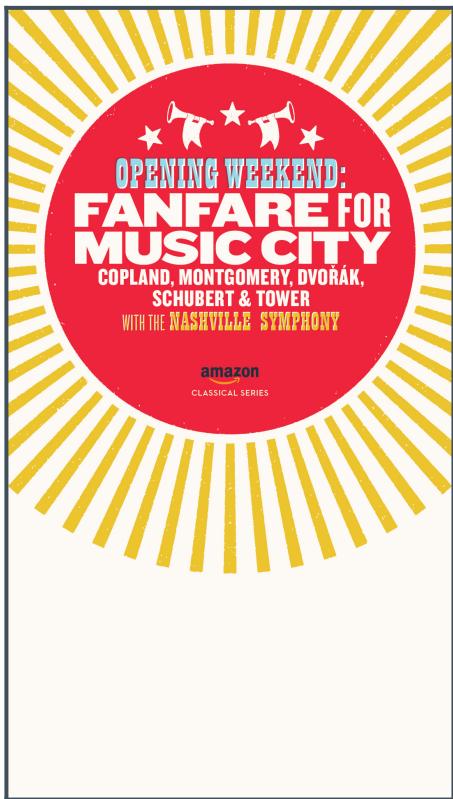


Opening Weekend: Fanfare for Music City

SEPTEMBER 16 TO 19, 2021



Program

OPENING WEEKEND: FANFARE FOR MUSIC CITY

Thursday, September 16, 2021 | 07:00 PM

Friday, September 17, 2021 | 08:00 PM

Saturday, September 18, 2021 | 08:00 PM

Schermerhorn Symphony Center

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

Giancarlo Guerrero, *conductor*

PROGRAM

AARON COPLAND

Fanfare for the Common Man

JOAN TOWER

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 1

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

Serenade in D Minor for Winds

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Strum

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Symphony in B Minor, "Unfinished"

AT A GLANCE

Aaron Copland wrote his stirring *Fanfare for the Common Man* during one of the nation's greatest crises, soon after the U.S. had entered the Second World War. Copland's homage to the everyday people who kept life going in the face of grave danger resonates all the more powerfully in our own era. Joan Tower's thoughtful response extends the homage to those who have been marginalized by traditional structures of power — including those in the performing arts — but the quest for full representation of the myriad fabric of voices that make up America continues. The talents of such members of the younger generation as Jessie Montgomery are bringing this vision ever closer to reality.

Along with music by these three Americans, we hear a delectable early work by Dvořák inspired by his love of Mozart. Dvořák was just gaining wider recognition at the time, coming from a minority background within the context of the German-centric European tradition of classical music — a position that would make him especially open to the new voices he came to know during his highly successful stay in the United States at the height of his career. We end with a fascinating work by Schubert that melds Beethovenian ambitions with his signature gift for melody: a symphony that endures despite its apparently “incomplete” state.

Fanfare for the Common Man



AARON COPLAND

Born on November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York; died on December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

Composed: 1942

Estimated length:
3 minutes

First performance: March 12, 1943, with Eugene Goossens leading the Cincinnati Symphony

First Nashville Symphony performance: November 22, 1991, conducted by Kenneth Schermerhorn at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center

Commissioned as one of a series of fanfares to support the Allied struggle in World War Two, the piece has endured as an icon of Copland's "American sound."

Aaron Copland arrived at what is now often labeled as his "populist" style only after a searching period of experimentation. His earlier years were spent investigating a spectrum of possibilities, from European modernism to the American vernacular of jazz. Copland's desire to communicate with a wider audience was naturally heightened by the collective experience of the Depression, and in the 1930s his name gained greater prominence through the music he wrote for ballet, theater, and film.

The Second World War likewise had a powerful impact on

composers at the time. Soon after the United States entered the war, Copland wrote his public occasional piece, *Lincoln Portrait*. The same year, 1942, brought an invitation from Eugene Goossens, then music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, to contribute to a project of fanfares for brass and percussion intended to serve as “stirring and significant contributions to the war effort.”

Goossens had become a prominent new-music champion during his tenure with the Cincinnati Symphony (1931-46) and commissioned a total of 18 fanfares from a who’s-who of contemporary composers. While the titles of the other fanfares alluded directly to the U.S. allies or branches of the military, Copland chose to pay tribute to “the common man … who was doing all the dirty work in the war and the army. He deserved a fanfare.” He later returned to this music — the only one of the commissioned fanfares that has transcended its original purpose — and drew on it for the final movement of his Third Symphony (completed in 1946).

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Copland conveys a sense of stoic majesty and strength, focusing on the colors produced by brass and percussion. The latter takes the spotlight at the opening, mixing a sense of ceremony or ritual with the theatrical (note Copland’s dramatic use of pauses for effect, like a master rhetorician). Marked “very deliberate,” the tempo is stately and dignified rather than martial. The trumpets first play the main motif — a sequence shaped as a rise and fall — in unison. As the rest of the brass join in, Copland adds harmonies and echo effects, adding to an impression of spaciousness. A surprise turn of harmony, from the opening B-flat to D major, introduces a note of expectant aspiration in the final measures.

Scored for 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and tam-tam.

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 1



JOAN TOWER

Born on September 6, 1938, in New Rochelle, New York; currently resides in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Composed: 1986

Estimated length:
4 minutes

First performance: January 10, 1987, with Hans Vonk leading the Houston Symphony

First Nashville Symphony performance: March 24, 2011, conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center

The career of Joan Tower certainly represents an uncommon success story — not just as a woman in the male-dominated classical canon, but as a contemporary composer whose work has won favor with a widespread audience. Tower spent part of her youth in Bolivia, where her father was engaged in projects as a mining engineer. Her exposure to South American music enhanced the feeling for vibrant color and percussion that became one characteristic of Tower's work. Back in the States, she studied piano and composition and cofounded the Da Capo Chamber Players, a new-music group, in 1969, performing with them as pianist until the mid-1980s.

Tower's own compositions were initially oriented more toward the postwar avant-garde and focused on chamber ensemble. Her debut orchestral work, *Sequoia* (1981), opened up a new path, and in 1990 Tower was the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award with *Silver Ladders*. She wrote the latter as composer-in-residence for the St. Louis Symphony (where Leonard Slatkin became one of her foremost champions).

Among her major influences, Tower points to Beethoven, Stravinsky, Debussy, and jazz; she is passionately committed to reestablishing lines of communication between contemporary composers and audiences. Copland, who addressed the same issue in an earlier period, serves as the point of departure for *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*, which she dedicates “to women who take risks and who are adventurous” (and, specifically, to Marin Alsop, who recently retired from her path-breaking tenure as director of the Baltimore Symphony). Between 1986 and 2014, Tower produced a total of six fanfares with this title, calling for various configurations of brass alone or brass and percussion (No. 4 is set for full orchestra).

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Tower notes that the first theme of the Fanfare No. 1 suggests a likeness with the one that begins Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Tower’s scoring for brass and percussion is similarly modeled on Copland’s instrumentation, but she adds her own signature by expanding the percussion considerably. With its mix of tuned and untuned instruments, this section even resembles a miniature orchestra. Moreover, Tower packs a greater variety of thematic material and textural contrast into her fanfare. Each of the themes is characterized by a contrasting rhythmic profile, from hints of Renaissance grandeur in the trumpets’ opening flourishes to the steely muscularity of the lower brass.

Scored for 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, and 2 percussion players (snare drum, large and medium bass drum, cymbals, high and medium gongs, large tam-tam, tom-toms, medium temple blocks, and triangle)

Serenade for Winds in D minor, Op. 44



ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

Born on September 8, 1841, in the village of Nelahozeves, just north of Prague; died on May 1, 1904, in Prague

Composed: 1878

Estimated length:
24 minutes

First performance: November 15, 1878, in Prague, with the composer conducting

First Nashville Symphony performance: December 2, 2010, conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero at the Collins Auditorium, David Lipscomb University

Dvořák composed across the “Continental Divide” of symphonic music and opera. He aspired to become part of the classical tradition of Central Europe but incorporated musical ideas from outside the classical mainstream — whether from his Bohemian homeland or from the music he encountered during his later sojourn in the United States. His music is prized for its warmth, invention, rhythmic vitality, and gift for melody and color.

These traits are already apparent in the works this unpretentious musician was writing before he made his breakthrough in 1878 with his first series of *Slavonic Dances*. In the mid-1870s, a series of grants helped buy Dvořák more time from his day job as church organist to compose. *The Serenade for Winds* launched the productive year of 1878, when young Dvořák was bursting with optimism about his future. Brahms had recently announced himself an admirer and became an important advocate, recommending

Dvořák to his publisher.

Dvořák found an attractive model for the genre of the woodwind serenade in the classical period, above all in Mozart's examples. But he also drew on his childhood memories of village woodwind bands, an important medium for music-making in Bohemia. Although the Serenade's main material is played by the woodwinds, Dvořák later added lines for solo cello and double bass (with optional contrabassoon) to anchor the musical narrative. Even without a flute on top to sweeten the mix, and in spite of the home key of D minor (a key associated with deep pathos and even the demonic in Mozart's works), the Serenade comes across as a captivatingly buoyant composition.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A march was a typical format to open a classical-era serenade, but the strutting attitude of this first movement suggests a band that wants to take itself rather too seriously. A new theme of contrasting cheerfulness dispels the self-important note of ceremony. All the while, Dvořák flexes his compositional muscle by subtly developing such ideas as the march's characteristic dotted rhythm.

The term "Minuet" suggests a quaint homage to an old-fashioned classical dance form, yet into this shell Dvořák inserts folk dance rhythms from daily Czech life in the countryside. Notions of dainty politesse are further kept at bay by the syncopated middle section, which seems to invite the village drunk to participate.

The heart of the Serenade is one of Dvořák's most arrestingly beautiful slow movements and offers a clear tribute to Mozart, evoking the lofty lyricism of the latter's *Gran Partita* (the Serenade No. 10, K. 361). Against the seemingly unpromising background of "wheezing" harmonies from the lower voices, a haunting three-note fragment echoes and is traded between the oboe and other instruments as the movement builds in emotional intensity. Especially remarkable here is the way Dvořák weaves this brief fragment into the wave of long, flowing melody.

Solo voices call and respond against a restlessly insistent pulse in the Serenade's finale. With a mocking wink, Dvořák reprises the opening march idea but then, in the final moments, brings the village drunk back with his fellow revelers to strike up the band, now in D major, and whip it into a frenzy.

Scored for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, solo cello and double bass

Strum



JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Born in 1981 in Manhattan,
where she currently resides

Composed: 2006;
revised 2012

Estimated length:
8 minutes

First performance: April 2006 in Ann Arbor, Michigan,
by the Providence String Quartet and guests of
Community MusicWorks Players (in the original
quintet version)

First Nashville Symphony performance: These are the
first performances of *Strum* by the Nashville Symphony

The daughter of parents involved in the experimental arts scene in Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1980s, Jessie Montgomery witnessed boundary-stretching endeavors from a young age. Her mother is the award-winning playwright, actor, and teacher Robbie McCauley, who is known for her work in the avant-garde theater scene. Her father, Ed Montgomery, is also a composer as well as a jazz musician and indie filmmaker.

Montgomery, who started taking lessons at the age of four, grew up playing violin "on a traditional track," as she recalls, and she remains a busy string quartet player. She points out that while her basic technique "is really rooted in European tradition — some of my favorite composers are Bartók, Debussy, and Britten," she was also surrounded while growing up by experimental music and jazz: "I grew up seeing free jazz musicians regularly, like Butch Morris, Willie Parker, violinist Billy Bang — they were part of my home life."

Montgomery is active not only as a violinist but as a composer, teacher, and curator, often playing multiple roles at the same time.

She also uses the improvisational approach that characterizes her playing style in her teaching practice. Now in heavy demand as a composer, Montgomery premiered her song cycle *Five Slave Songs* for soprano Julia Bullock last month at the Sun Valley and Grand Teton Music Festivals. Other projects include a chamber work for nine players addressing the legacy of the Great Migration and what she calls a “musical reimagining” of the 1911 Scott Joplin opera *Treemonisha*.

Strum began as a string quintet, which Montgomery later revised and arranged for string quartet, first in 2008 and then later, when she provided it with a new introduction and ending for a concert celebrating the 15th annual Sphinx Competition.

IN THE COMPOSER'S WORDS

“Originally conceived for the formation of a cello quintet, the voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound. Within *Strum* I utilized texture motives, layers of rhythmic or harmonic *ostinati* that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming *pizzicato* serves as a texture motive and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece. Drawing on American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement, the piece has a kind of narrative that begins with fleeting nostalgia and transforms into ecstatic celebration.”

Scored for string quartet

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759 (“Unfinished”)



FRANZ SCHUBERT

Born in Liechtental, a suburb of Vienna, on January 31, 1797, and died in Vienna on November 19, 1828

Composed: 1822

Estimated length:
28 minutes

First performance: Johann von Herbeck conducted the first performance of this music on December 17, 1865 in Vienna

First Nashville Symphony performance: February 22, 1949, conducted by William Strickland at War Memorial Auditorium

The so-called (though not by Schubert) “Unfinished” Symphony shows the composer tackling much more ambitious projects than he had in his previous six symphonies. (The fact that it remains known as “Symphony No. 8,” though it is really No. 7, is a long story resulting from the confusion over the vast store of unpublished manuscripts left behind after his premature death at age 31.)

As a teenager, Schubert had expressed doubts about what he denounced in his diary as Beethoven’s “eccentric” style. His earlier models were Mozart and Haydn. But Schubert eventually came to appreciate the significance of Beethoven’s achievement, which he hoped to emulate with a “great symphony” of his own, as he wrote in 1824 (the year Beethoven’s Ninth was premiered in Vienna).

The nickname “Unfinished” can be misleading insofar as it suggests a connection between the Symphony’s incomplete state and the tragic early death of its composer (along the lines of Mozart’s Requiem). Schubert in fact lived on for another six years after he composed this music — indeed, he produced one masterpiece after

another in those extraordinary final years.

But why did Schubert set this work aside after writing two perfectly complete movements? Lots of theories have tried to solve that enigma. Sketches for a third-movement Scherzo actually exist. That makes plausible the idea that Schubert had no intention of departing from the conventional four-movement plan of a classical symphony. It has even been suggested that Schubert did write the other two movements, with part of the manuscript getting lost in a later shuffle, or that he recycled these hypothetical later movements for another composition.

Perhaps Schubert simply could not figure out how to proceed with a finale weighty enough to counterbalance this magnificent opening half. Some biographers also point to the illness Schubert experienced a few months later — a result of contracting syphilis — as a devastating event he may have linked with the Symphony via a kind of guilt by association, making it too painful to resume work on it.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The “Unfinished” begins with music of shadowy gloom. The choice of B minor as the home key — which literally sets the tone for a work — was exceptionally unusual at the time; you have to wait until 1893 for another great symphony in the same key, which also became associated with death: [Tchaikovsky's final symphony, No. 6, known as the *Pathétique*.](#) A mysterious opening figure, played at an almost inaudible level by basses and cellos, sounds from an abyss. The apparently resigned air of this theme, which will return in haunted and even violent transformations, turns out to be just one of its many guises. It sets up an uneasy sense of expectation, which Schubert prolongs by giving us accompaniment before melody. Violins spin out a restless figure above plucked gestures — all of which is the backdrop for the melancholy theme sung by oboes and clarinets.

A magical carryover note from bassoons and horns links to the second theme. Here, Schubert follows the same pattern as the start: accompaniment first, and then the overlay of theme. The cellos sing it quietly at first and go on to weave sighing echoes into the violins’ rendition of the same. The sheer beauty of Schubert’s melody is Siren-like, for this music is revealed to have a more aggressive side as the movement unfolds. Roiling climaxes convey a frightening sense of volatility, and the end returns to the grim, inescapable pathos of the opening motif.

How to follow up after such exhaustively gripping music? Schubert solves that challenge with the Andante con moto (in E major). A descending-scale figure accompanies the serenely prayerful melody. Schubert introduces a mysterious octave leap in the violins to signal the transition to a second theme, which the clarinet presents. At the Symphony’s long-delayed premiere in 1865, the critic Eduard Hanslick described Schubert’s “melodic stream” as so lucid that “one can see every pebble on the bottom.”

Nashville Symphony

In contrast to the almost monolithic darkness of the first movement, the Andante is unexpectedly mercurial: passionate outbursts disturb the calm waters of melody. These traces of darker, more ambivalent moods add depth to Schubert's lyricism. There have been several attempts to "complete" the "Unfinished," but Schubert's pair of movements by themselves make for a uniquely, hauntingly satisfying torso.

Scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

— Thomas May is the Nashville Symphony's program annotator.