



MOZART & TCHAIKOVSKY

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28 & 29, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

VINAY PARAMESWARAN, *conductor*

ÉRIK GRATTON, *flute*

LICIA JASKUNAS, *harp*

NINA SHEKHAR

11 minutes

Lumina

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

30 minutes

Concerto for Flute and Harp in C major, K. 299

I. Allegro

II. Andantino

III. Rondo: Allegro

Érik Gratton, *flute*

Licia Jaskunas, *harp*

INTERMISSION

20 minutes

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

45 minutes

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique")

I. Adagio - Allegro non troppo

II. Allegro con grazia

III. Allegro molto vivace

IV. Finale: Adagio lamentoso

This concert will last approximately one hour, 45 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Concerto for Flute and Harp in C major, K. 299

Born on January 27, 1756,
in Salzburg, Austria

Died on December 5, 1791,
in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1778



Estimated length:
30 minutes

First Nashville Symphony performance:

April 4, 2007, conducted
by Klaus-Peter Seibel at
Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

“Wolfgang is extremely busy and...so well known here and popular that it is hard to describe,” Maria Anna Mozart wrote to her husband Leopold in April 1778, reporting on their son’s progress in Paris. This turned out to be something of an over-optimistic account: in fact, Mozart’s trip to the French capital would end in failure.

In September 1777, the composer had left an unfulfilling job at the court of his native Salzburg, undertaking an extensive journey across Western Europe that lasted until January 1779. His goal was to find a position more suited to his talents and interests. Ultimately, despite some significant creative achievements and inspiring connections, Mozart was unable to land the breakthrough post he had hoped for. Dejected, he headed back to Salzburg, where he was compelled to work again in the court orchestra under his hated patron there.

The Paris chapter of this epic quest lasted from March to September 1778 and proved to be not only disheartening but tragic, for Maria Anna became ill with typhus and died in their Paris lodgings in early July. She had accompanied Wolfgang while Leopold remained at home to carry on with his duties as deputy Kapellmeister (or else risk being fired). Only 22 at the time, Mozart had to inform his father of the terrible news that his beloved Anna Maria’s life “went out like a light.”

Although Mozart did have some good contacts in Paris, not much came of them, and he expressed distaste of a city he found dirty and rude, complaining of Parisian “arrogance” and “self-importance.” Certainly his dealings with Adrien-Louis de Bonnières, a general, diplomat and aristocrat

known as the duc de Guînes, must have intensified Mozart’s loathing. But we can thank the Duke for ensuring that the Concerto for Flute and Harp came into the world—and then vicariously feel something of the composer’s indignation when he complained to Leopold that he was still waiting to be paid by de Guînes. In the end, Mozart seems to have been given an insulting offer of half the fee agreed on, which he refused in protest.

De Guînes was, however, a talented flutist, according to Mozart himself, and his eldest daughter, Marie-Louise-Philippine, played the harp “magnificently,” he wrote to Leopold. (On the other hand, Mozart mocked her lack of skill when he was hired to give her composition lessons.) Hence the request for a concerto that would highlight both musicians. Otherwise, Mozart claimed that the flute was “an instrument that I cannot bear”—unlike his adored clarinet.

His fondness for the harp was similarly limited—this is Mozart’s only composition for that instrument. For all its rich and storied tradition, in fact, the harp was not a part of the standard Classical orchestra and would really only come into vogue in concert music in the 19th century.

Mozart’s prolific catalogue of works includes very few concertos for more than two soloists besides K. 299. Shortly after returning to Salzburg in 1779, he produced another work featuring a duo of soloists: the famous *Sinfonia Concertante* in E-flat major for solo violin and viola, using a format that was then highly popular in Paris. Joseph Boulogne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who was the son of an aristocrat and an enslaved woman from Guadeloupe,

was an acclaimed contemporary who helped bring the *sinfonia concertante* genre to prominence and arguably influenced Mozart. (They even briefly lived under the same roof just after the death of Mozart's mother.)

Whatever Mozart felt about the flute and the harp, this concerto combining both stands out as a composition of irresistible beauty and charm. No wonder that it has remained a cherished part of the repertoire for these instruments.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Mozart faced the challenge of balancing two relatively “delicate” instruments with the power of an orchestra—accordingly, the ensemble is reduced to a chamber orchestra of pairs of oboes and horns along with the strings. The spotlight alternates between the soloists—who create a special sound world in themselves—and the reduced orchestra.

This is most obvious in the opening minutes, as the orchestra by itself first introduces the main ideas (note the careful contrast of loud and soft phrasing). After this, the soloists come in with their version of the same. It's all standard Classical concerto format, but Mozart evolves themes that suit the combo particularly well. He does, however, tend to write more “pianistically” for the harp

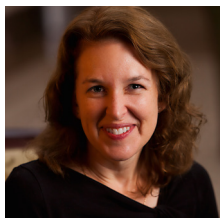
part—that is, emphasizing patterns of four or eight notes. Each movement is allotted a cadenza for the two instruments, where the orchestra remains completely silent. Mozart did not write these parts out, so the performers have a choice of performing cadenzas published by other musicians or supplying their own.

The *Andantino*, which shifts to F major, omits even the oboes and horns but divides the violas into two separate lines, creating an intimate and radiant sound picture. The movement unfolds as a series of dreamily spun variations on a beatific theme—the flute and harp comprising a kind of super-Orpheus, empowered by his musical beauty to enchant the most aggressive forces. Some hear an anticipation of Mozart's later operatic style in this music, surrounded by the more impersonal *galant* style of his earlier years in the outer movements.

Concluding the Concerto is a series of episodes connected by the repeating dancelike spirit of the main theme. Mozart uses the French term, *rondeau*, for this procedure. Here, the cadenza is placed just before its last recurrence, and the Concerto ends with chords emphasizing its bright C major tonality.

Scored for 2 oboes, 2 horns and strings plus solo harp and flute.

ABOUT THE SOLOISTS

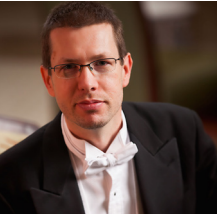


LICIA JASKUNAS
Harp

Licia Jaskunas has been the Principal Harpist with the Nashville Symphony since 1998. She has also been Principal Harpist with the New World Symphony and with the Utah Festival Opera Company. She has made several solo appearances with the Nashville Symphony and soloed with the New World Symphony, the Louisville Symphony and the Huntsville Symphony. She is a long-time member of the Alias Chamber Ensemble and is

a participant in the local commercial recording industry. Her orchestral festival performances include the Tanglewood Music Center, the Spoleto Festival, the Pacific Music Festival, the Aspen Music Festival and the Brevard Music Festival.

She is a graduate of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music where she was awarded a Performers Certificate, and she received a Master of Art degree from the Eastman School of Music. She is a previous winner of the advanced division of the American Harp Society's national competition and of two Ruth Lorraine Close national fellowship awards in harp.



ÉRIK GRATTON

Flute

Érik Gratton is a native of Montréal, Canada. He received a First Prize with great distinction from the Montreal Conservatory, where he studied with Carolyn Christie and Jean-Paul Major. He furthered his studies with Jeanne Baxtresser at the Manhattan School of Music. Érik is in his 25th season as principal flutist of the Nashville Symphony. He has made many solo appearances with the orchestra, including a recording of Ranjbaran flute concerto. He can be heard on more than 25 recordings with the Nashville Symphony on the Naxos label.

Érik has performed with the Montreal Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, San Francisco Symphony and St. Louis Symphony. He has also served as principal flute of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. He has appeared at numerous orchestral festivals, including Tanglewood, Shira Music Festival Israel, the Peninsula Music Festival, Mainly Mozart, Napa Valley Music Festival and Classical Tahoe. Érik is an active session player in Nashville's busy recording industry and enjoys giving solo recitals and playing chamber music on a regular basis. In his spare time, his hobbies include beekeeping, woodworking and discovering new things and places with his wife Erin, who is acting concertmaster of the Nashville Symphony.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique")

Born on May 7, 1840,
in Votkinsk, Russia

Died on November 6, 1893,
in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Composed:
1893

**Estimated
length:**
45 minutes



First performance:

October 28, 1893, in
Saint Petersburg, with the
composer conducting.

**First Nashville Symphony
performance:**

February 21, 1956, with
Guy Taylor conducting at
War Memorial Auditorium.

The popular notion that the Sixth Symphony is rife with confession warrants challenge, as does the idea, worthy of Hollywood, that it predicts the composer's death," writes the biographer Roland John Wiley. As with the early death of the pioneering genius of computer science and cryptanalysis, Alan Turing, questions continue to proliferate about the cause. Did an accidental drink of cholera-contaminated water kill Tchaikovsky, or did the "scandal" of his same-sex affairs result in the composer's submitting to a kind of Socratic suicide to preserve a code of "honor" among his associates? (This sensationalist interpretation has been largely debunked.)

The point is that the emotional power of this

music continues to tempt us to construct a narrative to "explain" it. Quite possibly for that very reason, Tchaikovsky became ambivalent about program music, which had been championed by his early mentors and the Russian nationalists as an antidote to the sterile "formalism" of Western music. Tchaikovsky had already written his share of narrative-driven pieces. At one extreme are the Fourth Symphony, for which Tchaikovsky supplied an elaborate program centered on the idea of fate, and his unnumbered *Manfred* Symphony of 1885, a treatment of Lord Byron's poetic drama and its Faustian hero.

Something far less overt, or perhaps more mysterious, occurs in the Sixth Symphony.

Tchaikovsky developed a “private,” unpublished program for this music but refused to divulge it, teasing with the provocative subtitle as the work was still in progress of “Program Symphony.” The esoteric and unpublished program for the Sixth, which was composed between February and August 1893, has kept generations of scholars and fans busy with attempts to decipher its internal musical codes. Tchaikovsky dedicated the score to “Bob” Davidov — his nephew, with whom he became increasingly obsessed during his final decade.

According to one of the many legends that surround this score, the composer’s brother Modest suggested the French title “Pathétique,” which connotes “impassioned suffering” in its Russian context. Tchaikovsky’s sudden death just a little over a week after he conducted the world premiere in October 1893 made that title seem uncannily well-suited to the impression of intense psychological devastation that the Sixth traces.

The Israeli musicologist Marina Ritzarev follows a very different line of argument in her book *Tchaikovsky’s Pathétique and Russian Culture*. In her analysis, the conventional view of the Sixth as a personal, subjective lamentation clashes with the composer’s aesthetic and ethical sensibility. The actual “program,” Ritzarev argues, has to do with a more traditional, religious sense of “passion” (and compassion) from European culture. “The image that might have served as the source of inspiration for Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece,” she writes, “was that of Jesus Christ, his life and death, transformed into a general imagery of the *Passion*.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The lengthy first movement establishes an emotional space dominated by despair from the outset — consolation enters as contrast or possible delusion. Tchaikovsky employs his brilliance as an orchestrator using relatively conventional forces: brass chorales evoke apocalypse, while tender memories are highlighted by sensitive woodwind solos. Tempestuous string scales fulminate with a nervous energy that verges on terror. But the climaxes avoid predictability: in the middle of this movement, an exaggerated silence (marked

pppppp in the score for emphasis) shocks even more than an explosion of sound would.

One interpretive challenge in performance is to establish coherence between what seem to be sharply disparate sections: note the dead pause preceding the deliriously lyrical second theme (which was inspired by a moment from one of the fate-obsessed Tchaikovsky’s favorite operas, the “Flower Song” that Don José sings in *Carmen*).

Two inner movements that contrast in character turn out to be interludes rather than long-range shifts of direction. The second movement’s flowing, dance-like charm is subtly inflected through Tchaikovsky’s use of 5/4 meter. This parceling of time units manages to sound graceful rather than hobbled, but it gives the familiar pattern of the waltz an uneasy edge. In the third movement, Tchaikovsky presents a blazing but hollowly triumphant march, emblazoned by victorious brass that revels in aggressively swaggering rhythms. The march’s resounding final proclamation enacts a famous “false” stop. The Sixth’s ultimate pathos comes in the fact that there is “more to come.”

It has frequently been noted that had Tchaikovsky merely switched the order of the final two movements, he would have preserved the optimistic, Beethovenian model of light triumphing over darkness. Yet by reversing that model and concluding with the nihilistic, dying fall of a “lamenting” Adagio (the Sixth began with an Adagio as well), a radically new concept of the symphonic journey is introduced. Mahler’s Ninth would later adopt a similar strategy. The valedictory plunge into silence from a sustained B minor chord deep in the strings sets the stage for a new century of bleak requiems — and confessions that conceal more than they declare, all the way to the grave.

Scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals and tam-tam) and strings

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



GUEST CONDUCTOR: Vinay Parameswaran

Internationally recognised for his energetic presence, imaginative programming and compelling musicianship, Vinay Parameswaran is one of the most exciting and versatile young conductors on the podium today.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season include Parameswaran's debut with the Charlotte Symphony and return appearances with the Nashville Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic orchestras. He also conducts a series of education concerts with the Chicago Symphony. In the 2021/22 season, Parameswaran concluded five seasons with the Cleveland Orchestra, where he was Assistant Conductor from 2018/19 and promoted to Associate Conductor in 2021. During this period, he conducted many concerts each season at Severance Hall, Blossom Music Festival and on tour. As Music Director, he led the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra on an acclaimed four-city European tour that included a performance at the Musikverein in Vienna.

Prior to his time with the Cleveland Orchestra, Parameswaran was the Associate Conductor of the Nashville Symphony for three seasons and led more than 150 performances, which included his subscription debut with the Orchestra in 2016/17, conducting works by Gabriella Smith, Grieg and Prokofiev. Other highlights include debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Detroit Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, Grant Park Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony and Jacksonville Symphony.

A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Parameswaran graduated with honours from Brown University with a Bachelor of Arts in music and political science. At Brown, he began his conducting studies with Paul Phillips. He received an Artist Diploma in conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with renowned pedagogue Otto-Werner Mueller as the Albert M. Greenfield Fellow.

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