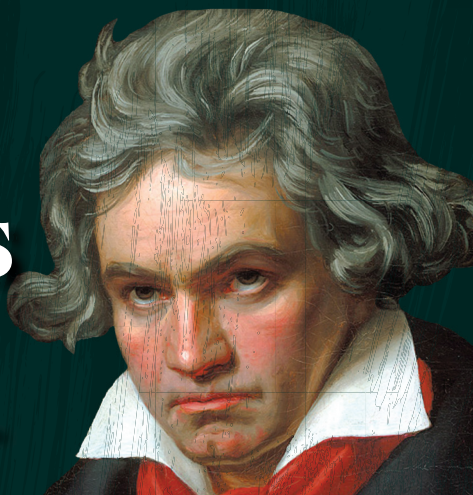


Beethoven's Seventh

with the NASHVILLE SYMPHONY



CLASSICAL SERIES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, AT 7 PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22 & 23, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*

ALBAN GERHARDT, *cello*

AARON JAY KERNIS

Symphony No. 4, "Chromelodeon"

Out of Silence

Thorn, Rose | Weep, Freedom (after Handel)

Fanfare Chromelodia

SAMUEL BARBER

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 22

Allegro moderato

Andante sostenuto

Molto allegro ed appassionato

Alban Gerhardt, cello

— INTERMISSION —

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Poco sostenuto – Vivace

Allegretto

Presto

Allegro con brio

This concert will last 1 hour and 55 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission.

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TONIGHT'S CONCERT | AT A GLANCE



AARON JAY KERNIS

Symphony No. 4, “Chromelodeon”

- New York City-based composer Kernis has earned the Pulitzer Prize in Music and the prestigious Grawemeyer Award, as well a 2019 GRAMMY® nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. (Winners had not yet been announced at the time of the program guide's printing.) He also serves as workshop director for the Nashville Symphony's Composer Lab & Workshop.
- The title of his latest symphony, “Chromelodeon,” comes from an unusual word previously used by maverick American composer Harry Partch to describe one of his musical inventions. As defined by the composer, this word aptly describes his own creation here: “chromatic, colorful, melodic music performed by an orchestra.”
- The idea of color is especially significant in Kernis' work, as the composer has synesthesia, a condition that associates specific notes and chords and with distinct colors. In “Chromelodeon,” no one color emerges more strongly than any other — the impression this music creates is similar to that of a kaleidoscope, with its unpredictable variety.



SAMUEL BARBER

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 22

- Barber's Cello Concerto was commissioned in the mid-1940s by Serge Koussevitzky, music director of the Boston Symphony. The composer worked on the piece while serving as an Army Airman — he was discharged in September 1945, after Koussevitzky wrote letters on his behalf.
- Koussevitzky had a specific soloist in mind for his commission: fellow Soviet émigré Raya Garbousova. Barber met with the cellist prior to working on the concerto so that he could internalize her style. One immediately noticeable characteristic of the piece is the important role he assigned to the solo instrument's high registers.
- While the music is overall “lyric and romantic,” in the composer's own words, it is also notable for being extremely challenging for the soloist. This may account for why the piece is less frequently performed than other Barber concertos.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

- Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is notable in the composer's oeuvre for its rhythmic, joyous spirit — a contrast to other his symphonic works, which tend to unfold as epic journeys from darkness to light. The composer Richard Wagner, one of this symphony's biggest fans, famously called it “the apotheosis of the dance.”
- The piece received its premiere on December 8, 1813, at a special charity concert in Vienna for war veterans who'd fought against Napoleon. It was a significant time in European history, as Napoleon and his imperial pretensions were nearing defeat (which would ultimately come in the summer of 1815, after years of conflict).
- While the work's overall mood is of exhilarating power, the second movement offers a melancholy reprieve from the churning speed that courses through the rest of the symphony. At the world premiere, the audience demanded an encore of this movement. The work closes with a powerhouse finale — one of the most memorable moments in the Beethoven repertoire.



AARON JAY KERNIS

Born on January 15, 1960, in Philadelphia; currently lives in New York City

Symphony No. 4, “Chromelodeon”

Composed: 2017-18

First performance: April 18, 2018, with Hugh Wolff conducting the New England Conservatory of Music Philharmonia

First Nashville Symphony performance:

These are the Nashville Symphony’s first performances.

Estimated length: 23 minutes

“I’m always thinking about journeys,” Aaron Jay Kernis says when asked to describe his creative process. “It’s very much a journey that I don’t want to express in words but that I hope provokes the listener to find some connection with their own personal journey and experience of life.” In the course of writing his Symphony No. 4 (“Chromelodeon”), the Philadelphia-born composer set out on one path but found, to his surprise, that the musical material “took its own way,” leading him into unexpected directions — rather like a novelist whose characters acquire, even demand, a life of their own, subverting their creator’s original plans.

Initially, Kernis notes, he was reading the work of Thích Nhất Hạnh, the peace activist and Vietnamese Buddhist monk, which in turn recalled to him avant-garde composer John Cage’s writings on music and silence. But the musical material led him down unanticipated paths, resulting in this richly colorful, event-filled, three-movement work. “I’ve only begun on a journey suggested by those readings,” he observes, “and very possibly the experience of writing this symphony is part of that.”

Kernis has earned a place among the most highly regarded composers of our time with a substantial body of works for orchestra, chorus, chamber formations and solo piano. He began teaching himself piano and composition at the age of 12, later studying at the San Francisco Conservatory and at the Manhattan and Yale Schools of Music;

John Adams was among his early mentors. In his early 20s, Kernis emerged on the national scene when the New York Philharmonic premiered his first orchestral work.

Both the Pulitzer Prize in Music (1998, for his Second String Quartet) and the prestigious Grawemeyer Award (2002, for *Colored Field* for cello and orchestra) are among Kernis’ many accolades. The Seattle Symphony’s recording of his Violin Concerto with James Ehnes received three nominations for the 2019 GRAMMY® Awards, including Best Contemporary Classical Composition. (The winners had not yet been announced before this program went to press.) Kernis has developed an especially close relationship with Giancarlo Guerrero and the Nashville Symphony, which will release a recording of this work, along with his *Color Wheel*, on Naxos. In addition, he has served as the workshop director for the Nashville Symphony’s Composer Lab & Workshop, which supports the work of American composers under the age of 30.

Weighty topics figure frequently in Kernis’ compositions, corresponding to the intense emotional reactions his music characteristically elicits. Although, as he remarks, “writing symphonies can seem anachronistic” nowadays, he is drawn to the Mahlerian ideal of the symphony’s potential to contain “the entire world. It is the totality of the musical worlds of Mahler, Sibelius and Haydn (plus Messiaen) that speak most urgently to me.” Each of his symphonies indeed inhabits a remarkably different universe: the phenomenon of waves as natural and metaphorical in the First Symphony (“Symphony in Waves”), from 1989; the First Gulf War in the Second, from 1991; and Jewish spirituality in the choral Third (“Symphony of Meditations”), from 2009.

The Fourth Symphony was commissioned to mark the 150th anniversary of the New England Conservatory of Music’s founding — with the Nashville Symphony and Bellingham Festival of Music as co-commissioners with the NEC. Given the occasion, Kernis addressed the power of the orchestra itself, and of the musicians who comprise it, with his title *Chromelodeon*. Kernis points out that this portmanteau word has been used as the name of a musical invention by American maverick composer Harry Partch, as well as an indie rock band from his native Philadelphia. But

he elucidates the particular meaning the word has for him: “chroma-, relating to the chromatic scale of notes, or intensity of/ or produced with color; melodi-, melody, a succession of tones that produce a distinct phrase or idea; and -eon, one who performs. In other words, chromatic, colorful, melodic music performed by an orchestra.”

The Symphony No. 4 is thus “created out of musical elements, not images or stories.” At the same time, the work conveys a powerful emotional sensibility. “While there is no hidden program,” the composer explains, “underneath there is always for me a sense of living in the moment, of reflecting the emotional tenor of the time in which I write.” He hints at “the influence of living in the chaos of the world today” and how this might play a role “at a ‘molecular’ emotive level.”

The title also anchors the Symphony No. 4 in Kernis’ own body of work, where the importance of color, he says, “is present all the time.” In his commentary on *Color Wheel*, from 2001, Kernis refers to a characteristic he shares with one of his admired predecessors, the French composer Olivier Messiaen: “I sometimes see colors when I compose, and the qualities of certain chords do elicit specific sensation in me — for example, I see A major as bright yellow.” Currently, he is working on a commission for Stéphane Deneuve’s inaugural season as music director of the St. Louis Symphony (beginning this fall) that was inspired by the Guggenheim’s recent retrospective of the pioneering Swedish artist Hilma af Klint and her unusual use of reds.

In *Chromelodeon*, no single color emerges more strongly or more often than the others. The impression this music generates is instead closer to that of a kaleidoscope and its wildly unpredictable variety. “With a piece as big and varied as this,” says Kernis, “the orchestra becomes a sort of vehicle for color and combinations.”

The composer additionally notes a curious relationship between creative work on a symphony and his subsequent efforts in the more intimate medium of the string quartet. Much as his pivotal First String Quartet (“musica celestis”) followed in the wake of his First Symphony, Kernis’ String Quartet No. 4 (“musica universalis”) was completed after the Symphony No. 4. His symphonies and quartets each tend to push the limits of their respective genres with each new endeavor.

The very first musical idea that found its way into the Symphony No. 4 is the fanfare that opens the final movement. Kernis had jotted this idea down in 2014 while working on another commission, realizing it belonged “to a different piece.” Work proper on the new symphony began in 2017, when Kernis sensed that the idea he had set aside would be ideally suited to the last movement. The process of composing and determining the “home” for a given musical idea, he remarks, is “always so mercurial.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Each of *Chromelodeon*’s three movements has a title: Out of Silence; Thorn, Rose / Weep, Freedom (after Handel); and Fanfare Chromelodia. The first movement indeed emerges out of a kind of silence as bells sound mysterious harmonies. The viola then spells out a yearning melody, generating a mood of contemplation that, in the composer’s words, “grows in drama and intensity, and through many variations in texture.” The first movement is also the longest and most richly chromatic of the three.

What follows is a moving reflection on the musical past courtesy of one of George Frideric Handel’s best-loved tunes: the aria “Laschia ch’io pianga” (“Let me weep”), which the composer used in the operas *Almira* and *Rinaldo*, as well as the oratorio *The Triumph of Time and Truth*. In each case, Handel used it to set different texts. Kernis extracts keywords from those different contexts for the second movement’s title; he explains that the enduring beauty of the melody and its layers of reuse made him think about “history and glosses on history, accretions on top of the past.” An opening chorale introduces Kernis’ melody, which is “vaguely influenced” by Handel’s source, played by “an antique-sounding string quartet which is soon opposed by shifting, chromatic chord clouds.” The movement unfolds as a series of 10 variations, with the longest of these reserved for the strings. In the final variation of the melody, “wave-like outbursts” overwhelm the picture. This unsettling meeting of Neo-Baroque and Modernist music ends with a sense of tonality broken and melting away.

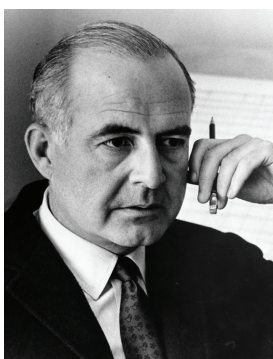
Fanfare Chromelodia, the shortest movement, is notably different in character, though it continues

the Symphony's exploration of the tension between ambitious, open-ended chromaticism and stably defined consonance. Here, the conflict is staged as a juxtaposition of "ringing brass exhortations, repetitive little 'musical machines,' and wide-ranging disjunct melodies..." the composer notes, "with a final slow chorale placed below fast runs and nearly ecstatic melodic figures." The finale achieves a kind of resolution of the tension that has built up across the Symphony.

In all three movements, different strategies of variation underlie the musical process and serve as a unifying element. Another is the appearance

of a cataclysmic moment in each movement. In Fanfare Chromelodia, that moment arrives in the huge outburst for full orchestra at the end, which comes to rest on a vast, loud, open fifth of F and C (potentially either major or minor).

Symphony No. 4 is scored for a large orchestra of 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (2nd doubling E-flat clarinet, 3rd doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, five percussionists, piano (doubling celesta), harp and strings.



SAMUEL BARBER

Born on March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania; died on January 23, 1981, in New York City

Composed: 1945

First performance: April 5, 1946, with Raya Garbousova as the soloist and Sergei Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony

First Nashville Symphony performance: These are the orchestra's first performances.

Estimated length: 27 minutes

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 22

Some very powerful allies in the music industry can be thanked for helping launch Samuel Barber's career as a composer. He started out as a prodigy, growing up in a supportive environment; Louise Homer, a famed Metropolitan Opera alto, was his aunt. By the age of 7, Barber was already composing, and at 14 he entered the newly founded Curtis Conservatory (later Curtis Institute), where he distinguished himself as a student of voice and piano in addition to composition. The Conservatory's founder, Mary Louise Curtis Bok, set Barber up with the internationally renowned American music publisher Schirmer.

Roughly a decade later, in 1937, Arturo Toscanini was impressed by Barber's Symphony in One Movement, the first orchestral piece by an American to be played at the Salzburg Festival. The star conductor requested that Barber compose a work for his fledgling radio orchestra, the NBC Symphony. The result was the radio premiere, in November 1938, of Adagio for Strings, which firmly put Barber on the map. Another major opportunity

came when Serge Koussevitzky, music director of the Boston Symphony (and, unlike Toscanini, a fervent champion of contemporary music), commissioned a choral-symphonic piece in 1942. After a long delay, this was premiered in 1954 as the cantata *Prayers of Kierkegaard*. Koussevitzky also led Boston in the premiere of Barber's Second Symphony in 1944, but the composer later officially withdrew that work.

It was Koussevitzky who came up with the idea of commissioning a cello concerto for his friend and fellow émigré from the Soviet Union, Raya Garbousova, whose grandson is the acclaimed pianist Jonathan Biss. The commission fee was covered by John Nicholas Brown, a musical philanthropist and amateur cellist. Barber, who tended to work slowly, began composing the Cello Concerto at the start of 1945, while he was still an Army Airman. (He had been drafted into the Army Air Corps in 1942 and was given leeway to write music as moral support.) Koussevitzky wrote letters at Barber's request to help effect his

When he set about writing the Cello Concerto, Barber met with soloist Raya Garbousova to listen to her play her repertoire and imprint on his inner ear what would be best suited to her style.

early discharge in September 1945. At that point, the composer reported, all that remained was to orchestrate the concerto.

Biographer Barbara B. Heyman reports that over the previous winter, while in the thick of composing the piece, Barber was allowed to continue living at the home he shared with his life partner, the composer Gian Carlo Menotti, in Mount Kisco, in New York's Westchester County. He spent much of his free time reading French literature, taking weekly breaks in New York City to attend lectures on philosophy.

Barber had undertaken his first work in the concerto genre in 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, producing a major success and one of the best-loved works of his career with the Violin Concerto. When he set about writing the Cello Concerto, Barber met with Garbousova to listen to her play her repertoire and imprint on his inner ear what would be best suited to her style. One immediately noticeable characteristic is the important role Barber assigns to the instrument's high registers. As work continued, he consulted closely with Garbousova, who reminded him that Stravinsky had relied heavily on input from soloist Samuel Dushkin for his Violin Concerto. "The cellist reported this collaboration to be one of the most creative and happiest times of her life," notes Heyman. "But there was frustration and quarreling as well."

Garbousova became an enthusiastic advocate of the work. Yet in contrast to Barber's Violin Concerto and his Piano Concerto — which came later and earned him the second of his two Pulitzer Prizes — the Cello Concerto has suffered serious neglect. This is in part because of its severe technical challenges, though Barber later revised the score and clarified the cello part. Still, at its premiere, the curmudgeonly critic/composer Virgil Thomson praised the Concerto: "The working up of [its ideas] into a richly romantic, well-sustained structure is musical, masterful, thoughtful and not without a certain Brahms-like grandeur." In the estimation of Koussevitzky, Heyman points out, Barber's

achievement for the 20th century with the Cello Concerto was comparable to what Brahms did for his century with the Violin Concerto.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The music overall is "lyric and romantic" — in the composer's own words — "with, however, some of the vivacity and rhythmic tension of Capricorn" [referring to his chamber Capricorn Concerto of 1944 for flute, oboe, trumpet and strings]. Barber's layout follows the familiar concerto pattern of two faster movements surrounding a slow one. Indeed, he expected the music to be so self-evident "on its own musical terms, which do not call for verbal description or analysis," that he requested no program note be printed for the premiere and first recording.

In very Brahmsian fashion, the substance of the first movement develops out of the first two dozen measures, which present two main themes. The soloist comes in with a cadenza-like monologue that makes use of the passage bringing those themes. After a far-far-reaching, passionate development of these ideas, the cello takes center stage for a lengthier, tour de force cadenza.

In the Andante sostenuto, Barber's signature lyricism is first assigned to the oboe, which plays a melody that originates from the first movement. The music unfolds as variations on this lilting idea, which is contrasted with another expressive idea on the cello. Barber concludes the Concerto with an agitated finale of striking contrasts and includes a funereal theme. The ending gave Barber particular trouble — this is one of the passages he later revised, extending it in an effort to achieve a more satisfying balance between the soloist and orchestra.

In addition to solo cello, Barber's Concerto is scored for 2 flutes, oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets (2nd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, timpani, snare drum and strings.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born on December 16, 1770,
in Bonn (now part of
Germany);
died on March 26, 1827,
in Vienna

Composed: 1811-12

First performance: December 8, 1813, in
Vienna, with the composer conducting

First Nashville Symphony performance:
December 10, 1946, with Music Director
William Strickland — at the orchestra's very
first public performance.

Estimated length: 36 minutes

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

On December 8, 1813, Beethoven conducted a special charity concert in Vienna for war veterans and their families, victims of one of the major battles against Napoleon's retreating armies. Europe was on the verge of a major paradigm shift that would usher in dramatic political and social changes. The first audience to experience the Seventh Symphony may well have associated the work's outsize exuberance with the sense of impending triumph over Napoleon's once seemingly invincible power: after years of disruptive warfare, a lasting peace finally beckoned on the horizon. The program also included Beethoven's patriotic *Wellington's Victory*, a shorter and now rarely performed composition sometimes known as "The Battle Symphony."

In other words, the Seventh Symphony comes at the conclusion of the French Revolutionary fervor that had so deeply affected Beethoven at the beginning of his career — a fervor expressed above all in his Third Symphony ("Eroica") as well as his only opera, *Fidelio*. As far as the composer was concerned, Napoleon had co-opted that spirit and corrupted it through his imperial pretensions.

"The apotheosis of the dance" — Richard Wagner's endlessly quoted epithet for this work — offers one way of thinking about the significant role that rhythmic energy plays in this music. In his 1870 essay marking the centennial of Beethoven's birth, Wagner also observed: "Never has any art in the world created anything so serenely buoyant as these Symphonies in A [No. 7] and F [No. 8].... The effect upon the hearer is the deliverance from all earthly guilt, precisely as the aftereffect is the feeling of a forfeited paradise so that we return to the world of semblances."

It's interesting to note that Wagner chose to program the Seventh Symphony when he rebooted his conducting career during his exile in Switzerland, after he had fled his position at Dresden Opera in the aftermath of the 1849 revolutions there. Wagner repeatedly claimed to be the true inheritor of Beethoven's mantle. The musicologist Klaus Kropfinger writes that "this work's ecstatic rhythmic progressions fascinated Wagner all his life," with the Seventh forming "a crowning experience" in his youth, when he first began to explore Beethoven. The Seventh also played a key role in converting another musical revolutionary, Hector Berlioz, into a Beethoven follower during a series of Paris Conservatoire concerts in 1829.

Even such modern commentators as the biographer Maynard Solomon echo Wagner in discerning a consensus impression of the Seventh Symphony as conveying a "festive Paradise, outside of time and history, untouched by mortality." Instead of an epic struggle through suffering toward triumph or joy, the Seventh gives us a series of differentiated states of Dionysian ecstasy. Solomon also describes the work as "a modernist symphony" that "bears what may be the hallmarks of a dynamic era of revolution and war — a rhythm-dominated musical language, rhetoric and grammar."

Along with all of these varied associations, the Seventh might be said ultimately to be "about" the power of music itself. Wagner persuasively approached the Seventh as a work that seems to take that power as its very subject — in contrast with the more concretely allegorical programs that Wagner liked to dream up, such as the "hero's struggle" for the *Eroica*. Beethoven builds the work

Even more than an “apotheosis,” the Seventh Symphony embodies what Wagner found especially awe-inspiring in Beethoven’s genius: “the power to shape the unfathomable” and to endow it with the “most transparent” immediacy.

out of primal elements, from obsessively repeated rhythmic patterns to the rudimentary character of most of his actual thematic material (scales and outlines of the basic harmony that defines the home key). But if the components are primal, Beethoven develops them to construct a complex architecture of epic proportions.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The introduction to the first movement, almost a movement in itself, uses the basic idea of the scale to gloriously dramatic effect; the overall impression is massive in proportion and unprecedented for a slow introduction. It segues, via a call-and-response between flutes and violins, to the first movement proper, a Vivace that makes prominent use of long-short-short rhythms (the ancient classical meter of epics) against slowly grinding drones deep in the bass. The resulting tension generates an electrifying, even seismic, sense of energy in the coda. Composer and Beethoven contemporary Carl Maria von Weber allegedly compared this music to the musings of a madman (at least according to Beethoven’s first, though unreliable, biographer, Anton Schindler). But there is method to the “madness.” This drone, a musical metaphor for outdoor, rustic celebration, plays an important role later in the Seventh, literally grounding its sense of Dionysian festivity.

Overall, the Seventh Symphony exudes a mood of exhilarating power, but that still leaves room for the melancholy strain that emerges in the main part of the Allegretto, with its shift to A minor and its solemn long-short-short-long-long pattern. This is an unusual tempo indication for a Beethovenian slow movement. Still, the Allegretto offers a reprieve from the churning speed of the other movements. At the world premiere, the audience demanded an encore of this movement.

Ever-changing layers of orchestration clothe the Allegretto’s main idea with each repetition — a

procedure Beethoven also uses in the orchestral introduction of the “joy” theme in the Ninth Symphony’s finale — and he adds a poignant countermelody to its almost monotonic, long-short-short tread. The key warms to A major in the middle section, in which the clarinet basks in a fresh melody — Beethovenian lyricism at its warmest.

Scherzos by nature are heavily rhythmic, and here Beethoven also wittily alludes to the scalar pattern we heard in the grand introduction. But in this case, it’s a rapidly descending scale. The contrasting middle section has a ceremonial flair, climaxing in an insistent trumpet call. After one complete repeat of all this material, Beethoven brings the Scherzo to an abrupt halt.

The finale begins with powerhouse chords and proceeds with an almost terrifying fury. Beethoven, writes Solomon, composes what might be interpreted as “a critique” that “undermines the precepts of a calm and symmetrical Classicism, preferring those dynamic polarities of tranquility and terror, containment and abandon, and dream and intoxication that Nietzsche later identified as ‘the Apollonian-Dionysian duality.’ ” Even more than an “apotheosis,” the Seventh Symphony embodies what Wagner found especially awe-inspiring in Beethoven’s genius: “the power to shape the unfathomable” and to endow it with the “most transparent” immediacy.

Symphony No. 7 is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets; timpani; and strings.

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

ABOUT THE SOLOIST



ALBAN GERHARDT
cello

Alban Gerhardt has, for 25 years, made a unique impact on audiences worldwide with his intense musicality, compelling stage presence and insatiable artistic curiosity. His gift for shedding fresh light on familiar scores, along with his appetite for investigating new repertoire from centuries past and present, truly sets him apart from his peers.

Highlights of Gerhardt's 2018/19 season include the premiere of a new concerto by Brett Dean with Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Berliner Philharmoniker, and concerts with Hong Kong Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, and WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln under Jukka-Pekka Saraste, with whom he will record both Shostakovich concertos.

Gerhardt will also give recitals at The Phillips Collection Museum in Washington, D.C., London's Wigmore Hall and Shanghai Concert Hall. Next season sees the development of a new project, "Love in Fragments," with violinist Gergana Gergova, choreographer Sommer Ulrickson and sculptor Alexander Polzin bringing together music, movement and the spoken word; the project will receive its U.S. premiere at the 92nd Street Y.

Gerhardt is passionate about sharing his discoveries with audiences far beyond the traditional concert hall: outreach projects undertaken in Europe and the U.S. have involved performances and workshops not only in schools and hospitals, but also in public spaces and young offender institutions. In early 2017, Gerhardt founded #Musicians4UnitedEurope, a group of international musicians working together to voice their support for a united and democratic Europe.

Following early competition success, Gerhardt's international career was launched by his debut with Berliner Philharmoniker and Semyon Bychkov in 1991. Notable orchestra collaborations since have included Concertgebouw Amsterdam, London Philharmonic, all of the British and German radio orchestras, Tonhalle Zürich, Leipzig Gewandhaus and Orchestre National de France, as well as the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago orchestras, under conductors including Kurt Masur, Christoph von Dohnányi, Christoph Eschenbach, Michael Tilson Thomas, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Andris Nelsons.

As a recording artist, Gerhardt has won several awards, and his recording of Unsuk Chin's Cello Concerto, released by Deutsche Grammophon, won the BBC Music Magazine Award and was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award in 2015. He has recorded extensively for Hyperion. In 2019, his complete recording of the Bach suites will be released.

Alban Gerhardt plays a Matteo Gofriller cello dating from 1710.

