

POLISH WIENIAWSKI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
WOJCIECH RODEK, PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR
SARA DRAGAN, VIOLIN

Saturday, February 26, 2022, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

POLISH WIENIAWSKI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Wojciech Rodek, principal conductor

Sara Dragan, violin

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56

Theme: Chorale St. Anthony: Andante

Variation I: Poco più animato

Variation II: Più vivace

Variation III: Con moto

Variation IV: Andante con moto

Variation V: Vivace

Variation VI: Vivace

Variation VII: Grazioso

Variation VIII: Presto non troppo

Finale: Andante

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

Allegro moderato

Canzonetta: Andante

Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

20-minute intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Allegro con brio

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro

Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra appears by arrangement with:

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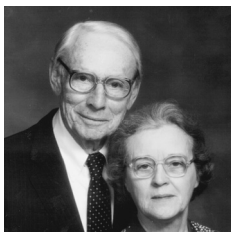


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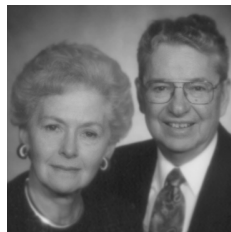


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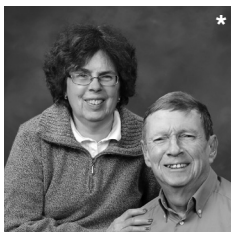
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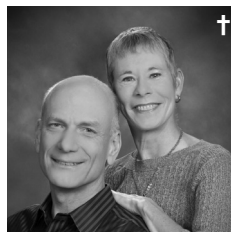
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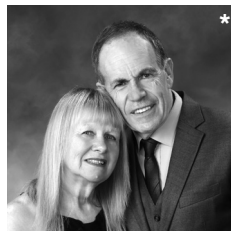
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PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56

Composed: 1873

Approximate duration: 19 minutes

Brahms composed the magnificent *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* in the summer of 1873 at Tutzing in Bavaria. It was written in two versions, one for two pianos and the one for orchestra, which we hear on this program performed by the Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic. It remains the better known and more often performed of the two versions and is often noted as the first set of variations for orchestra in the history of music. The first performance of the orchestral version was given on November 2, 1873, by the Vienna Philharmonic under Brahms' baton.

With their demand for both variation and continuity, variations are always a demanding form of composition. Certainly, that is confirmed in Brahms' set with its enticing thematic statement followed by eight variations on the theme that never dull and fulfill every notion of variation form in their individually distinct characters. Brahms outdoes himself in the magnificent Finale. The work also bows to Haydn and his pioneering efforts in variation form in such works as his *Symphony No. 101 in D Major*, "The Clock" composed in 1794. While both composers remain equally honored in musical history, it is interesting to note that Haydn wrote 106 symphonies and Brahms four.

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia

Died November 6, 1893, in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

Composed: 1878

Approximate duration: 34 minutes

The Violin Concerto was begun in 1878, shortly after Tchaikovsky's brief and disastrous marriage, a suicide attempt, and an extended trip to Clarens, the Swiss resort on the shores of Lake Geneva where he sought recovery from depression. He was joined there by his pupil and friend, Iosif Kotek, who provided great inspiration for the Concerto. That friendship was broken when Kotek refused to perform the work. Violinist Leopold Auer also turned down the request for an 1879 performance, and the work was not premiered until December 4, 1881, when it was played by violinist Adolph Brodsky and the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Hans Richter.

Despite his many problems in the composition of the work, Tchaikovsky had written to his patroness von Meck, "For the first time in my life I have begun to work at a new piece before finishing the one on hand . . . I could not resist the pleasure of sketching out the concerto and allowed myself to be so carried away that the sonata has been set aside." Tchaikovsky's pleasure becomes ours in this thrilling work that has captured audiences worldwide and remains today one of the most popular violin concertos ever composed. That was not the case, however, at its premiere. The influential and acidic critic Eduard Hanslick commented in the *Neue Freie*

Presse: "The violin is no longer played, but torn apart, pounded black and blue . . . Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto gives us for the first time the hideous notion that there can be music that stinks to the ear." Fortunately, Hanslick has been proven wrong, and we have artists today who handle the difficulties of the Concerto with ease and with the brilliance it deserves.

An orchestral opening in the first movement, *Allegro moderato* leads directly to a solo violin section that quickly reveals the virtuosic challenges that intimidated so many violinists. These virtuosic moments continue throughout the movement and the entire work. The fully developed and longest of the three movements, the *Allegro moderato* may be "moderate" in its tempo marking but not in its emotional impact. Nor do the dramatic cadenzas demanded of the violinist lose the thematic continuity of the movement.

As its title implies, the briefer second movement *Canzonetta* suggests a song, in this case, with a contrapuntal sense that we might associate with the madrigal. Perhaps more important is the Eastern touch to its harmonies that suggest a Russian quality to the music.

Without pause, we are cast into the Finale marked *Allegro vivacissimo*. Vivacious it is as the orchestra explodes in full force before the violin enters with its dramatic solo. Good spirits prevail, and most shadows are cast aside, yet there remains a sense of the Russian folk dance. Indeed, Tchaikovsky was not so thoroughly European as his Russian competitors, the famous Mighty Five, accused him of being.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 1770, in Bonn, Germany
Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria
Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Composed: 1808

Approximate duration: 32 minutes

In an 1801 letter to his friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler, Beethoven admitted: "For the past three years my hearing has been growing constantly weaker . . . For two years now I have ceased to attend any social function for I cannot bring myself to tell people, *I am deaf*." Despite this horrifying condition, Beethoven would produce in the next few years such works as his Op. 18 and Op. 59 string quartets, his opera *Fidelio*, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the Fourth Symphony, and the Mass in C. Some of these works, in fact, interrupted the composition of the Fifth Symphony which he began in 1804 but did not complete until 1808. The work was premiered on December 22, 1808, at a six-hour concert in the Vienna's Theater an der Wien. It was played for the first time in America at the inaugural concert of the New York Philharmonic on December 7, 1842.

The opening of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is probably the most famous statement in musical history, known to everyone from the musically sophisticated to innocent children at play in war games. We hold our breaths to hear how each conductor will handle the declarative statement that has been treated so widely. Charles Ives, for example, toyed with it creatively in his *Concord Sonata*. Hearing it within its true symphonic context,

however, is an irreplaceable experience. While the famous four-note motto dominates, many other musical devices are artfully employed in the first movement. Contrast, for example, is everywhere in the use of powerful and sweetly lyrical moments punctuated by dramatic silences and startling horn calls. Every instrument is put to its fullest use before Beethoven brings the movement to a conclusion with a final statement of the famous motto in a slower tempo and a definitive exclamation.

The second movement, curiously the longest of the four, brings much contrast to the first with its opening graceful waltz. That waltz, however, soon transitions into a powerful march, and we are pulled between these two effects throughout. Wind instruments are given especially remarkable moments, but little is neglected in Beethoven's compositional style in this movement. We have even a moment of playfulness before a beautifully lyrical climax and a strong conclusion.

The third movement opens more in the spirit of mystery than the joke suggested by its Scherzo marking. The march flavor of the second movement continues but with a new ominous quality so effective in Beethoven's use of C minor, his notorious "fate" key that he chose for some of his most powerful works including the Third Symphony, the Choral Fantasy, and his final Piano Sonata, Op. 111. Few composers before him had used the forbidding key so frequently. Beethoven also breaks tradition in this movement by not including a usual minuetto but going only from the opening Scherzo to a contrasting Trio section before a return to the Scherzo.

After a dramatic long note, the Scherzo dives directly into the final movement. Here a certain joyfulness predominates the mood. Beethoven seems to loosen all bonds and even initiates a new motto lighter in nature but still in the Beethoven power mode. The heroic sense we so clearly associate with Beethoven is ever present but not without great compositional variety and, in particular, rhythmic complexity. This monumental symphony ends with a daring repetition of C major chords that increase in tempo almost to a breaking point.

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PROFILES

WOJCIECH RODEK (principal conductor) was born in 1977 in Brzeg, Poland, birthplace of legendary conductor, Kurt Masur. Rodek is one of the most prominent conductors of his generation. Following the traditions of Silesian music culture cultivated in Wrocław, Otto Klemperer's birthplace, he continues the best traditions of the Polish school of conducting. Remaining under the influence of the German performing tradition, during his studies in Moscow he studied under three of Russia's leading conductors: Mark Ermler, Evgeny Svetlanov, and Yuri Simonov. He has been an assistant to Kurt Masur, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Antoni Wit, Pinchas Steinberg, Marc Minkowski, and Charles Dutoit.

Since 2005, Rodek has been affiliated with the Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra as its principal conductor. The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra and the conductor have established a special bond, involving mutual trust in intense development of a symphonic ensemble and nurturing the best sound features of the Central European style. Maestro Rodek was the music director of the Gliwice Music Theatre, music director of the Lower Silesian Philharmonic, and music director of the Grand Opera Theatre in Łódź. He studied the piano from the age of eight in Namysłów and Wrocław. From 1998 to 2003, he studied conducting with professor Marek Pijarowski at the Karol Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław; he also learnt Russian in the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute in Moscow and at the University of Wrocław.

In 2005, he won a competition for the post of assistant conductor to Maestro Antoni Wit at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw, where he worked from 2005 to 2007. Currently, he

teaches conducting at the Academy of Music in Wrocław. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree and he is the winner of the 2nd prize at the 3rd National Witold Lutosławski Competition for Young Conductors (2002). In 2011, he was awarded the Polish Theatrical Music Award in the Best Conductor category. In 2015, he was awarded the Medal of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage for "Merit to Culture-Gloria Artis." He has conducted many of Europe's leading orchestras, including the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia, Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, the Polish Radio Orchestra in Warsaw, the Cracow Philharmonic, the Wrocław Philharmonic, the Polish Baltic Sea Philharmonic, the Ankara Presidential Symphony Orchestra, the Antalya State Symphony Orchestra, the Izmir State Symphony, European Johann Strauss Orchestra, the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Camerata Bucharest, and the Ostrava Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra. He has worked with outstanding soloists, including Rafał Blechacz, Idil Biret, Gülsin Onay, Ingolf Wunder, Paweł Wakarecy, Lukas Geniušas, Alexandre Dubach, Alexander Markov, Konstanty A. Kulka, Krzysztof Jakowicz, Agata Szymczewska, Piotr Pławner, Johannes Moser, and Gautier Capuçon.

Rodek prepared premieres for the Theatre Montansier in Versailles, the Wratislavia Cantans festival, The Grand Theatre-National Opera in Warsaw, the Grand Opera Theatre in Łódź, and the Wrocław Opera. He has performed in the most prestigious concert halls across Europe and China, including Dresden, Hamburg, Munich, Salzburg, Vienna, Zürich, Beijing, and Shanghai. He took part in the most important classical music festivals.

Rodek's recordings primarily include forgotten Polish music, contemporary works, as well as film productions, among others with music by Jan A.P. Kaczmarek /*City Island*, *Get Low*. Rodek believes in the necessity to introduce young people into the world of classical music. On his initiative, the Youth Orchestra of the Wieniawski Philharmonic was established, which brings together the most talented young musicians from across Poland.

SARA DRAGAN (violin) is 21 years old and an award-winning concert violinist, emerging as one of the finest violinists of her generation. She started to play the violin at the age of seven, under the tutelage of her parents, Konrad and Alicja Dragan.

Dragan is protégée of legendary pedagogue Professor Zakhar Bron. She is student of Escuela Superior de Musica Reina Sofia in Madrid, as well as Zakhar Bron Academy in Switzerland.

The exceptional young violinist is currently playing on an old Italian violin—Nicola Amati (1666) on the generous loan from Florian Leonhard Fine Violins (London and New York).

In 2021, she recorded her debut CD for Orpheus Classics with Roustem Saitkoulov, which is regular collaborative pianist of Maxim Vengerov. The CD was recorded on Antonio Stradivarius violin from FLFV.

Despite her young age, Sara won first prize Grand Prix of about 50 violin competitions in Europe, Asia and the US, among others: International Violin H.Wieniawski & K.Lipinski Competition, New York International Artists Association Competition, Novosibirsk International Violin Competition, International G.P.Telemann Violin Competition, and the International Global Music Partnership Competition.

She has already played thousands of concerts as a soloist. She performed solo with such orchestras as: the BVG Orchester Berlin, the RRCMC Moscow Orchestra, Royal Chamber Orchestra, Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra, Uzbekistan National Symphony Orchestra, Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra, Sudeten Philharmonic Orchestra, Opole Philharmonic Orchestra, the Warmian-Masurian Philharmonic Orchestra, Slovak Sinfonietta, Tel Aviv Soloists Orchestra, Busan Philharmonic, iPalpiti Soloists Orchestra, and many others.

Dragan made her debut after six months of studying violin playing. She performed Henryk Wieniawski's *Obertas* with the orchestra.

At the age of 12, she played *Violin Concerto No.1 in D-Major* by Niccolò Paganini (with the cadenza of E. Sauret) and *Carmen Fantasie* by F. Waxman with the accompaniment of the Opole Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Piotr Borkowski. At age 15, she made her United States debut at Carnegie Hall (NYC) where she played *Violin Concerto No.1 in F-Sharp Minor* by H. Wieniawski, as well as *The Last Rose of Summer* by W. Ernst.

As a soloist, she gave concerts at Berlin Philharmonic Hall, Carnegie Hall in New York City, Walt Disney Hall of Los Angeles Philharmonic, Haeundae Cultural Center' Concert Hall of Busan in South Korea, Rachmaninov Concert Hall in Moscow, Landovsky's Auditorium in Paris, Auditorium Sony in Madrid, and Polish Royal Palace in Warsaw. She played in most Polish Philharmonic Halls as well as was touring around Europe, Asia, and US.

Dragan has performed at many prestigious festivals all over the world, among those are Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Interlaken Classics, Henryk Wieniawski Festival, and the Emanations Festival at Krzysztof Penderecki European Music Center of Music.

Dragan engages herself in many charity events by performing, among others, during ballgames for gifted young people and promotion of talented children in Hof, Germany, as well as taking part in charity auctions for children with Down's syndrome.

"Sara Dragan is an extremely talented young violinist. She is a phenomenon of her age group. She has a large repertoire and is an immensely gifted and creative musician. [. . .] Sara is a very promising talent." Professor Jadwiga Kaliszewska, 2009.

POLISH WIENIAWSKI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra commenced its activities in December 1944. Its beginnings go back to numerous chamber and solo concerts given by musicians, who after World War II established ties within Poland. The repertoire and artistic considerations, as well as the joy of making music together, led to a premiere chamber music concert, held on February 10, 1945, in the hall of the Music Society. This concert gave the impulse to extend the orchestra and a classical music gala was held on May 18 of the same year—which was at the same time the first symphony concert in post-war Poland.

The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra has gone on many concert tours. Performances in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Germany, South Korea, Denmark, and Ukraine were acclaimed both by the critics and the public. The orchestra participated in numerous international festivals and Franco Ferrara Conductors' Seminar in Siena.

The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic is the largest music institution in eastern Poland. It is visited not only by local music-lovers, but by cosmopolitan Polish and international patrons alike. This is a place where you can enjoy art of the highest quality. The Philharmonic offers symphony concerts, recitals, organ and chamber music soirées performed by the most prominent Polish musicians and internationally acclaimed artists.

The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic is under the artistic direction of its principal conductor Wojciech Rodek. Zuzanna Dziedzic is the Deputy General Manager. Since 1944 until today, The Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic has attracted a glittering list of prominent conductors, such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Antoni Wit, Kazimierz Kord, Philippe Herreweghe, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Jan Krenz, and soloists: Sviatoslav Richter, David Oistrakh, Konstanty Andrzej Kulka, Wanda Wiłkomirska, Nigel Kennedy, Eugen Indjic, Rafał Blechacz, Kevin Kenner, Ingolf Wunder, Yulianna Avdeeva, Krzysztof Jakowicz, Roman Lasocki, Piotr Pławner, Bartłomiej Nizioł, Tomasz Strahl, Lukas Geniušas, Corina Marti, Vadim Brodski, Ilya Grubert, Georgijs Osokins, and many others.

Huge repertoire of the Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra encompasses compositions from Baroque to contemporary music. Concert programs include works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, Wieniawski, Bruckner, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Stravinsky, Scriabin, Shostakovich, Lutosławski, Penderecki, and many others. The discography of the Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra consists of many albums featuring outstanding artists. The Orchestra's upcoming plans include numerous concerts with Polish music, and recording of works by Józef Wieniawski and Władysław Żeleński. Foreign tours constitute a particularly important part of the schedule. In 2022, it will undertake its first tour of the US. The orchestra will be accompanied by first prize-winners of the Chopin International Piano Competition and Wieniawski International Violin Competition.

POLISH WIENIAWSKI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA ROSTER

Principal Conductor

Wojciech Rodek

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Krzysztof Maślanka
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Aleksandra Mazurek
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Lech Gąsior
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