

## FIRE: LIGHT & LEGEND

Our Winter Festival concludes with a spectacular array of music from three different centuries, representing fire, light and legend. The element of fire plays a role in all three works. Music Director Jacques Lacombe opens with **Haydn's Symphony No. 59, subtitled "Fire."** "I love conducting Haydn!" he declares. "It always amazes me how fresh and new his music sounds. From a purely musical standpoint, Haydn is always more complex than Mozart. The structure is unpredictable. Our orchestra is experienced with Haydn because of the many symphonies that Neeme Järvi conducted, which is an advantage."

Exciting Finnish cellist Anssi Karttunen makes his NJSO debut this weekend with a work dedicated to him—**Kaija Saariaho's *Notes on Light*** for cello and orchestra. "Saariaho is one of the most important living composers, and she has not yet been performed here," Lacombe notes. "Karttunen is good friends with her and is a specialist in her music. He will bring wonderful insight to this important concerto." Its second movement, "On fire," refers to the heated exchange between cello and orchestra.

Finally, we turn to legend, specifically the Greek legend of Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mankind—which brings us back to fire in a neat circle. **Beethoven's incidental music to *The Creatures of Prometheus*** was his only significant ballet score. These performances honor those origins in a collaboration with dancers. A narrator assists in refreshing our knowledge of Greek mythology.

**Symphony No. 59 in A Major, “Fire”****Franz Joseph Haydn****Born March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Austria****Died May 31, 1809 in Vienna**

Haydn’s six “Paris” and 12 “London” symphonies show up on orchestral programs more than all the rest of his symphonies combined. His 80-plus other works in the genre are filled with glorious music that is well worth discovering. Lacombe has chosen the 59th, in part because of its subtitle (which actually comes from a play).

Prince Nikolaus Eszterházy, Haydn’s employer from 1762 to 1790, was keenly interested in all the arts. During the 1770s, he employed a resident theatre troupe during the summers. For five years, the celebrated Russian actor and director Carl Wahr oversaw theatrical presentations at Eszterháza, the prince’s summer palace. In 1774, Wahr produced *The Conflagration* by Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann. For its *entr’actes*, the Prince’s resident orchestra played music from an A major symphony that Haydn had composed several years earlier. That work became known as the “Fire” Symphony.

The symphony falls into a group of works from the late 1760s and early 1770s described as Haydn’s *Sturm und Drang* symphonies. The term, which means “storm and stress,” refers to a movement in German romantic literature in the 1770s that emphasized the powerful, even exaggerated, expression of emotion. Goethe and Schiller are associated with the movement, which takes its name from the title of a 1776 drama by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger.

**HAYDN AND THE *STURM UND DRANG* MOVEMENT**

*Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) is a literary movement that originated in Germany in the 1770s. Music experienced its own *Sturm und Drang* at the same time in Austria, but the two phenomena appear to have been simultaneous and unrelated developments. In Haydn’s music, *Sturm und Drang* manifested itself as a series of works in minor keys that relied on various methods to create a strong effect: chromatic harmonies, spare textures,

dramatic gestures. Isolated in the Esterházy court, Haydn was most likely unaware of the German *Sturm und Drang* movement, much less affected by it. That likelihood does not lessen the emotional impact of his unusual symphonies from this period. In his case, the so-called *Sturm und Drang* works (which also include his six Op. 20 string quartets) date principally from the late 1760s to the early 1770s.

The Symphony No. 44, called “Mourning,” is one of seven symphonies in minor keys that Haydn wrote in seven years, an unusually high number. It is a superb example of his stormy, darker side. Others that fall into this category are the Symphony No. 26 in D Minor, “Lamentatione;” Symphony No. 45 in F-sharp Minor, “Farewell,” and the Symphony No. 49 in F Minor, “La Passione.” Surprisingly, at least three works in major mode also qualify as *Sturm und Drang*: the Symphony No. 58 in F Major, Symphony No. 65 in A Major and the symphony on this weekend’s program, No. 59 in A Major, “Fire.”

Scholars and critics have paid disproportionate attention to Haydn’s *Sturm und Drang* works in minor keys. Major mode does not preclude the sudden dynamic changes, instrumental experimentation and inherent drama that characterize these works. The “Fire” Symphony has many of the same qualities that distinguish its symphonic siblings: *tremolando*, rapidly repeated notes, dramatic leaps and pregnant pauses. It makes a persuasive case for inclusion among Haydn’s most celebrated early symphonies.

Chronology is difficult to pinpoint for Haydn’s early symphonies, but this one almost certainly dates from 1767 or 1768. The opening movement is fiery indeed, with aggressive repeated notes in the strings and a strong rhythmic profile. Sudden switches between *piano* and *forte* suggest the irregularity of flickering flames.

Haydn concentrates on the strings in the slow movement, a sedate minuet in A minor. His third movement is a conventional minuet, lighter in mood. The trio section is for strings alone. Woodwinds take center stage in the finale, with a remarkable opening for horns and oboes reminiscent of Haydn’s wind divertimenti. Their cameo solo recurs just before the close.

*Haydn's score calls for two oboes, bassoon, two horns, continuo and strings. Timing: approximately 17 minutes.*

### ***Notes on Light***

**Kaija Saariaho**

**Born October 14, 1952 in Helsinki, Finland**

**Currently residing in Paris, France**

Finland is a small country that boasts a remarkable number of prominent composers, conductors and performers of international stature. Kaija Saariaho has become one of Finland's most celebrated musical figures. She studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with the Finnish modernist Paavo Heininen (b. 1938); her classmates and friends included composer Magnus Lindberg and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen. The three of them were co-founders of Ears Open!, a progressive group that promoted avant-garde music.

Saariaho worked in Freiburg and Darmstadt in the late 1970s and early 1980s, eventually settling in Paris, where she was associated with the IRCAM research institute. IRCAM is a legendary center of electronic and computer-assisted technology in music. Both areas interest Saariaho, who worked with such multimedia combinations as orchestra and tape. More recently, she has explored techniques used by the French "spectralist" school, employing computer analysis to analyze sound spectra for specific notes.

*Notes on Light* is exclusively acoustic. No electronica is involved, but Saariaho asks for extended techniques from many members of the orchestra, particularly the strings, as well as the soloist. These include "bent" pitches; extensive glissandi; bowing on, near or behind the bridge; rapid alternation between normal and harmonic sounds and increasing bow pressure to achieve a scratchy tone.

Saariaho is known for manipulating dense blocks of sound in shifting patterns with an emphasis on orchestral color. Her five-movement concerto initially looks like an arch form, but its quasi-programmatic movement titles are more akin to a journey that explores the relationship between cello and orchestra.

Glissandi and sliding pitches—those “between” the conventional 12 pitches of the piano keyboard—dominate “Translucent, secret.” Divided strings, flutes and harp join the soloist in establishing the mood: static, with a bit of tense uncertainty.

“On Fire” is the sole fast movement of the five. Nervous and flickering throughout, it is as agitated as the first movement was static. The soloist has extended *moto perpetuo* passages in dialogue with the orchestra. “Awakening” is both the longest movement and the emotional heart of the work. Marked “sweet, languid,” it is a virtuoso exercise in extended techniques and otherworldly sounds.

“Eclipse” refers, in part, to the silencing of the soloist. He plays only three times: two gestures in a signature semitone slide near the front, and a resurgent, intense C-sharp at the end. That single note, in a dramatic crescendo, moves without pause to the finale, “Heart of light,” a culmination of everything that has preceded.

On the last page of the score Saariaho includes a quotation from T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*: “I could not speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither living nor dead, and I knew nothing, looking into the heart of light, the silence.”

Saariaho composed *Notes on Light* on commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Karttunen played the premiere under the baton of Jukka-Pekka Saraste in February 2007.

### **KAIJA SAARIAHO'S *NOTES ON LIGHT*, IN THE SOLOIST'S WORDS**

This weekend's soloist, cellist Anssi Karttunen, is the dedicatee of *Notes on Light*. He played the premiere performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in February 2007, with Jukka-Pekka Saraste conducting. Since then, Karttunen, who is a close personal friend of Saariaho, has made *Notes on Light* one of his signature solo works. He has written the following note for the piece:

At first sight, *Notes on Light* with its five movements might not seem like the average cello concerto. With a closer look, however, one finds the elements that at least I like to think make a great concerto:

1. The relation of soloist and orchestra goes through many very different situations.
2. The soloist is given a chance to show many sides of his personality.
3. When the soloist has important things to say, the orchestra gives it space and, on the other hand, the orchestra gets its moments to lift the music up into exuberant colours, often in surprising ways.

The solo cello is not only the hero of *Notes on Light*, it also has to fight for its rights, lead, collaborate with and sometimes submit to the orchestra. All this makes *Notes on Light* a rich voyage that could well lead us into the very heart of light.

I see two intervals of a semitone as important mottos of the piece: The first is a slide down from F sharp to F natural, which starts the piece and to which one returns from different paths along the Concerto. The second is a rising semitone from C sharp to D natural, which often interrupts the action changing the atmosphere. These two motives seem to be even stronger landmarks than any traditional melodic element. In the last movement the single note of f sharp proves to be the centre of the whole work. In fact, Saariaho seems to have invented a kind of melody that doesn't so much sketch a contour of notes as a contour of colour.

Through the voice of the cello, the first movement introduces the secret world of the piece, translucently coloured by small ensembles within the orchestra. The second movement opposes the soloist and the orchestra in a fiery dialogue. The music is energetic and obsessive, the soloist refusing to speak at the same time with the orchestra. The third movement finally awakens both into large, colourful gestures.

In the fourth movement, the soloist offers his C sharp-to-D motive twice, but both times the orchestra eclipses him gently with dark, slowly moving shadows of sound. With the third try, he finally drives the shadows away and leads us to the fifth movement, embarking on a voyage towards light. Finally, the F sharp appears as the note that could be the heart of light, it seems to draw all the music to itself, finally lifting the cello high up to the spheres of absolute brightness ... or total darkness.

– Anssi Karttunen, Paris, 2008

## FINNISH MUSIC

In January 2000, *The New York Times Magazine* published an article by Geoffrey Wheatcroft, “Finland’s Forte: How a Small Scandinavian Country Conquered the World of Classical Music.” In the 11 years since then, an abundance of important Finnish musicians have assumed commanding roles in world musical culture. Some are performers, like violinist Pekka Kuusisto, soprano Karita Mattila, mezzo-soprano Monica Groop, bassist Matti Salminen and pianist/conductor Olli Mustonen. Others are composers with names that once sounded exotic and are now becoming mainstream: Kalevi Aho, Magnus Lindberg, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Saariaho and Aulis Sallinen. Another group of Finns has developed into major conductors: Paavo Berglund, Osmo Vänskä, Mikko Franck, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Leif Segerstam (Salonen and Segerstam conduct *and* compose).

Plenty more vibrant young talent is coming up through the ranks. Finland is reaping the benefits of a state system that fosters active participation in the arts. Beginning in the 1960s, the government sponsored state grants to support composers and performing artists. During the next 20 years, dozens of music schools, orchestras, music libraries and festivals were established. The venerable Sibelius Academy, Finland’s most prestigious conservatory, has a conductor training program that is among the world’s finest.

The real success of the national program stems from its grassroots presence in elementary and secondary schools. Music is an integral part of Finnish education, which means that the country’s young people grow up familiar with music and expecting it as a normal and desirable part of everyday life. As a result, performances in Finland—whether choral music or opera, chamber music, solo recital or orchestra—are well attended by appreciative, well-educated audiences.

So great is the demand that Finland, a country of about five million people, now boasts some 50 music festivals. A strong sense of national pride ensures performances of new music by Finnish composers, and the world has noticed.

*The score calls for four flutes (third and fourth doubling piccolo and alto flute), two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, timpani, a large percussion battery, harp, celeste, piano, solo cello and strings. Timing: approximately 28 minutes.*

### **Overture and Selections from *The Creatures of Prometheus*, Op. 43**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

**Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany**

**Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria**

In 1800, the Italian dancer and choreographer Salvatore Viganò was the most influential ballet master active at the Viennese imperial court. When Viganò approached Beethoven about collaborating on a ballet, the then-30-year-old composer eagerly accepted the assignment, correctly guessing that the project would do much to further his reputation. The resulting work, *The Creatures of Prometheus*, was his only mature ballet score.

In Viganò's scenario, the Greek demigod Prometheus brings two clay statues to life, using fire from the heavens. Upon discovering that they lack emotions, he leads them to Parnassus. There, the Muses, Apollo and Bacchus educate them in the arts so that they may experience the passion of human life through the power of harmony.

*The Creatures of Prometheus* became quite popular, enjoying nearly 30 performances in its first two years. Today, it is known primarily for its first and final movements. The overture is the earliest of Beethoven's concert overtures to remain in the repertoire. It is a symphonic sonata-form movement, drawing heavily on the models of both Haydn and Mozart. The slow introduction calls to mind Beethoven's First Symphony (also in C), but the *Allegro molto con brio* is more self-assured and aggressive than that of the symphony. Beethoven's overture relies heavily on its principal theme for both development and coda, and it boasts some imaginative orchestration.

Several of the succeeding movements were solos for Viganò in the original ballet; for these performances, Lacombe has chosen selections that feature individual orchestra musicians, including harp, cello, oboe and basset horn. The *Pastorale* is a lovely little confection in C major that highlights the woodwinds, with another major solo for oboe, a lilting duet between horn and bassoon and engaging commentary from the flutes and the rest of the ensemble. The finale is based on two of Beethoven's *contredanses*. The first of them is the same theme he used in the "Eroica" Symphony and in the Piano Variations, Op. 35. In this earlier incarnation, the famous tune has less dramatic weight, but more unselfconscious charm.

*Beethoven's score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, basset horn, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, harp and strings. Timing: approximately 36 minutes.*