TCHAIKOVSKY

SYMPHONY NO.4

&

LESHNOFF

DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR
CLARINET AND BASSOON



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR



THOUGHTS ON TCHAIKOVSKY'S SYMPHONY NO. 4: AN INESCAPABLE FATE

It is impossible to separate Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, first performed on 9 February 1878, from his life and personality. Born on 7 May 1840 in Kamsko-Votkinsk (Russian Empire), Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky attended school in St. Petersburg from 1850-1859 in order to fulfill his parents' wishes for a career in law. He soon entered the civil service and worked in the Ministry of Justice, though it was not long before he found that this was unfulfilling and demanded a change.

A fascination with music led Tchaikovsky in 1862 to the St. Petersburg Conservatory, though he left in 1866 at the behest of Nikolai Rubinstein to teach at the Moscow Conservatory. At this same time, Tchaikovsky's inner life was changing more and more, with numerous testimonies pointing to his increasing depression and neurosis. He was emotionally burdened, likely a result of the immense pressure to hide his homosexuality, but it was also a period of great success. Many trips abroad to European capitals highlighted Tchaikovsky's own growing notoriety as a composer outside of Russia. It was also at this time that he attended the first performance of "The Ring" in Bayreuth.

Then came the year 1877, a year of crisis, which would play an extremely important role in Tchaikovsky's life and turn out to be eventful in many ways. What a year! Russia waged war against the Ottomans to liberate the Balkans. Likewise in 1877, the American inventor Thomas Alva Edison produced a sound recording for the very first time using a steel roller covered with tinfoil, which he would later develop into the phonograph.

Two women now figured predominantly in Tchaikovsky's life. On 18 July 1877, Tchaikovsky married his pupil, Antonina Miliukova. According to the writings of Antonina, Tchaikovsky explained to her, "I have thought it all

over and can tell you this: I have never loved a woman in my life and I just feel too old for a stormy love. I don't think I will ever feel that way about anyone else. But you are the first woman I have ever liked beyond all measure. If you could be satisfied with a silent, steady love that is more like brotherly love, then I will propose to you."

Sadly, the marriage lasted less than a few weeks, though it was never annulled. A letter from Tchaikovsky himself reveals, "No sooner had the marriage ceremony been performed, no sooner had I been left alone with my wife, and no sooner had I realized that fate had inseparably bound us together, then I suddenly realized that I did not even feel friendship, but literally reluctance towards her. Death seemed the only way out, but suicide was out of the question." Tchaikovsky then fled to Western Europe for seven months.

The second woman central to Tchaikovsky's life that fateful year was Nadezhda von Meck who would play a major role. She was the wife and widow of the Baltic German railway entrepreneur Karl von Meck and she supported, among others, the composers Henryk Wieniawski and Claude Debussy.

Von Meck brought light into Tchaikovsky's life. She had already commissioned a violin sonata from him one year earlier and was a fervent believer in Tchaikovsky's extraordinary talent as is evidenced by her passionate correspondence. She rewarded Tchaikovsky, who was regularly plagued by money worries, with 6,000 rubles each year and their special friendship would go on to last fourteen years. Curiously, Tchaikovsky and von Meck agreed to never meet, though they exchanged more than 1,200 letters discussing music, philosophy, religion, and daily matters, as well as private and intimate confessions, all of which have largely been preserved.

Tchaikovsky dedicated his Fourth Symphony to von Meck and on 26 June 1877, incidentally only a few weeks before the unhappy marriage, wrote to her, "[...] Before I express my wish, I would like to ask you a question: Do you consider me your friend? [...] If you can answer this question with a yes, then I would be very pleased if the dedication of the symphony could simply

read, without mentioning your name: Dedicated to my friend."

Their correspondence would continue throughout the coming months and included many references to the Symphony No. 4. In letters from 9 December 1877, Tchaikovsky penned, "Not only am I occupying myself assiduously with scoring our symphony, I am utterly absorbed in this work. None of my previous orchestral works ever cost me such labor, yet I have never felt such a love for one of my own pieces. […] Perhaps I am mistaken, but I think that this symphony is something out of the ordinary, and that it is the best thing I have done so far... Now I... can wholly devote myself to work in the knowledge that I am bringing forth something which, in my opinion, shall not be forgotten..."

Tchaikovsky completed the score of the Fourth Symphony on 11 January 1878 and, with the consent of his patroness, dedicated it "à mon meilleur ami" – "to my best friend." As Tchaikovsky himself said, "How happy I am that it is our symphony and that you will know how I have thought of you with every bar. Without you, I would never have written this symphony."



THE MUSIC

The Fourth Symphony, composed between December 1876 and January 1878 is strongly autobiographical and provides a clear look into Tchaikovsky's mental and emotional state at the time. It is therefore not surprising that the very sensitive Tchaikovsky did not illuminate the human connection between himself and von Meck in the music. Rather, this Symphony is about darkness and suffering, but also hope and light. At once, it is on the edge of despair—depressed, hopeless, broken, melancholic and

gloomy; but there is also an incredible counterpoint—courageous, self-confident, joyful, optimistic, wild and blissful. Perhaps this great contrast has something to do with Tchaikovsky's own life and destiny, as this Symphony is the first of the three so-called fate symphonies which culminate in the "Pathétique." Here, Tchaikovsky writes deeply from his soul, painting his various emotional states in the music, at once depressed, but also highly euphoric. In this light, the music seems to provide a certain stability in his life.

It is therefore not surprising that Tchaikovsky gave the first of his three fate symphonies a program. Shortly after the premiere of "her" symphony, von Meck asked Tchaikovsky to explain the program to her, famously done in his reply of 1 March 1878. But similar to Gustav Mahler, who wrote a program for his First Symphony and later withdrew it, Tchaikovsky never included the program in the score as it was not intended for the public. It is also not a literary program and does not tell a story or plot, though it does shed light on Tchaikovsky's emotional world during the composition.

Tchaikovsky himself also spoke of the program to Sergei Taneyev, his student, fellow composer and trusted musician friend, writing: "As to your remark that my symphony is programmatic, then I am in complete agreement. […] I should not wish symphonic works to flow from my pen that express nothing, and which consist of empty playing with chords, rhythms and modulations. […] But the programme is such that it is impossible to formulate in words. […] But is this not what a symphony, that is, the most lyrical of all musical forms, ought to be? Ought it not to express everything for which there are no words, but which gushes forth from the soul and cries out to be expressed? […] In essence, my symphony is an imitation of Beethoven's Fifth, that is, I was imitating not his musical thoughts, but the fundamental idea. [...] Furthermore, I'll add that there is not a note in this symphony (that is, in mine) which I did not feel deeply, and which did not serve as an echo of sincere impulses within my soul."

TCHAIKOVSKY ON THE FIRST MOVEMENT:

"The introduction is the core of the whole symphony, it contains the main idea. This is the fate, that fateful power that prevents the urge for happiness from reaching its goal, that jealously ensures that the feeling of well-being and peace does not take over, that the sky does not become cloudless; a power that hovers constantly over the head like a sword of Damocles and that poisons the soul incessantly. This power is overwhelming and invincible. There is nothing left but to submit to it and to complain unsuccessfully.

"The feeling of despondency and hopelessness becomes stronger and stronger, more and more burning. Isn't it better to turn away from reality and weigh yourself down in dreams? Oh joy! What a tender, what a sweet dream has appeared! A radiant, auspicious human being hovers before me and waves at me. How beautiful! The Allegro's obtrusive first motif now sounds far away. Little by little the whole soul is engulfed in dreams. Everything dark, everything joyless is forgotten.

"Happiness. Happiness! Happiness!!! – But no, they're just dreams, the fate's scaring them away. So the whole of life is just an eternal alternation of dark reality and fluttering dreams of happiness. There is no harbour: you are tossed to and fro by the waves until the sea devours you."

As is referenced throughout Tchaikovsky's program description, the idea of fate is evident from the very opening bars, powerfully represented first in the horns, only to be repeated next by the trumpets. Here, it was impossible for me not to think of the "sword of Damocles" over the head and it was important to keep this in mind to achieve a certain relentlessness of expression. In bar 16 (0:41), the horns and strings already begin to resolve this tension and I ask them to play softer in the noted *diminuendo*. I find it particularly beautiful how Tchaikovsky integrates the lament motif in bar 23 (1:06, clarinets and bassoons) into the lament theme that follows. Over four bars he repeats the two-note lament four times in succession, thus it was important for me to arrange the *ritardando* and the *fermata* in an organic way.

As Tchaikovsky indicates, the following lament theme is to be played in the tempo "Moderato con anima," not Allegro, with the additional marking "in movimento di Valse." It is in the nature of a waltz to move, and a certain restless effect is achieved. As Tchaikovsky mentions in the program, it is important "that the feeling of well-being and calmness does not take over." Adding to the mood are the individual *hemiolas* (noted by accents) in bar 72 (3:32), as well as the impetuous descending horn line in bar 78 (3:48), both of which I bring out in relief of the overall texture.

Throughout, Tchaikovsky paces the movement with specific dynamic notations. For example, the long passage of bar 82 to 103 (3:58-4:51) is only marked as *fortissimo,* though this does not literally apply to all of the instruments. Now in the middle of bar 91 (4:22), he again indicates fortissimo, though there is no specific need to mark this as everything is already in the fortissimo dynamic. Therefore, I imagine that Tchaikovsky expected individual dynamic nuances as a matter of interpretation. I ask for a diminuendo for a short moment (bar 89 or 4:18), so that the fortissimo notated shortly afterwards sounds anew like a sudden rebellion, further adding to the agitated mood. In this light, I believe that it is important to resist the overall temptation to smooth and polish every corner and aspect of the sound, as this would counteract the desired restless and *agitato* mood.

As a contrast, the second theme now sounds. One hears the "tender...sweet dream" in bar 116 (5:31) with the short, fast phrases of the woodwinds, while the cellos (bar 121 or 5:54) and later the woodwinds (bar 127 or 6:18) present the dancing, swaying melody. The consummate dreaminess seems to have been achieved in the wonderful *pianissimo* waltz (bar 134 or 6:43): "Happiness. Happiness! Happiness!!!" And yet, with the answer of the woodwinds and especially the strings (bar 147 or 7:32), a certain melancholy undertone seems to undercut the bliss. I use this opportunity to take this moment a bit more broadly.

Exuberant joy is heard in the strings (bar 161 or 8:10) and the horns (bar 169 or 8:27)— what irony and contrast as the horns were the first to intone the fate theme — in a euphoric,

life-affirming, melody as well as in short, rhythmically pointed moments (bar 160 or 8:08 and bar 176 or 8:41), which I have asked to be played with strong accents. This joy, though, is rather short-lived, now abruptly interrupted by the return of the fate theme from this point forward always played first by the trumpets which adds a certain immediacy and shock. Of particular interest is the last occurrence in bar 355 (16:28) where the trumpets play a high sounding A-flat in triple *fortississimo* which would have sounded enormously sharp considering the instrument commonly used at that time. I imagine that this was surely a conscious decision by Tchaikovsky.

I want to also mention the beginning of the development section (bar 201 or 9:35), which starts with a deliberate emptiness and uncertainty, only to find its way forward with a long, rapturous sixteen bar phrase beginning in bar 237 (11:05). I ask to start this even more quietly than noted and then continuously push forward in order to emphasize impassioned resistance to the inescapable fate. But the fate theme, heard in total eight times in its original form throughout the movement, does not allow this to happen.

A final spot to highlight is the wonderful and touching episode (bar 365 or 16:50) that follows the last occurrence of the fate theme. It is almost like an intimate prayer asking for release from suffering, while the subsequent "Molto piu mosso" (bar 381 or 17:30) creates a feeling of haste and flight. Perhaps it is the wish for an escape from fate, from which there is none. As Tchaikovsky himself said, "There is no harbour: you are tossed to and fro by the waves until the sea devours you." The lamentation theme (bar 402 or 18:19) sounds for the last time, this time with both the greatest excitement and simultaneous desperation, now powerful chords in the woodwinds, brass and timpani creating the effect of something irreversible. The final escape can be seen in the "Allegro Vivo." Here, I have decided not to do the usual ritardando at the end, keeping in mind Tchaikovsky's own words, "This power is overwhelming and invincible." There is no escape, no turning back! It is final!

TCHAIKOVSKY ON THE SECOND MOVEMENT:

"The second movement shows suffering at a different stage. It is that melancholy feeling that surrounds you when you sit alone at home in the evening, exhausted from work; the book you took to read has slipped from your hands; a whole swarm of memories emerges. How sad that so much has already been and gone. And yet it is pleasant to remember the young years. One regrets the past and does not have the courage, nor the desire to start a new life. One is a little tired of life. One would like to relax and look back, refresh some memories. One thinks of the happy hours, when the young blood was still foaming and bubbling and found satisfaction in life. One also thinks of sad moments, of irreplaceable losses. All of this is already so far, so far away. It's sad and yet so sweet to contemplate the past."

It is clear that while Tchaikovsky references "one" in his program text for the second movement, here he surely speaks of himself and his own feelings. Whereas the first movement evokes depression and hopelessness, now in the second movement he describes great melancholy. The tempo and expression marking also underscore this character: "Andantino in modo di canzona," with the word *canzona* derived from the Italian word *canzone,* meaning song. I see this movement as a song that Tchaikovsky himself sings. First heard in the oboe and denoted "semplice, ma grazioso" (simple but graceful), this melody sets a peculiar mood and immediately strikes a feeling of melancholy. It is neither very cheerful, nor very sad and wanders through the orchestra with different colors as it is passed between the instruments. One example is the cello variation where he scores the flutes as a countermelody (bar 34 or 1:07), reminiscent of the style of a madrigal. Another is the viola-bassoon variation (bar 77 or 2:32) where the melody is surrounded by light sixteenth figures, and finally the recapitulation (bar 200 or 6:17), where the woodwinds play the thirty-second note figures that we already know from the first

movement (bar 117), perhaps evoking spun dreams.

A particular challenge of this movement is the traditionally long phrases with their simple rhythmic material (bar 42 to bar 74, or 1:25 to 2:28) which must be connected and sustain the tension through the line. Here, too, Tchaikovsky succeeds in spreading a peculiar mood: "It's sad and yet so sweet to contemplate in the past." The middle section (bar 126 or 4:07) naturally stands out from the melancholy mood, for it is not only faster, marked *piu mosso* (more quickly), but also fresher in expression. I have therefore asked for the eighth notes to be played slightly shorter than usual to emphasize the youthful, dancing character even more, a reference to Tchaikovsky's thoughts of "young blood."

Later, in bar 150 (4:41), Tchaikovsky achieves a somewhat melancholy mood with the same musical material. Next with the addition of trumpets, timpani and horns, he shifts the character into a youthful swing (bar 166 or 5:06), only to return to the melancholy mood a short time later, a wonderful change of harmony (a Neapolitan cadence from C Major to D Major including the pedal point) marking this moment (bar 174 or 5:21). Overall, the movement is rather calm and Tchaikovsky only once seems to step out of this mood (bar 238 or 7:36), where the phrase ends in a dissonant chord (bar 246 or 2:49). Similar to a recitative, I take the liberty of steering with great purpose towards this chord. It is interesting to note that Tchaikovsky has all of the woodwinds back away after the initial accent, but, at the same time, allows the flute to crescendo beyond. For me, this trill in the flute is like a bird song, a symbol of redemption and liberation, similarly used by Mahler a few years later in the "Grosse Appell" ("The Great Call") of his Second Symphony which also mainly uses flute and piccolo for the arrival in the world beyond. A small harmonic cloudiness (bar 292 or 9:36) disturbs the music which has come to rest again. I can't help but think how the movement begins with the sound of the somewhat brighter oboe (perhaps the voice of a youthful Tchaikovsky), and now ends simply with the dark sound of the bassoon (perhaps an aged Tchaikovsky).

TCHAIKOVSKY ON THE THIRD MOVEMENT:

"In the third movement, no particular emotion was expressed. These are capricious arabesques, incomprehensible figures that flit along in your imagination when you have drunk some wine and are a little intoxicated. The mood seems neither funny nor sad. One thinks of nothing; one gives free rein to one's imagination and enjoys drawing the strangest lines. Suddenly, the image of a drunken peasant appears in the memory and a little alleyway [...] In the distance you hear military music passing by. These are just the incoherent structures that arise and die away in our brains when we fall asleep. They have nothing to do with reality: they are incomprehensible, bizarre, torn apart."

The third movement is a Scherzo titled "Pizzicato ostinato." It is the shortest of the movements and uses piccolo for the first time in the Symphony. For me, the main challenge with this movement was to inflect additional phrasing which Tchaikovsky likely had in mind, but did not specifically notate. One example is bar 25 (0:18) to bar 42 (0:30) which he marks simply in the *piano* dynamic, but which clearly requires shaping. Contrasts also play an important role, one being the use of the oboe (bar 133 or 1:40) following the whispering *pizzicato* of the first section. Here, Tchaikovsky asks for an abrupt and *subito forte* dynamic — but it should not be a polished, beautiful tone, as it is used now to characterize a drunken peasant. One can certainly perceive a balalaika group which is especially audible in bar 387 (5:06). Whether this sentence is completely funny, I dare to doubt: "The mood seems neither funny nor sad." They are confused dreams, and yet grotesque in nature.

TCHAIKOVSKY ON THE FOURTH MOVEMENT:

"If you cannot find joy in yourself, look around you. Go into the people as they know how to be funny, as they give themselves completely to their joyful feelings. The image of a public festival. No sooner have you forgotten yourself, no sooner have you had time to sink into the joy of other people, than the tireless fate announces its nearness to you. But the other children of men turn little to you. They do not look at you at all, they do not notice that you are lonely and sad. Oh, how they rejoice when they are happy! And you want to say that everything in the world is gloomy and sad? There is joy, after all, simple, primal joy. Rejoice in the joy of others, and - and life is bearable after all."

This final movement of the Fourth Symphony is considered one of the most effective movements that Tchaikovsky ever wrote. It is titled "Allegro con fuoco" and it sparkles with the joy of life. Notably, Tchaikovsky employs various percussion instruments including the triangle, cymbals and bass drum. One must wonder why he did not use them in the previous three movements? Perhaps he saves them for the fourth movement in order to introduce a new color and energy into the music, namely the depiction of a folk festival. And here, he speaks not only of his own private feelings, but also of the joyful feelings of the people. On closer inspection, however, we learn that this movement is also somehow sad. It is about the lonely man Tchaikovsky who cannot even embrace the joy. Only as a distant observer can he share in the joy of others, but the others do not recognize his condition as a wall stands between him and the other world. One can only imagine how Tchaikovsky must have truly suffered through this depiction of his own state—an inescapable fate—in the music.

The opening bars immediately make it clear that we are at a folk festival with

the use of cymbals and bass drum. I ask that this opening should be played with the greatest fire (*con fuoco*), represented partly by the running sixteenth note figures. The main theme is the Russian folk song "Vo pole berezka stojala" ("A Birch Stood in the Field") (bar 10 or 0:13) and is mainly in a minor key, next returning in various combinations [at first only in the winds—flute, clarinet and bassoon (bar 10), oboe and bassoon (bar 60 or 1:32), horns (bar 76 or 2:01), and (bar 84 or 2:15) trombones and tuba.]

With this last iteration of trombones and tuba, it is particularly exuberant and funny, as Tchaikovsky has written into the music the sound of clicking glasses heard now in the triangle and cymbal. It is not until measure 149 (4:04) that he first uses the strings with this theme, adding a certain melancholy to the character. As in several prior spots, here, too, Tchaikovsky does not prescribe specific phrasing, thus the performers must add shaping themselves. For example, I ask for the two-bar phrase in bar 153 (4:13) repeated in pianissimo to remain quiet (bar 155 or 4:16) so as to give the solo flute more room. The result is a delicate, sensitive and effective melancholy that permeates the emotional world of the listener.

Tchaikovsky's careful and conscious use of instrumentation is seen in bar 38 (0:56) when he has the whole orchestra play the exuberant Russian dance. (The whole people dance.) But he never lets the trumpet play the folk song theme until the very end (bar 188 or 5:19), perhaps as a preparation for the dramatic reappearance of the fate theme (bar 199 or 5:37), "that fateful power that prevents the urge for happiness from reaching its goal." The trumpets (again on A-flat) powerfully announce the fate theme, thus destroying (at least for the time being) the hustle and bustle of the folk festival. Here, Tchaikovsky brings back a large part of the introduction of the first movement, but with a few key differences including the end now scored for somber cellos and basses (bar 218 or 6:34) instead of clarinet and bassoon. With the entrance of the timpani and horns, the turning point now begins (bar 223 or 6:49): "And you want to say that everything in the world is gloomy and sad?" With this question, Tchaikovsky turns the musical events into one of the most effective conclusions

in all of the symphonic literature. One is briefly reminded of the balalaika section (bar 239 or 7:13), but it is also interesting to note the twenty bar pedal point in the cellos and basses, which I ask to be played one octave lower so as to achieve a greater tonal impact. The opening theme returns, as does the folk song, but all in a grandiose expansion.

While there is no escape from fate at the end of the first movement, here the joy is also overwhelming and there is no escaping from it either, it is the joy of the "joy of others." Therefore, I ask for an unrestrained, wild increase in tempo until the end, the first increase taking place in bar 257 (7:41), and the second stage in bar 277 (8:10).

I believe that even the end should have an unbridled forward drive, without a hint of ritardando. As Tchaikovsky explained in his letter to Nadezhda von Meck, "That is all I can tell you about the symphony, my dear friend. Of course my words are not clear and not exhaustive enough. But therein lies the peculiarity of instrumental music, that it cannot be analyzed."

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony was immediately and enthusiastically received by the public. After the premiere, Tchaikovsky's brother Modest wrote, "If ever a symphonic work produced a furor after its performance, then it was your symphony. […] The end of the Finale was greeted with unanimous applause, calls and stamping of feet ... The performance was very lively, but in the last movement... breathtaking!"

Even through the very end of his life, Tchaikovsky greatly valued his Fourth Symphony, sharing at the end of 1878, "I adore terribly this child of mine; it is one of only a few works with which I have not experienced disappointment." Ten years later, when referring again to the Symphony, he wrote, "It turns out that not only have I not cooled towards it, as I have cooled towards the greater part of my compositions, but on the contrary, I am filled with warm and sympathetic feelings towards it. I don't know what the future may bring, but presently it seems to me that this is my best symphonic work."

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THOUGHTS ON THE DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND BASSOON

I was fortunate to meet Michael Rusinek at the Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 2017. During the last few seconds of a break in the rehearsal, Michael shared that he wanted to talk to me, though it was only in subsequent conversations that we developed the idea of the Double Concerto.

Writing a double concerto has particular challenges as not only does there need to be a convincing solo part, but add to that another, equally interesting and fitting second solo line. I have great familiarity writing for the clarinet which I find to be limitless in its agility and colors, but had not written extensively for the bassoon. An important question would be how to combine and juxtapose the sprite clarinet with the heavier color of the bassoon and be sure that the bassoon stood out from the texture. In studying the bassoon repertoire, I found that this could be accomplished through the use of the poignant and resonant range of the higher end of the bassoon. This sound world stimulated many ideas including the extended bassoon solo that opens the concerto, as well as the realization that this register was fertile ground around which the clarinet could weave. How would the two solo lines complement each other, and then individually and collectively, engage with the orchestra?

I came up with several solutions in my Double Concerto. In the first movement, which is mostly delicate and subtle, I created ethereal textures using wonderful combinations of selected instruments in specific registers, for example flutes in a low register. I also used divided strings in higher registers which added the translucence that I had in mind. The second movement, a “tipsy” waltz, provided me space to take a more humorous approach. A highlight is the bassoon trio towards the end where the solo bassoon and two orchestral bassoons take the spotlight together. The third movement, kinetic and propulsive, gave me room to showcase the orchestra which both counters and supports the solo lines, harkening back to the definition of a concerto.

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A CONVERSATION WITH MANFRED HONECK, MICHAEL RUSINEK AND NANCY GOERES ON THE DOUBLE CONCERTO.

MH: What attracted you first to Jonathan's music?

NG: We got to know Jonathan's Violin Concerto that he wrote for Gil Shaham at the Aspen Music Festival. What attracted me most was how beautiful it was, both slow and melodic.

MR: The wind writing in the Violin Concerto was also very good, the orchestration was excellent, and the piece itself was very approachable on the first listening.

MH: Tell me about the process and evolution of the piece.

MR: Jonathan took the idea of the Double Concerto and ran with it. It was immediately clear that he was fascinated by the interplay between the instruments and combination of sounds.

MH: What do you see as different from other concertos?

MR: One interesting aspect is that he starts with the slow movement, which is more typically in the middle and is usually the most central and emotionally impactful part of a piece. He then highlighted the natural character of the wind instruments, so we have the very playful Scherzo middle movement.

NG: Yes, and the trio of bassoons which Jonathan was very excited about! It is so lively and humorous.

MH: There is a wonderful chamber music feel to the writing. He builds the Concerto almost like a crescendo, from the tender first movement, to the light and quick miniature of the second movement, to the motoric third movement. I have the feeling that you play in this movement almost all of the time.

NG: It is a wonderful back and forth—so it is constant, but we are not always playing together.

MR: And here what is interesting is that there are two players and different accentuations which create a whole different level of interest for the ear.

MH: What is the most interesting aspect of the music for you?

NG: There is such a great range, stretching from the low bassoon register then to soaring, high melodic lines. This combination of the two is not always found.

MR: For me, it is the last movement where we play the most together and there is a lot of counterpoint. The overall impact is one of joy and fun.

MH: He is not searching for effects, but rather, lets the music speak for itself.

NG: And there is a lot of depth to Jonathan's perceptions and writing.

MR: Jonathan is a very spiritual person and this comes through especially in the slow moments. There is wonderful meaning, not just music to get a reaction. He is not trying to simply push the extremes of the instruments, but the goal is to create a mood and a real feeling. There is great resonance in this as it is so unapologetically sincere.



MANFRED HONECK MUSIC DIRECTOR

Over the last quarter century, Manfred Honeck has firmly established himself as one of the world's leading conductors, renowned for his distinctive interpretations. For more than a decade, he has served as Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, celebrated for their performances in Pittsburgh and abroad, performing regularly in major music capitals. Together they have continued a legacy of music-making that includes many GRAMMY nominations and a 2018 GRAMMY Award for Best Orchestral Performance. Honeck and the orchestra serve as cultural ambassadors for the city as one of the most frequently toured American orchestras.



Born in Austria, Manfred Honeck received his musical training at the Academy of Music in Vienna. Many years of experience as a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra have given his conducting a distinctive stamp. He began his career as assistant to Claudio Abbado and was subsequently engaged by the Zurich Opera House, where he was bestowed the prestigious European Conductor's award. Following early posts at MDR Symphony Orchestra and at the Oslo Philharmonic, he was appointed music director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He also served as principal guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, and was music director of the Staatsoper Stuttgart.

As a guest conductor, Manfred Honeck has worked with such leading orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, and the Vienna Philharmonic, among others, and is a regular guest with all of the major American orchestras.

Manfred Honeck was awarded the honorary title of Professor by the Austrian Federal President. An international jury of critics selected Honeck as the International Classical Music Awards "Artist of the Year" in 2018.

JONATHAN LESHNOFF COMPOSER

Distinguished by *The New York Times* as "a leader of contemporary American lyricism," GRAMMY-nominated composer Jonathan Leshnoff is renowned for his music's striking harmonies, structural complexity, and powerful themes. The Baltimore-based composer has been ranked among the most performed living composers by American orchestras, with recent commissions from Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Nashville, and Pittsburgh. Leshnoff's compositions have also been premiered by celebrated artists including Gil Shaham, Roberto Díaz, Johannes Moser, Manuel Barrueco, Ricardo Morales, and Joyce Yang.

Four earlier releases exclusively feature Leshnoff's music, including three on the Naxos American Classics label. Following recordings by the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, IRIS Orchestra, and Atlanta Symphony, Naxos' all-Leshnoff disc featuring the Nashville Symphony and Violins of Hope was nominated for a GRAMMY in 2019. Future releases include a disc featuring the Kansas City Symphony's premieres of Leshnoff's third symphony and piano concerto with Joyce Yang, and a recording featuring the Oklahoma City Philharmonic's commissioned major work, *Of Thee I Sing.*

Celebrated by *Fanfare* magazine as "the real thing," Leshnoff's music has been lauded by *The Baltimore Sun* as "remarkably assured, cohesively constructed and radiantly lyrical." Leshnoff is a Professor of Music at Towson University.



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The two-time 2018 GRAMMY Award-winning Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra is credited with a rich history of engaging the world's finest conductors and musicians, and demonstrates a genuine commitment to the Pittsburgh region and its citizens. Known for its artistic excellence for more than 120 years, past music directors have included Fritz Reiner (1938-1948), William Steinberg (1952-1976), André Previn (1976-1984), Lorin Maazel (1984-1996) and Mariss Jansons (1997-2004). This tradition of outstanding international music directors was continued in fall 2008, when Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck became Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

The Pittsburgh Symphony is continually at the forefront of championing new American works. They premiered Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 "Jeremiah" in 1944, John Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* in 1986, and Mason Bates' *Resurrexit* in 2018 to celebrate Manfred Honeck's 60th birthday.

The orchestra has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and live radio broadcasts. Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra have received multiple GRAMMY nominations for Best Orchestral Performance, taking home the award in 2018 for their recording of Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5; Barber: Adagio.

As early as 1936, the Pittsburgh Symphony has been broadcasted on the radio. Since 1982, the orchestra has received increased attention through national network radio broadcasts on Public Radio International, produced by Classical WQED-FM 89.3, made possible by the musicians of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Lauded as the Pittsburgh region's international cultural ambassador, in 2019 the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, under the leadership of Music Director Manfred Honeck, embarked on an extensive tour of Europe, the 25th in orchestra history.



NANCY GOERES

Principal Bassoonist Nancy Goeres joined the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 1984 and holds the Mr. & Mrs. William Genge and Mr. & Mrs. James E. Lee Principal Bassoon Chair. Prior to coming to Pittsburgh, Goeres held similar positions with the Florida Orchestra, the Caracas Philharmonic and the Cincinnati Symphony. She serves on the faculties of Carnegie Mellon University and Boston University and the music festivals of Aspen and Sarasota. An active teacher, Goeres has given master classes and recitals in Europe, Canada, Mexico, South America and returns frequently to China.

In addition to her appearances with the Pittsburgh Symphony, she has been a member of the All Star Orchestra, conducted by Gerard Schwartz, which produced a multi disc set of recordings of major orchestral repertoire, and has also performed at leading festivals around the world.

Goeres has had a number of works written for her. Commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony, Goeres premiered Alan Fletcher's Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra in 2011 with the orchestra, conducted by Manfred Honeck. André Previn's Sonata for Bassoon was also written for her and premiered by her with the composer at the 92nd Street Y in New York. With Lorin Maazel and the Pittsburgh Symphony, she premiered Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's Bassoon Concerto, commissioned for her by the Pittsburgh Symphony. Other concerto performances with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra include: Music from the Floating World, by David Ludwig, Haydn's Sinfonia Concertante, John Williams' bassoon concerto, The Five Sacred Trees, and Mozart, Vivaldi and Rossini bassoon concertos.



MICHAEL RUSINEK

Michael Rusinek joined the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as Principal Clarinetist in 1998 and holds the Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Silberman Chair. Born in Toronto, Canada, his early studies were with Avrahm Galper at the Royal Conservatory of Music and he later attended the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Donald Montanaro. Upon graduation, Rusinek served as Assistant Principal Clarinet with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. In addition to his position with the Pittsburgh Symphony, he has performed as Principal Clarinet with the orchestras of Philadelphia, St. Louis, The Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and The National Arts Center in Ottawa, Canada.

Rusinek has performed as a recitalist across Canada, the United States, and Israel, as concerto soloist with many orchestras, and as a featured soloist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra many times. In May 2008, he premiered and recorded a new concerto by composer Alan Fletcher that was commissioned for him by the orchestra.

Rusinek has participated in numerous music festivals around the world including Internationale Wolfegger Konzerte (Germany), Instrumenta Verano (Mexico), Bay Chamber, Music in the Vineyards, New York's 92nd Street Y, and returns regularly to the Grand Teton, Santa Fe Chamber, and Marlboro music festivals.

Dedicated to teaching, Rusinek is a member of the faculties of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and the Aspen Music Festival and School in Aspen, Colorado. He has led master classes at some of the leading institutions around the world, often adjudicates competitions and appeared on the jury for the inaugural Jacques Lancelot International Clarinet Competition in Rouen, France.



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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(L) Leshnoff

(T) Tchaikovsky

CREDITS

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Recorded Live
May 6-8, 2016 (Tchaikovsky)
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Photo of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra:
Ed DeArmitt
Photo of Nancy Goeres: Phil Kessler

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We at sound/mirror believe that in a good and successful recording, the sound has to serve the music. While an important goal is to truthfully represent the acoustical event in the hall, another is to capture the composer's intention reflected in the score and its realization by the performer. To achieve these goals, extensive collaboration and communication between the artists and the recording team are of utmost importance.

Based on our long experience of recording the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in Heinz Hall, we chose five omnidirectional DPA 4006 microphones as our main microphone array. Supplementing those with "spot mics" to clarify the detail of the orchestration, we worked towards realizing the above goals. Extensive listening sessions with Maestro Honeck and orchestra musicians were crucial in refining the final balance.

This recording was made and post-produced in DSD256 on a Pyramix workstation to give you, the listener, the highest sound quality possible.

We hope you will enjoy listening to this recording as much as we enjoyed making it.

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TCHAIKOVSKY

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN F MINOR, OPUS 36

I. Andante sostenuto — Moderato con anima *18:55*
II. Andantino in modo di canzona *10:15*
III. Scherzo - Pizzicato ostinato - Allegro *5:33*
IV. Finale - Allegro con fuoco *8:47*

LESHNOFF

DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND BASSOON

Movement I *6:50*
Movement II *2:45*
Movement III *7:55*

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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