

2023–2024 | 124th Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, January 26, at 2:00

Saturday, January 27, at 8:00

Sunday, January 28, at 2:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Gil Shaham Violin

Jeanine De Bique Soprano

Christopher Maltman Baritone

Philadelphia Symphonic Choir

Joe Miller Director

Bates *Nomad Concerto*, for violin and orchestra

I. Song of the Balloon Man

II. Magician at the Bazaar

III. Desert Vision: Oasis

IV. Le Jazz manouche

World premiere—Philadelphia Orchestra co-commission

Intermission

Peña Laguna *Oraison*, for chorus and orchestra

First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Brahms *A German Requiem*, Op. 45

I. Selig sind, die da Leid tragen

II. Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras

III. Herr, lehre doch mich

IV. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen

V. Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit

VI. Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt

VII. Selig sind die Toten

This program runs approximately 2 hours, 15 minutes.

These concerts are sponsored by **Dr. and Mrs. Joseph B. Townsend.**

The Bates co-commission and its world premiere performances are made possible through the generous support of **Joseph and Bette Hirsch** and **Carol Kaganov.**

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, in Verizon Hall and around the community, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; School

Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; All City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad. The Orchestra's free online video series, Our City, Your Orchestra (OCYO), uncovers and amplifies the voices, stories, and causes championed by unique Philadelphia organizations and businesses. Joining OCYO in connecting with the community is HearTOGETHER, a free monthly podcast featuring artists and activists who discuss music, social justice, and the lived experiences that inform the drive to create a more equitable and inclusive future for the arts.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 13 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Music and Artistic Director

London Nordeman



Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 12th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty "Philadelphia Sound" in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers and by performing the music of under-appreciated composers of the past. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 13 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Soloist



Chris Lee

Gil Shaham made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1988 at the Mann Center and has performed regularly with the Philadelphians ever since. He is one of the foremost violinists of our time. His flawless technique, combined with his inimitable warmth and generosity of spirit, has solidified his renown as an American master. The GRAMMY Award winner and *Musical America* "Instrumentalist of the Year" is sought after throughout the world for concerto appearances

with leading orchestras and conductors. He regularly gives recitals and appears with ensembles on the world's great concert stages and at the most prestigious festivals. Highlights of recent years include the acclaimed recording and performances of J.S. Bach's complete sonatas and partitas for solo violin. In the coming seasons, in addition to championing these solo works, he will join his long-time duo partner, pianist Akira Eguchi, in recitals throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Appearances with orchestra regularly include the Berlin, Israel, New York, and Los Angeles philharmonics; the Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco symphonies; the Orchestre de Paris; and multi-year residencies with the orchestras of Montreal, Stuttgart, and Singapore.

Mr. Shaham has recorded more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs, earning multiple GRAMMYS, a Grand Prix du Disque, the Diapason d'Or, and *Gramophone* Editor's Choice awards. Many of these recordings appear on Canary Classics, the label he founded in 2004. His recordings include *1930s Violin Concertos*, *Virtuoso Violin Works*, Elgar's Violin Concerto, *Hebrew Melodies*, *The Butterfly Lovers*, and many more. His *1930s Violin Concertos Vol. 2* was nominated for a GRAMMY Award. His latest recording of Beethoven and Brahms concertos with the Knights was released in 2021.

Born in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, in 1971, Mr. Shaham moved with his parents to Israel, where he began violin studies at the age of seven, receiving annual scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. In 1981 he made debuts with the Jerusalem Symphony and the Israel Philharmonic. In 1982, after taking first prize in Israel's Claremont Competition, he became a scholarship student at the Juilliard School. He also studied at Columbia University. He was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990 and in 2008 received the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. In 2012 he was named "Instrumentalist of the Year" by *Musical America*. He plays the 1699 "Countess Polignac" Stradivarius and also an Antonio Stradivari violin, Cremona c. 1719, with the assistance of Rare Violins in Consortium, Artists and Benefactors Collaborative. He lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, and their three children.

Soloist



Tim Tronckoe

Trinidadian soprano **Jeanine De Bique** makes her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. Additional highlights of her 2023–24 season include a return to Paris Opera for her debut in the title role of Massenet's *Cinderella*, her house debut at the Berlin State Opera as Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen* at Barcelona's Gran Teatre de Liceu. In concert she presents a new program of Baroque arias and Caribbean folk songs with

Holland Baroque on tour throughout the Netherlands. She also performs with the English Concert, the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic, and the B'Rock Orchestra in Belgium.

Highlights of Ms. De Bique's recent seasons include several important role and house debuts, including Isabel in George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* at the Zurich Opera House; the title role in Handel's *Alcina* at the Opéra National de Paris followed by her return as Susanna in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*; Poppea in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* with the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer; Anai in Rossini's *Moses and Pharoah* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival; and Agathe in Weber's *Der Freischütz* with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin and Christoph Eschenbach. At Houston Grand Opera she appeared as Maria in excerpts from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. Most recently she returned to the Salzburg Festival for Purcell's *Indian Queen* under the baton of Teodor Currentzis and to the BBC Proms for Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri* with the London Symphony and Simon Rattle. Equally sought after in concert, she gave her solo recital debut at New York's Carnegie Hall and appeared at Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival. She has performed at the Montreal Symphony's summer festival as well as with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel; the Pittsburgh Symphony and Manfred Honeck; the London Symphony and Mr. Rattle; the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Martin Fröst; the Vienna Philharmonic and Herbert Blomstedt; the Dallas, New World, St. Louis, and WDR symphonies; and the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Mirrors, Ms. De Bique's first solo CD with Concerto Köln, was released by Berlin Classics in 2021. The album received the 2022 Opus Klassik Award, a Diapason d'Or découverte, and the Edison Klassiek award, as well as the Editor's Choice award in *Gramophone*, *Fono Forum*, and *Opera* magazines. The CD's program was also presented throughout Europe and the US, including at Carnegie Hall.

Soloist

Chris Singer



GRAMMY Award–winning baritone **Christopher Maltman** has appeared to wide acclaim on all the major operatic stages, including the Royal Opera House, the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, the Berlin State Opera, and Teatro alla Scala in Milan, to name a few. Initially associated with the works of Mozart and a globally renowned Don Giovanni, his extensive and ever-growing repertoire

includes roles such as Iago in Verdi's *Otello*, Wotan in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, Jochanaan in Strauss's *Salome*, Mandryka in Strauss's *Arabella*, the title role in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Orest in Strauss's *Elektra*, Amfortas in Wagner's *Parsifal*, Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca*, and the title role in Enescu's *Oedipe*.

Mr. Maltman made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in December 2004. He makes two exciting debuts this season: as Wotan in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* in Barrie Kosky's new production of the *Ring Cycle* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and as Scarpia at the Berlin State Opera. He also appears as Don Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, both at the Vienna State Opera, and as Iago at the Bavarian State Opera. On the concert platform, he joins the Antwerp Symphony and Kevin John Edusei for Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*; the Orchestre de Paris and Daniel Harding for Mahler's Symphony No. 8; the Netherlands Philharmonic under the baton of Ivor Bolton for Bach's St. Matthew Passion; the Lahti Symphony and Martyn Brabbins for Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*; and gives a recital with pianist Audrey Saint-Gil at the Oxford International Song Festival. Last season Mr. Maltman appeared as Leporello at the Royal Opera House; Count di Luna in Verdi's *Il trovatore* at Washington National Opera; Amfortas at the Grand Théâtre de Genève; Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff* at the Metropolitan Opera; Wotan in Wagner's *Die Walküre* at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples; and Rigoletto at the Berlin State Opera. Concert appearances included Brahms's *A German Requiem* with the Rochester Philharmonic conducted by Andreas Delfs.

Following his degree in biochemistry from the University of Warwick, Mr. Maltman studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music. His breakthrough performance came when he won the Lieder Prize in the 1997 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. He remains a renowned interpreter of lieder and song. His vast and varied discography includes John Corigliano's GRAMMY Award–winning *The Ghosts of Versailles* from Los Angeles Opera. In 2023 Erato released *Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette & Cléopâtre* featuring Mr. Maltman with the Strasbourg Philharmonic, led by John Nelson.

Choir

Jessica Griffin



The **Philadelphia Symphonic Choir** made its debut in December 2016, performing in three programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra that season. Consisting of talented vocalists auditioned from around the country, the ensemble was created to marry gifted and unique voices of Philadelphia and beyond with the legendary Philadelphia Sound. Last season the Choir appeared in The Philadelphia Orchestra's performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Bruckner's "Christus factus est" and

Te Deum, and Holst's *The Planets*. Other recent highlights with the Orchestra include the world premiere of the concert version of Kevin Puts's opera *The Hours* in Verizon Hall and performances of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall. The ensemble has also sung in performances of Haydn's *The Seasons*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 ("Kaddish"), and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, as well as holiday performances of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by **Joe Miller**, professor of conducting and director of choral studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). He is also artistic director of choral activities for the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina. He has served as conductor of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir since 2016 and made his conducting debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra in 2021 leading Handel's *Messiah*. Featured concerts in the 2023–24 CCM season include Bach's St. Matthew Passion featuring stage direction by James Alexander, Gregory Spears's *The Tower and the Garden*, and collaborations with Gallicantus. Mr. Miller closes the season with the world premiere of Layale Chaker and Lisa Schlesinger's *Ruinous Gods* at the Spoleto Festival USA and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* with Berkshire Choral International. From 2006 to 2020 he served as professor of conducting and director of choral activities at Westminster Choir College of Rider University. His debut recording with the Westminster Choir, *Flower of Beauty*, received four stars from *Choir & Organ* magazine and earned critical praise from *American Record Guide*.

This season marks the premiere of the film *Maestro*, a collaboration with Bradley Cooper and Netflix featuring the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir and the music of Leonard Bernstein.

Philadelphia Symphonic Choir

Joe Miller Director

Sopranos

Hayley Abramowitz
Elise Brancheau
Andrea Broido
Katharine Burns
Lilian Carmichael
Abigail Chapman
Maria Costa
Lauren Cohen
Marisa Curcio
Natalie Esler
Sofia Farrell
Alexandra Gilliam
Julie-Ann Green
Jin Jang
Rachael Lipson
Yitian Luo
Nöel McCormick
Jorie Moss
Luciana Piovan
Rebecca Ruescher
Sophia Santiago
Emily Tiberi
Pei Wang

Altos

Tanisha Anderson
Robin Bier
Katherine Brown
Marissa Chalker
Lori Cummines-Huck
Calli Ann Graver
Alyson Harvey
Jessica Kerler
Kelsey Lewis
Kimberly Martinez

Megan McFadden
Meghan McGinty
Alexandra
Meakem
Heather Mitchell
Elisabeth Pace
Rebecca Roy
Sarah Sensenig
Cecilia Snow
Lisa Stein
Kaitlyn Tierney
Kaitlyn Waterson
Kathryn Whitaker
Liyao Yu

Tenors

Brendan Barker
Zachary Chan
Matthew Coules
Samuel Denler
Noah Donahue
Jonathan Feinstein
Aidan Gent
Jonathan Hartwell
Bryan Hoyos
Joshua John
Colin Kase
William Lim
Joshua Lisner
Maximiliano Marques
Michael McCormick
DonLeroy Morales
Jacob Nelson
Eric Rodriguez
Kev Schneider
Reid Shriver

Tyler Tejada
Tyler Wert
Carson Zajdel

Basses

Christopher Aldrich
Steven Berlanga
Gordon Blodgett
Greg Boatman
Vinroy D. Brown
Kyle Chastulik
Edwin Peter Christian
Alec Dorris
Samuel Duffey
Matthew English
Mark Hightower
Robert Lamb
Matthew Marinelli
John Miles
Alexander Nguyen
Erik Potteiger
John Scherch
Douglas Stuart
Sergey Tkachenko
Kirby Traylor
Jackson Williams

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1865

Brahms

A German

Requiem

Music

Dvořák

Symphony

No. 2

Literature

Carroll

Alice's

Adventures in

Wonderland

Art

Homer

Prisoners from

the Front

History

Lincoln

assassinated

The concert today opens with a Philadelphia Orchestra co-commission as Gil Shaham plays the world premiere of a new violin concerto by Mason Bates, one of the most performed American composers of our time. Bates states that the eclectic four-movement *Nomad Concerto* explores "the mysterious and soulful music of the wanderer. ... In the same way that nomadic musics have continually reimagined themselves, the many styles informing the concerto are swirled together into a cohesive whole."

Oraison, by the Cuban-Canadian composer Luis Ernesto Peña Laguna, was written as a companion piece to Brahms's *A German Requiem*, which closes the concert. The work offers a tribute to victims of the COVID-19 pandemic and premiered in Montreal with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting. Sung in four languages, it ends on a note of joyful hope.

Brahms's *A German Requiem* was likewise born of grief and a desire to comfort the living. Brahms looked back to the death of his mentor, Robert Schumann, and his beloved mother when he composed the work in his mid-30s. It was the piece that first brought him wide fame. Unlike most requiems, which set the Latin Mass for the Dead, Brahms turned to Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

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Music and Artistic Director

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The Music

Nomad Concerto

Mason Bates

Born in Philadelphia, January 23, 1977

Now living in Burlingame, California



The music of the American composer Mason Bates defies easy categorization. It often fuses genres that we might consider to be incompatible, even antithetical to one another. Electronic house music and symphonies, for example, seem to make uncomfortable bedfellows, yet they somehow appear destined for one another in one of Bates's best-known compositions titled *Mothership* (2011). Commissioned by the YouTube Symphony Orchestra and Michael Tilson Thomas, the piece combines the driving rhythms of techno with orchestral writing that is both colorful and precise. It is this combination of accessibility and hybridity that has helped to propel him to international fame in recent years.

Bates's music often centers on technology—as an idea and as a medium for the creation of new soundworlds and timbres. Perhaps his most famous work is the GRAMMY Award–winning opera *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (2019), which centers on the biography of America's famous tech guru. And his *Philharmonia Fantastique* (2021), the composer's self-described "concerto for orchestra and animated film," integrates live orchestral performance, digital animations, film, and pre-recorded sound. Bates is fluent in traditional orchestra genres as well and has written three other concertos before the *Nomad Concerto*, composed for Gil Shaham, which receives its world premiere on this concert.

A True Collaboration Bates explains that the Concerto is "envisioned to showcase Shaham's legendary Old World sound," and in this respect is very much in keeping with a tradition of collaborative concerto writing that stretches back centuries. Mozart wrote some of his for Antonio Brunetti; Mendelssohn's great final work with the help of its dedicatee, the violinist Ferdinand David; and Brahms wrote his for longtime friend Joseph Joachim. Like its predecessors, Bates's *Nomad Concerto* was born from the unique alchemy of the composer's creative imagination and the particular style of the soloist for whom it was written.

One aspect of Shaham's playing that is particularly influential for the *Nomad Concerto* can be heard on *Nigunim: Hebrew Melodies*, a 2013 collaborative album featuring Gil and his sister, pianist Orli Shaham. The keening lyricism that Shaham brings to such works as Ernst Bloch's *Baal Shem* (1923) or Avner Dorman's Violin

Sonata No. 3 ("Nigunim") (2011) is refracted and transformed in Bates's Concerto, fused with other musical traditions including that of the Eastern European Roma and early-20th-century jazz. While stylistic mixture has long been a hallmark of Bates's compositional voice, he explains the particular combination of idioms found in the *Nomad Concerto* as emerging from the desire to explore "the mysterious and soulful music of the wanderer. ... In the same way that nomadic musics have continually reimagined themselves, the many styles informing the concerto are swirled together into a cohesive whole."

A Closer Look The first movement (**Song of the Balloon Man**) tells the story of "an old balloon seller wandering through a village singing a doleful tune, which is gradually picked up by the villagers." The movement opens with ethereal chords and shimmering harmonics in the strings and the violinist enters almost unobtrusively, strumming on his instrument as if it were a mandolin. This pizzicato motif is eventually passed along to the cellos as the soloist opens into ever more lyrical and virtuosic figurations over the course of the movement.

Reminiscent of a scherzo in its playfulness, the second movement (**Magician at the Bazaar**) showcases Bates's flair for inventive timbres. While the violin leaps out of the orchestral texture with gossamer-thin threads of melodic energy, the rest of the ensemble responds with radiant splashes of sound largely defined by the creative orchestration of flute and clarinet figurations.

In **Desert Vision: Oasis**, Bates makes prominent use of the Jewish folk melody "Ani Ma'amin," setting it within what he describes as "haunting orchestral expanses depicting the vast deserts of the Middle East." The music of the Romani-French jazz guitarist and composer Django Reinhardt (1910–53) provides the inspiration for the fourth and final movement of the Concerto (**Le Jazz manouche**). Perhaps the most abstract one of the piece, it opens with the soloist performing a steadily accelerating motif *sul ponticello* that returns several times throughout. Among the more notable features of this finale is its replication of improvisational dialogues in more traditional jazz combos as small melodic motifs are passed back and forth across the ensemble. After a reflective episode of almost Romantic lyricism with lushly orchestrated harmonies, the opening *sul ponticello* theme returns one last time to help drive the piece to a rousing conclusion.

—Sean Colonna

Bates composed the Nomad Concerto in 2023.

These are the world premiere performances of the piece.

The work is scored for solo violin, two flutes (I doubling piccolo II, II doubling alto flute and piccolo I), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (bass drum, bongo, djembe, drum kit, finger cymbals, glockenspiel, rutes, tambourine, Thai gong, triangles, wood blocks), harp, piano, and strings.

The Concerto runs approximately 25 minutes in performance.

The Music

Oraison

Luis Ernesto Peña Laguna

Born in Las Tunas, Cuba, October 10, 1983

Now living in Montreal



A Canadian of Cuban origin, Luis Ernesto Peña Laguna began his musical studies at the Escuela Vocacional de Arte El Cucalambé in his Cuban hometown of Las Tunas, nicknamed the Ciudad de las Esculturas (City of Sculptures). He holds degrees from Cuba's Conservatorio de Música Esteban Salas and completed programs in composition and conducting at Cuba's University of Art. Peña Laguna holds a master's degree in musical pedagogy from the University of Art, a master's

degree in composition from Montreal University, and is currently pursuing a PhD at the same institution. In addition to his career as a composer, he has been active as a conductor, educator, lecturer, and author.

As an educator, Peña Laguna taught harmony, polyphony, and analysis classes at Cuba's Amadeo Roldán Conservatory, the National Lyric Palace, the National School of Art, and the University of Art. Since 2017 he has been an independent teacher and composer in Montreal with his company, Chenille Musicale. He has won more than 35 international awards and scholarships, including composition contests in France and Serbia. Peña Laguna's wide-ranging and diverse output includes pieces for solo, chamber, choral, and symphonic instruments and ensembles, and crosses numerous disciplinary genres, including dance, theater, and the electro-acoustical field.

Modern-Day Requiem *Oraison* was commissioned in 2021 by Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain specifically to be performed with Johannes Brahms's *A German Requiem* as a tribute to victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. The work was premiered in Montreal with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting on May 20, 2022. The following May Nézet-Séguin led the New York premiere with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus, paying special tribute to members of the Metropolitan Opera who had been lost during the pandemic.

Just as Brahms's Requiem emphasizes remembrance of the dead by those left behind, *Oraison* also speaks to grief and comfort for the living. The title evokes a meditative prayer and the text is a portion of 21st-century French author Jean Massard's poem *La Danse humaine*, commissioned by Peña Laguna for this piece. Massard's poem, principally in French and Latin with English and Spanish



The
Philadelphia
Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

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Photo: Jeff Fusco

interpolations, is inscribed "To the millions of victims of the coronavirus pandemic; to those who helped the dead and the living; to those who preserved the gestures of humanity against them like treasures."

The Latin text draws from the biblical Book of Psalms, as well as the liturgical Mass for the Dead. The French text is of recollection, especially a recurring "gesture" that particularly resonated with Peña Laguna when he reflected on the pandemic and how it was managed in Canada. Massard's Spanish verses ask for eternal rest for all people. *Oraison* is scored for orchestra and a seven-part chorus conveying joyful hope through the four languages of Massard's poem. As Peña Laguna writes, "The use of several languages speaks to the fact that COVID has affected the entire planet."

A Closer Look *Oraison* opens as the chorus cries out in Latin for mercy from "out of the depths" against a steady but soft timpani. The call rises from within the ensemble, beginning with the basses, complemented by chant-like utterances of "miserere" from upper voices. The text "I remember the gesture" recurs as a refrain throughout, and the choral parts shift among languages. Both chorus and orchestra reach an especially pleading high point on the Latin text "dona eis requiem."

Oraison falls naturally into sections, often marked by a change in language, as the texture moves from darkness to light, and from heavy to soft. The harp plays a prominent role, adding a translucent color to the orchestral palette, while the choral writing is harmonic. The description of "weeping people" (*plorantes populi*) begins low in the tenors and basses, adding voices slowly, as universes, both great and small, head toward collision. Complex orchestration brings the piece to a pinnacle as an "eternal light" (*lux aeterna*) shines through, gracefully scored with harp and a pair of oboes.

Peña Laguna's poignant work concludes in a cautiously optimistic coda as the chorus once again remembers "the gesture." As the composer writes, "The composition ends just like it begins ... a way of representing each wave, how the pandemic is cyclic and still not over."

—Nancy Plum

Oraison was composed in 2021.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work and the first time the ensemble has performed a piece by the composer.

The score calls for piccolo, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, strings, and seven-part mixed chorus.

Performance time is approximately eight minutes.

Oraison

(Jean Massard)

*Miserere, miserere, clamaui
De profundis clamaui miserere.*

*Geste, je me souviens du geste
Et des mains qui ont soigné
Geste, je me souviens du geste
Gestes des mains fins de corps
Et des bras qui ont soutenu mon torse
pour boire
Et des doigts anonymes qui ont fait mes
confiances.*

*Gesture, I remember the gesture
Gesture, I remember the gesture*

*Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine.
Potentes et ancillæ
Pauperes et magnates
Egeni*

*Plorantes populi
Concurrunt universi
Grandes et parvuli*

*Gesture, I remember the gesture
Gesture, I remember the gesture*

*Lux æterna,
Lux æterna,
Eternal light*

*Mañana,
Saldremos descalzos
Por los prados húmedos
Al alba*

Murmure ...

Mercy, mercy, I cried
Out of the depths, I cried out for mercy.

Gesture, I remember the gesture
And the hands that healed
Gesture, I remember the gesture
Gestures of the hands and extremities
And arms that supported my chest
to drink
And anonymous fingers that gave me
confidence.

Gesture, I remember the gesture
Gesture, I remember the gesture

Grant them eternal rest, Oh Lord.
The powerful and servants
The poor and rich
I need it

Weeping people
The universes collide
Great and small

Gesture, I remember the gesture
Gesture, I remember the gesture

Eternal light,
Eternal light,
Eternal light

Tomorrow,
We will go out barefoot
Through the dew-covered meadows
At dawn

Whisper ...

The Music

A German Requiem

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833

Died in Vienna, April 3, 1897



The opening words of Johannes Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem)—“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”—capture some of the uniqueness, inspiration, and personal nature of the composer's largest composition, the work that first brought him wide-spread fame. That the text is in German, drawn from Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, is its first unusual feature. This requiem is not the traditional Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead set by so

many composers before and after Brahms. Nor is it a German translation of the Latin such as was occasionally used in performances of requiems by Mozart and others. Brahms's North German Protestant childhood had made him intimately familiar with Luther's 16th-century translation and he carefully chose passages from the Old and New Testaments as well as from the Apocrypha. He explained in a letter: “As regards the title I will admit that I could happily omit the ‘German’ and simply say ‘Human.’” He conspicuously avoided any mention of Christ or of Resurrection, continuing: “I knowingly and intentionally dispensed with passages such as St. John 3:16 [‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son’].”

A Human Requiem The loving sentiment that the opening conveys, an intimate message of comfort, returns to begin the final movement. The terrifying element of the traditional Latin Mass—the fire and brimstone of the “Dies Irae” (Day of Wrath) so memorably dramatized by Mozart, Berlioz, and Verdi—did not appeal to Brahms, who ends his third movement declaring that “no torment shall touch them.” He was not interested in apocalyptic visions of the Last Judgement, but rather in comforting the living left behind. And this gets to what apparently inspired Brahms to compose his unusually human requiem, which looks back nearly a decade to the death of his mentor Robert Schumann in 1856 as well as to the recent passing of his beloved mother, Christiane, in 1865. Musically, the work looks back to the illustrious legacy of Heinrich Schütz, Johann Sebastian Bach, and other German Baroque masters, and to the more recent phenomenon of religious pieces written primarily for performance in concert halls.

Brahms wrote *A German Requiem* in his mid-30s and it was unveiled in stages

between December 1867 and February 1869, starting with the opening three movements in Vienna. He conducted the premiere, including the further fourth, sixth, and seventh movements, at Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday 1868 with the celebrated baritone and close friend Julius Stockhausen as the soloist. Brahms soon decided to add another movement, the fifth, featuring a soprano soloist. The composer Carl Reinecke conducted the first complete performance of all seven movements at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig.

The great success that the Requiem enjoyed fulfilled Schumann's prophetic notice from 15 years earlier when he hailed Brahms as the musical messiah the world had been waiting for since Beethoven's death. After the Bremen performance, Clara Schumann recalled her late husband's article and wrote in her diary that the Requiem had "taken hold of me as no sacred music ever did before. ... As I saw Johannes standing there, baton in hand, I could not help thinking of my dear Robert's prophecy ... which is fulfilled today. The baton was really a magic wand and its spell was upon all present. It was a joy such as I have not felt for a long time."

Other close friends, Brahms's father, and leading musicians also attended the Bremen premiere, including the violinist Joseph Joachim who performed three instrumental works between two of the movements of the Requiem. Although Brahms had not yet written the fifth movement with soprano, Joachim's wife, Amalie, sang "I know that my Redeemer liveth" from Handel's *Messiah* and "Erbarme dich" from Bach's St. Matthew Passion, thus interjecting an explicitly Christian element into the event and perhaps giving Brahms the idea of adding a movement for soprano.

Brahms composed sacred music throughout his career, from choral works in his mid-20s to the Four Serious Songs (which also use biblical texts) and Eleven Choral Preludes for organ at the very end of his life. But the free-thinking composer shunned organized religion and dogma. The composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg wrote a somewhat critical review of the late songs in which he characterized them as "not only undogmatic, but unbelieving." Informing his friend Herzogenberg of his preludes, Brahms remarked, "I will shortly be sending you some little things that you can attack for their 'unChristian thinking.'" Although Brahms shared neither the fervent Catholic religiosity of his symphonic rival Anton Bruckner nor the devout faith of his protégé Antonín Dvořák (who once said Brahms "believes in nothing!"), he nonetheless composed magnificent spiritual music and was deeply connected to the sacred choral tradition.

A Closer Look Brahms gave a symmetrical shape to *A German Requiem*, framed by the consoling outer movements that begin with the same two words ("**Selig sind**"/**Blessed are**) and that use a three-note musical motif that appears in other movements as well. Each of the seven movements concludes with expressions of some kind of joy, hope, comfort, or praise. The second ("**Denn alles Fleisch es**

ist wie Gras"/For all flesh is as grass), the earliest part of the piece that Brahms sketched, unfolds as a gigantic slow funeral march with a more optimistic middle section and a final fast fugato. The prophetic baritone soloist enters for the third movement ("**Herr, lehre doch mich"/Lord, make me to know mine end**), which concludes with an extended double fugue (one in the orchestra, the other for the chorus) and an impressive pedal point for organ, timpani, lower brass, and strings throughout, the sustained pitch of D reflecting the stability of the "hand of God." The brief central fourth movement ("**Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen"/How lovely are Thy tabernacles**), a setting of Psalm 84, is often performed separately in churches and concerts.

The added fifth movement ("**Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit"/And ye now therefore have sorrow**) is the most personal, written after the death of Brahms's mother and containing strikingly relevant words from Isaiah: "I will see you again" and referring to maternal comforting. If any part of Brahms's Requiem conveys something of the terror of the Latin "Dies Irae" it is in the sixth movement ("**Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Staat"/For here have we no continuing city**) with passages familiar from *Messiah*: "The trumpet shall sound" (in German the instrument is *Posaune*—trombone—which is what Brahms uses) and "O death where is thy sting?" This movement, again featuring the authoritative baritone soloist, ends with a triumphant fugue with words drawn from Revelation: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory." The mood shifts back to one of solace for the final choral movement ("**Selig sind die Toten**") that opens with another comforting beatitude: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth."

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Brahms composed A German Requiem from 1865 to 1868.

The first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the German Requiem were in March 1921, with soprano Florence Hinkle, baritone Reinald Werrenrath, and the Philadelphia Orchestra Chorus, with Leopold Stokowski on the podium. The most recent subscription performances were in November 2011 with Yannick Nézet-Séguin leading the Orchestra and soprano Dorothea Röschmann, baritone Matthias Goerne, and the Westminster Symphonic Choir.

In 1962 Eugene Ormandy and the Orchestra recorded the work (in English) in Salt Lake City, Utah, for CBS with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, soprano Phyllis Curtin, and bass Jerome Hines while on a cross-country tour.

Brahms scored the Requiem for an orchestra of piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, two harps, organ, strings, SATB chorus, and baritone and soprano soloists.

The Requiem runs approximately 70 minutes in performance.

A German Requiem

*Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,
denn sie sollen getröstet werden.
Die mit Tränen säen,
werden mit Freuden ernten.
Sie gehen hin und weinen
und tragen edlen Samen,
und kommen mit Freuden
und bringen ihre Garben.*

*Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen
wie des Grases Blumen.
Das Gras ist verdorret
und die Blume abgefallen.
So seid nun geduldig, lieben Brüder,
bis auf die Zukunft des Herrn.
Siehe, ein Ackermann wartet
auf die köstliche Frucht der Erde
und ist geduldig darüber,
bis er empfahe den Morgenregen und
Abendregen.
So seid geduldig.
Aber des Herrn Wort bleibt
in Ewigkeit.
Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wieder
kommen,
und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen;
Freude, ewige Freude,
wird über ihrem Haupte sein;
Freude und Wonne werden sie ergreifen,
und Schmerz und Seufzen wird
weg müssen.*

I. Chorus

Blessed are they that mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
They that go forth and weep,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing their sheaves with them.

II. Chorus

For all flesh is as grass,
and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass.
The grass withereth,
and the flower thereof falleth away.
Be patient therefore, brethren,
unto the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the husbandman waiteth
for the precious fruit of the earth,
and hath long patience for it,
until he receive the early and
latter rain.
Be ye also patient.
But the word of the Lord endureth
for ever.
And the redeemed of the Lord shall
return,
and come to Zion with songs
and eternal joy
upon their heads:
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall
flee away.

Please turn the page quietly.

III. Baritone Solo and Chorus

*Herr, lehre doch mich,
dass ein Ende mit mir haben muss,
und mein Leben ein Ziel hat,
und ich davon muss.
Siehe, meine Tage sind
einer Hand breit vor dir,
und mein Leben ist wie nichts vor dir.
Ach, wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen,
die doch so sicher leben.
Sie gehen daher wie ein Schemen,
und machen ihnen viel vergebliche Unruhe;
sie sammeln und wissen nicht,
wer es kriegen wird.
Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?
Ich hoffe auf dich.
Der Gerechten Seelen sind in
Gottes Hand
und keine Qual rühret sie an.*

Lord, make me to know mine end,
and the measure of my days,
what it is; that I may know
how frail I am.
Behold, Thou hast made my days
as an handbreadth;
and mine age is as nothing before Thee;
verily every man at his best state
is altogether vanity.
Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:
surely they are disquieted in vain:
he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not
who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in Thee.
But the souls of the righteous are in the
hand of God
and no torment shall touch them.

IV. Chorus

*Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen,
Herr Zebaoth!
Meine Seele verlangt und sehnet sich
nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn;
mein Leib und Seele freuen sich
in dem lebendigen Gott.
Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,
die loben dich immerdar.*

How lovely are Thy tabernacles,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
for the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh crieth out
for the living God.
Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house:
they will be still praising Thee.

V. Soprano Solo and Chorus

*Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;
aber ich will euch wieder sehen,
und euer Herz soll sich freuen,
und eure Freude soll niemand von euch
nehmen.
Ich will euch trösten,
wie einen seine Mutter tröstet.
Sehet mich an: ich habe eine kleine Zeit
Mühe und Arbeit gehabt
und habe grossen Trost funden.*

And ye now therefore have sorrow:
But I will see you again,
and your heart shall rejoice,
and your joy no man taketh
from you.
As one whom his mother comforteth,
so will I comfort you.
Ye see how for a little while
I labor and toil,
yet have I found much rest.

VI. Baritone Solo and Chorus

*Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt,
sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.
Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis:
Wir werden nicht alle entschlafen,
wir werden aber alle verwandelt werden;
und dasselbige plötzlich in einem
Augenblick,
zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune.
Denn es wird die Posaune schallen
und die Toten werden auferstehen
unverweslich;
und wir werden verwandelt werden.
Dann wird erfüllet werden das Wort,
das geschrieben steht.
Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.
Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?
Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?
Herr, du bist würdig
zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft,
denn du hast alle Dinge erschaffen,
und durch deinen Willen haben sie
das Wesen
und sind geschaffen.*

For here have we no continuing city,
but we seek one to come.
Behold, I show you a mystery:
we shall not all sleep,
but we shall all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling
of an eye,
at the last trombone;
for the trombone shall sound,
and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible,
and we shall be changed.
Then shall be brought to pass the saying
that is written,
death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?
Thou art worthy, O Lord,
to receive glory and honor and power:
for Thou hast created all things,
and for Thy pleasure
they are
and were created.

VII. Chorus

*Selig sind die Toten,
die in dem Herrn sterben von nun an.
Ja der Geist spricht,
dass sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit;
denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.*

Blessed are the dead
who die in the Lord from henceforth:
yea, saith the Spirit,
that they rest from their labors;
and their works do follow them.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Coda: A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

Dies irae: Literally, day of wrath. A medieval Latin hymn on the Day of Judgement sung in Requiem Masses.

Fugato: A passage or movement consisting of fugal imitations, but not worked out as a regular fugue

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Harmonic: (1) Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony. (2) One of the series of tones (the so-called partial tones) which usually accompany, more or less faintly, the prime tone produced by a string, organ-pipe, human voice, etc. The partial tone is produced by the vibration of fractional parts of the string or air-column.

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Legato: Smooth, even, without any break between notes

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Pedal point: A long-held note, usually in the bass, sounding with changing harmonies in the other parts

Pizzicato: Plucked

Polyphony: A term used to designate music in more than one part and the style in which all or several of the musical parts move to some extent independently

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Sul ponticello: A directive to play with the bow of a string instrument kept near the bridge so as to bring out the higher harmonics and thereby produce a nasal tone

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

Tonality: The orientation of melodies and harmonies toward a specific pitch or pitches



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