NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
NJSO
XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

BY LAURIE SHULMAN, ©2016

Zhang Conducts Beethoven & Haydn

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Haydn: Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40

Haydn's finest keyboard writing is in his late piano trios. This one, composed for a lady friend, so pleased him that he borrowed its slow movement for his Symphony No. 102.

Beethoven: Triple Concerto

Three soloists are a throwback to the *sinfonia concertante* tradition. Beethoven's music unfolds at a leisurely pace, giving each soloist a turn with the themes. Elements of chamber music combine with concerto writing. A brief Largo serves as introduction to Beethoven's finale, a majestic Polonaise.

Haydn: Symphony No. 102

One of the crowning achievements of Haydn's second trip to London, this symphony is vintage Haydn. His minor mode slow introduction precedes an energetic Allegro. The Adagio is an orchestration of the movement that opened this program, while the Minuet and Presto unfold with grace and wit.

Strauss: Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Strauss' most popular opera was a valentine to Mozart and late 18th-century culture. The suite rhapsodizes love music and 19th-century Vienna's signature ballroom dance, the waltz.

HAYDN: Adagio from Piano Trio No. 40 in F-sharp minor, Hob. XV:26

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1794 or early 1795

World Premiere: undocumented, almost certainly in London, 1795.

NJSO Premiere: These are the first NJSO performances.

Duration: 6 minutes

Piano trios form a fascinating portion of Haydn's immense musical legacy. They date substantially from his maturity, when he was writing superbly for piano. Of the 31 mature trios, only four predate 1780. Although the Hoboken catalogue lists 45 works for piano, violin and cello, it is clear that the first 14 of these were intended for performance on the harpsichord. In the final quarter of the 18th century, the fortepiano grew immensely in popularity, gradually edging the harpsichord from its long position of dominance as the domestic instrument of choice.

Haydn's solo piano sonatas clearly indicate the shift in his preference from the harpsichord to the Viennese fortepiano, whose dynamic variation and five-octave range challenged the composer's imagination. During his first trip to England in the early 1790s, Haydn was introduced to the fine English pianos of Broadwood. He was quite impressed with the capabilities of this slightly larger, more responsive keyboard, and he brought one back with him to Vienna upon his return.

Six piano trios date from Haydn's second trip to England in 1794–95. He wrote three of them for Rebecca Schroeter, a widow and gifted amateur pianist with whom he was also romantically involved.

The slow movement to the F-sharp major trio, one of the Schroeter trios, has an elaborate melody with extensive ornamentation. Most of the intricate writing is in the piano part, with the violin and cello in primarily supporting roles. Haydn adapted this Adagio cantabile as the slow movement to his

Symphony No. 102 in B-flat major.

A Baroque form reimagined in the Classical era

The concept of a concerto was born in the early Baroque era. While we think of the genre primarily as a vehicle featuring an individual soloist with an orchestra, concertos were far more flexible in the 18th century. The word "concerto" comes from Latin and Italian words with ambiguous meanings. The Latin "concertatio" means a contest, strife or dispute; the Italian verb "concertare" can mean both "to harmonize" and "to combat." This very ambiguity suggests the inherent conflict in a concerto: a small group juxtaposed with a larger group.

Baroque concertos frequently featured a group of soloists rather than an individual. In that sense, Beethoven's Triple Concerto is a throwback to the 18th century. There is also a connection to the later genre called *sinfonia concertante* (the French term is *symphonie concertante*), a type of concerto for two or more solo instruments and orchestra. Such works became popular in the late 18th century and remained in vogue through the early Romantic era. Despite its nods to the past, the Beethoven concerto on this weekend's concerts is characteristic of the early Romantic era with respect to harmony and motivic development.

Instrumentation: violin, cello and piano.

BEETHOVEN: Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano in C Major, Op. 56

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, in Bonn Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1802–04

World Premiere: Possibly a private performance by the Archduke Rudolph's orchestra ca. 1804. First public performance: Leipzig, April 1808.

NJSO Premiere: 1992–93 season. Hugh Wolff conducted; Robert McDuffie, Carter Brey and Yefim

Bronfman were the soloists.

Duration: 33 minutes

BEETHOVEN AND THE CONCERTO

When we think of Beethoven and the concerto, our thoughts go directly either to his five piano concerti or to the Violin Concerto. Beethoven was himself a virtuoso pianist, and the fact that all five of his piano concertos are staples of the repertoire gives them the weight of numbers in addition to the glow of genius. His Violin Concerto is considered by many to be the finest work of its kind in the entire literature. Beethoven composed no other solo concerto, leaving the other members of the orchestra, and particularly the cello, with a gap that has been left to later composers to fill.

The closest Beethoven came to writing for cello and orchestra is his so-called Triple Concerto. This work grew out of the *sinfonia concertante* tradition in that it featured a solo group rather than an individual soloist. Although the cello shares billing with violin and piano, its role is both more prominent and more difficult than either of the other two instruments'. Cellists view the Triple Concerto with the respect they accord to the most challenging compositions in their solo literature.

An experiment in expanded concerto form

What accounts for this apparent imbalance? And why would Beethoven, who celebrated the solo instrument vs. orchestra with such immense success, devote his attention to such an unusual grouping? Beethoven composed the Triple Concerto between April and August 1804. He was at the height of his powers, having recently completed the "Waldstein" Piano Sonata and the "Eroica" Symphony. The concerto is contemporary with his revisions on the "Eroica" Symphony and the sketches for the "Appassionata" Sonata, Op. 57. Aside from the fact that these are very great works, what they share in common is enormous scale. Beethoven was a superb musical architect. In the "Eroica," he expanded the scope of symphonic form to nearly twice the length of Mozart's and Haydn's late symphonies. The Triple Concerto was a further experiment, this time with enlarged concerto form.

One student and two colleagues: players guide the composer's hand

Another challenge Beethoven addressed was the merger of chamber music and concerto. Collectively, his three soloists comprised a traditional piano trio, yet they were also individual players. How might he distribute the musical material equitably? The problem was compounded by the specific players he had in mind when he composed the Triple Concerto, for they were not players of equivalent musical stature. The piano part was almost certainly written for the Archduke Rudolph, a preferred student of Beethoven, but only 16 at the time. The violinist was Carl August Seidler, a competent but not great violinist.

The cellist, on the other hand, was Anton Kraft, one of the most celebrated virtuosos of his day. Kraft had played under Haydn in Prince Esterházy's court orchestra; Haydn wrote his D-major concerto for him. Later, Kraft was principal cellist of Prince Lobkowitz's private orchestra. Until 1809, he sometimes played cello in Ignaz Schuppanzigh's string quartet, who were the first performers of many Beethoven quartets.

Follow the leader

Kraft's prominence accounts for the imbalance in the level of difficulty among the three solo roles. While the violin and piano parts are certainly not negligible, requiring a high level of musicianship and technique, they are less demanding. Beethoven clearly casts the cello as leader, awarding it the principal thematic material in all three movements. The second movement, a transporting Largo in A-flat major, is written exceptionally high in the cellist's range, drawing additional attention to the *cantabile* theme.

Among Beethoven's great middle-period compositions, the Triple Concerto has been something of a stepchild. Critics disdain its length and raise eyebrows at the supposed lack of inspiration in its themes. Those who listen carefully will understand that length, particularly in the monumental first movement, was necessary in order to distribute the thematic material equitably among all three soloists.

Beethoven balances the first movement with the brevity of his slow movement, which serves as an ethereal introduction to the elegant finale. The cello soloist provides the connecting bridge to the

concluding Rondo alla Polacca, which writer Robert Simpson calls “the greatest and most expansive polonaise ever written.” Beethoven must have been pleased with the structural experiment of connecting slow movement to finale, for he repeated it in his Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, as well as his Violin Concerto. More than any other contemporary work, the Triple Concerto points to Beethoven’s future and the greatness that was still his to achieve.

Instrumentation: flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings, solo violin, solo cello and solo piano.

HAYDN: Symphony No. 102 in B-flat Major, Hob. I:102

Franz Joseph Haydn
Composed: summer and autumn 1794
World Premiere: London, King’s Theatre, February 2, 1795. The composer conducted.
NJSO Premiere: 1975–76 season; Jessie Levine conducted.
Duration: 24 minutes

Just trying to wrap one’s brain around the stupendous achievement of 104 symphonies—the traditional total ascribed to Joseph Haydn—is a big concept to assimilate. Equally amazing is the superb quality of these works. The series culminated in the 12 that are collectively known as the “London” Symphonies, Nos. 93–104. Haydn wrote them for concerts presented by the Austrian violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon, who persuaded him to travel to England first in 1791–92, then again in 1794–95. The B-flat major symphony dates from Haydn’s second English journey.

By then, Salomon had decided to combine his forces with the Opera for his spring 1795 season; he was no longer the promoter. The Opera Concerts benefitted from musicians who had fled the carnage of the French Revolution, among them the excellent Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti. They swelled the ranks of the Opera Concerts orchestra to 60 players, a significant increase over the 40 in Salomon’s earlier ensemble. Haydn responded to the grander resources at his disposal with his best symphonies

yet. When this symphony was premiered, the *Morning Chronicle* gushed, “The rapture it gave cannot be communicated by words: to be known it must be heard.”

Extroverted and concise in form, the symphony shows Haydn’s mastery of motivic organization and counterpoint. His first-movement Allegro theme is cleverly embedded in the slow introduction. Fortissimo outbursts interrupt the second theme. A descending motive extracted from one of the themes becomes the basis for an intricate three-part canon in the development section. The timpani’s thrilling crescendo announces the recapitulation.

The Adagio is based on the slow movement to the Piano Trio in F-sharp Minor. Haydn’s custom was to head his scores with the Latin words *In Nomine Domini* and conclude his manuscripts with thanks to God: *Laus Deo*. *In Nomine Domini* appears twice in this symphony—also before the slow movement. Clearly, he recognized that this movement was special, bordering on the sublime.

The symphony’s version differs from the trio’s primarily in texture. Haydn wrote out the orchestral repeat of the exposition, allowing him to alter the instrumentation. The result is simultaneously rich and transparent. Muted trumpets and timpani add subtle depth; a solo cello accompanying in triplets is a delicious touch.

Haydn’s Minuet is a brisk affair, pushing the pace toward that of a scherzo. A peasant-like emphasis on first beats connects it to the Austrian Ländler, a folk predecessor to the waltz. Dance music is also evident in the finale, a contredanse that combines sonata and rondo. Joyous and witty, it concludes marvelous symphony with good-humored affirmation.

Miracle Misnomer

An important early biography of Haydn is Albert Christoph Dies’ *Biographical Accounts of Joseph Haydn*, based on interviews conducted with Haydn between 1805 and 1808. One of its better-known stories concerns a narrowly averted disaster during a concert that Haydn was leading.

> When Haydn appeared in the orchestra and sat down at the pianoforte to conduct a symphony himself, the curious audience at the front orchestra level left their seats and crowded toward the orchestra the better to see the famous Haydn quite close. The seats in the middle of the floor were thus empty, and hardly were they vacated when the great chandelier crashed down and broke into bits, throwing the crowd into great consternation. A soon as the first moment of fright was over and those who had pressed forward could think of the danger they had luckily escaped, … several people cried out "Miracle! Miracle!" Haydn himself was deeply moved and thanked the merciful Providence that had allowed him in a certain way to be the cause of or the means of saving the lives of at least 30 people.

The incident has traditionally been associated with the Symphony No. 96 in D major, first performed in March 1791. That Symphony was long nicknamed the *Miracle*. The *Morning Chronicle* of February 3, 1795, however, reported the chandelier incident in its review of Haydn's newest symphony—No. 102 in B-flat major, which was premiered the night before. The subtitle *Miracle*, if used at all, should rightfully be associated with the work on this weekend's program. The real miracle, of course, is Haydn's music.

Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

STRAUSS: Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Op. 59

Richard Strauss
Born: June 11, 1864, in Munich, Germany
Died: September 8, 1949, in Garmisch, Germany
Composed: 1909–10
World Premiere: The opera premiered September 26, 1910, in Dresden. The suite's origins are unclear; Artur Rodzinski may have compiled it. He conducted the first performance in New York on October 5, 1944.
NJSO Premiere: 1971–72 season; Henry Lewis conducted.

Duration: 22 minutes

Is there any more joyous opening in all opera than the exuberant horn fanfare of *Der Rosenkavalier*? In those seven upward-swooping notes are compressed all the optimism of youth, the zany machinations of practical jokes and the compassion and humanity inherent in the Marschallin (the opera's central character). Strauss was far too good a man of the theater to forego such a pregnant and promising beginning. The fanfare begins the suite, which takes much of its pacing and chronology from the operatic source.

Der Rosenkavalier was a surprise to almost everyone in 1910. Strauss had concentrated on orchestral tone poems for much of his youth. Works like *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Juan* and *Ein Heldenleben* all predate 1900. After the turn of the century, however, Strauss focused almost exclusively on opera. Strauss' two stage works that preceded it, *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), were expressionist canvasses with deliberate and powerful shock elements. *Rosenkavalier*, which is set in Maria Theresa's Vienna and was planned as a tribute to Mozart, could not be further from them in spirit. It is Strauss' masterpiece: a brilliant combination of romance, farce, sentimentality and human compassion.

After the beginning horn call, the music moves directly to that of the opening scene in the opera, which takes place at the end of a lovers' tryst between the Marschallin and Octavian in her private apartments. Next, we move to the ineffable sweetness of the "Presentation of the Rose" music from Strauss's Act II. Here Octavian presents the silver rose to beautiful young Sophie on behalf of the Marschallin's country-bumpkin cousin, Baron Ochs. Time stands still as the two young people fall instantly in love and momentarily forget that there are others about them. It is one of the most enchanted moments in all opera, and translates magnificently to the orchestral idiom.

The suite proceeds to an excerpt from Act III, when Octavian's henchman are booby-trapping an inn, preparing to publicly embarrass the oafish Baron Ochs. From here Strauss makes a smooth transition to the Baron's waltz, the most famous melody from the opera. How ironic that the clumsy, conceited Ochs should have the music that best summarizes the spirit of Maria Theresa's 18th-century Viennese

court society!

If the Baron's waltz is the most characteristically Viennese, the segment that follows is the most Straussian. In the final Trio, the Marschallin relinquishes Octavian, recognizing that her youth has passed and that the two young lovers, Octavian and Sophie, should have the opportunity to bring theirs to full fruition. Making her final exit from the stage, she drops a handkerchief. The opera closes with her blackamoor dashing back to the room to retrieve it; the suite closes with a reprise of the Baron's waltz.

PERFORMING TRADITIONS FOR THE *ROSENKAVALIER* SUITE

Over the years, different performing traditions have evolved concerning the Suite from Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Its history has been somewhat complicated by the fact that Strauss revised the opera's unforgettable waltzes during World War II, expressing an objection that they had been "unjustly vulgarized." He favored the longer, brilliant conclusion that is familiar to listeners who know the suite from recordings.

Tradition opts for a reprise of the Baron's Waltz. The late Josef Krips, who was also an experienced conductor of Strauss' operas, chose to close the suite the way the opera ends, with the blackamoor's exit. Most conductors prefers that conclusion as well. Either way, Strauss' orchestration is so sparkling that the spirit of the horn's beginning fanfare bears delicious fruit.

Instrumentation: three flutes (third doubling piccolo), three oboes (third doubling English horn), three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons (third doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, glockenspiel, snare drum, military drum, bells, castanets), celeste, harp and strings.