

Saturday, August 15, 8:30pm
THE CAROLINE AND JAMES TAYLOR CONCERT
IN MEMORY OF JETT TRAVOLTA

ANDRÉ PREVIN CONDUCTING

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4 in B-flat, Opus 60
 Adagio—Allegro vivace
 Adagio
 Allegro vivace
 Allegro ma non troppo
 {Intermission}

LISZT Piano Concerto No. 2 in A
 JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET

RAVEL “La Valse,” Choreographic poem

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Please do not take pictures during the concert. Flashes, in particular, are distracting to the performers and to other audience members.

Note that the use of audio or video recording during performances in the Koussevitzky Music Shed or Seiji Ozawa Hall is prohibited.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 4 in B-flat, Opus 60

First performance: (private) March 1807, at the Vienna town house of the composer's patron Prince Lobkowitz, Beethoven cond.; (public) April 13, 1808, Burgtheater, Vienna, Beethoven cond. *First BSO performance:* December 1881, Georg Henschel cond. *First Tanglewood performance:* August 11, 1940, Serge Koussevitzky cond. *Most recent Tanglewood performance:* July 20, 2007, Mark Elder cond.

The works Beethoven completed in the last half of 1806—the Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the Fourth Piano Concerto among them—were finished rather rapidly by the composer following his extended struggle with the original version of his opera *Fidelio*, which had occupied him from the end of 1804 until April 1806. The most important orchestral work Beethoven had produced before this time was the *Eroica*, in which he had overwhelmed his audiences with a forceful new musical language reflecting both his own inner struggles in the face of impending deafness and his response to the political atmosphere surrounding him. The next big orchestral work to embody this “heroic” style—with a striking overlay of defiance as well—would be the Fifth Symphony, which had begun to germinate in 1804, was worked out mainly in 1807, and was completed in 1808. But in the meantime, a more relaxed sort of expression began to emerge, emphasizing a heightened sense of repose, a broadly lyric element, and a more spacious approach to musical architecture. The Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the Fourth Piano Concerto share these characteristics to varying degrees, but it is also important to realize that these works, though completed around the same time, do not represent a unilateral change of direction in Beethoven's approach to music, but, rather, the emergence of a particular element that appeared strikingly at this time. Sketches for the

Violin Concerto and the Fifth Symphony in fact occur side by side, and that the two aspects—lyric and aggressive—of Beethoven’s musical expression are not entirely separable is evident also in the fact that ideas for both the Fifth and the *Pastoral* symphonies appear in the *Eroica* sketchbook of 1803-04. These two symphonies—the one strongly assertive, the other more gentle and subdued—were not completed until 1808, two years after the Violin Concerto. And it appears that Beethoven actually interrupted work on his Fifth Symphony so that he could compose the Fourth in response to a commission from the Silesian Count Franz von Oppersdorff, whom he had met through Prince Carl von Lichnowsky, one of his most important patrons during the early years in Vienna and the joint dedicatee, together with Count Razumovsky, of the Fifth and Sixth symphonies.

So Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony partakes successfully and wonderfully of both these worlds, combining a relaxed and lyrical element with a mood of exuberantly aggressive high spirits. The key is B-flat, which suggests—insofar as we can describe the effects of different musical keys—a realm of spaciousness, relaxation, and warmth, in contrast, for example, to the “heroic” E-flat of the Third Symphony and *Emperor* Concerto, the “defiant” C minor of the Fifth, and the “heaven-storming” D minor of the Ninth.

Beethoven actually begins the first movement with an Adagio introduction in a mysteriously pianissimo B-flat *minor*, and the mystery is heightened as the music moves toward B-*natural*, via the enharmonic interpretation of G-flat to F-sharp, until trumpets and drums force the music back to B-flat, and to the major mode, of the Allegro vivace. (This same gambit will be repeated on a larger scale as the music of the Allegro moves from the development into the recapitulation, at which point, once again, the timpani will play a crucial role in telling us where we belong—this time with an extended drumroll growing through twenty-two measures from a pianissimo rumble to a further nine measures of thwacking fortissimo.) Once the Allegro is underway, all is energy and motion, with even the more seemingly relaxed utterances of the woodwinds in service to the prevailing level of activity. One more word about the first movement: one wants the exposition-repeat here, not just for the wonderful jolt of the first ending’s throwing us back to the home key virtually without notice, but also for the links it provides to the end of the introduction and the beginning of the coda.

The E-flat major Adagio sets a *cantabile* theme against a constantly pulsating accompaniment, all moving at a relaxed pace which allows for increasingly elaborate figuration in both melody and accompaniment as the movement proceeds. The second theme is a melancholy and wistful song for solo clarinet, all the more effective when it reappears following a fortissimo outburst from full orchestra. The scherzo, another study in motion, is all ups and downs. Beethoven repeats the Trio in its entirety following the scherzo *da capo* (a procedure he will follow again in the third movement of the Seventh Symphony). A third statement of the scherzo is cut short by an emphatic rejoinder from the horns.

The whirlwind finale (marked “Allegro ma non troppo,” “Allegro, but not too...”; the speed is built into the note values, and the proceedings shouldn’t be rushed by an overzealous conductor) is yet another exercise in energy, movement, and dynamic contrasts. Carl Maria von Weber, who didn’t much like this symphony when he was young and it was new, imagined the double bass complaining: “I have just come from the rehearsal of a Symphony by one of our newest composers; and though, as you know, I have a tolerably strong constitution, I could only just hold out, and five minutes more would have shattered my frame and burst the sinews of my life. I have been made to caper about like a wild goat, and to turn myself into a mere fiddle to execute the no-ideas of Mr. Composer.” Beethoven’s approach in this movement is wonderfully tongue-in-cheek and no-holds-barred: the solo bassoon, leading us into the recapitulation, is asked to play “*dolce*” (“sweetly”) when he’s probably thankful just to get the notes in, and only at the very end is there a brief moment of rest to prepare the headlong rush to the final cadence.

MARC MANDEL

Marc Mandel is Director of Program Publications of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Piano Concerto No. 2

First performance: January 7, 1857, Weimar Court Theater, Liszt cond., Hans von Bronsart, soloist. *First BSO performance:* February 1884, Georg Henschel cond., Carl Baermann, soloist. *First Tanglewood performance:* July 30, 1961, Charles Munch cond., Byron Janis, soloist. *Most recent Tanglewood performance:* July 16, 2006, Andrew Davis cond., Jean-Yves Thibaudet, soloist.

For all his spectacular self-assurance at the piano, Liszt was astonishingly insecure as a composer. He would rework old compositions repeatedly, fussing with this detail or that, never quite sure if he had yet got it right. And, worse, he often took advice from random acquaintances, offered gratuitously, and then reworked pieces again. Almost every one of his major compositions went through stages of creation, and a number of works actually exist in two different “finished” forms. But few, if any, of his works have so long a gap between conception and first performance as the Second Piano Concerto.

It was during the early phase of his career, when he was known primarily as a touring piano virtuoso of extraordinary attainments, that Liszt sketched both of his piano concertos—almost simultaneously—in 1839. At that point they were surely conceived as showpieces for his own talents, and if he had actually finished and performed them then, they would no doubt have been much different in character than they finally turned out. As it was, the pressure of touring caused him to put both works aside for a decade until he had settled in Weimar and given up the vagabond life of the international concert star to devote himself to composition and conducting. Although he had written a great deal of music already (mostly brilliant display pieces for piano solo), he worked hard to improve his skills, especially in orchestration.

Liszt was surely not lacking totally in experience at orchestration, since he had already finished a score for the 1839 version of the concerto. But by 1849 he had put himself to some extent in the hands of Joachim Raff, who is believed to have worked with him on his scoring and even perhaps to have scored a few of the symphonic poems. (Raff was an extremely fluent and prolific composer, eleven years Liszt’s junior; in 1875—the year before Brahms’s First Symphony—he was widely recognized as the greatest living German symphonist.) But it is clear that Liszt had essentially finished the A major concerto before Raff even arrived. His letter to the younger man, accepting Raff’s offer of assistance in orchestration, mentions in passing that the scores of his two concertos have been fully written out. At most Raff might have suggested some changes as cosmetic improvements after the fact, though the orchestration of the Second Concerto is so much of a piece, and so poetic throughout, that it is hard to see where any changes could have been made.

Even though the work was “finished” according to Liszt in 1849, he was in no hurry to present it to the public, and there seem to have been some slight adjustments to the score during the ensuing years. Liszt wrote to Hans von Bülow on May 12, 1853, “I have just finished reworking my two concertos and the *Totentanz* in order to have them copied definitively.” The “definitive” fair copy was made by Raff, but even then Liszt added a few more touches himself. And Raff made yet another copy about the time of the first performance, which took place in Weimar with the work’s dedicatee, Hans von Bronsart, as soloist. By now Liszt himself had definitely given up appearing as a virtuoso, and most of his own performances at the keyboard were private affairs. He preferred to be presented as a conductor and composer.

Like so much of Liszt’s work, the Second Concerto is *sui generis*. Although it is by no means lacking in opportunities for virtuoso display, it gives the impression of being quieter, more introspective than the First Concerto, partly because of the ravishingly beautiful opening for woodwinds, in which the sweet song of the clarinet turns out to generate many of the musical ideas that follow. The fusion of the usual three movements of a concerto into a single long movement that could be construed as a kind of sonata form is Liszt’s response to the nineteenth-century composer’s search for increasing organic relationships throughout a composition, and his inventive reworking of the motivic material to produce melodies of strikingly diverse psychological tone remains a matter of admiration. The orchestration throughout is masterly, and though there are brilliant passages galore throughout this concerto, Liszt is admirably restrained in his virtuoso display. Almost without exception the sparkling, cadenza-like passages are built on still new developments of the basic thematic material;

thus, rather than intruding, as virtuosic elements so often do in romantic piano compositions, they contribute further to the unity of this remarkable score.

STEVEN LEDBETTER

Steven Ledbetter was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998 and now writes program notes for other orchestras and ensembles throughout the country.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

“La Valse,” Choreographic poem

First performance: January 8, 1920, Paris, Lamoureux Orchestra. *First BSO performances:* January 1922, Pierre Monteux cond. *First Tanglewood performance:* August 13, 1939, Serge Koussevitzky cond. *Most recent Tanglewood performance:* July 28, 2006, Ludovic Morlot cond.

Ravel found it difficult to return to normal work after the ravages of the First World War. Quite aside from the long interruption in his compositional activity and the loss of many friends, he was suffering from a recurring insomnia that plagued him for the rest of his life and played a considerable role in the dramatic reduction of new works. He had already started sketching a symphonic poem that was intended to be a musical depiction of Vienna; naturally it was a foregone conclusion to cast the work as a grand orchestral waltz. Ravel had never yet visited the Austrian capital (he was only to do so in 1920, after finishing his big waltz composition), but he “knew” Vienna through the composers, going back to Schubert and continuing with the Strauss family and many others, who had added a special Viennese lilt to the waltz (in this sense Ravel was as familiar with Vienna as Bizet and Debussy were with Spain when they composed what we still regard as the most convincing “Spanish” music ever written).

The first sketches for *Wien* apparently date from 1907, when Ravel was completing another musical travelogue, the *Rapsodie espagnole*. He began orchestrating the work during 1914 but ceased after the outbreak of hostilities; he complained in his letters that the times were not suitable for a work entitled Vienna. After the war, Ravel was slow to take up the composition again. Only a commission from Serge Diaghilev induced him to finish it, with the new title *La Valse, Poème choréographique*, and intended for production by the Russian Ballet. When the score was finished, however, Diaghilev balked. He could see no balletic character in the music, for all its consistent exploitation of a dance meter, and he refused to produce the ballet after all. (This marked the end of good relations between the composer and the impresario.) *La Valse* was first heard in concert form; only in 1928 did Ida Rubenstein undertake a ballet production of the score, for which Ravel added a stage direction: “An Imperial Court, about 1855.” The score bears a brief scenic description:

Clouds whirl about. Occasionally they part to allow a glimpse of waltzing couples. As they gradually lift, one can discern a gigantic hall, filled by a crowd of dancers in motion. The stage gradually brightens. The glow of chandeliers breaks out fortissimo.

The hazy beginning of *La Valse* perfectly captures the vision of “clouds” that clear away to reveal the dancing couples. The piece grows in a long crescendo, interrupted and started again, finally carried to an energetic and irresistible climax whose violence hints at far more than a social dance.

Ravel’s date of “1855” for the *mise-en-scène* was significant. It marked roughly the halfway point of the century of Vienna’s domination by the waltz—the captivating, carefree, mind-numbing dance that filled the salons, the ballrooms, and the inns, while the whole of Austrian society was slowly crumbling under an intensely reactionary government, the absolutism of Emperor Franz Joseph, who was twenty-five in 1855 and reigned until the middle of the First World War. The social glitter of mindless whirling about concealed the volcano that was so soon to explode. Ravel’s *La Valse* has the captivating rhythms in full measure, but the music rises to an expressionistic level of violence, hinting at the concealed rot of the society. Would *La Valse* have been different if composed before the horrors of the war? Who can tell? In any case, consciously or not, Ravel’s brilliantly orchestrated score captures the glitter and the violence of a society that, even as he was composing, had passed away.

STEVEN LEDBETTER

Guest Artists

André Previn

Composer/conductor/pianist André Previn holds both the Austrian and German Cross of Merit, was a Kennedy Center honoree for his lifetime achievements, and was knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1996. In 2006 he was presented with the Glenn Gould Prize in Toronto, and in May 2008 he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award of the London Symphony Orchestra. He has received several Grammys for his recordings and was honored at the 2005 Grammy Awards for his disc with Anne-Sophie Mutter of his own Violin Concerto (*Anne-Sophie*) and Bernstein's Serenade for violin and orchestra, the former recorded with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the latter with the London Symphony Orchestra. *Musical America* has named him "Musician of the Year"; his first opera, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque. A frequent guest both in concert and on recordings with the world's major orchestras, Mr. Previn has also held chief artistic posts with the Houston Symphony, London Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, and Royal Philharmonic. As a pianist, he has given recitals with Renée Fleming and with Barbara Bonney and performs chamber music frequently with the Emerson String Quartet, as well as with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and Vienna Philharmonic. He also performs and teaches regularly at the Tanglewood Music Center, where he works with student orchestras, conductors, and composers, and coaches chamber music. Mr. Previn's recent successes as a composer include *Diversions* for orchestra, premiered and recorded by the Vienna Philharmonic; *The Giraffes Go To Hamburg* and *Three Songs of Emily Dickinson* for Renée Fleming; two works for Anne-Sophie Mutter (*Tango, Song, and Dance* for violin and piano, and his Violin Concerto, written for Ms. Mutter and the BSO); a concerto for violin and double bass, premiered by the BSO with Ms. Mutter and bass player Roman Patkoló; a commissioned Harp Concerto premiered under his direction with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 2008 and then in Europe by the Vienna Philharmonic this year; and an orchestral work, *Owls*, premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in October 2008. His second opera, *Brief Encounter*, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, was premiered there in May 2009. Other compositions include works written for Yo-Yo Ma, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Janet Baker, and Barbara Bonney. On the occasion of André Previn's 80th birthday, Carnegie Hall presented four concerts in spring 2009: a jazz duo performance featuring bassist David Finck and Mr. Previn on piano; a performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra in which he both conducted and performed as soloist; an evening of his compositions as performed by the Orchestra of St. Luke's with Anne-Sophie Mutter, Renée Fleming, and Yuri Bashmet, including the world premiere of his double concerto for violin and viola, written for Ms. Mutter and Mr. Bashmet; and a chamber music concert featuring Ms. Mutter and Lynn Harrell with Mr. Previn at the piano in a program including the world premiere of his new piano trio. Other recent highlights include concerts with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the London Symphony with Anne-Sophie Mutter, the Boston Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Accademia Nazionale de Santa Cecilia. Mr. Previn records for Deutsche Grammophon; his concert music is published by G. Schirmer, Inc., and Chester Music Ltd. This is the second of his three Tanglewood appearances this month: he was pianist with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players in Ozawa Hall this past Wednesday night, and, also as pianist, he plays an evening of jazz favorites with bass player David Finck in Ozawa Hall tomorrow night.

Jean-Yves Thibaudet

The versatile pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet is sought after by today's foremost orchestras, festivals, conductors, and collaborative musicians. Summer 2009 takes Mr. Thibaudet to major festivals in the United States and Europe, for performances with such ensembles as the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Cleveland Orchestra, as well as the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra. His 2009-10 season is highlighted by an Australian tour with the London Philharmonic, as well as European and North American tours with the Helsinki Philharmonic,

Rotterdam Philharmonic (including a performance at New York's Avery Fisher Hall), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. He also appears with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Berner Symphonie-Orchester, Museumorchester Frankfurt, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Norddeutscher Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester, Castilla y Leon Symphony Orchestra, Gelders Orchestra, and Sinfonieorchester des Westdeutschen Rundfunks. In the United States, Mr. Thibaudet performs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Dallas, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Baltimore, Atlanta, Cincinnati, and Nashville. Recital appearances take him to Carnegie Hall, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Seattle, Washington. In May 2010 he embarks on a U.S. tour with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and its new music director Gustavo Dudamel, bringing Leonard Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety* to San Francisco, Nashville, Washington, New York, and Newark, New Jersey. Jean-Yves Thibaudet was the soloist on the Oscar- and Golden Globe-award winning soundtrack of Universal Pictures' *Atonement* and in the Oscar-nominated *Pride and Prejudice*. He is an exclusive recording artist for Decca, which has released more than forty of his albums, earning the Schallplattenpreis, the Diapason d'Or, Choc de la Musique, *Gramophone* Award, two Echo awards, and the Edison Prize. His Grammy-nominated recording of Saint-Saëns's Piano Concertos 2 and 5 with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande was released in fall 2007, and follows the album "Aria—Opera Without Words," which features transcriptions of opera arias. Among other recordings are Strauss's *Burleske* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, "Satie: The Complete Solo Piano Music," and the jazz albums "Reflections on Duke: Jean-Yves Thibaudet Plays the Music of Duke Ellington" and "Conversations with Bill Evans," tributes to two of jazz history's greats. Jean-Yves Thibaudet was born in Lyon, France, where he began his piano studies at five and made his first public appearance at seven. At twelve he entered the Paris Conservatory, where he studied with Aldo Ciccolini and Lucette Descaves, a friend and collaborator of Ravel. He won the Premier Prix du Conservatoire at fifteen and the Young Concert Artists Auditions in New York City three years later. In 2001 the Republic of France awarded him the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 2002 he was awarded the Premio Pegasus from the Spoleto Festival in Italy, for his artistic achievements and his longstanding involvement with the festival. His most recent accolade is the 2007 Victoire d'Honneur, a lifetime career achievement award and the highest honor given by France's Victoires de la Musique. Jean-Yves Thibaudet made his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut at Tanglewood in August 1992 and has since also appeared regularly with the BSO at Symphony Hall. His most recent Tanglewood appearance was in August 2008, in Khachaturian's Piano Concerto with André Previn conducting; his most recent BSO subscription appearances were in February 2009, in Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin.