THE EDMUNDSON FAMILY CONCERT HONORING THOMAS ADÈS AS BSO ARTISTIC PARTNER

THOMAS ADÈS conducting

LISZT

“MEPHISTO WALTZ” NO. 1

THOMAS ADÈS

CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA (2019)

(world premiere; commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, Music Director, through the generous support of Catherine and Paul Buttenwieser, and through the generous support of the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency)

I. Allegramente (♩ = 112)
II. Andante gravemente (♪ = 66 intimo)
III. Allegro giojoso (♩ = 120)

KIRILL GERSTEIN

{INTERMISSION}

TCHAIKOVSKY

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN F MINOR, OPUS 36

Andante sostenuto—Moderato con anima
Andantino in modo di canzone
Scherzo (Pizzicato ostinato): Allegro
Finale: Allegro con fuoco

THE PERFORMANCES OF THOMAS ADÈS’S CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA ARE SUPPORTED IN PART BY AN AWARD FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS.

Concertmaster Malcolm Lowe performs on a Stradivarius violin, known as the “Lafont,” generously donated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra by the O’Block Family.
First associate concertmaster Tamara Smirnova performs on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the “ex-Zazofsky,” and James Cooke performs on a 1778 Nicolò Gagliano violin, both generously donated to the orchestra by Michael L. Nieland, M.D., in loving memory of Mischa Nieland, a member of the cello section from 1943 to 1988.
Steinway & Sons Pianos, selected exclusively for Symphony Hall.
The BSO’s Steinway & Sons pianos were purchased through a generous gift from Gabriella and Leo Beranek.

BANK OF AMERICA AND TAKEDA PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY LIMITED ARE PROUD TO SPONSOR THE BSO’S 2018-19 SEASON.

FRIDAY-AFTERNOON CONCERT SERIES SPONSORED BY THE BROOKE FAMILY
The evening concerts will end about 10, the afternoon concert about 3:30.
The program books for the Friday series are given in loving memory of Mrs. Hugh Bancroft by her daughters, the late Mrs. A. Werk Cook and the late Mrs. William C. Cox.
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The Program in Brief...
BSO Artistic Partner Thomas Adès leads a program featuring the world premiere of his own second piano con-
In short: his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra—commissioned by the BSO and composed for Kirill Gerstein, a frequent collaborator of the composer’s. Whereas Adès’s first piano concerto, *In Seven Days*, was a concerto doubling as tone poem with its narrative impetus derived from the Book of Genesis, his new Concerto for Piano and Orchestra harks back to the abstract heart of the genre. The three-movement, fast-slow-fast overall form, within-movement architecture, and use of clearly audible motifs have their foundations in the tradition of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, even as Adès’s individual musical voice is everywhere apparent in his characteristically brilliant approach to orchestration and in the work’s organic harmonic flow. The physical, dancing basis for the concerto’s rhythm and meter, carefully notated to insure flexibility from the performers, is a further Adès hallmark.

Bookending the program are two Romantic-era scores. Throughout his life, the great pianist and composer Franz Liszt was fascinated by the legend of Faust and its representations in literature and music. His *Mephisto Waltz*, which opens this concert, depicts a scene from Nikolaus Lenau’s 1836 poem *Faust* in which Mephistopheles plays demonically on a fiddle during a wedding celebration. As for many other pieces by Liszt, we have no precise date of composition for the *Mephisto Waltz* (ascribed to the period 1856-61), which exists in separate versions for piano and for orchestra composed and rethought along with multiple other works over an extended period of time.

The last three of Tchaikovsky’s six numbered symphonies are his most popular, the Fourth being generally perceived as a major breakthrough in his approach to symphonic form. Completed in early 1878, around the same time as his opera *Eugene Onegin*, the Fourth also demonstrates Tchaikovsky’s feel for orchestral color, Russian folk tunes, and dance (*Swan Lake*, the first of his great ballets, was completed in 1876). In addition, as we know from the composer’s own words, it shares with his Fifth Symphony (completed a decade after the Fourth) an extramusical program based in the notion of an implacable Fate that “prevents the impulse to happiness from attaining its goal”—here reflected in the portentous fanfare for brass and woodwinds introduced at the very outset of the symphony, and which reappears late in the finale.

Robert Kirzinger/Marc Mandel

Richard Strauss, the Anti-Modernist Innovator  
by Thomas May

*On his all-Richard Strauss program this month (March 14-16), Andris Nelsons juxtaposes music by the young fire-brand (Strauss’s orchestral tone poem “Also sprach Zarathustra”) with excerpts from the composer’s final opera, “Capriccio” (here featuring Renée Fleming)—compositions separated by nearly half a century. The narrative of Modernist progress could make little sense of the long arc of Strauss’s career and so wrote much of it off as “reactionary”; but such short-sightedness, which once prevailed, has since given way to a more balanced assessment, one more aligned with contemporary sensibilities. “The destruction was horrific,” wrote one of Vienna’s music critics when *Also sprach Zarathustra* was first heard there in March 1897, several months after Richard Strauss had conducted the tone poem’s world premiere in Frankfurt. Resorting to vivid metaphors of the composer exploding his “anarchic music bomb,” the reviewer admitted to “sparks of genius that fly out in the midst of this musical blasting operation” but warned that “art must protect itself”—else “the way is free for the rule of the street.”

So far, so good: anticipating the notorious “scandal premieres” involving both Stravinsky and Schoenberg’s circle by a good sixteen years, Strauss was accruing impressive credentials as the prototypical Modernist enfant terrible. Indeed, Strauss’s timing seemed impeccably synchronized with the mixture of hope and angst that greeted the dawn of a new century. At one point, he even weighed giving his score the subtitle “Symphonic Optimism in fin-de-siècle form, dedicated to the 20th century.” That, more or less, is what the young Bela Bartók seems to have taken from his first experience with this music in 1902, when he was still only twenty. The Hungarian composer later recalled that Zarathustra, “[though] received with shudders by musicians [in Budapest], stimulated the greatest enthusiasm in me; at last I saw the way that lay before me.”

A few years after Bartók’s epiphany, Strauss was still making news as a depraved avant-gardist. After the failure of his first two operas, the one-act *Salome* (premiered in 1905) provided his breakthrough to stage success. *Salome* became an international sensation but provoked such outrage when unveiled at the Metropolitan Opera in 1907 that the production was closed after a single performance. Expectations ahead of the premiere in 1909 of his subsequent opera, *Elektra*, were positively feverish, information about the score being strictly embargoed. A kind of period trigger warning, one cartoon of the era (reproduced above) depicts a victim strapped to an “Elektric chair” and being tormented by a trumpet-wielding Strauss. (The linkage between modern music and murderous assault seems to have become a trope: when Walter Damrosch led the premiere of the young Aaron Copland’s First Symphony in 1925, he turned to the audience and declared that if an artist is capable of writing such music at age twenty-three, “within five years he will be ready to commit murder.”)

In short: from the premiere in 1889 of *Don Juan*—the tone poem in which he first achieved a real breakthrough to
his signature style—through the first decade of the 20th century, Richard Strauss commanded a reputation as a formidable revolutionary, a spearhead of Europe’s musical avant-garde. Even Schoenberg fell under his influence during this period, learning tricks of the trade from Don Juan and expressing astonished admiration at the originality of Salome’s score: “Perhaps in another twenty years, someone will manage to explain the theory behind these harmonic progressions,” he remarked.

Elektra came to represent a Rubicon the revolutionary dared not venture across. With regard to how far he had stretched himself in this score, Strauss himself, looking back from the distance of many years, observed: “I went to the utmost limits of harmony, psychological polyphony (Klytämnestra’s dream), and the capacity of today’s ears to take in what they hear.” Having used all twelve notes of the chromatic scale as the subject of a fugue in Zarathustra’s “Science” section, here the composer edged past super-saturated late Romanticism, touching on the disturbing new potential of free (a)tonality. Following Elektra, when he was in his mid-forties, Strauss and his Modernist peers continued along paths that soon diverged dramatically. Many of the latter came to disparage Strauss’s prolific oeuvre post-Elektra as an embarrassing anachronism out of tune with the times. And this bias held sway through much of the 20th century.

Even his official biographer and friend Willi Schuh implicitly acknowledged this dichotomy in the introduction he contributed to a Festschrift celebrating Strauss’s 80th birthday in 1944. But Schuh gave it a positive spin by comparing him with another long-lived artist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (an idol of the aging composer): “In their young years lauded and condemned as ‘reactionaries’ of their art, in their mature years, on account of their classical posture, suspected of being ‘reactionaries,’ both followed their daimon calmly through all the various phases of their relation to the world until they reached advanced age.” Even nowadays, what happened after Elektra is often described as a step back from the abyss, handily symbolized by the volte-face that Der Rosenkavalier (premiered in 1911) seems to enact not only in musical style but as a fantasy anchored to a nostalgic view of the past.

Curiously, that image of stepping back from the abyss is sometimes applied to another composer who was almost the exact contemporary of Strauss (outliving him by nearly a decade): Jean Sibelius, whose bleak, despairing Fourth Symphony (also premiered in 1911) is taken to embody an Elektra-like stretching-to-the-limit for its composer, after which he “reverted” to a more immediately accessible musical language, rejecting pressure to continue along the Modernist path. As with Strauss, the music of Sibelius faced the censure of gatekeepers of opinion who preferred to enforce a linear, putatively progressive interpretation of artistic history; and Sibelius has similarly benefited from reassessment by later champions of his work. Once derided as yet another holdout from outdated Romanticism, the Finn is now hailed as a pioneer on his own terms, a source of inspiration for composers ranging from Peter Maxwell Davies to John Adams and Thomas Adès.

Strauss, for his part, almost perversely went out of his way to épater l’avant-garde, so to speak, by playing the role of the conventional bourgeois to the hilt. He reveled in material comforts and pointedly talked about his creative work with the attitude of a man of business: exactly the opposite of how Modernism preferred to typecast the protesting, alienated artist—an image that was itself held over from the Romantic era. And there is the far darker issue of Strauss’s (brief) role as a music official in the early years of the Third Reich (though he kept his distance from the Nazi Party). Rather than emigrate, his defenders argue, Strauss intended to use his influence to counteract National Socialist policies. In any case, what can at best be construed as political naiveté and detachment strengthened the association of later Strauss with a reactionary worldview.

Yet, with the collapse of faith in the Modernist project, the once widespread view of a sharp dichotomy between the revolutionary and the reactionary in Strauss’s music has itself come to seem out of date. When originality for its own sake no longer stands as the chief criterion for creative authenticity, Strauss’s instinct to respect “the capacity of today’s ears”—to honor the need to communicate with his audience—points toward a different understanding of innovation, one that is by no means a risk-free retreat to the comforting familiarity of the past. Leon Botstein, an eloquent exponent of the postmodern reevaluation of Strauss, observes that “the simultaneous presentation, undercutting, and gradual withdrawal of the sentimental in music is perhaps Strauss’s profoundest contribution” to the artist’s response to the condition of modernity.

All of this is distilled into Capriccio, premiered in 1942, and which Strauss conceived less as a grand finale than as a subtle epilogue to his operatic career—in the composer’s phrase, as a “theatrical fugue” (recalling the fugue that concludes Verdi’s late Falstaff) and “a conversation piece for music.” Strauss made Capriccio an opportunity to ruminate on the history of opera itself, the perennial aesthetic issue of the proper relation between words and music here taking concrete form as an allegorical love story.

At Capriccio’s center is the widowed Countess Madeleine, on whom the composer lavished one of the most sumptuous and refined solo scenes in all of his operas. The Countess touches on the very questions that affected Strauss as he reflected on his own position in a rapidly changing world, and on larger issues that must remain open-ended: the relation between beauty and truth, head and heart, the “real world” and the ideal perfection of art.

THOMAS MAY writes about the arts and blogs at memeteria.com.
Franz Liszt

“Mephisto Waltz” No. 1, for orchestra

FRANZ (or FERENC of FRANÇOIS) LISZT was born in Raiding, Hungary, on October 22, 1811, and died in Bayreuth, Germany, on July 31, 1886. His “Mephisto Waltz” No. 1 was composed in the period 1856 to 1861 and first performed on March 8, 1861, in Weimar, Germany.

THE SCORE OF THE “MEPHISTO WALTZ” calls for an orchestra of two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, triangle, harp, and strings.

Franz Liszt was a man of exceptional energy, active throughout his life as pianist, composer, conductor, and teacher, with constant commitments in France, Germany, Italy, and Hungary. He was a lifelong reviser of his own music, so it is never clear which piece he was working on at any given moment. Many works were sketched, drafted, completed, revised, and revised again before being published or performed, and even then were often subject to more revision. His output of original compositions and transcriptions of various kinds being so vast, it is likely that his mind, if not his desk, was a traffic jam of complete and incomplete pieces at all times. For many pieces there are no precise dates of composition; he allowed several at a time to take shape in parallel, working now on one, now on another. The nearest estimate for the composition of the Mephisto Waltz No. 1 remains “between 1856 and 1861,” no more precise facts being accessible to the most searching modern scholarship. Its other title is “The Dance at the Village Inn,” published as the second of Two Episodes from Lenau’s Faust.

The poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850) is best-known to musicians for these pieces and for Strauss’s tone poem Don Juan. He and Liszt probably never met, but the latter’s interest in this particular Faust concentrated on two scenes that were not represented in his three-movement Faust Symphony, completed in 1857 and derived purely from Goethe. The first is a “Night Procession,” while the second (which also exists as a solo piano piece) depicts a village wedding where Mephistopheles seizes the violin from a strolling fiddler and strikes up a wild, diabolic dance. The assembled company leap to their feet and whirl around. They pair off, Faust pressing the hand of a brunette and leading her out through the open door into the night.

The violin’s open strings are heard being strummed at the beginning, leading into the main dance, marked “rustico,” with its heavy, demonic energy. There follows a tender theme on the cellos and the air fills with fantastic flutterings. For a while the dance is heard returning, then a wild outburst leads to an accumulation of energy, which subsides for the softer, atmospheric music of the nightingale and the murmuring of the trees outside. The piece has a possessed character, with a brilliant portrayal not only of the dance, but also of Mephistopheles’ sinister power over the mind of Faust. It was a subject into which Liszt could readily pour the best of himself. Some twenty years later he composed a second Mephisto Waltz, again either for orchestra or for piano solo.

Hugh Macdonald

HUGH MACDONALD, general editor of the New Berlioz Edition, was for many years Avis Blewett Professor of Music at Washington University in St. Louis. A frequent guest annotator for the BSO, he has written extensively on music from Mozart to Shostakovich, including biographies of Berlioz, Bizet, and Scriabin, and is currently writing a book on the operas of Saint-Saëns.

THE FIRST AMERICAN PERFORMANCE OF THE “MEPHISTO WALTZ” NO. 1 was given on November 17, 1866, in New York’s Steinway Hall by the New York Philharmonic Society under conductor Carl Bergmann.

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCE OF LISZT’S “MEPHISTO WALTZ” took place on November 19, 1887, under Wilhelm Gericke’s direction, subsequent ones being given between 1893 and 1936, at home and out of town, by Arthur Nikisch, Emil Paur, Gericke again, Karl Muck, Pierre Monteux, and Serge Koussevitzky. Until this week, the only BSO performances since Koussevitzky’s were given in March/April 2011, under the direction of John Nelson.

Thomas Adès

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2019)

THOMAS JOSEPH EDMUND ADÈS was born in London on March 1, 1971, and lives there. He wrote his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in 2018-19 for Kirill Gerstein on commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, through the generous support of Catherine and Paul Buttenwieser, and through the generous support of the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. These are the first performances. Adès, Gerstein, and the BSO will give the New York premiere later this month, on March 20, 2019, at Carnegie Hall. Adès and Gerstein give the European premiere performances of the concerto with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig on April 25 and 26, 2019.

IN ADDITION TO THE SOLO PIANO, the score of Adès’s Concerto for Piano and Orchestra calls for two flutes, piccolo (doubling alto flute), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets (first in B-flat, second in A), bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and rototom, percussion (three players: glockenspiel, xylophone, bass marimba, two suspended cymbals, choke cymbal, sizzle cymbal, small crash
cymbals, castanets, wood block, small tambourine, large cowbell [or reco-reco], guero, two or more whips, tam-tam, side drum, bass drum [with mounted cymbals–machine]), and strings. The duration of the piece is about twenty minutes.

Thomas Adès’s new Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, composed for soloist Kirill Gerstein and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is his second work for piano and full orchestra. The idea for the new concerto originated when Gerstein and Adès were rehearsing for performances of Adès’s In Seven Days with the BSO in November 2012, corresponding to Gerstein’s BSO subscription series debut. The two worked together on the piece in New York City, where Adès was about to conduct his opera The Tempest at the Metropolitan Opera around the same time. Having been awarded the monetarily substantial Gilmore Artist Award in 2010, Gerstein had initiated a string of commissions for solo works from such composers as Chick Corea, Timo Andres, Oliver Knussen, and others. He demurely suggested to Adès that he would like to “get in line” for what he rightly assumed was a backlog of projects the composer had to fulfill. Adès replied, “Does it have to be a solo work?” and said he might like to write “a proper concerto.” When the prospect was mentioned to BSO artistic director Anthony Fogg, he immediately said, “We’ll do it.” Gerstein calls it the quickest commissioning agreement in history. He later learned that he had “cut the line”—Adès became so involved in writing his concerto that he put off accepting commissions that would otherwise have taken precedent.

Gerstein and Adès first collaborated more than ten years ago performing Stravinsky’s Les Noces and since their 2012 BSO concerts have developed a deep musical friendship. They have performed In Seven Days with several different orchestras, including the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra last summer, and also devised a two-piano recital first performed also at Tanglewood. (They repeat their recital program at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall in New York City on Wednesday, March 13, and at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall on Friday, March 15.) Adès did ultimately come through with a solo work for Gerstein to play in solo recitals. The pianist told Adès he found a scene in his opera The Exterminating Angel particularly moving, and Adès responded by creating a piano version: the Berceuse from his 2017 opera The Exterminating Angel. Gerstein gave the world premiere of the Berceuse last month in Vienna, repeating it in London’s Wigmore Hall the following week.

In addition to his friendship with Gerstein, Adès’s new concerto also celebrates his important ongoing relationship with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He made his BSO conducting debut at Symphony Hall in 2011, followed by appearances with the orchestra in the subsequent two seasons. The 2016-17 season was his first as the BSO’s first-ever Artistic Partner, an unprecedented role created to showcase the composer-conductor-pianist-curator’s many interests and talents on various collaborative levels. In addition to conducting the BSO, he has performed as pianist with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, performed Schubert’s Winterreise with tenor Ian Bostridge, directed the Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood, and led the TMC Orchestra. In February 2019 the BSO announced a two-year extension of the partnership, which will now continue through the 2020-21 season.

The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra is just the latest in the series of large-scale, high-profile orchestral and dramatic projects that have dominated Adès’s compositional activity in the past decade-plus. These have included his operas The Tempest, based on Shakespeare’s play and first performed in 2004 at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and The Exterminating Angel, based on the film by Luis Buñuel and premiered in 2016 at the Salzburg Festival, which commissioned it along with the Royal Opera in London, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Danish Royal Opera. Between and concurrent with these undertakings were his Violin Concerto, Concentric Paths (2005); the piano concerto In Seven Days (2008); the orchestral works Tevot (2007) and Polaris (2010); Totentanz for mezzo-soprano, baritone, and orchestra (2013), and Lieux retrouvés for cello and orchestra (2016). He also revisited his 1995 chamber opera Powder Her Face to create two orchestral suites. (He has led the BSO in many of these works in the past few years.) His biggest chamber-music piece of this period is Four Quarters for string quartet (2010). Adès’s most recent venture is a foray into film music: he wrote the score for Wash Westmoreland’s widely released 2018 biopic Colette, starring Kiera Knightley as the French writer.

The standard repertoire is saturated with the results of composers’ conflicting impulses to cast off into uncharted waters on the one hand and, on the other, to test their mettle in well-established genres. Although the works of Adès’s early career may have suggested a greater tendency toward the avant-garde, he has continually sought to develop his own compositional voice via traditional compositional methods and, occasionally, stylistic mimicry. He has also made incursions into traditional genres while maintaining a degree of flexibility: for example, his Asyla is a symphony in all but name, but by not calling it a symphony he could sidestep (whether that was his intention or not) certain inherent “responsibilities” to the music-historical timeline. The same is true of his concertos for violin (Concentric Paths) and piano (the eight-minute Concerto Conciso from 1997 as well as In Seven Days), which, while they’re called concertos, are in a sense sui generis, that is, works with perspectives unique to themselves. In Seven Days, arguably the most relevant predecessor to the new concerto, is a piano concerto doubling as tone poem, the narrative impetus for which was the creation myth from the Book of Genesis. In its approach to the problems of solo piano versus orchestra, both technically and in terms of character and philosophy, it’s certainly a concerto, but the overall form is far removed from those of the concertos of Mozart, Brahms, or even Ravel.
By contrast, Adès’s approach to his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra—as its unleavened title hints—comes from the very heart of the piano genre: it is a “PROPER” piano concerto of a sort that Gerstein suggests we’ve seen very few of since the days of Bartók (without dismissing the greatness of such works as Ligeti’s Piano Concerto, among others). The three-movement, fast-slow-fast overall form has its roots in the Classical tradition. Adès’s employs clearly audible thematic ideas with an almost traditional opposition of characters, e.g., the rhythmically charged opening piano idea in contrast with the “more expressive second subject.” Adès calls the second subject a “second subject”—synonymous with “theme” in musical parlance—is telling, redolent of descriptions of sonata form. The concerto even calls for solo cadenzas.

Adès’s individual musical voice, of course, suffuses the piece. Rigorous craft in the service of musical fluidity and expressiveness are the fundamental tenets of Adès’s art. Fluidity of meter and rhythm is especially characteristic: its careful, unusual notation belies the sense of flexibility inherent in the rhythmic flow, a kind of composed rubato characteristic of Adès’s music. The concerto’s harmonic clarity, idiosyncratically tonal and developing with organic rigor, is also Adès through and through. The orchestra is brilliant and sparkling but also supplies dimension and depth. Its colors and harmonies often seem to have been catalyzed by the piano’s moods and material. The composer’s own note on his piece—which takes one through the entire form—is printed on page 48.

After hearing hints of what the concerto might be like for months, Gerstein first saw it in substantially completed form at Tanglewood last summer when visiting Adès socially with his family. The composer pointed to a score on the piano, saying, “there’s your concerto,” and was persuaded to talk and play through parts of it. Since receiving the completed score, Gerstein said the process of learning it proceeded in a very “21st-century” way—he’d text or e-mail Adès a flurry of questions, or record a snippet of video on his phone to ask about his approach to a particular passage. When they were able to meet in person with Gerstein playing through the solo part, Adès would lean over his shoulder to make infinitesimal adjustments in penultimate cadenzas.

Composer/annotator Robert Kirzinger is the BSO’s Associate Director of Program Publications.

Thomas Adès on his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

The first movement Allegramente opens with a statement of the theme by piano and then tutti. A march-like bridge passage leads to the more expressive second subject, first played by the piano and then taken up by the orchestra. The development section interrogates the first theme before an octave mini-cadenza leads to the recapitulation ff. There is then a solo cadenza based on the second subject, first played tremolo and then over many octaves, the piano joined first by horn and then by the full orchestra. The movement ends with a coda based on the first theme and the march.

The second movement Andante gravemente consists of a chordal introduction and a melody, which is joined by a countermelody, and a second idea with a simple falling melody over rising harmony. The first melody reappears, leading to a fortissimo climax, subsiding to a final statement of the original theme and a coda based on the countermelody.

The finale Allegro gioioso begins with a three-chord call to arms, and then a tumbling theme for piano and orchestra, which is interrupted by the blustering entry of a clarinet solo, heralding a burlesque canon. There is a good deal of argument, with frequent differences of opinion as regards key, brought to an end by the call to arms. Eventually the piano takes up a new theme in the style of a ball bouncing downstairs and develops it to a chorale climax. The tumbling material is developed, and the call to arms is heard in multiple directions leading to an impasse, a winding down of tempo, and a new slow (Grave) section in three time with a new falling theme. This leads to a precipice which the piano falls off with the original tumbling theme, and a coda lining up all the other themes for a final resolution on the call to arms.

Thomas Adès

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY was born at Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka province, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893. He began the Symphony No. 4 in May 1877 and completed the score on January 19, 1878. Nicolai Rubinstein conducted the first performance on March 4 that year, in Moscow.

THE SCORE OF TCHAIKOVSKY’S SYMPHONY NO. 4 calls for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and strings.

For Tchaikovsky, the Symphony No. 4 was a breakthrough work, a bounding creative leap beyond his first three symphonies. In scale, control of form, intensity, and ambition it towers above any symphonies previously produced
by other Russian composers, most of whom shunned the symphonic form in favor of operas and programmatic works. Here, in one of the masterpieces of late Romanticism, Tchaikovsky combines his strong sense of the theatrical (already demonstrated in *Romeo and Juliet, Francesca da Rimini, and Swan Lake*) with a heightened mastery of orchestration and thematic development.

The year of the composition of the Fourth Symphony—1877—has been called the most fateful year in the composer’s eventful and emotionally volatile life. It was in 1877 that he made the rash and ultimately tragic decision to marry Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova, a woman he barely knew. He did so (on July 18) in a panic-stricken attempt to conceal—or even overcome—his homosexual inclinations. Not surprisingly, given Tchaikovsky’s lack of sexual interest in women and the unbalanced personality of Milyukova, the marriage ended in disaster. It lasted a mere two months, at the end of which Tchaikovsky attempted suicide by walking into the frigid Moscow River in the hopes of contracting pneumonia. (Those who have seen Ken Russell’s film-bio of Tchaikovsky, *The Music Lovers*, will no doubt remember the scene.) Fleeing his wife and his botched attempt at a “normal” life, he escaped to St. Petersburg and then to Europe. It was there, far from the problems that awaited him in Russia, that he completed the Fourth Symphony, begun in the spring. From this time on, Tchaikovsky restless divided his time between Russia and Europe, feeling entirely comfortable in neither. Milyukova was not the only woman in Tchaikovsky’s life at the time. The other was Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow so passionate about the composer’s music that she became his patron, giving him large sums of money so he could continue composing without financial worries. At von Meck’s insistence, however, they never met, and instead maintained a remarkable epistolary relationship. During the stressful period of his failed marriage, Tchaikovsky turned to von Meck for emotional and financial support. She did not fail him. In gratitude, Tchaikovsky dedicated to her his new Fourth Symphony, but anonymously, as they had agreed: “To my best friend.” Not only did the composer dedicate the Fourth Symphony to von Meck; he also provided her with a detailed written description of its emotional program. “In our symphony there is a programme,” he wrote, “i.e., it is possible to express in words what it is trying to say, and to you, and only to you, I am able and willing to explain the meaning both of the whole and of the separate movements.”

The symphony’s “signature”—among the most famous music Tchaikovsky ever wrote—is its stunning, even alarming opening fanfare scored for brass and woodwinds. This introduction, Tchaikovsky told von Meck, “is the seed of the whole symphony, undoubtedly the main idea....This is *fate*, this is the fateful force which prevents the impulse to happiness from attaining its goal....It is invincible, and you will never overcome it. You can only reconcile yourself to it, and languish fruitlessly.” This “fate” motif appears most prominently in the opening movement, but reappears dramatically in the finale. (Tchaikovsky would go even further in the Fifth Symphony, using a “signature” motif in all the movements.) In the finale, the “fate” motif grows (at measure 200) out of a folk song in a most ingenious and startling manner. If this fanfare represents thwarted happiness, then the stuttering waltz theme that follows in the first movement also reflects frustration, Tchaikovsky told von Meck. The theme is in 9/8 meter, which lends it a fluid and yet halting gait. “The cheerless and hopeless feeling grows yet stronger and more burning. Is it not better to turn away from reality and submerge yourself in daydreams?” These daydreams (remember that the title of Tchaikovsky’s First Symphony was “Winter Daydreams”) are reflected in the melancholy, rising-and-falling theme given to the clarinet. Of the much shorter second movement (Andantino in modo di canzone), Tchaikovsky said this: “This is that melancholy feeling which comes in the evening when, weary from your labor, you are sitting alone, you take a book—but it falls from your hand. There comes a whole host of memories. You both regret the past, yet do not wish to begin your life again. Life has wearied you—It’s sad and somehow sweet to immerse yourself in the past.”

The scherzo (*Pizzicato ostinato*) offers respite from the emotional intensity of the outer movements. Constructed in classical, even Mozartian fashion, in three sections (ABA), this delicate and innovative confection is dominated by the strings, playing pizzicato, with a middle Trio section featuring a playful military-style theme in the brass and winds.

A well-known Russian folk song (“A little birch tree stood in the field”: “Vo polye beryozinka stoyala”) provides the central focus for the relatively brief but fiery final movement. (It’s not labeled “Allegro con fuoco”—“Fast, with fire”—for nothing!) Some years earlier, Russian composer Mily Balakirev (1837–1910) had used the same folk song in his *Overture on Three Russian Themes*, but treated it very differently. Balakirev retained the circular free rhythm of the tune, remaining faithful to the Russian folk tradition. But Tchaikovsky, more of a “Westernizer,” adds two beats after the first phrase, squaring the tune to fit into conventional 4/4 meter. By the finale’s end, Tchaikovsky has whipped this innocent little tune into a tragic frenzy that culminates in the majestic reentry of the “fate” theme. “Hardly have you managed to forget yourself and to be carried away by the spectacle of others’ joys, than irrepressible *fate* again appears and reminds you of yourself,” the composer wrote to von Meck about the finale. “But others do not care about you. They have not even turned around, they have not glanced at you, and they have not noticed that you are solitary and sad.”
Musicologists and biographers have long debated how accurately Tchaikovsky’s over-heated description of the Fourth Symphony reflects its content. They do agree on one thing. The score, despite some flaws (excessive repetition, and what Russian composer Sergei Taneyev called an overuse of “ballet music”), established Tchaikovsky as one of the masters of the symphonic form in Russia and elsewhere.

Harlow Robinson

Harlow Robinson is an author, lecturer, and Matthews Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of History at Northeastern University. The author of “Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography” and “Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood’s Russians,” he is a frequent annotator and lecturer for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Lincoln Center, Metropolitan Opera Guild, and Aspen Music Festival.

THE AMERICAN PREMIERE OF TCHAIKOVSKY’S SYMPHONY NO. 4 was given by Walter Damrosch with the New York Symphony Society on February 1, 1890.

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCES WERE PARTIAL ONES, when Arthur Nikisch led just the second and third movements here on October 18, 1890, subsequently programming just those movements for numerous out-of-town and tour performances between that month and February 1892, with a final performance of the two paired movements on a March 1892 benefit concert in Boston. The first complete BSO performances of the Tchaikovsky Fourth were given by Emil Paur on November 27 and 28, 1896, subsequent ones being given by Wilhelm Gericke, Max Fiedler, Karl Muck, Ernst Schmidt, Pierre Monteux, Sergei Koussevitzky, Richard Burgin, Charles Munch, Thomas Schippers, Eleazar de Carvalho, Erich Leinsdorf, Sixten Ehrling, Milton Katims, Colin Davis, Daniel Barenboim, Seiji Ozawa, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Joseph Silverstein, Herbert Blomstedt, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Kurt Masur (in guest appearances on BSO subscription concerts with the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig), Leonard Slatkin, Robert Spano, Bernard Haitink, Charles Dutoit, Adam Fischer, Federico Cortese, Neeme Järvi, Christoph von Dohnányi, James Levine, Michael Stern, Stéphan Denève, Juanjo Mena (January 2017), and Gustavo Gimeno (July 21, 2017).

To Read and Hear More...

Thomas Adès’s website, www.thomasades.com, is the most comprehensive source for up-to-date information about the composer. Basic information can also be found on the websites of his publisher, Faber Music (fabermusic.com), and his record label, EMI Classics (emiclassics.com). The Faber site features a works-list and program notes for many of Adès’s pieces. Thomas Adès: Full of Noises, conversations with Tom Service (2012), presents Adès as a widely knowledgeable polemicist and offers some commentary on method and on specific pieces, but be aware that this is neither a biography nor a methodical survey of the composer’s music (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Tom Service is a respected and thoughtful English critic writing for The Guardian. The brief Adès article in New Grove II, originally written more than a dozen years ago and not yet updated, was written by Arnold Whitall.

Adès’s earlier piano concerto In Seven Days was recorded by pianist Nicolas Hodges with the London Sinfonietta under the composer’s direction (Signum Classics). Adès himself was both soloist and conductor in his tiny 1997 Concerto Conciso for piano and ensemble in a recording with the London Sinfonietta (EMI). The composer’s three operas are all available on CD or video. The Metropolitan Opera’s 2017 production of The Exterminating Angel with the composer conducting was released last month on Blu-ray (Warner Classics/Parlophone). The 2007 Covent Garden production of his Shakespeare-based opera The Tempest is available on CD (EMI); the Metropolitan Opera performance of the later Robert Lepage production was recorded for DVD (Deutsche Grammophon). The opera Powder Her Face is available on CD in a recording by Almeida Opera with Adès conducting (EMI). A DVD and audio recording are available of a version of the opera adapted for television in a production by David Alden, with Adès leading the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (also EMI). A wide swath of Adès’s catalog has otherwise been recorded. Taking single works from a number of earlier releases is the two-CD “Anthology” that includes the string quartet Arcadiana, the Quintet for Piano and Strings, America: A Prophecy, and the Adès/Anthony Marwood recording of the Violin Concerto, along with a number of other pieces. Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra recorded his quasi-symphonic Asyla (on a disc including his Concerto Conciso, These Premises Are Alarmed, Chamber Symphony, and...but all shall be well). Other releases include Adès conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in Asyla, Tevot, Polaris, and Brahms, the latter with soloist Samuel Dale Johnson (LSO Live), and a disc of chamber music with the composer and the Calder Quartet (Signum Classics). Adès as a performer of others’ music has released a piano recital disc of works by Grieg, Busoni, Janáček, Stanchinsky, Kurtág, and Castiglioni, and accompanies tenor Ian Bostridge in Janáček’s song cycle The Diary of One Who Disappeared (both EMI). With cellist Steven Isserlis he recorded works by Liszt, Fauré, Kurtág, Janáček, and Adès (Hyperion). As conductor, Adès led the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and various soloists in Gerald Barry’s opera The Importance of Being Earnest, recorded live in concert performances in 2012 (NMC).

Robert Kirzinger
The important biographies of Liszt are Derek Watson’s compact *Liszt* in the Master Musicians series (Schirmer paperback) and Alan Walker’s Liszt biography in three volumes—*Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years (1811-1847)*, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years (1848-1861)*, and *Franz Liszt: The Final Years (1861-1886)*—which was reprinted in paperback (Cornell University Press). Walker also authored *Reflections on Liszt* (also Cornell University Press) and an older brief biography with good illustrations, *Liszt*, in the “Great Composers” series (Faber and Faber, out of print); edited the symposium volume *Franz Liszt: The Man and his Music* (Taplinger), and provided the Liszt article in the 2001 edition of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. A relatively recent addition to the Liszt bibliography is *Franz Liszt: Musician, Celebrity, Superstar* by Oliver Hilmes, translated from the original German by Stewart Spencer (Yale University Press, 2016). Also worth noting is Kenneth Hamilton’s 2007 *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance*, an engaging history of the piano recital and its changing mores from the time of Liszt into the 20th century (Oxford University Press).

Serge Koussevitzky’s 1936 recording of the Mephisto Waltz No. 1 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra was reissued on CD in the Koussevitzky volume of the series “Great Conductors of the 20th Century” (EMI/ICA Artists). Other recordings of the *Mephisto Waltz* No. 1 in its orchestral version include Herbert von Karajan’s with the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Kurt Masur’s with the New York Philharmonic (Teldec), Eugene Ormandy’s with the Philadelphia Orchestra (Sony), and Fritz Reiner’s with the Chicago Symphony (RCA). Recordings of the version for solo piano include those by Leif Ove Andsnes (EMI), Claudio Arrau (Philips), Jorge Bolet (Decca), Alfred Brendel (Vox), Van Cliburn (RCA), György Cziffra (EMI), Vladimir Horowitz (RCA), Evgeny Kissin (RCA), John Ogdon (Testament), Arthur Rubinstein (RCA), and Earl Wild (Vanguard).

David Brown’s *Tchaikovsky*, in four volumes, is the major biography of the composer (Norton). The Symphony No. 4 is discussed in Volume II, “The Crisis Years: 1874-1878” (Norton). Brown is also the author of *Tchaikovsky: The Man and his Music*, an excellent single volume (512 pages) on the composer’s life and works geared toward the general reader (Pegasus Books), and of *Tchaikovsky Remembered*, published in 1994 to mark the centenary of the composer’s death (Amadeus Press). Though out of print, John Warrack’s *Tchaikovsky* is worth seeking both for its text and its wealth of illustrations (Scribner’s). Anthony Holden’s *Tchaikovsky* is a single-volume biography that gives ample space to the theory that Tchaikovsky committed suicide for reasons having to do with his homosexuality (Bantam Press). Alexander Poznansky’s *Tchaikovsky’s Last Days: A Documentary Study* also takes a close look at this question (Oxford). Also useful are Alexandra Orlova’s *Tchaikovsky: A Self-Portrait* (translated by R.M. Davison), an “autobiographical narrative” based on surviving documentation (Oxford), and David Brown’s chapter “Russia Before the Revolution” in *A Guide to the Symphony*, edited by Robert Layton (Oxford paperback).

Michael Steinberg’s program notes on Tchaikovsky’s Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth (*Pathétique*) symphonies are in his compilation volume *The Symphony—A Listener’s Guide* (Oxford paperback).

The Boston Symphony Orchestra recorded Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 under Serge Koussevitzky in 1936, under Koussevitzky again in 1949, under Charles Munch in 1955, and under Pierre Monteux in 1959 (each time for RCA). BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons has recorded it with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (Orfeo). Other noteworthy recordings—of varying vintage, listed alphabetically by conductor—include Claudio Abbado’s with the Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Marin Alsop’s with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra (Naxos), Leonard Bernstein’s with the New York Philharmonic (Sony), Iván Fischer’s with the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Channel Classics), Valery Gergiev’s with the Vienna Philharmonic (Philips), Vladimir Jurowski’s live with the London Philharmonic (Lpo), Igor Markevitch’s with the London Symphony Orchestra (Philips), Kurt Masur’s with the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig (Telarc), and Evgeny Mravinsky’s with the Leningrad Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon).

Marc Mandel

Guest Artists

Thomas Adès, CBE

Now in his third year as the BSO’s Deborah and Philip Edmundson Artistic Partner, a position just recently extended through the BSO’s 2020-21 season, composer-conductor-pianist Thomas Adès was born in London in 1971. Renowned as both a composer and a performer, he works regularly with the world’s leading orchestras, opera companies, and festivals, and was made a CBE in the 2018 Queen’s Birthday Honours. Mr. Adès’s most recent opera, *The Exterminating Angel*, premiered at the 2016 Salzburg Festival and has also been performed at the Metropolitan Opera and at London’s Royal Opera House. His opera *The Tempest* was commissioned by and first performed at the Royal Opera House in 2004, with a new production at the Metropolitan Opera in 2012. His first opera, *Powder Her Face* (1995), was written for the Cheltenham Festival and the Almeida Theatre, London. Orchestral commissions include those from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Carnegie Hall, the New World Symphony, Berliner Festspiele, BBC Proms, Los Angeles Philharmonic, London’s Royal Festival Hall, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His catalog also includes numerous celebrated chamber and solo works. As the BSO’s artistic partner he leads the orchestra in Boston and at Tanglewood, performs
Kirill Gerstein

Kirill Gerstein’s natural versatility and curiosity have led him to explore a wide range of repertoire ranging from Bach to Adès. Following his world and New York City premieres this month of Thomas Adès’s Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he gives the concerto’s European premiere with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, again with the composer conducting. Messrs. Gerstein and Adès also perform the composer’s In Seven Days with the London Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic and give duo-recitals in New York and Boston. In 2018-19, Mr. Gerstein also performs with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Mark Elder, in China with the Shanghai and Guangzhou symphony orchestras, with orchestras throughout Europe and the United States, and in São Paulo, Brazil. Other appearances include recitals in London, Stuttgart, Lisbon, Singapore, Melbourne, and Copenhagen, and chamber music concerts with the Hagen Quartet, Veronika Eberle, and Clemens Hagen in Lucerne. Festival appearances have taken him to Salzburg, Verbier, Lucerne, Edinburgh, Tanglewood, the Proms in London, and the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival. Mr. Gerstein’s recording of Scriabin’s Prometheus: The Poem of Fire with the Oslo Philharmonic and Vasily Petrenko was reissued in fall 2018. His live recording on Myrios Classics of Busoni’s Piano Concerto with Sakari Oramo conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the men of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus is being released this month. Other releases include Tchaikovsky’s First, Second, and Third piano concertos with Bychkov and the Czech Philharmonic; Liszt’s Transcendental Études; “The Gershwin Moment”; “Imaginary Pictures,” coupling Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition with Schumann’s Carnaval, and a recital disc of works by Schumann, Liszt, and Knussen. Kirill Gerstein was brought up in the former Soviet Union and moved to Boston at age fourteen to become the youngest student to attend the Berklee College of Music. He studied with Solomon Mikowsky in New York, Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid, and Ferenc Rados in Budapest. His honors include the Gilmore Artist Award, which provided funds for him to commission works from Timo Andres, Chick Corea, Alexander Goehr, Oliver Knussen, and Brad Mehldau. A committed teacher and pedagogue, he taught at the Stuttgart Musik Hochschule from 2007 to 2017 and from autumn 2018 as part of the Kronberg Academy’s newly announced Sir András Schiff Performance Program for Young Artists. Kirill Gerstein made his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in July 2010 at Tanglewood performing Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1, and his BSO subscription series debut in November 2012 performing both Thomas Adès’s piano concerto In Seven Days and Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 1. Since then, his BSO appearances have included performances of Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Gershwin’s Piano Concerto in F, Busoni’s Piano Concerto in C, and J.S. Bach’s Concerto in D minor for three pianos (also featuring Thomas Adès and Jean-Yves Thibaudet). Last summer he was the BSO’s Koussevitzky Artist at Tanglewood, where he performed with the BSO (as soloist last August in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2, his most recent BSO appearance), the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and in duo-recital with Thomas Adès. This coming March 20 he rejoins Thomas Adès and the BSO at Carnegie Hall for the New York premiere of The Rake’s Progress and the world and European premiers of Gerald Barry’s Alice’s Adventures Under Ground. Recent piano engagements include solo recitals at Carnegie Hall and London’s Wigmore Hall and concerto appearances with the New York Philharmonic. This season includes a solo Janáˇcek program in London, Paris, Lisbon, and the Czech Republic, Schubert’s Winterreise at Wigmore Hall with Ian Bostridge, and duo-recitals with Kirill Gerstein at Carnegie Hall and Boston’s Jordan Hall. Mr. Adès’s honors include the Grawemeyer Award for Asyla (1999), the Ernst von Siemens Prize for Arcadiana, and the British Composer Award for The Four Quarters. His recording of The Tempest (EMI) won a Gramophone award; the DVD of the Metropolitan Opera’s production was awarded the Diapason d’Or de l’année, Best Opera Grammy Award, and ECHO Klassik Music DVD Recording of the Year. The Exterminating Angel won the World Premiere of the Year at the International Opera Awards. In 2015 Mr. Adès was awarded the prestigious Léonie Sonning Music Prize. Thomas Adès made his BSO conducting debut in March 2011, subsequently returning to lead subscription concerts in November 2012, October 2013, November 2016, and January 2018 (a program of Beethoven, Ligeti, Adès, and Stravinsky). In July 2017, for his first Tanglewood appearance with the BSO, he led music by Britten, music of his own, and Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto with soloist Emanuel Ax, also appearing that month as pianist in a “Schubert’s Summer Journey” program in Ozawa Hall, collaborating with baritone André Schuen and with members of the Emerson String Quartet. With Kirill Gerstein and Jean-Yves Thibaudet, he was a piano soloist in February 2018, with Andris Nelsons conducting, in J.S. Bach’s Concerto in D minor for three pianos during last season’s “Leipzig Week in Boston.” He most recently led the orchestra last summer at Tanglewood, in a July 2018 program of Adès and Sibelius.
Adès’s new Concerto for Piano and Orchestra.