

**Concerts of Friday, September 20, and Saturday, September 21, at 8:00p,  
and Sunday, September 22, 2019, at 3:00p**

**Robert Spano, Conductor**

**Joshua Bell, violin**

**John Stafford Smith (1750-1836) (arr. Walter Damrosch)**

***The Star-Spangled Banner***

**Richard Wagner (1813-1883)**

**Prelude to Act I of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg)* (1868)**

**Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)**

***Concerto for Orchestra* (2002)**

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

**Intermission**

**Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880)**

**Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 in D minor, Opus 22 (1862)**

I. *Allegro moderato*

II. *Romance. Andante non troppo*

III. *Allegro con fuoco; Allegro moderato (à la Zingara)*

Joshua Bell, violin

**Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908)**

***Zigeunerweisen* for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 20 (*Gypsy Airs*) (1878)**

Joshua Bell, violin



## Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

### Prelude to Act I of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*) (1868)

Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig, Germany, on May 22, 1813, and died in Venice, Italy, on February 13, 1883. The first performance of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* took place at the Hoftheater in Munich, Germany, on June 21, 1868, with Hans von Bülow conducting. The Prelude to Act I is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, harp, and strings. Approximate performance time is ten minutes.

**First Classical Subscription Performance: November 4, 1950, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.**

**Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: February 19 and 21, 2015, Robert Spano, Conductor.**

As with any revolutionary composer, Richard Wagner encountered harsh critical resistance. In Wagner's only successful comedy, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (*The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*), the composer lampoons his critics, but also acknowledges that youthful inspiration must be tempered by the wisdom of tradition.

As was his usual practice, Wagner authored both the text and music for *Die Meistersinger*. Wagner drew upon tales of the Mastersingers, a guild that existed in Nuremberg in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, many of the opera's characters, including the beloved German writer and composer Hans Sachs (1494-1576), were members of the Nuremberg Mastersingers.

Likewise, the opera's villain, Sixtus Beckmesser, was a Mastersinger. There is no indication that, in real life, Beckmesser displayed the objectionable traits found in his operatic counterpart. In *Die Meistersinger*, Beckmesser represents the critics who railed against Wagner's musical expression. In fact, Wagner contemplated naming Beckmesser "Veit Hanslich," a clear reference to his nemesis, the eminent German critic Eduard Hanslick. Wagner wisely decided to forego such heavy-handed tactics, hardly necessary to make his point.

Wagner first began to consider *Die Meistersinger* in 1845, then as a humorous counterpart to *Tannhäuser*. It was not until October of 1867 that Wagner finally completed the score. The work received its premiere in Munich on June 21, 1868, under the direction of Hans von Bülow. Hanslick, who was present for the first performance, characterized *Die Meistersinger* as "the conscious dissolution of all fixed forms in a formless, intoxicating sea of sound, the replacement of self-sufficient, articulated melodies by shapelessly vague melodizing." Posterity has disagreed, according *Die Meistersinger* the status of one of the greatest of all comic operas.

Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* takes place in Nuremberg toward the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The young knight Walther von Stolzing is in love with Eva, daughter

of Veit Pogner, a member of the Nuremberg Mastersingers' guild. Walther attempts to join the Mastersingers in order to win Eva as his bride. But the guild members, led by the pedantic town clerk Sixtus Beckmesser (also a rival for Eva's hand), reject the knight's inspired, but undisciplined, song. Even the support of the cobbler Hans Sachs, the most respected Mastersinger, fails to aid Walther.

The next day, Sachs assists Walther to craft a song that weds the knight's youthful eloquence to accepted musical structure and discipline. At the contest, Beckmesser attempts to present the song as his own, but humiliates himself by mangling the piece. Walther's rendition wins the admiration of the Mastersingers. With the urging of Sachs, Walther accepts membership in the Mastersingers guild and marries Eva. The assembled join in praising Nuremberg's beloved Sachs.

The majestic orchestral Prelude to Act I (*Sehr mässig bewegt*) (*Proceeding in a very moderate fashion*) opens with a grand statement of the Mastersinger's theme. Other themes include melodies associated with Walther's love for Eva, and the knight's conflict with Beckmesser. Wagner manipulates (and often brilliantly combines) the various melodies, as the Prelude resolves to a final grand statement of the Mastersingers' theme.

### ***Concerto for Orchestra (2002)***

**Jennifer Higdon was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 31, 1962. The first performance of the *Concerto for Orchestra* took place at Verizon Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on June 12, 2002, with Wolfgang Sawallisch conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. The *Concerto for Orchestra* is scored for piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani; percussion I: chimes, crotales, suspended cymbal, snare drum, temple blocks, small triangle, sandpaper blocks, flexatone, tom-toms; percussion II: orchestra bells, vibraphone, tam-tam, suspended cymbal, Chinese cymbal, wood blocks, maraca, temple blocks, bongo drums, tom-toms, medium roto-tom; percussion III: marimba, crotales, small triangle, large triangle, bass drum, suspended cymbal, sizzle cymbal, vibraslap, castanet, guiro, floor tom-tom, slapstick, sandpaper blocks, tam-tam; piano/celeste, harp, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-two minutes.**

**First Classical Subscription Performances: October 1-3, 2015, Robert Spano, Conductor.**

**Recording: Telarc-CD 80620, Robert Spano, Conductor.**

Jennifer Higdon, the distinguished American composer and educator, is a charter member of the "Atlanta School" of composers. Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra have performed and recorded (for Telarc) Ms. Higdon's

*blue cathedral, City Scape, Dooryard Bloom, The Singing Rooms, and (for ASO Media) On A Wire.*

The Philadelphia Orchestra commissioned the *Concerto for Orchestra* as part of its Centennial Celebrations. The National Endowment for the Arts, The Philadelphia Music Project (funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, administered by Settlement Music School) and Peter Benoliel provided funding. The premiere took place at Philadelphia's Verizon Hall on June 12, 2002, with Music Director Wolfgang Sawallisch leading the Philadelphia Orchestra. In September of 2003, Maestro Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra made the world premiere recording of the *Concerto for Orchestra*, for Telarc.

### **Jennifer Higdon Discusses Her *Concerto for Orchestra***

The “**Concerto for Orchestra**” is truly a concerto in that it requires virtuosity from the principal players, the individual sections, and the entire orchestra. Built from the inside out, the third movement was written first, and it is the movement that allows each principal player a solo, before moving into section solis. The winds are highlighted first, which are followed (after a tutti) by the strings, and then the brass. Each solo has its own unique material, some of which is utilized in the tutti sections of the movement.

The second movement was written next, inspired by the string sound of The Philadelphia Orchestra. This movement is like a scherzo in character, written in a jaunty rhythm and tempo that celebrates the joyous sound of strings. The movement begins with everyone playing pizzicato and then slowly integrates an arco sound, first through soloists, and then with all of the players. It continues to romp through to the end, where a snap pizzicato closes out the movement.

The fourth movement is a tribute to rhythm and the percussion section of the orchestra (harp, celesta, and piano are included in this movement). Since this piece was completed at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seemed very fitting to have a movement that highlights the one section of the orchestra that has had the greatest amount of development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ironically, the opening of this movement is the quietest and stillest part of the entire work, which is not what one might expect from percussion. The movement opens with bowed vibraphone and crotales...opening the way for the percussion to move through many of its pitched instruments (as well as collaborating with the harpist and celesta player, who are percussive in their nature). Eventually, the musicians move to non-pitched percussion, which is emphasized by the movement's tempo speeding up at key moments. This progression in the tempi will carry this movement from an extraordinarily slow start (quarter equals 42) through to the fifth movement, which continues the progression of increasing tempi, until the end of that movement, which arrives at a quarter equals 160-180 on the metronome. These tempo increases occur at specific moments, usually covering 2 measures, and are meant to resemble the effect of a victrola being wound up.

The fifth movement, which begins with the entrance of the violins, highlights the

entire orchestra and has its rhythm set up through an ostinato in the percussion, which has been carried over from the previous movement. The various sections of the orchestra converse in musical interplay throughout, while the tempo continues to increase. This occurs to such an extent, that a primary theme that is stated within the first minute of the movement will eventually come back in rhythmic values that are twice as long, but with the increased tempo, will sound like it did at its first appearance.

Surprisingly, the first movement was the last to be composed. It took writing the other four movements to create a clear picture of what was needed to start this virtuosic tour-de-force. The opening of the piece begins with chimes and timpani, sounding together, and then a quick entrance by the strings in energetic scale patterns (octatonic), which moves the orchestra up through the winds and finally adds the brass in major chords, a major second apart (this is a sound the composer has been working with for years). This movement is primarily tutti in its use of instruments, but there are small chamber moments, in recognition of the fact that it takes many individuals to make the whole of the orchestra.

### **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 in D minor, Opus 22 (1862)**

**Henryk Wieniawski was born in Lublin, Poland, on July 10, 1835 and died in Moscow, Russia, on March 31, 1880. The first performance of the Violin Concerto No. 2 took place in St. Petersburg on November 27, 1862, with the composer as soloist, and Anton Rubinstein, conducting. In addition to the solo violin, the Concerto No. 2 is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-two minutes.**

**First Classical Subscription Performances: May 9-11, 1991, Cecylia Arzewski, Violin, Zdenek Macal, Conductor.**

The Polish-born violinist and composer Henryk Wieniawski was one of the greatest virtuosos of his day. His friend, Anton Rubinstein, the distinguished Russian pianist, composer, and teacher, commented: "He is without doubt the finest violinist of our time—there is no one comparable: his playing produces a tremendous effect." The legendary violinist Leopold Auer, whose pupils included Efrem Zimbalist, Mischa Elman, and Jascha Heifetz, recalled:

Wieniawski was one of the greatest masters of his instrument in any age. He fascinated his audience with an altogether individual talent, and he was as entirely different from any of the other violinists of his day in outward appearance as he was in his manner of playing. Since his death no violinist has ever seemed able to recall him.

Wieniawski's violin playing was distinguished by its rich, gorgeous tone—intensified by a striking use of vibrato—that could move listeners to tears. His

impeccable technique allowed Wieniawski to play even the most difficult passages with breathtaking ease. When Wieniawski encountered a particularly troublesome passage in a score, he would brandish a red pencil, and write above the music, “Il faut risquer” (“One must risk”). Commenting upon this extraordinary bravado, Wieniawski admitted: “I write these words for my own encouragement, for these passages are really dangerous!” His success in overcoming these dangers was attested to by the great Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim, who dubbed Wieniawski “the wildest violinistic daredevil I’ve ever met. What he can do with his left hand is incredible.”

But Henryk Wieniawski was more than a brilliant technician. He was a sensitive artist, who excelled in such works as the *Chaconne* from Bach’s D-Minor Partita, Beethoven’s *Kreutzer* Sonata, and the concertos of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Vieuxtemps.

Henryk Wieniawski entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of eight. By the age of thirteen, he was regaling concert audiences in Poland and Russia. Two years later, Wieniawski embarked upon a successful tour throughout Europe. During the 1850s, Wieniawski firmly established himself as one of the premiere violinists.

In 1860, Wieniawski accepted Rubinstein’s invitation to move to St. Petersburg. There, Wieniawski was appointed solo violinist to the Tsar, a position he held for twelve years. He was the leader of both the string quartet and orchestra of the Russian Musical Society. Wieniawski also served as a professor at the newly formed St. Petersburg Conservatory.

The Violin Concerto No. 2 is a product of Wieniawski’s Russian years. The score bears the dedication “to his friend, Pablo de Sarasate”. On November 27, 1862 in St. Petersburg, Wieniawski was the soloist in the world premiere, accompanied by an orchestra led by Rubinstein. The work was an immediate sensation. Even composer César Cui, a notoriously acerbic critic, admitted, two days after the premiere, “I still cannot collect myself from the impact of that first *Allegro* of his Concerto.”

### **Musical Analysis**

I. *Allegro moderato*—The Concerto opens with an orchestral introduction of the movement’s two principal themes. The first violins immediately present the yearning, initial theme. The solo horn softly intones the second, triplet-based melody. The soloist enters, and, in brilliant fashion, presents a highly elaborate fantasia on both themes. An orchestral *tutti* leads to a more reflective passage, featuring a solo clarinet. This serves as a bridge to the ensuing *Romance*, which follows without pause.

II. *Romance. Andante non troppo*—The solo violin sings the *Romance*’s principal theme; a lovely, flowing melody in 12/8 meter. The music grows more

passionate before resolving to a serene conclusion, capped by a breathtaking ascending passage for the soloist.

III. *Allegro con fuoco; Allegro moderato (à la Zingara)*—An agitated passage (*Allegro con fuoco*), capped by a solo cadenza, leads to the *Allegro moderato*, marked “*à la Zingara*” (“in the Gypsy style”). The soloist introduces the scurrying *moto perpetuo* principal theme. The finale also features reminiscences of the opening movement’s second theme. The music becomes ever more brilliant, and a dazzling flourish for the soloist brings the Concerto to an exhilarating close.

### ***Zigeunerweisen* for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 20 (*Gypsy Airs*) (1878)**

**Pablo de Sarasate was born in Pamplona, Spain, on March 10, 1844, and died in Biarritz, France, on September 20, 1908. In addition to the solo violin, *Zigeunerweisen* is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, triangle (optional), and strings. Approximate performance time is ten minutes.**

### **These are the First Classical Subscription Performances.**

Pablo de Sarasate, one of the greatest violinists of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was born in Pamplona on March 10, 1844. The son of a military bandmaster, Sarasate quickly demonstrated extraordinary musical talents. With the assistance of Queen Isabella, who provided financial aid and a 1724 Stradivari violin, Sarasate commenced studies at the Paris Conservatoire by the age of 12. Within a few years, he established himself as a violinist of international repute.

In 1859, Sarasate, then fifteen, made his initial acquaintance with the eminent French composer, Camille Saint-Saëns. In later years, Saint-Saëns recalled:

It is a long time ago now since I first saw Pablo de Sarasate call at my house. Fresh and young as spring itself, the faint shadow of a mustache scarcely visible on his upper lip, he was already a famous virtuoso. As if it were the easiest thing in the world he had come quite simply to ask me to write a concerto for him. Flattered and charmed to the highest degree I promised I would, and I kept my word with the (First Violin) Concerto in A Major...

In addition to the A-Major, Saint-Saëns composed his Third Violin Concerto, as well as the *Introduction et Rondo capriccioso*, for his dear friend Sarasate.

Pablo de Sarasate’s playing was notable for its warm tone (observers noted a broader application of *vibrato* than had previously been customary), impeccable technique, and patrician musicianship. Leopold Auer, the great teacher and virtuoso, offered the following description:

Sarasate was a small man, very slender, and at the same time very elegant; his face framed in a fine head of black hair, parted in the middle, according to the fashion of the day...From the very first notes he drew from his Stradivari...I was impressed by the beauty

and crystalline purity of his tone. The master of a perfected technique for both hands, he played without any effort at all, touching the strings with a magic bow in a manner that had not a hint of the terrestrial...

Sarasate's extraordinary artistry also inspired such composers as Max Bruch, Edouard Lalo, Joseph Joachim, Henryk Wieniawski, and Antonín Dvořák to write works for the Spanish virtuoso.

Sarasate, too, was an accomplished composer who fashioned many works that he played to rapturous acclaim in his legendary concerts. One of the most beloved of these works is *Zigeunerweisen* (*Gypsy Airs*), Opus 20 (1878). Cast in the traditional slow-fast structure of Gypsy music, *Zigeunerweisen* showcases throughout the virtuoso talents of the soloist.