

HART HOUSE ORCHESTRA

HENRY JANZEN
PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR & MUSIC DIRECTOR

WINTER CONCERT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH, 2025
HART HOUSE GREAT HALL
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH, 2025
FIRST CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE, MA

PROGRAMME

Overture to the Opera 'Figaro' K.492

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Concerto for Cello in A minor Op.129

Robert Schumann

- I. Nicht zu schnell
- II. Langsam

Yuna Lee-Cello

Intermission

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

Johannes Brahms Ralph

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro giocoso
- IV. Allegro energico e passionato

Yuna Lee, Cellist



Yuna Lee is a passionate and dedicated cellist who has been deeply immersed in music for over a decade. She is a graduate of the Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for the Royal Conservatory of Music, where she spent six years under the tutelage of David Hetherington. During her time at the Taylor Academy she was a member of the Academy Chamber Orchestra and was awarded with an

Associate Diploma (ARCT) for Cello Performance and Teaching.

Yuna has been privileged to perform with inspiring musicians and a variety of ensembles. She is an alumnus of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, where she spent three cherished seasons from 2021 to 2023. She served as the Co-Principal Cellist of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, where she was a member from 2018 to 2022. Notably, Yuna placed second in the National Finals of the Canadian Music Competition and has participated in numerous music festivals throughout her musical career. Recently, she was awarded the K. Alan Turner Prize from the Hart House Orchestra Concerto Competition.

Yuna is currently pursuing a double major in Neuroscience and Molecular Genetics with a minor in Mathematics at the University of Toronto. She is also the Assistant Principal Cellist of the Hart House Orchestra, where she continues to grow as a musician and remains committed to exploring the connections between art and science in meaningful ways.

Deepest gratitude to Mike Chuang for his generous sponsorship of the cello used by our soloist tonight, whose support helps bring this performance to life and enriches our shared love of music.

Henry Janzen, Hart House Orchestra Music Director and Principal Conductor



Henry has extensive international experience conducting a variety of ensembles. A highlight for him was conducting the Hart House Orchestra's 40th year celebratory concert at Carnegie Hall. He has toured Europe, both as violist and conductor. As President of the Canadian Viola Society he represented Canada at International Viola Society meetings. One of his accomplishments was the re-drafting of the International Viola Society bylaws.

At present, in addition to conducting the Hart House Orchestra, he teaches Applied Instrumental Techniques at the University of Toronto Schools and the University of Guelph.

Music has its own language. Through music we communicate with each other in a way which both transports and transforms us, enriching both our lives and the lives of our listeners.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Overture to the Opera 'The Marriage of Figaro'



Orchestration: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 2 horns, timpani, and strings.

Approximate duration: 5 minutes.

The Marriage of Figaro is Mozart's first collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, and his first major operatic success. It is, arguably, the perfect comic opera: a fast-paced serious comedy that delivers action, a love story, character development, and a political message – all in music.

The source of the opera is Pierre Caron de Beaumarchais comedy *The Mad Day, or The Marriage of Figaro*, written in 1781, which helped spark the French Revolution. Figaro is Count Almaviva's factotum. The Count wants to get Suzanne, Figaro's fiancée, into his bed without Figaro's knowledge. Suzanne warns Figaro of the Count's intentions. The servants devise a scheme that exposes the Count to ridicule, and he has to beg for forgiveness. Not only does the play have the servant win in his conflict with the master, it also contains a direct and bitter denunciation of the aristocracy and of the then social order. It is therefore not surprising that the French King Louis XVI forbade the play. It took Beaumarchais three years, involving many of his aristocratic friends at court, for the king to relent. Needless to say the first public performance, April 1784 in Paris, was a runaway hit.

According to Lorenzo Da Ponte's memoirs, it was Mozart who suggested to Da Ponte an opera based on Beaumarchais's play. By the time Mozart came up with this idea the play had already been translated and published in Austria, yet performing it publicly was still forbidden. Da Ponte took it upon himself to obtain permission from Emperor Joseph II, brother of queen Marie-Antoinette of France and, therefore, Louis XVI's brother-in-law. The Emperor granted permission upon Da Ponte's promise to delete the more incendiary parts of the play. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* premiered at the Burgtheater in Vienna on May 1, 1786, and it was a great success with many numbers being encored. The opera was

even more successful in Prague, where it was performed at the end of 1786; its success there led to the commissioning of the next Mozart/Da Ponte collaboration, *Don Giovanni*.

The Marriage of Figaro is as much of a revolutionary work as Beaumarchais's play on which it is based. Mozart's main preoccupation was to keep the action going. To that end, he abandoned the Italian model of alternating recitative and da capo arias. Instead he reduced the number of arias (only 13 in the whole opera) and that of recitatives, while the action is carried forwards in ensemble numbers: from duets to the 20-minute long finale of act II involving 10 characters. With his gift of musical characterization, Mozart created compelling characters in way never done before, and rarely after. Even though Da Ponte removed all the political references from Beaumarchais's play, Mozart managed to communicate it in a subtle way: he broke the 18th century opera etiquette, according to which servants would have simple tunes, by assigning complex melodies and harmonies not only to the upper-class characters, but also lower-class characters.

The overture to the opera is a self-contained piece. Unlike the overtures to his other operas, it does not quote themes from the opera proper; nor does its ending lead directly into the opening bars of the opera. It does however capture the madcap character of the opera and its witty mood. The music opens with bustling notes, like whispers of gossip which gain momentum. Ultimately, these fragments gel into an energetic theme which establish the buoyant tone of the opera. At one point Mozart had considered a contrasting slow tune for oboe. but deleted the idea; he also dropped the customary repeat of the exposition. Allowing the overture to run uninterrupted by any structural corseting, provided the perfect introduction and preparation for the hilarious opera.

Robert Schumann: Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

Soloist: Yuna Lee



Orchestration: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, and solo cello.

Approximate duration: 15minutes (movements 1 & 2).

Schumann wrote the Cello Concerto in a span of two weeks in the fall of 1850, just after his move to Düsseldorf to take up the position of conductor of that city's orchestra. He finished the draft on the 29th of October 1850, the same day he conducted his first concert with the Düsseldorf Orchestra. Schumann's move to Düsseldorf was prompted by the prospect of financial security that this position offered, and which he badly needed in order to support his growing family. Unfortunately, his lack of skills as a conductor, combined with his mental instability, caused the initial warm relationship with the orchestra to deteriorate to the point where he was asked to leave in 1853. But, in 1850 he was in high spirits and the move to Düsseldorf was the start of his last major creative period: apart from the Cello Concerto he wrote the *Rhenish Symphony*, revised his D minor symphony into what he considered its definitive form (Symphony No. 4), wrote two violin sonatas, the *Märchenbilder* for viola and piano, two substantial cantatas, and a number of overtures on literary themes.

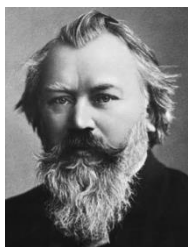
Schumann seems to have been happy about this piece, and his wife Clara was delighted. However, getting it published and performed was another matter. Schumann offered the Concerto to two publishers who were not interested, despite his pointing out that it was likely to sell well because of the dearth of cello concertos. He made the same point to a third publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, but added that the Concerto was quite a cheerful piece. This was stretching the truth, but Breitkopf bought the Concerto. The Concerto was published with piano accompaniment in 1854, and correcting the proofs was one of Schumann's last activities during his final descent into madness and death.

Getting the Concerto performed was even more difficult. Schumann approached the Düsseldorf composer-cellist Robert Bockmühl to help prepare the cello part for publication. Initially, Bockmühl expressed some interest in performing the Concerto, but demanded a much slower tempo for first movement which Schumann met only halfway. From then on Bockmühl found excuses to avoid playing the piece, even though he did edit the solo part. And so, the Cello Concerto was never performed in Schumann's lifetime. The first performance took place on April 23, 1860, four years after his death, in Oldenburg, with Ludwig Ebert as soloist. Due to the work's unusual structure as well as the inward nature of the music and the lack of virtuoso passages, the Concerto lingered in near oblivion until the early 20th century. Even now the Concerto is somewhat at the periphery of cello repertoire, although some cellists place the Schumann Concerto alongside those of Dvořák and Elgar.

On the autograph score, Schumann gave the title "Konzertstück" (concert piece) rather than "Konzert" (concerto), which indicates that he intended to depart from the traditional conventions of the concerto form. Indeed, the Concerto's form lies somewhere between, with three movements played without pause and one continuous movement in three contrasting sections. Schumann achieves a further degree of unity by using the material of the first movement throughout the whole piece.

The first movement starts with three woodwind chords, somewhat reminiscent of Mendelssohn's overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, after which the cello introduces the main theme, a long, deeply lyrical melody. This is followed by a short tutti that leads into additional melodic material that is both new and related to what has preceded it. In this way, the character of the work is one of improvisation and fantasy. The emotional heart of the Concerto is the slow movement, which is a lyrical duet between the solo cello and a single orchestral cello. The third movement, which will not be performed in tonight's concert, is a lighter, yet resolute sonata-form movement, and here Schumann utilizes the timpani for the first time in the work, adding to the main theme's march-like character. At the end of the movement, there is an accompanied cadenza, something unprecedented in Schumann's day.

Johannes Brahms: Symphony No.4 in E minor, Op 98



Orchestration: 2 flutes (2nd = piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, triangle, and strings.
Approximate duration: 40 minutes.

Brahms's Fourth Symphony, his last one, is considered by many to be his greatest work. Whether it is indeed his magnum opus is debatable, but it is certainly his greatest and most complex symphony.

Brahms wrote his Fourth Symphony at a mountain retreat during the summer months of 1884 and 1885. He wrote the Symphony specifically for the court orchestra of Saxe-Meiningen (a small German duchy) led by his friend and promoter Hans von Bülow. Shortly before the first public performance, Brahms and a friend gave a private performance of the piano version. The skeptical reaction of his closest friends gives a measure to how unsettling this music sounded to them. His friend, Eduard Hanslick, remarked that he had the feeling of "being given a beating by two incredibly intelligent people." Another friend went so far as to suggest he keep the finale as a stand-alone piece, and to rewrite the two inner movements. These comments made Brahms very apprehensive as to the fate of the symphony, but he went ahead and conducted the first performance in Meiningen in October of 1885. The premiere was a success, and Hans von Bülow and his orchestra took the symphony on a 14-city tour during which the symphony was received with enthusiasm. By the time the symphony reached Vienna, his doubters' attitudes had mellowed and the first performance in that city, under the baton of Hans Richter, was met with a positive reaction.

The Fourth Symphony is dark and deeply pessimistic. This is especially evident in the finale, which ends with one of the bleakest minor-key cadences in symphonic music. This ending was a departure from the tradition that symphonies in minor keys (which are associated with sadness) should end in a major key (associated with joy and happiness). Before Brahms's Fourth Symphony, this tradition had been broken only once, namely by Mozart in his

Symphony No. 40 in G minor. After Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies (in C minor and D minor, respectively), the narrative of "journey from darkness to light" and the major-key "happy-end" convention became almost inviolable. But when Brahms wrote this symphony he was thinking of retirement and death was on his mind. Even though he lived, and continued composing, for another 12 years, he himself called the Fourth "a new tragic symphony." Brahms obviously felt that a happy ending would have been contrived and unconvincing, and decided in favour of an uncompromisingly pessimistic one.

The Fourth Symphony is Brahms's most progressive work and challenges the view of Brahms being a traditionalist. This view, held both by his champions as well as by his detractors, is correct, but only up to a point. Brahms used the classical forms as tool that offered him a structure for presenting and organizing his musical ideas, and possibly also as a stimulus to his musical imagination. It was none other than Arnold Schoenberg, the inventor of twelve-tone music, who challenged this view by showing how original and innovative Brahms's compositional technique was. Schoenberg claimed the uniqueness of Brahms' music is predicated on a principle of composition which he coined as "developing variation". According to Schoenberg, "developing variation" is the idea that a simple thematic or motivic cell can form the basis of an entire piece of music, and any subsequent material that arises from it is merely the logical consequence of the preceding or foundational material, which is varied and transformed organically throughout the piece.

Nothing better illustrates Brahms's use of "developing variation" than the first movement of this Symphony. The first subject, at once pleading and agitated, is a sequence of two falling thirds alternating with two rising sixths, all separated by short rests. A closer look reveals that this sequence is actually the variation of a chain of descending thirds spanning two octaves. It is these descending thirds that are the fundamental motif of the first movement, and, indeed, of the whole symphony. The descending third is a motif associated with death in some of Brahms's earlier songs; moreover, Brahms used these exact sequences of descending thirds as the

opening of the song *O Death, How Bitter You Are*, which he composed less than a year before his death. A brief fanfare in the winds and brass makes the transition to the second subject: a warm melody full of longing, first in the celli, then first violins, punctuated by groups of four descending thirds each, in a tango-like rhythm in the rest of the orchestra. The fanfare returns to introduce the last segment of the second subject, in which woodwinds and horns intone a glorious tune in a major key. The development section is terse, yet extremely intricate – a multi-layered structure, which, as a modern-day Brahms scholar points out, is of such complexity there is nothing like it even in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. It was perhaps this intricacy that led to Hanslick's remark. The movement ends with a climactic coda based on a compressed variant of the opening phrases.

The second movement starts with a sad, stark melody introduced by two horns, the dotted rhythm suggestive of a dirge. The opening statement is taken over by the strings as a delicate pizzicato accompaniment to a slightly mellower version of the main theme in the winds. After a contrasting tender melody appears in the violins, a more forceful motif morphs into a gorgeous melody in the cellos (the cello melody uses the same notes as the forceful motif, only at half-speed). This melody is accompanied in the violins by motifs of ascending thirds, which are but an inversion falling thirds motif of the first movement. The horn call returns with increasing intensity, climaxing in a hammering passage for full orchestra based on the forceful motif. The movement ends with a richly orchestrated version of the horn call with strange harmonies that inspire a sense of wonder.

The third movement is the closest Brahms ever came to a true scherzo. Unlike the third movements of his previous symphonies, which are understated, intimate intermezzi, this one represents an explosion of vitality and life force unmatched in Brahms's symphonic music. Written in the bright key of C major, it is boisterous and almost bacchanalian in character. To add to the sizzle, Brahms adds piccolo and, for the first time in his

symphonies, a triangle. When the work was premiered, Brahms and von Bülow risked the wrath of an otherwise ecstatic audience by refusing to encore it.

The finale is Brahms's boldest, yet most conservative, in which he seamlessly combines innovation and tradition. It is a passacaglia (or chaconne), a polyphonic form of theme and variations, very popular with the Baroque composers, but rarely used since the advent of the Classical era in the mid-18th century. Brahms's choice of looking for inspiration in the Baroque era, at a time when interest in the music of that era was mainly academic, is another measure of his originality.

After the high spirits of the third movement, the dark opening of the finale, introduced by the winds and the timpani, is hair raising. This opening, which is the theme of the passacaglia, is a chromatic variation of Bach's Cantata No. 150. The movement is modeled on Bach's Chaconne from the Partita in D minor for solo violin, a work that Brahms greatly admired. In developing this material into a symphonic movement, Brahms observes a strict structure of 30 variations and a coda with no change of key, other than a brief E-major episode. Moreover, the variations are organized in four groups, roughly corresponding to the four sections of the sonata form. To add another layer of complexity, many variations are at the same time variations of the fundamental motif of descending thirds. This motif appears in its basic form in the last variation before the coda. The apocalyptic coda reiterates the passacaglia theme in the winds and the lower strings accompanied by furiously descending arpeggios in the violins. The whole movement evokes a sense of relentless tragedy. The end, where the classical tradition demands that the darkness of minor should be lightened by a final turning to major, is a shattering minor chord

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