



THE EARTH

AN HD ODYSSEY

WITH THE NASHVILLE SYMPHONY



CLASSICAL SERIES

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JANUARY 12 & 13, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*

INGRID FLITER, *piano*

DUNCAN COPP, *film producer and director*

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Concerto No. 1 in E minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 11

Allegro maestoso

Romanze

Rondo

Ingrid Fliter, piano

– INTERMISSION –

JOHN ADAMS

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

RICHARD STRAUSS

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

Einleitung, oder Sonnenaufgang [Introduction, or Sunrise]

Von den Hinterweltlern [Of the Backworldsmen]

Von der großen Sehnsucht [Of the Great Longing]

Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften [Of Joys and Passions]

Das Grablied [The Grave Song]

Von der Wissenschaft [Of Science]

Der Genesende [The Convalescent]

Das Tanzlied [The Dance Song]

Nachtwandlerlied [The Night-Wanderer's Song]

This weekend's performances made possible by Drs. Mark & Nancy Peacock.

Ingrid Fliter's performance is underwritten in part by Sallie & John Bailey.

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TONIGHT'S CONCERT

AT A GLANCE



FREDERIC CHOPIN

Concerto No. 1 in E minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 11

- Polish-born composer Chopin improvised with virtuosity on the piano from a young age. Once he learned how to put his ideas to paper, he published his first official piece at age 15. The writer George Sand once said of the composer, “Invention came to his piano, sudden, complete, sublime.”
- Chopin never wrote any symphonies, and his two piano concertos are his only works for full orchestra. Though labeled his Piano Concerto No. 1, this work was actually written after his Piano Concerto No. 2 — the numbering is due to the order in which the pieces were published. It premiered in Poland shortly before the composer moved to Paris.
- Composer and critic Robert Schumann continually praised Chopin's innovation and individuality in form. Other critics, however, reproached his simplistic use of the orchestra and his seeming inexperience with large-scale forms. Over time, though, his impact as a pianist and composer has endured, due in large part to the many pieces he wrote for solo piano.
- Where you might have heard this music: the movies *The Truman Show* (1998), starring Jim Carey, and *The Lady in the Van* (2015), starring Maggie Smith.



JOHN ADAMS

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

- Educated at Harvard, Adams moved to the West Coast and became composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Orchestra and has since written a plethora of works strongly influenced by Minimalism. He is one of America's most frequently performed composers.
- In Adams' own words, Minimalism “was a style that embraced tonality, embraced regular rhythm and pulse, but at the same time was absolutely new and fresh. I felt that I could take that language — somewhat in the same way, let's say, that Picasso took Cubism and used it as a jumping-off point for an expression that was much more varied and much more dramatic.”
- Inspired by a harrowing ride in a relative's Ferrari, this fanfare's non-stop pulse is maintained by the woodblock and clarinet. The driving beat is the constant in a wild ride of orchestral color with emphatic percussion.



RICHARD STRAUSS

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

- Strauss' tone poem is based on Nietzsche's philosophical work of the same name. Following the trumpet's awe-inspiring introduction depicting the sunrise, eight continuous sections follow, each titled after Nietzsche's chapter headings.
- Nietzsche's intense writing details the life of the fictional but historically based prophet Zarathustra, who draws a cult rejecting traditional Christianity and striving toward a self-reliant “superman.” While this source material can be considered problematic, given that it later resonated with the Nazis, Strauss distanced himself somewhat from Nietzsche's text, stating that he simply wanted “to convey musically an idea of the development of the human race.”
- Where you've heard this music: The dramatic opening trumpet passage was most notably featured in Stanley Kubrick's classic film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), but it can also be heard in epic or mock-epic moments in *Toy Story 2* (1999), *WALL-E* (2008) and *Zoolander* (2001).

— Corinne Fombelle



FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Born on March 1, 1810, in Zelazowa Wola, Poland (west of Warsaw); died on October 17, 1849, in Paris

Composed: 1830

First performance: October 11, 1830, in Warsaw, with the composer as soloist.

First Nashville Symphony performance:

January 18, 1955, with music director Guy Taylor and soloist Alexander Brailowsky

Estimated length: 40 minutes

Concerto No. 1 in E minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 11

Before he arrived in Paris in 1831, at which point he would rebrand himself and find his niche as a salon artist, young Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin was forging his path to international success with works showcasing his dazzling virtuosity. During Chopin's final years in his native Poland, he completed all but one of his small handful of works combining piano and orchestra. These include his two full-scale piano concertos, which are of the same vintage and therefore reflect similar musical approaches. Despite its official number (the result of being published first), Chopin in fact composed his Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor after No. 2 (Op. 21) and gave its premiere during what turned out to be his last

public performance in Poland before he set out westward. Only 20 years old at the time, Chopin would never return to his homeland.

Chopin's frame of reference was a host of now-forgotten post-classical concertos, and not the concertos of Mozart or Beethoven — models that were likely unknown to him at the time. Even though his overall design replicates the conventions of the era, Chopin introduces a uniquely poetic attitude into his writing for the solo part. This personal slant reveals the inspiration he found in contemporary Italian bel canto opera and its style of rhapsodic, long-spun lyricism.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening theme, majestic and even a touch pompous, soon yields to a variant that is more reflective and plays a major role in the development. The second theme, in E major, is nostalgic in character, further tilting the balance away from the grandiose. All of these ideas are laid out first by the orchestra, per convention, thus sharpening our suspenseful anticipation of the piano's entrance. Chopin then repeats this lengthy exposition, but with the soloist's point of view as a guide, giving the first movement's expansive proportions a sense of leisurely exploration. A lightly accompanied cadenza near the end highlights Chopin's imaginative rethinking of virtuosic embellishments.

The slow movement, styled a "Romance," is often associated with the shy composer's love for

a young soprano who had been a fellow student. Chopin's elaborations of the principal melody, set against muted strings, give a foretaste of one of his later nocturnes. Chopin himself likened this Romance to "a meditation...by moonlight."

Aspects of the composer's love for his native Poland come to the fore in the scintillating Rondo finale, in which, after a faux-serious intro, Chopin lets loose with a polka-like main theme. Suggesting a joyful folk dance, the theme appears in ingenious new guises at each return. A year after he left Poland for good, the land would be in revolt against its Russian overlords.

In addition to solo piano, Chopin's score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani and strings



JOHN ADAMS

Born on February 15, 1947, in Worcester, Massachusetts; currently lives in Berkeley, California

Composed: 1986

First performance: June 13, 1986, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony.

First Nashville Symphony performance: November 22 & 23, 1991, with music director Kenneth Schermerhorn

Estimated length: 4 minutes

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

John Adams, whose new opera *Girls of the Golden West* received its world premiere at the end of last year at San Francisco Opera, is equally at home on the stage and in the concert hall. In fact, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* is a concert-opening fanfare that Adams wrote during the mid-1980s, when he was busy composing his first opera, *Nixon in China*. It also shows a kinship with the exultant passages of *Harmonielehre*, his breakthrough orchestral work that preceded *Nixon*.

Adams had an opportunity around this time to experiment twice with the format of the stand-

alone concert fanfare. Preceding *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* was *Tromba Lontana* (“Distant Trumpet”). The composer characterizes both pieces as “in extremis versions of the traditional fanfare.” As a pair, they form a kind of yin-and-yang, *Tromba* being a reserved, ruminative “anti-fanfare,” while *Short Ride* is a boisterously in-your-face, virtuoso roller coaster ride of orchestral sonorities. Although both are sometimes presented as companion pieces, Adams points out that he never actually intended them to be played together.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Short Ride might almost be heard as a concise primer on how Adams forged a freshly powerful musical language all his own from the building blocks of Minimalism, as well as from the vernacular idioms of his upbringing — all transmogrified by his buoyant imagination. Like a metronome gone mad, the woodblock lays out a basic pulse against which varying rhythmic patterns generate a trilling tension. The result brings to mind snatches of Sousa recalled in a fever-dream. Adams himself likens the piece to being invited to go for a spin “in a terrific sports car” — after which “you wish you hadn’t.”

The repetitive swirl of Minimalist motifs is further energized by hints of the big-band sound

of Duke Ellington, which the composer mentions as another generative source of the piece. While Adams has a superb instinct for larger architectonic spans, *Short Ride* compacts the long-range sonic landscapes for which he is known into a dizzying blur. What we hear, as Adams puts it, is “a cranked-up, high-velocity orchestral juggernaut.”

Short Ride in a Fast Machine is scored for 4 flutes (2 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 4 clarinets, 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, 2 synthesizers and strings.

Also sprach Zarathustra can be heard as an orchestral showpiece, a massive ensemble concerto in which Strauss flexes his muscle as a master of an instrumental surround-soundscape.



RICHARD STRAUSS

Born on June 11, 1864, in Munich, Germany; died on September 8, 1949, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Composed: 1896

First performance: November 27, 1896, in Frankfurt, with the composer conducting

First Nashville Symphony performance: February 24 & 25, 1964, with music director Willis Page

Estimated length: 35 minutes

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

By the turn of the 19th century, the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) had started to influence artists across all disciplines. His “prose poem” *Also sprach Zarathustra* — written in the mid-1880s but not published in full until 1892 — features a language rich in symbolism, parable and enigmatic oracles. The name Zarathustra (also known as Zoroaster) refers to the ancient Persian prophet credited with developing a religious vision of the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Nietzsche’s version remodels Zarathustra after his own image. The prophet now returns to subvert the old values, preaching a message of extreme self-reliance in which humans must become superhuman: i.e., create their own meaning by affirming life and nature, rather than rely on the illusion of a transcendent god.

Some have argued that Strauss’ tone poem is less about Nietzsche than about the reactions that reading his philosophy aroused. The composer himself wrote that “I did not intend to write philosophical music or to portray Nietzsche’s great work in musical terms,” but instead meant to reflect “my homage to the genius of Nietzsche” in the evolutionary arc suggested by the piece. *Also sprach Zarathustra* can also be heard as an orchestral showpiece, a massive ensemble concerto in which Strauss flexes his muscle as a master of an instrumental surround-soundscape.

But as a self-appointed heir to Wagner, Strauss would have been especially tuned in to the philosopher’s sensitivity to musical thought, which Wagner had helped inspire. Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* is pervaded with references to music and acts of hearing. Its most pivotal moments occur in the form of songs. Strauss selected a small number from the many short chapters comprising the text and reshuffled their order to prompt his muse, fashioning a symphonically unified work.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Stanley Kubrick’s iconic use of the introduction for his film 2001: A Space Odyssey (which also incorporates Ligeti’s *Atmosphères*) may have made this music overfamiliar, but it remains a thrilling depiction of the prologue to Nietzsche’s work — a scene in which the prophet greets the sunrise and determines to come down from his mountain to share his wisdom with humanity. Against a profound shadow cast by the lowest bass, Strauss introduces the central cell of the piece as four trumpets pronounce a primal ascending motif (C-G-C). Strauss later explained that he meant “to convey in music an idea of the human race from its origins, through its various phases of development (religious and scientific) right up to Nietzsche’s idea of the Superman [*Übermensch*].”

The following eight sections are woven together seamlessly and pursue the idea of humanity’s evolution. Where Nietzsche resorted to resonant symbols, allegories and wordplay, Strauss builds a sense of dramatic conflict through his deployment of key and orchestration. The fundamental tension pivots around the tonics of C (the tonality of the introduction), which is associated with nature, and B (minor and major), used as a symbol for humanity. Each is only a half-step apart, yet when sounded together, they clash in a powerful dissonance.

First, though, comes a momentary oasis in “Of the Backworldsmen.” Strauss quotes from plainchant and then develops a lush fabric of divided strings to depict the worldview of those who seek consolation through the hollow promise of an afterlife. While Nietzsche’s tone is acerbic and mocking, Strauss nearly convinces us with the overwhelming beauty of this music before casting it aside as an illusion. In “Of the Great

Longing” and “Of Joys and Passions,” the dramatic tension rises to a boil, with the central C-G-C motif now clearly associated with questing. The religious music recurs as a source of dissonance and conflict with natural desires, while Strauss borrows a page from *Götterdämmerung* to inject a tone of tragic pathos. Particularly elegiac scoring for the winds adds to the intense pity of “The Grave Song” as Zarathustra sees humanity still enslaved by its illusions.

Like religion, “Of Science” presents another potent force for disappointment (the German word *Wissenschaft* actually refers to all scholarly endeavors — the Faustian quest for knowledge). Strauss structures this section around that most learned of forms, the fugue: an especially imposing one that employs all 12 tones of the chromatic scale for its subject. In the midst of this, Zarathustra himself collapses from exhaustion and is then restored to health (“The Convalescent”), as the fugue reaches a climax with a restatement of the introductory sunrise music. A long pause follows, but humanity remains benighted, as the grim music in B minor indicates.

In an extraordinary passage, the orchestra rallies its energy and begins to glimmer and twinkle with sounds of a new awakening. Zarathustra at last begins to preach the ideal of the *Übermensch* (or “Superman,” the ultimate goal of

the fully self-reliant human) in “The Dance Song.” This long section, set as a waltz, also doubles as a mini-violin concerto. The idea of a waltz might seem incongruously lighthearted in this context, but here Strauss taps into a very Nietzschean sense of irony, of “unbearable lightness.”

This builds to a new climax (marked by the twelffold tolling of a bell) for the concluding “The Night-Wanderer’s Song.” The gorgeous, velvety night music suggests an air of leave-taking. Yet it is also emphatically inconclusive. Instead of resolving the nature-humanity dichotomy, Strauss pits the C-G-C theme deep in the bass against a high shimmering chord of B major. The dissonance is now sweet and subtle, but it is still left to ring in our ears as evolution continues.

Also Sprach Zarathustra *calls for a very large orchestra of 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, bells, 2 harps, organ and strings.*

— Thomas May, the Nashville Symphony’s program annotator, is a writer and translator who covers classical and contemporary music. He blogs at memeteria.com.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



INGRID FLITER
PIANO

Argentine pianist Ingrid Fliter has won the admiration of audiences around the world for her passionate yet thoughtful and sensitive music-

making, played with effortless technique. Winner of the 2006 Gilmore Artist Award, Fliter is one of only a handful of pianists and the only woman to have received this honor.

Fliter made her American orchestral debut with the Atlanta Symphony, just days after the announcement of her Gilmore award. Since then, she has appeared with the orchestras of Cleveland, San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, Milwaukee and Seattle, among others, as well as at the Mostly Mozart, Grant Park, Aspen, Ravinia,

Blossom and Brevard summer festivals. Equally busy as a recitalist, she has performed in New York at Carnegie’s Zankel Hall, the Metropolitan Museum and the 92nd Street Y; at Chicago’s Orchestra Hall; in Boston, San Francisco, Vancouver and Detroit; and for the Van Cliburn Foundation in Fort Worth.

In Europe and Asia, Fliter has performed with orchestras and in recital in Amsterdam, London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Salzburg, Cologne and Tokyo, and has participated in festivals such as La Roque D’Anthéron, Prague Autumn and The World Pianist Series in Tokyo.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1973, Fliter began her piano studies in Argentina with Elizabeth Westerkamp. In 1992 she moved to Europe, where she continued her studies in Freiburg with Vitaly Margulis, in Rome with Carlos Bruno, and with Franco Scala and Boris Petrushansky at the Academy “Incontri col Maestro” in Imola, Italy. She began playing public recitals at age 11

and made her professional orchestra debut at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires at age 16. Already the winner of several competitions in Argentina, in 2000 she was awarded the silver medal at the Frederic Chopin Competition in Warsaw. She has been teaching at the Imola International Academy “Incontri col Maestro” since the fall of 2015.

Fliter’s two all-Chopin recordings for EMI have earned her the reputation as one of the pre-eminent interpreters of that composer, while her most recent EMI recording is an all-Beethoven CD featuring the *Pathétique* and *Appassionata* sonatas. She recently recorded the complete Chopin Nocturnes for Linn Records.

