served as an important laboratory for the full efflorescence of Mozart's inimitable genius.

Mozart had spent some seven of his nineteen years on the road — Paris, London, Vienna, Munich — by the time he wrote the violin concertos, and the Second Concerto is imbued with some of the many influences he absorbed along the way. The opening movement begins with a unison flourish and proceeds with a refined, *galant* movement decorated with many trills and decorative figurations, both traits favored by the French. In several passages, the movement's orchestration shows the influence of the Italian concerto in its reduced accompaniment to support the soloist. The music's tunefulness is a quality that was fostered by John Christian Bach (Johann Sebastian's youngest son) while the two played fugues to each other in London — Mozart was six at the time. The soulful *Andante* derives from the style of the Italian opera aria. The finale, a *Rondeau*, is not only French in its title but also shows such Parisian niceties as the immediate appearance of the soloist with the main theme and the inclusion of a minor-key episode.

THOMAS ADÈS

Violin Concerto, "Concentric Paths," Opus 24 (2005)

Thomas Adès was born in London on March 1, 1971, and is one of the world's leading composers and conductors. He composed his Violin Concerto, entitled "Concentric Paths" in 2005, and it was premiered in Berlin by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe with Anthony Marwood as soloist and Adès conducting on September 4, 2005. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of the work. The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings.
Performance time: approximately 20 minutes.

Thomas Adès, born in London in 1971, studied piano with Paul Berkowitz and composition with Robert Saxton at the Guildhall School of Music before first coming to notice when he won the Second Piano Prize in the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 1989. That same year he entered King's College, Cambridge, where his principal teachers included Hugh Wood, Alexander Goehr and Robin Holloway, and he began establishing his reputation as a composer when the BBC Philharmonic under Mathias Bamert played his Chamber Symphony at the Cambridge Festival in 1990. He graduated from Cambridge in 1992 with highest honors and was appointed Composer-in-Association to the Hallé Orchestra the following year. In 1997, Adès was appointed Britten Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music; he has also served as Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival and Music Director of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He was Resident Composer with the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 2005 to 2007, held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer Chair at Carnegie Hall in 2007-2008, and served as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's first Artistic Partner from 2016 to 2019. He is also active as a pianist and conductor, with many concert and broadcast performances in Europe, America and Japan. Adès' quickly accumulating list of distinctions includes the Paris Rostrum, Royal

Philharmonic Society Prize, Elise L. Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Grawemeyer Prize and an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex; in November 2010, he was named *Musical America*'s "Composer of the Year."

Adès composed his Violin Concerto, subtitled "Concentric Paths," in 2005 on a commission from the Berlin Festival and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; he led the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in the work's world premiere on September 4, 2005, with Anthony Marwood as the soloist. Adès wrote, "This concerto has three movements, like most, but it is really more of a triptych, as the middle one is the largest. The 'slow' central movement is built from two large and very many small, independent cycles that overlap and clash, sometimes violently, in their motion towards resolution. The outer movements too are circular in design, the first fast, with sheets of unstable harmony in different orbits, the third playful, at ease, with stable cycles moving in harmony at different rates."

JEAN SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 3 in C major, Opus 52 (1904-1907)

Jean Sibelius was born in Hämeenlinna, Finland on December 8, 1865, and died in Järveenpää, Finland on September 20, 1957. He composed his Third Symphony between 1904 and 1907, and it was premiered by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra with Sibelius himself conducting on September 25, 1907. These performances mark the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of the work. The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings.
Performance time: approximately 26 minutes.

The successful premiere of the Second Symphony in March 1902 confirmed the distinctive genius of Jean Sibelius to the international musical community. The composer's personal life at the time, however, was not without difficulty. Though he received sizeable royalties from his compositions and an annual stipend from the Finnish government, he was a poor money manager, and he mired his family, which then included two young daughters, in continuous debt and some financial distress. Exacerbating his unsettled state of mind was a painful ear infection that did not respond to treatment. Thoughts of the deafness of Beethoven and Smetana plagued him, and he feared that, at age 37, he might be losing his hearing. In June 1902, he also began having trouble with his throat, and he jumped to the conclusion that his health was about to give way, even wondering how much time he might have left to work. He persevered, however, and completed his Violin Concerto in 1903. (A benign tumor in his throat was discovered in 1909 and successfully removed. Sibelius enjoyed sterling health for the rest of his days, and lived to the ripe age of 91.)

For relaxation during that anxious period in his life, Sibelius frequented the local drinking establishments in Helsinki, and his generous and uncomplaining wife, Aino, often found him unaccounted for after a day or two, when he would resurface with apologies. By early 1904, he and Aino had determined to face the problem. "It was necessary for me to get away from Helsinki," Sibelius told his biographer Karl Ekman. "My art demanded another environment. In Helsinki, all melody died within me. Besides, I was too sociable to be able to refuse invitations that interfered with my composition. I found it very difficult to say no. I had to get away." He scouted out a lot for a new country house overlooking Lake Tuusula, twenty miles north of Helsinki, but found the waterfront property too expensive, and settled instead for a nearby forest site at Järvenpää ("Lake's End"; *Hallwag's Atlas of Europe* lists twelve towns by that name in Finland). He engaged a builder, approved plans for a log house, and followed the progress of the project eagerly through the summer of 1904. His new home, named Ainola in honor of his wife, was ready in September, and the move to new surroundings renewed his spirit and fired his creative imagination. Ainola was to be his home until he died more than fifty years later. Almost before the boxes were unpacked, he notified a friend, "Have begun my Third Symphony."

After starting the Third Symphony with enthusiasm in September 1904, Sibelius laid the project aside during the following year to revise the Violin Concerto, to compose the incidental music for a production in Helsinki of Maeterlinck's *Pélleas et Mélisande*, and to undertake conducting tours to Germany and Britain. While conducting in London, he met Henry Wood, director of the popular Promenade Concerts, who agreed to lead the London Philharmonic in the premiere of the still gestating Third Symphony in March 1907. The year 1906 was devoted not to the Symphony, however, but to the tone poem *Pohjola's Daughter* and the incidental music for Hjalmar Procopé's *Belshazzar's Feast*, in which event the

Symphony was not completed in time for its scheduled introduction in London. Sibelius finally finished the score during the summer of 1907, three years after its conception, and he conducted its first performance in Helsinki on September 25th; London did not hear the piece until the following February.

"The predominating feature of the Symphony," wrote Karl Ekman in his biography of the composer, "is the Apollonian joy in light, clarity, strength and chaste form." The opening *Allegro* is the most purely classical structure in any of Sibelius' symphonies. Its sonata form begins with a simple but beautifully proportioned main theme given unaccompanied by the low strings and then shared with the rest of the orchestra. A diatonic passage of increasing animation leads to three unison notes from trumpets and trombones to herald the cellos' presentation of the subsidiary theme, a typically Sibelian melody comprising a long-held note followed by a quick flourish. A quiet phrase of slow string scales in contrary motion serves as the gateway to the development section. The recapitulation of the earlier themes is signaled by the loudest dynamic climax of the movement and a drone pedal note in the basses. A hymnal coda closes the movement.

The gently melancholic second movement is a lovely intermezzo with delicately shifting rhythmic accents. There are no strong contrasts to disrupt the easy flow of this music, just short chordal passages for divided cellos and woodwinds to mark the movement's mid-point.

The two-part closing movement fuses the formal functions of scherzo and finale. Its first section, in spirited 6/8 meter, begins the process that the composer called "the crystallization of ideas from chaos." It comprises thematic bits and fragments, sometimes melded, sometimes diffused, which arrange themselves into no obvious formal pattern save the continuous accumulation of energy as the music unfolds. Continuity and thematic integrity are achieved in the movement's second section, the Symphony's finale, which is based on a short-breathed theme intoned by the low strings. The melody acquires a rhythmic ostinato as it proceeds, and grows to a stentorian statement by the full orchestra before reaching its heroic close with a broad proclamation of the notes of the C major triad.