Season 2017-2018

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Cristian Măcelaru  Conductor
Nitzan Haroz  Trombone
Matthew Vaughn  Trombone
Blair Bollinger  Bass Trombone
Carol Jantsch  Tuba

Kodály  Dances of Marosszék

Higdon  Low Brass Concerto  
(In one movement)
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances—
Philadelphia Orchestra co-commission

Intermission

Beethoven  Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93
I. Allegro vivace e con brio
II. Allegretto scherzando
III. Tempo di menuetto
IV. Allegro vivace

Brahms  Select Hungarian Dances
No. 2 in D minor (orch. Hallén)
No. 4 in F-sharp minor (orch. Juon)
No. 8 in A minor (orch. Dennison)
No. 16 in F minor (orch. Parlow)
No. 10 in F major (orch. Brahms)

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes.

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The February 24 concert is sponsored by Medcomp.

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Bartók String Quartet No. 4
   I. Allegro
   II. Prestissimo, con sordino
   III. Non troppo lento
   IV. Allegretto pizzicato
   V. Allegro molto

Juliette Kang  Violin
Dara Morales  Violin
Che-Hung Chen  Viola
Derek Barnes  Cello
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The Philadelphia Orchestra

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of imagination and innovation on and off the concert stage. The Orchestra is inspiring the future and transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—and exceeding—that level, by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world.

Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin’s connection to the Orchestra’s musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics since his inaugural season in 2012. Under his leadership the Orchestra returned to recording, with two celebrated CDs on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label, continuing its history of recording success. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of listeners on the radio with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM.

Philadelphia is home and the Orchestra continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with its loyal patrons at its home in the Kimmel Center, and also with those who enjoy the Orchestra’s area performances at the Mann Center, Penn’s Landing, and other cultural, civic, and learning venues. The Orchestra maintains a strong commitment to collaborations with cultural and community organizations on a regional and national level, all of which create greater access and engagement with classical music as an art form.

The Philadelphia Orchestra serves as a catalyst for cultural activity across Philadelphia’s many communities, building an offstage presence as strong as its onstage one. With Nézet-Séguin, a dedicated body of musicians, and one of the nation’s richest arts ecosystems, the Orchestra has launched its HEAR initiative, a portfolio of integrated initiatives that promotes Health, champions music Education, eliminates barriers to Accessing the orchestra, and maximizes impact through Research. The Orchestra’s award-winning Collaborative Learning programs engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, The Philadelphia Orchestra is a global ambassador for Philadelphia and for the US. Having been the first American orchestra to perform in China, in 1973 at the request of President Nixon, the ensemble today boasts a new partnership with Beijing’s National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Shanghai Oriental Art Centre, and in 2017 will be the first-ever Western orchestra to appear in Mongolia. The Orchestra annually performs at Carnegie Hall while also enjoying summer residencies in Saratoga Springs, NY, and Vail, CO. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit www.philorch.org.

Jessica Griffin
Newly appointed music director and conductor of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Cristian Măcelaru has established himself as one of the fast-rising stars of the conducting world. He launched his inaugural season at Cabrillo in the summer of 2017 with programs of new works and fresh re-orchestrations, including seven world premieres, 11 composers-in-residence, and two special tributes—one to commemorate Lou Harrison’s centenary and another honoring John Adams’s 70th birthday. He recently completed his tenure with The Philadelphia Orchestra as conductor-in-residence, a title he held for three seasons until August 2017. Prior to that he was the Orchestra’s associate conductor for two seasons and assistant conductor for one season. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra subscription debut in April 2013 and continues a close relationship with the ensemble, leading annual subscription programs and other special concerts.

Mr. Măcelaru regularly conducts other top orchestras in North America, including the Chicago, National, St. Louis, Detroit, and Toronto symphonies, and the New York and Los Angeles philharmonics. Highlights of the 2017-18 season include opening the National Symphony’s season in Washington D.C. and returning to The Philadelphia Orchestra for two subscription programs in addition to Handel’s Messiah. He also guest conducts the symphony orchestras of Dallas, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Atlanta, Seattle, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, San Diego, and Vancouver. Internationally he leads the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; the Swedish Radio and Danish National symphonies; and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. In summer 2017 he made his debut with the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Festival, returned to the Grand Teton and Interlochen festivals, and led The Philadelphia Orchestra in two programs at the Mann Center.

An accomplished violinist from an early age, Mr. Măcelaru was the youngest concertmaster in the history of the Miami Symphony; he made his Carnegie Hall debut with that orchestra at the age of 19. Today he resides in Philadelphia with his wife, Cheryl, and children, Beniamin and Maria.
Soloists

Nitzan Haroz, a native of Israel, rejoined The Philadelphia Orchestra as principal trombone (Neubauer Family Foundation Chair) in 2014 after holding the same position with the Los Angeles Philharmonic since 2012. Previously he was principal trombone of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 1995 after serving as assistant principal trombone of the New York Philharmonic and principal trombone of the Israel Symphony and Opera Orchestra. He was also first trombone of the Israel Defense Forces Orchestra. Mr. Haroz has appeared as a soloist with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, and the Israel, Jerusalem, Sofia Radio, and Fairbanks symphonies, among others, and he is an active recitalist and chamber musician. He was a first-prize winner of the François Shapira Competition in Israel and a former scholarship recipient of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. He has commissioned and premiered several works for trombone and harp with his mother, Adina Haroz. His teachers included Eli Aharoni, Mitchel Ross in Israel, and Joseph Alessi at the Juilliard School. Mr. Haroz’s recording, *Towards the Light*, was released in 2004. He currently serves on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music.

Matthew Vaughn has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 1999; he was named co-principal trombone in 2014. Previous positions have included principal trombone of the San Antonio Symphony and service in the U.S. Air Force Concert Band. He has been offered principal positions with the Dallas and Atlanta symphonies and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and he has also performed with the National and Montreal symphonies, the Israel Philharmonic, Gerard Schwarz’s “All-Star Orchestra,” and the “Super-World” Orchestra in Tokyo. He has performed solos with orchestras and bands around the US and has given frequent solo recitals and master classes worldwide. Born in Dallas and raised in Richmond, IN, Mr. Vaughn earned a bachelor’s degree with high distinction and a Performer’s Certificate from Indiana University, continuing with graduate work in education and conducting at Indiana University and George Mason University. He currently teaches trombone and coaches brass chamber music at the Curtis Institute of Music and Temple University. He was the founder and artistic director of Bar Harbor Brass Week from 2000 to 2016. His teachers included David Brumfield, M. Dee Stewart, and Dr. Milton Stevens.
Soloists

**Blair Bollinger**, bass trombone, joined the Orchestra in 1986; he holds the Drs. Bong and Mi Wha Lee Chair. He has soloed with The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Atlanta and National (Taiwan) symphonies, among others, and has given recitals and master classes worldwide. He won the 1986 Philadelphia Orchestra Senior Student Competition and is the only trombonist to win this competition since it began in 1934, as well as the only bass trombone soloist ever with the Orchestra. His instrument is the Bollinger Model by the S.E. Shires Co., which he helped design. His recordings include the solo disc *Fancy Free*; two discs with his trombone quartet, *Four of a Kind*; a Gabrieli disc with the Canadian Brass; and a premiere recording of Jay Krush’s Concerto with the Temple University Wind Ensemble. Mr. Bollinger is on the faculties of the Curtis Institute, Juilliard, and Temple. His has spent summers at the National Orchestral Institute; the Grand Teton, Eastern, and Aspen music festivals; Bravo! Vail; the NY State Summer School for the Arts; the Luzerne Music Center; and Bar Harbor Brass Week. Born in Rochester, PA, he is a 1986 graduate of Curtis, where he studied with Charles Vernon and Glenn Dodson.

**Carol Jantsch** has been principal tuba of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2006 and holds the Lyn and George M. Ross Chair. She won the position during her senior year at the University of Michigan, becoming the first female tuba player in a major symphony orchestra. She gives recitals regularly and has appeared as soloist with The Philadelphia and Henry Mancini Institute orchestras; the Columbus and St. Petersburg (Russia) symphonies; and the U.S. Marine Band. She has given master classes and has been a featured artist at brass festivals worldwide. She is on the faculties of Yale University’s School of Music and Temple University’s Boyer College of Music. Ms. Jantsch began piano lessons at age six and euphonium at nine. After switching to tuba, she attended the Interlochen Arts Academy, graduating as salutatorian. She continued at the University of Michigan with Fritz Kaenzig. She released her first solo recording, *Cascades*, in 2009. In 2013 she premiered *Reflections on the Mississippi*, written for her by Michael Daugherty, and recorded it with both the Temple University Symphony and the University of Michigan Symphony Band. She plays a Yamaha YFB-822 F tuba and a Nirschl MWN 8 CC tuba.
Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1812
Beethoven
Symphony No. 8

Music
Rossini
La scala di seta

Literature
Brothers Grimm
Fairy Tales

Art
Géricault
The Charging Chasseur

History
Louisiana becomes a state

1852
Brahms
Hungarian Dances

Music
Schumann
Requiem

Literature
Dickens
Bleak House

Art
Millais
Ophelia

History
French Second Empire begins

1925
Kodály
Dances of Marosszék

Music
Gershwin
Piano Concerto in F

Literature
Dos Passos
Manhattan Transfer

Art
Kokoschka
Tower Bridge

History
Scopes Trial

Folk music of Central Europe, real and imagined, bookends today’s concert. At the turn of the 19th century, the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály, together with his friend Béla Bartók, collected an abundance of folk music and then incorporated some of the material into marvelous compositions. Dances of Marosszék draws upon an especially rich oral tradition of old folk-dance music that Kodály found in the region of Marosszék. Johannes Brahms, although not Hungarian, was deeply attracted to Hungarian music throughout his career. This impulse, which ultimately related more to urban rather than authentic peasant sources—was long-lasting and made its way not only into extraordinarily popular compositions like his Hungarian Dances, but also into many of his most serious pieces.

Although Philadelphian Jennifer Higdon, who just last month won a Grammy Award for her Viola Concerto, has long been well-known to audiences here, she is now ever more recognized internationally. Her concertos in particular—including the Concerto for Orchestra that she composed for the Philadelphians’ centennial season—are especially admired. On this concert we hear a new joint commission from the orchestras of Philadelphia, Chicago, and Baltimore for a multi-instrument brass concerto, scored for two tenor trombones, bass trombone, and tuba.

While Beethoven’s buoyant Symphony No. 8 may be eclipsed by its mighty neighbors, the popular Seventh and the mighty Ninth, its modest scale lovingly looks back to his own teacher Joseph Haydn. The Symphony is a delightful piece, brimming with good cheer and witty touches.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only American orchestra with weekly broadcasts on Sirius XM’s Symphony Hall, Channel 76, made possible through support from the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation on behalf of David and Sandy Marshall. Broadcasts are heard on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.
Zoltán Kodály excelled in three independent but related fields of musical activity, achieving international renown as a composer, an ethnomusicologist specializing in Hungarian folk music, and a music educator with particular interests in choral singing. He vigorously advanced the cause of Hungarian music, making contributions to the restoration of national pride in Hungary during the turbulent years following the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire at the end of World War I.

A Champion of Folk Music An ardent nationalist, Kodály worked in tandem with his friend and colleague Béla Bartók to incorporate Hungarian folk music into contemporary composition. While Bartók was the more Modernist of the two, Kodály preferred to weave complete folk tunes into his works, which are frequently settings, harmonizations, or arrangements of melodies he had collected himself.

Despite their differences in compositional style and musical tastes, Bartók and Kodály had tremendous respect for each other’s work. Bartók acknowledged his friend’s musical integrity and gift for composition when he wrote that Kodály “is a great master of form and possesses a striking individuality; he works in a concentrated fashion and despises any sensation, false brilliance, any extraneous effect.”

Kodály began working on the Dances of Marosszék in 1923 when he received a commission for the 50th anniversary celebration of the union of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda to form the Hungarian capital, Budapest. He had planned to base the work on some of the Transylvanian folk melodies he had collected in 1912. But when he found out that Bartók was planning to write his own folk-inflected Dance Suite for the same occasion, Kodály put the Dances of Marosszék aside and hurriedly composed the Psalmus hungaricus (one of his most popular works) instead. It wasn’t until several years later, in 1927, that the Dances of Marosszék were published, appearing in a version for solo piano.

Kodály was a cellist and conductor by training, and was not closely associated with the piano either as a performer or composer. The initial publication of the Dances of Marosszék for solo piano was, then, something of an
Dances of Marosszék was composed for piano from 1923 to 1927, and was arranged for orchestra in 1929.

Eugene Ormandy conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the work on a Senior Student Concert in November 1962. The only other performances were at the Robin Hood Dell in July 1975 with Seymour Lipkin and on subscription in May 2003 with Hugh Wolff.

The Philadelphia recorded the Dances in 1962 with Ormandy for CBS.

The score calls for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, bassoon, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, small drum), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 12 minutes.

anomaly. But the ease with which Kodály arranged them for orchestra (in a score published in 1930) indicates that he was probably thinking orchestrally when he conceived the work, and that the solo piano version was simply a reduction of this original idea.

Neither was Kodály a prolific composer for the orchestra, focusing mainly on choral works—a genre in which he is widely regarded as one of the rare 20th-century masters. But the Hungarian folk songs that provided raw material for so many of his choral pieces also motivated the composition of a few very popular orchestral works. In addition to the Dances of Marosszék, Kodály's orchestral works that remain in the current repertory include the Suite from Háry Janós, the “Peacock” Variations, and the Dances of Galánta.

A Closer Look

Kodály noted in his preface to the score that the region of Marosszék was an especially rich source of old folk-dance music in Hungary, and that dances from other regions of Hungary were sometimes referred to also as Marosszáki. These tunes were probably originally sung—some were still extant in their texted form when Kodály collected them—but had been passed down for generations in instrumental versions. Kodály wrote that “until the [First World] war, one could hear such pieces in every village, played either on the violin or on a shepherd's flute; old people used to sing them.” His recollections of such instrumental performances undoubtedly influenced the scoring of the work.

Kodály explicitly distinguished these dances from the urbanized and westernized notions of Hungarian folk music popularized in works such as Brahms's Hungarian Dances, noting that the melodies Brahms used were “the expression of the spirit of the Hungarian city about 1860, being mostly composed by native musicians of this era.” The Dances of Marosszék, on the other hand, use the more authentic, centuries-old folk melodies of the Hungarian peasant villages.

The Dances of Marosszék are in a single-movement rondo form, with three contrasting interludes and a coda. While the work abounds in melodies that use the gapped or “gypsy” scale, with its characteristic augmented seconds, most of the folk color is found in the rhythms: sometimes graceful, other times aggressive and energetic. True to their folk heritage, the rhythms resist standardization into regular meters, often creating complex patterns of accent and articulation. Kodály allows the folk melodies to dominate by keeping the orchestration crystalline and the harmonization frugal, and by avoiding contrapuntal development.

—Luke Howard
When Jennifer Higdon writes a concerto, she pays close attention not just to the solo instruments in question but also to the soloists. Though her output ranges widely, her concertos stand out for their depth and detail, and have garnered significant awards. When writing her Concerto for Orchestra for The Philadelphia Orchestra’s Centennial Commissions, Higdon spent countless hours with members of the Orchestra, learning all she could about the capabilities and delights of each instrument. For her Percussion Concerto she paid careful attention to feedback from soloist Colin Currie: It won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2010. She was also deeply familiar with the artistry of Hilary Hahn—who had been a student in her classes at the Curtis Institute of Music—when writing the Violin Concerto that won the Pulitzer Prize in Music. This year a recording of her Viola Concerto featuring Curtis colleague Roberto Díaz as soloist won another Best Contemporary Classical Composition Grammy Award.

Born in Brooklyn but raised in Tennessee, Higdon attended Bowling Green State University and later studied composition at Curtis and at the University of Pennsylvania. She currently holds Curtis' Rock Chair in Composition. She has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Pew Fellowship, Meet the Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts and many other organizations. Her 2015 opera Cold Mountain played to sold-out audiences at Santa Fe Opera and Opera Philadelphia. Her music is communicative and brilliantly structured and orchestrated, and it blends tonality with raucous dissonance. It has been performed by a wide range of orchestras and soloists, at prominent venues and festivals.

When Higdon was presented with a commission by the Chicago Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Baltimore Symphony to write a concerto for two tenor trombones, bass trombone, and tuba, she performed her usual due diligence and sought out the advice of the soloists. “They said, ‘We can play beautifully, We can play soft!’ They wanted some lyrical material,” the composer said, in an article on the Chicago Symphony’s website.
They wanted the audience to hear the beauty of what they can do. They also said, ‘We want music that has serious depth, that isn’t just dancing hippo or dancing elephant music,’ which is the kind of music people expect them to play.”

This commission and its Philadelphia premiere are made possible through the generous support of Susan and Frank Mechura, with additional support provided, in part, by Drs. Bong and Mi-Wha Lee.

A Closer Look

The 17-minute Low Brass Concerto is structured as a single, continuous movement with clearly delineated sections. The various sections highlight the lyricism, muscular panache, and headlong capacity for dissonance and resolution of the soloists. The Concerto also features prominent contrasting material for the wind and string choirs, and at times pits the “higher brass” against the lush sonorities of the low brass soloists.

—Paul Horsley

Higdon wrote the following note about the piece:

Normally, when people think of brass they think of power, which is not an inaccurate assessment. But brass players are quick to tell you that they also can play beautiful melodies, and do so quietly and with exquisite control. So early on in the planning process for this Concerto, I decided to create music that would emphasize the qualities of majesty, grace, and power.

Writing this Concerto was a tremendous challenge, primarily because where normally there is one person standing at the front of the stage, suddenly I had four. Fortunately, I’ve had two prior opportunities to write concertos for multiple soloists. My first work was with my bluegrass/classical hybrid concerto for Time for Three, Concerto 4-3 (which was commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra). The second time was writing On a Wire, for the four-time Grammy winners Eighth Blackbird (which they performed here last fall with The Philadelphia Orchestra).

When I begin work on a commission, I look at what other composers have written for the instruments that I will feature. In the case of a low brass concerto, there isn’t much repertoire. But I also think a lot about the personalities of the players (because in a way, as a composer, it is my job to highlight that as well). I have, after decades of writing music, learned that
low brass players are always fun to work with. They bring an infectious joy to everything they play, which in itself is inspiring. This was confirmed when our players, Nitzan, Matt, Blair, and Carol, met with me to talk about what they’d like in a concerto, and also when they were so graciously willing to try out some of the music as I was writing it.

With all of this in mind, I decided to compose a traditional work that highlights these qualities, in straightforward lines and melodies. Sometimes it is the most challenging thing that a composer can do: compose a melody or chorale, with no special effects or colors, just focusing on the moving line. This is a work in one movement, with alternating slow and fast sections. There are solos for each player, as well as a few duets, and some chorales. It is a musical portrait of four extraordinary players, each working individually and as a group, bringing to the front of the stage, all of their majesty, grace, and power.

The Low Brass Concerto was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony, with The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony serving as co-commissioners.

The Music
Symphony No. 8

Sandwiched between the expansive Seventh Symphony and the revolutionary Ninth, the Symphony No. 8 demonstrates that the further Beethoven progressed, the further he looked back to his roots. He had been reforming the genre of the symphony, reaching beyond his own time to create a tectonic shift in symphonic composition that carried through the next century. However, the Symphony No. 8, composed in 1812, was a throwback to a musically simpler time, yet still imparted something new and different.

1812: The Year of the “Immortal Beloved”
Beethoven’s 1812 diary shows a recommitment to music after the failure of multiple romantic relationships, with a notable exception in the legendary “Immortal Beloved”—the intended recipient of a 10-page unsent letter written by the composer in July 1812. Her identity is still debated, but the most likely candidate is arts patron Antonie Brentano,
Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 8 in 1812.

Fritz Scheel led the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Beethoven’s Eighth, in November 1902. The work’s last appearance on subscription concerts was in October 2015, with Donald Runnicles.

The Philadelphians have recorded the Symphony twice: with Eugene Ormandy in 1961 for CBS and with Riccardo Muti in 1987 for EMI. The second movement alone was recorded in 1920 for RCA, with Leopold Stokowski. A live recording with Christoph Eschenbach from 2006 is also currently available as a digital download.

The score calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, timpani, and strings.

The Symphony runs approximately 27 minutes in performance.

married at the time to a successful Frankfurt merchant. Beethoven's life that year was further complicated by continued attempts to improve his own health, with the ever-looming likelihood of growing old unmarried and completely deaf. A long-standing family drama with his brother Johann, whose relationship with a housekeeper Beethoven was trying to break up, also required multiple trips to Linz. He turned away from this emotional turmoil when composing his Eighth Symphony, creating a refreshing self-titled “Little Symphony in F,” of which he was quite fond.

The work received its premiere on February 27, 1814, in Vienna's Redoutensaal. Like many of Beethoven's premieres, the concert was financed, produced, rehearsed, and conducted by the composer himself and was a performance marathon—also included were his Symphony No. 7, a revision of the vocal trio “Tremate, empi, tremate,” and the triumphant Wellington’s Victory. Performance forces were immense, with an ensemble of more than 70 strings alone. By this time, Beethoven’s conducting was hampered by his ever-increasing deafness and one reviewer noted that “the orchestra largely ignored his ungainly gestures and followed the principal violinist instead.”

Audience reaction to Beethoven’s new symphony was less than enthusiastic by the composer's standards. The Seventh had been immensely popular, and with Wellington’s Victory celebrating an end to decades of war, the audience at the Redoutensaal may not have been receptive to musical refinement and nostalgia. Beethoven himself, when asked why the Eighth Symphony was less popular than the Seventh, allegedly replied, “because the Eighth is so much better.”

A Closer Look Beethoven paid tribute to the Classical era from the outset of this Symphony with a first movement (Allegro vivace e con brio) in clear sonata form. Originally sketched for a piano concerto, this movement is a joyful dialogue among strings, winds, and the full orchestra. Beethoven's musical jokes (which Mahler later tried to "correct") come through in nontraditional key progressions and an errant C-sharp, which is out of character for the movement's key. Urban legend holds that the second movement (Allegretto scherzando) is an homage to the chronometer, a precursor to the metronome, patented by German inventor and Beethoven friend Johann Nepomuk Maelzel. The legend continues that the movement's opening bars are a canon composed at a dinner party as a tribute Maelzel. Although the ticking 16th notes of the winds sound metronomic and the 64th-note repetitions in the strings suggest an unwinding spring of the early-
The patterns of migration that are often brought about by war, famine, and social upheaval can play a vital role in the cultural cross-fertilization with which art continually renews itself. Without actually rejoicing in social trauma, we can nevertheless benefit from an examination of such works as Brahms’s Hungarian Dances by remembering that these pieces arose largely as a result of random historical circumstance. Thousands of Hungarians fled Europe after the Austrians quashed an uprising of 1848; a great many of them set sail from Brahms’s hometown, the port city of Hamburg. Often they waited months before gaining passage to North America or elsewhere, and of course thousands stayed and lived in Hamburg. It was thus that the young Brahms had his first contact around 1850 with the alla zingarese (“gypsy”) style, which at that time was thought of as “Hungarian folk music,” but whose tunes we now

—Nancy Plum

The Music
Hungarian Dances

18th-century chronometer, it is more likely this movement was inspired by Haydn’s “Clock” Symphony. Innovative in its intermezzo style rather than the traditional Adagio, this movement is a miniature of pastoral frolicking and playful tunes—more musical invention than musical joke.

Beethoven himself had rendered the customary third movement Minuet obsolete by replacing it with a Scherzo in previous symphonies, but returned to the form in this work with a rustic movement reminiscent of out-of-doors Vienna. Beethoven advanced its Classical format into the 19th century with offbeat sforzandos and a heavier orchestration. The “Trio” is led by two horns and a solo clarinet, which is stretched to an unprecedented technical height of a written G6 (the fourth line above the staff). The fourth movement (Allegro vivace) recalls the Classical rondo structure until measure 17, when a fortissimo C-sharp interrupts the peaceful atmosphere. As if undeterred by this out-of-place interruption, the movement continues in standard rondo form with three refrains, two intervening episodes, and a closing coda. This movement is the first in which the timpani are tuned in octaves, a device which Beethoven uses again in the Ninth Symphony. In the concluding coda, the rogue C-sharp returns to lead the music back to a spirited close.

—Nancy Plum
Brahms composed his Hungarian Dances from 1852 to 1869, originally for piano four-hands.

The first appearance of any of Brahms’s Hungarian Dances on an Orchestra program was in January 1902, when Fritz Scheel led the Orchestra in Nos. 5 and 6. The most recent appearance of multiple Dances on a subscription set were in November 1995, with Georges Prêtre.

The Orchestra’s very first commercial recording was of the Hungarian Dance Nos. 5 and 6, in 1917 with Leopold Stokowski. He also recorded No. 1, in both 1920 and 1934 for RCA. Eugene Ormandy recorded a selection of seven Dances in 1957 and just No. 5 in 1967, for CBS.

The works are scored variously for one or two piccolos, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle), harp, and strings.

Performance time for today’s selection runs approximately 15 minutes.

believe to have stemmed chiefly from ensembles of urban “gypsies”—the once-nomadic peoples now called Romanies. The 19th-century craze for this dashing musical style of the czárdás, the lassú, and the friss pervaded all of Europe.

Assimilating Folk Elements A number of composers, most notably Franz Liszt, tried to assimilate elements of these folk styles into tone poems, chamber music, and especially transcriptions and arrangements of various kinds. Brahms was especially fascinated with the music’s extremes of rubato (rhythmic “give-and-take”) and its irregular, complex meters. Through his friendship with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Hoffmann (known as Reményi), with whom he toured Europe in the early 1850s as piano accompanist, the composer not only learned the zingarese style of playing but also became acquainted with a large number of the tunes—many of which were appearing in popular published collections.

Brahms began his own arrangements of the Hungarian Dances in 1852, while still in his teens; over the next 17 years he set 21 numbers for piano four-hands, which were published in four volumes in 1869 and 1880. Three of these were original compositions in the style of the Romany music; the rest were settings of gypsy tunes in various combinations—most of which have now been identified by scholars. These dances were enormously popular and not only enjoyed brisk sales but also inspired widespread imitation; even Dvořák acknowledged his debt to these transcriptions when he prepared the publication of his own Slavonic Dances, also first conceived for piano duet.

A Closer Look Brahms himself orchestrated only three of the dances, Nos. 1, 3, and 10, in 1873. The other orchestrations heard on today’s concert are by Johann Andreas Hallén (No. 2), Paul Huon (No. 4), Sam Dennison (No. 8), and Albert Parlow (No. 16). All are sectional, containing flamboyant alternations of fast sections with slower parts rich in rubato and plangently expressive melodies. Some begin with a slow section and build to a gradual acceleration, others begin vigorously and become even more agitated before a return to normalcy. Most end with some sort of reprise of opening material.

—Paul J. Horsley

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