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Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRA IN RESIDENCE AT KRANNERT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

65

2024-2025/SEASON 65

**BEETHOVEN'S
FIFTH
SYMPHONY**

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

KRANNERT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

Ran Dank, piano



APRIL 12

THE RITE OF SPRING

CHAMPAIGN URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Saturday, April 12, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Foellinger Great Hall, Krannert Center

Stephen Alltop, conductor

East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra, Kevin Kelly, music director

The premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in 1913 was a seismic event in music history. A composition of revolutionary brilliance and stunning imagination, *The Rite of Spring* calls for an enormous orchestra. Hearing this inspired work live is a bucket-list wish for many music lovers. An in-depth introduction to *The Rite* will be presented by Maestro Alltop and CUSO musicians. CUSO is pleased to welcome the talented young musicians of the East Central Illinois Youth Orchestra for a side-by-side performance of a lively overture by Glinka and Mussorgsky's thrilling orchestral poem, *Night on the Bare Mountain*.

GLINKA: *Overture to Russlan and Ludmilla*

MUSSORGSKY: *Night on the Bare Mountain* (original version)

STRAVINSKY: *The Rite of Spring*



Tickets on sale at krannertcenter.com

\$40 standard/\$36 senior/\$10 youth, student

WELCOME

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Dear Friends,

We are excited to bring you a varied program tonight of old and new musical delights.

British composer Anna Clyne is one of the boldest compositional voices of our time. Her music is being played by orchestras around the world, and now in Champaign-Urbana as well. I believe you will find her *Masquerade* to be an engaging way to start the concert, and one that shows her great command of orchestral colors.

Adoration by Florence Price is a beautiful piece that was originally for organ. We are grateful to CUSO violist Elaine Fine for her lovely arrangement for string orchestra.

What a pleasure to welcome back pianist Ran Dank. His incandescent artistry will truly shine in Camille Saint-Saëns' endlessly imaginative *Piano Concerto No. 5*. Saint-Saëns loved to travel, and visited 27 countries during his lifetime. These travels often were reflected in his music, such as with the exotic elements we hear in this splendid concerto.

There is nothing quite like hearing Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* live in a great concert hall. The kinetic energy of the work is overwhelming. Whether you are hearing this iconic masterpiece for the first time, or the hundredth, we are so pleased to be performing it for you.

Musically yours,

Stephen Alltop
Music-Director and Conductor



CHAMPAIGN-URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

CUSO is the professional orchestra in residence at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts and is a member of the League of American Orchestras, the Illinois Council of Orchestras, the American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers (ASCAP), and Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI). CUSO is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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The “Champaign-Urbana Civic Symphony Orchestra” was founded in 1959 by music lovers in our community who had the dream of establishing a local, professional symphony orchestra. Funded by local businesses and more than 300 subscribers, the orchestra performed the opening concert in Smith Hall on October 20, 1960 under the leadership of Bernard Goodman. The concert was hailed “a magnificent success” by *The News-Gazette* and the new orchestra flourished with the help of the Symphony Guild that was formed in 1962.

CUSO began performing at the newly-built Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in 1969 and was designated the professional orchestra in residence at Krannert Center in 1988. Over the years, CUSO has performed more than 350 concerts and showcased the talents of thousands of local, professional musicians, bringing the magic of music to audiences of all ages. In partnership with the Guild, CUSO youth music programs have introduced thousands of grade school children to the vibrancy of live orchestral music, with Youth Concerts at Krannert Center and free concerts in the schools.

For the past 65 years, CUSO has thrived with community support. The orchestra is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and receives no funding from Krannert Center or the University of Illinois. Like orchestras throughout the country, more than 60% of our budget is funded by the generous support of sponsors and donors.

Your gift to the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra makes these performances of great music by talented local musicians possible. To make a donation, call the CUSO office at 217-351-9139 or visit our website at cussympphony.org. Thank you for your support!





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The Maestro Circle recognizes individuals who have made gifts of \$1,000 or more for the current season. CUSO gratefully acknowledges these donors for Maestro Circle gifts made to CUSO and the Guild from April 13, 2024 through February 20, 2025, to support the programs and performances of the 2024-2025 season.

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MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

It is with sincere gratitude that we recognize donations made to CUSO in the past 12 months for memorials and gifts made in honor of an individual for a birthday, anniversary, or special occasion.

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[Margaret C. Goodman Memorial Chair]
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Wei-Ting Chen
Noel Chi
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Jace Kim
Jungmin Lee
Camille Rose
Abby Tolar
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Alice Lee
Johnny Lusardi
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Juliana Scofield
Anna Wallace

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Isaac Henry, Associate Principal
[Ernest and Lois Gullerud Endowed Chair]
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Matthew Nowlan
Rebecca Saul
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Barbara Hedlund, Principal
[CUSO Guild Memorial Chair]
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Reid Lasley

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TIMPANI

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Daisy Waters

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Molly Madden, Principal

The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra
acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

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DIAMOND CIRCLE

The dream

to establish the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra was made possible by extraordinary community

support. When CUSO celebrated the important milestone of the 60th Anniversary in 2019, the Board of Directors launched the Diamond Campaign, a fundraising initiative to establish a secure financial foundation for the orchestra.

The Diamond Campaign Vision for the Symphony

CUSO is deeply committed to achieving program and performance excellence. Diamond Campaign funds have enabled the CUSO Board to raise musician pay rates to match other area orchestras. The Board continues to fully support Music Director Stephen Alltop and his programming goals, to secure outstanding guest artists, to perform ambitious works, and to pursue vibrant artistic collaborations.

CUSO seeks to expand and maximize community relevance with live orchestral music. In partnership with the CUSO Guild, we will continue to provide youth music education programs, including the annual Youth Concerts at Krannert Center, free ensemble concerts in the schools, and auditions and scholarship awards for young musicians. CUSO will also fund creative concert initiatives to reach new audiences and to perform in venues throughout the community.

The Diamond Circle

The Diamond Circle recognizes individuals who have made major gifts and pledges to the Diamond Campaign Fund. CUSO thanks these generous donors for their commitment to insure that the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra continues our long tradition of bringing fine orchestral music performed by local musicians, to our community.

Anonymous
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The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra performance of "Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" is made possible by the generosity of these sponsors and is dedicated to the memory of James Economy, who was an ardent supporter of the performing arts.

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IN MEMORY OF JAMES ECONOMY



JAMES ECONOMY 1929—2021

The Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra is deeply grateful to James and Anastasia Economy, generous patrons of the Symphony and Krannert Center, whose love of music and the arts has greatly enriched our community. This evening's concert honors the memory of James Economy. A lover of classical music and opera, he was an accomplished

pianist with a broad complement of favorite composers.

An internationally-renowned polymer scientist, Jim served as Professor and Head of the Materials Science and Engineering Department at the University of Illinois from 1989 until 2000, when he retired as head but continued to teach, do research, and mentor students. After his full retirement from the University in 2011, he stayed active in two companies he helped found, Serionix and ATSP Innovations. At the time of his passing in October of 2021, he was busy with the investigation of potential new materials for low-cost housing.

Prior to his tenure at Illinois, Jim was head of the Polymer Science and Technology Department in the Research Division of IBM in San Jose, California, where his group achieved worldwide prominence for scientific and technological achievements. From 1965 to 1972, he served as head of chemistry for The Carborundum Company, where his group developed more than 20 new materials. His research there was selected 14 times for the IR-100 Award recognizing outstanding technical development in American industry. During his career, Jim received numerous awards recognizing his scientific contributions, including the American Institute of Chemists' Chemical Pioneer Award, the ACS Phillips Medal, the Schoelkopf Medal, the Herman F. Mark Award, and the Paul J. Flory Polymer Research Prize for Extraordinary Contribution to Polymer Science and Engineering. He was a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a Fellow of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Throughout his life, Jim maintained an adventurous spirit. He and Stacy traveled the world and particularly enjoyed family trips to Greece and Italy to explore ancient sites, where he shared his pride in his Greek heritage with his four children and eight grandchildren.

Jim was an inveterate optimist, seeing the best in people and lifting up those around him with his positive outlook on life. He was always ready for the next challenge, the next opportunity and the next adventure. For Jim Economy, the next day was always the best day.

BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH SYMPHONY

THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stephen Alltop, Music Director & Conductor

Concert No. 317, March 8, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Foellinger Great Hall

Stephen Alltop, conductor

Ran Dank, piano

Masquerade

Anna Clyne | b. 1980

Adoration

Florence Price | 1887–1953, arr. Elaine Fine

Piano Concerto No. 5, Op. 103 ("The Egyptian")

Camille Saint-Saëns | 1835–1921

I. *Allegretto animato*

II. *Andante*

III. *Molto allegro*

Ran Dank, piano

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Ludwig van Beethoven | 1770–1827

I. *Allegro con brio*

II. *Andante con moto*

III. *Scherzo: Allegro—*

IV. *Allegro – Presto*

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MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR



STEPHEN ALLTOP

Stephen Alltop is celebrating his 12th season as Music Director and Conductor of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as Music Director and Conductor for the Apollo Chorus of Chicago and the Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Alltop has been a member of Northwestern University's conducting and keyboard faculties since 1994, where he conducts the Alice Millar Chapel Choir and the Baroque Music Ensemble.

Stephen Alltop has appeared with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as both a harpsichord and organ soloist, and performs frequently with Chicago's Music of The Baroque. He has performed with Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, Chicago Bach Project, Chicago Sinfonietta, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, the Peninsula Music Festival and Ravinia Festival. Alltop served as Coordinator and performer for WFMT's Bach Organ Project in the fall of 2014, a live performance series of all of Bach's organ works, and the WFMT Bach Keyboard Festival for the fall of 2015. His recordings are on the Albany, American Gramophone, Cedille and Clarion labels.

Alltop has performed with many leading musicians and actors of our time, including Hilary Hahn, Orli Shaham, Tony Randall, Martin Sheen, and Brian Dennehy. He has prepared ensembles for the Ravinia Festival, Chicago Opera Theater. The Oprah Winfrey Show, Star Wars in Concert, and Josh Groban on Tour. Dr. Alltop has guest conducted numerous orchestras and choruses across the United States, Europe and Korea. His guest conducting engagements have included "A Celebration of Celtic Music" at Chicago's Symphony Center, the Iowa All-State Orchestra,

(continued on page 24)



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GUEST ARTIST

RAN DANK

Technically dazzling and intellectually probing artistry exemplify Ran Dank's pianism and musicality—captivating audiences and critics alike. Recent season has included performances with the Pasadena Symphony and Keitaro Harada, Monterey Symphony, and Westchester Philharmonic with



Jayce Ogren. Ran's past performances have included recitals at the San Francisco Performances Series, Gilmore, Ravinia, Carnegie Hall's Zankel and Weill Halls, Steinway Hall, Gardner Museum, Kennedy Center, Town Hall, Yale School of Music, Philips Collection, Morgan Library, Pro Musica in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, Portland Ovations, and have garnered critical acclaim from The New York Times and The Washington Post. Mr. Dank has performed as a soloist with the orchestras of Cleveland, Sydney, St. Luke's, Portland, Eugene, Toledo, Hawaii, Kansas City, Vermont, Charleston, Jerusalem, Valencia, Phoenix, Hilton Head, among others, working under the batons such as Michael Stern, Jahja Ling, Michael Christie, Kirill Karabits, Jun Märkl, Pinchas Zukerman, Jorge Mester, Jaime Laredo, and Ken-David Masur. Mr. Dank's recent performance of the monumental set of variations "The People United Will Never Be Defeated!" at the University of Chicago has been selected as one of the top ten performances of 2017 by the Chicago Classical Review.

Mr. Dank is an ardent advocate for contemporary music, and has performed in recent seasons Kevin Puts' piano concerto "Night," the Tobias Picker concerto, "Keys to the City," Frederic Rzewski's "The People United Will Never Be Defeated," William Bolcom's Pulitzer winning set of "Twelve New Etudes," and has given, alongside pianist and wife, Soyeon Kate Lee, the world premieres of Frederic Rzewski's "Four Hands," and Alexander Goehr's "Seven Impromptus." Mr. Dank and Soyeon Kate Lee have also featured the world premiere of multiple Grammy-nominated pianist and composer's Marc-André Hamelin's "Tango" for piano four-hands. The recipient of numerous honors, Ran Dank won a coveted place on the Young Concert Artists roster in 2009 and subsequently made his New York recital debut. He was a laureate of the Cleveland International Competition, the Naumburg Piano Competition, the Sydney International Piano Competition, and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition.

Mr. Dank serves as an Associate Professor of Piano at the Eastman School of Music. His mentors and teachers include Emanuel Ax, Richard Goode, Joseph Kalichstein, Julian Martin, Robert McDonald, and Ursula Oppens.



PROGRAM NOTES



ANNA CLYNE

Born March 9, 1980 in London, UK.

Described as a “composer of uncommon gifts and unusual methods” by the New York Times and as “fearless” by NPR, GRAMMY-nominated Anna Clyne is one of the most in-demand composers today, working with orchestras, choreographers, filmmakers, and visual artists around the world. Clyne has been commissioned and presented by the world’s most dynamic and revered arts institutions, including

the Barbican, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Los Angeles Philharmonic, MoMA, Philharmonie de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, San Francisco Ballet, and the Sydney Opera House; and her music has opened such events as the Edinburgh International Festival, The Last Night of the Proms, and the New York Philharmonic’s season. The World Economic Forum commissioned Clyne’s *Restless Oceans*, which was premiered by an all-women orchestra, led by Marin Alsop, at the opening ceremony in Davos. In 2024-2025, Clyne continues her role as Composer in Residence with the BBC Philharmonic.

(Reprinted by kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes.)

Composer’s Notes: *Masquerade*

Masquerade draws inspiration from the original mid-18th century promenade concerts held in London’s pleasure gardens. As is true today, these concerts were a place where people from all walks of life mingled to enjoy a wide array of music. Other forms of entertainment ranged from the sedate to the salacious with acrobatics, exotic street entertainers, dancers, fireworks and masquerades. I am fascinated by the historic and sociological courtship between music and dance. Combined with costumes, masked guises and elaborate settings, masquerades created an exciting, yet controlled, sense of occasion and celebration. It is this that I wish to evoke in *Masquerade*.

The work derives its material from two melodies. For the main theme, I imagined a chorus welcoming the audience and inviting them into their imaginary world. The second theme, *Juice of Barley*, is an old English country dance melody and drinking song, which first appeared in John Playford’s 1695 edition of *The English Dancing Master*.

It is an honor to compose music for the Last Night of the Proms and I dedicate *Masquerade* to the Prommers.

— Anna Clyne



FLORENCE PRICE

Born April 9, 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas.
Died June 3, 1953 in Chicago, Illinois.

***Adoration*, arr. Elaine Fine**

Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Ark. to a mixed-race family, Florence Price was a talented pianist from a young age. She enrolled in the New England Conservatory of Music at 14, where she studied composition and graduated in 1907. She married a prominent civil rights attorney and returned to Little

Rock, but racial violence caused her family to move to Chicago, where she continued her study at the American Conservatory of Music. In 1932, Price's *Symphony in E Minor* won a composition prize, leading to its premiere by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra — the first composition by a black woman to be performed by a major orchestra. She went on to have a successful music career, composing two more symphonies, concertos, and other works for orchestra, as well as chamber works and piano music.

Written for organ and published in 1951, *Adoration* is now one of Florence Price's best-known works. CUSO violist Elaine Fine, who had read an article about Price in the 1980's, found the piece in the International Music Score Library Project in 2011. She arranged *Adoration* for violin and piano, and gave the arrangement its first performance in 2013. Since the original was in the public domain, Fine placed the arrangement in the IMSLP so that it would remain in the public domain. She has made arrangements (often by request) of *Adoration* for a variety of instruments and ensembles.

In 2019 Fine made this string orchestra arrangement. It is popular with students because of its accessibility, and is also popular with professional musicians all over the world, in part because a performance can be assembled using remote recordings. Many such performances were shared online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elaine Fine

Elaine Fine began musical life as a violinist, but received a Bachelor of Music Degree in flute performance from The Juilliard School of Music, where she was a student of Julius Baker. She also studied recorder in Vienna, baroque flute in Boston, and composition at Eastern Illinois University. She spent 23 years on the reviewing staff of the American Record Guide, was the program annotator for the New Philharmonic of DuPage County, served for 12 years as the Classical Music Director for WEIU-FM, and taught at Lake Land College, in Mattoon, Illinois. Elaine remains active as a composer and as a performing musician, playing violin, viola, viola d'amore, and recorders, and runs a private studio, teaching violin, viola, and recorder lessons. Elaine is celebrating her 19th season with CUSO.

PROGRAM NOTES



CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Born October 9, 1835, Paris, France.
Died December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria.

Born in Paris in 1835, Camille Saint-Saëns was an organist, pianist, and composer of music in the classical French tradition. He was born with a remarkable talent. At the age of three, he could already read and write and had begun piano lessons.

He began composing at age five. He made his piano debut at age ten, playing Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven for Paris audiences.

In 1848, Saint-Saëns entered the Paris Conservatoire, studying organ and composition. He was appointed organist of the Church de la Madeleine in 1857, a post that he held for 20 years. He also taught piano at l'école Niedermeyer from 1861 to 1865 where Gabriel Fauré was one of his pupils.

In 1871, Saint-Saëns co-founded the Société Nationale de Musique, a forum for promoting contemporary French Chamber and Orchestral music. During his association with it (1871-1886), he composed many of his better known works. Among them are *Cello Concerto No. 1* (1872) symphonic poem, *Danse Macabre* (1874) opera, *Samson et Delila* (1877), *Symphony No. 3 "Organ"* (1886), and *Carnival of the Animals* (1886). He wrote the last piece as a musical diversion for the amusement of his friends at a party and did not permit it to be published during his life. It became very popular after his death.

After resigning from the Société Nationale de Musique, Saint-Saëns traveled extensively, performing and occasionally composing throughout Europe, East Asia, South America, and North Africa. He died of pneumonia in Algiers, Algeria, in 1921, and his body was returned to Paris for a state funeral.

—The Kennedy Center.org/education

Piano Concerto No. 5 in F Major, Op. 103 ("The Egyptian")

If Saint-Saëns had been just a pianist, he would have been as famous and as acclaimed as Anton Rubinstein, Leschetizky, Paderewski, or any other lion of the age. His piano concertos, all of which he played himself, provide scintillating evidence of his astonishing technique both in weight and nimbleness. His piano writing bears the signature

of a brilliant pianist, and it takes a player of special gifts to throw off those cascades of scales and arpeggios as though they were the easiest thing in the world—as for him they were.

In January 1896 Saint-Saëns went to Milan for the Italian premiere of his opera *Henry VIII*, and from there traveled on to Cairo for his customary winter vacation. He ventured up the Nile into Upper Egypt and then settled into a Cairo hotel to write the Fifth Piano Concerto. As usual the music flowed from his pen, and it took just over three weeks to complete. His first ideas for the work had been noted down on a holiday two years before, when he went to the Canary Islands, but the main work was completed in Cairo in time to include the new concerto in a momentous concert in the Salle Pleyel, Paris, marking the fiftieth anniversary of his first appearance there in 1846 at the age of ten. This took place on June 2, 1896, with the great violinist Pablo de Sarasate, a close friend, sharing the bill. The concerto was published the same year with a dedication to Louis Diémer, a fine pianist who played it many times. Saint-Saëns continued to play it himself even past his 80th birthday.

There is nothing Egyptian about the concerto except in the second movement. The outer movements are perfectly European and, one might say, Classical in their balance of themes and tempos. The opening theme in the first movement has an affinity with plainchant, like many of Saint-Saëns' tunes, and the second main tune recalls Brahms in its broad sweep. The finale is a brilliant tour de force that actually exhibits little force. Its magic lies rather in its fleetness and ingenuity, and it keeps the soloist scampering from one end of the keyboard to the other.

The most remarkable music is to be found in the middle movement, which is unlike anything else by Saint-Saëns or anyone else. It is not simply that most of the themes have a Middle Eastern character, based on modal intervals; it proceeds strangely from one episode to another without any apparent direction, like an improvisation, although the balance of the movement is cleverly controlled. The one theme that is said to have a Nubian origin in fact sounds more northern, and has no Arabic intervals at all: two curious passages stand out. In one the left hand plays a series of notes that are colored by the right hand with soft chords that give it the sound of an organ mixture stop, a device later used by Ravel in his *Boléro*. The other is a strange chirruping in the distant key of F-sharp major, beneath which a Chinese melody is heard against soft blows on the tam-tam. Was Saint-Saëns recalling other journeys to distant parts, or just being playful?

—Hugh Macdonald, Boston Symphony Orchestra.org



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STEPHEN ALLTOP *(continued from page 17)*

and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Busan, South Korea for the International Schools Choral Music Society. He has conducted opera and orchestral concerts with a number of Italian orchestras, including I Soloisti di Perugia, Fondazione Arturo Toscanini (Bologna), Teatro Reggio Orchestra (Parma), Festival Mozart (Roveto), Orchestra Sinfonica (Bari), Teatro Piccinni (Bari), and the Festival Duni (Matera). His performances have been broadcast on Medici TV, RAI Italian Radio and Television, and the WFMT Fine Arts Network. Dr. Alltop has worked closely with leading composers of the day, including residency projects with Stacy Garrop, John Corigliano, Jeff Beal, Eleanor Daley, Stephen Paulus and Eric Whitacre, and has conducted world premieres of works by John Luther Adams, Jan Bach, Frank Ferko, Stephen Paulus, Joseph Schwanter, Alan Terricciano, and others.

Dr. Alltop lectures frequently for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Northwestern University Alumnae Continuing Education Series, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and other organizations. Since 2014, he has given presentations on leadership for various programs in the Kellogg School of Business.

Stephen is an avid squash player and baseball fan, and recently completed a personal fitness goal of running ten marathons and twenty half marathons over a ten-year period.

PROGRAM NOTES

Its famous four-note opening gesture is not only credited as, "Fate knocks at the door" by Beethoven's factotum and biographer Anton Schindler, but also represents the "fate" that Beethoven wants to overcome during his lifetime, because he was experiencing an increasing deafness, psychic pain and depression. Beethoven wrote in a letter: "I will seize fate by the throat; it shall certainly not bend and crush me completely".

—Eastman School of Music, esm.rochester.edu



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany.

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the iconic work of classical music. It pervades the whole world of symbols and imagery of musical art as an evocation of a welter of ideas. In a sad way it is almost impossible to escape all of these associations extrinsic to the work itself and to focus only on Beethoven's composition. But distancing one's self from it all and listening to the symphony as if for the first time can be a joy—as this writer has found, sitting in the best seat in the house (in the back of the orchestra).

By the time that Beethoven had composed this work he was a well-respected composer in Vienna, but certainly not hailed as a genius. The first three symphonies, three piano concertos, piano sonatas, string quartets—all had bolstered his growing reputation before he finished this symphony. It took him rather a long time, almost four years, as he interrupted his work frequently to produce some significant compositions: The Razumovsky string quartets, the fourth symphony and fourth piano concerto, and the first version of his only opera, *Fidelio*. Beethoven was a practical man, and when a commission materialized, he shifted his work to where the money was. He finally ground out the completion of the Fifth Symphony and presented it on an ill-starred concert at the Theater an der Wien on December 22, 1808.

(continued on page 26)



It was an all-Beethoven affair, presenting the premières of not only the Fifth Symphony, but also the Sixth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, and the Choral Fantasy (a precursor to his Ninth Symphony), as well as various other compositions. The concert was four hours long and the hall was literally freezing. Moreover, Beethoven, who was conducting, had to start over in one work after a mistake derailed things. The proceedings were not helped by his awkward, grand-eloquent conducting which led to knocking over some lamps and accidentally smacking an unfortunate stagehand in the face. All of this was soon forgotten and the written record shows that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was quickly accorded general acclaim, and was on its way to immortality.

The defining characteristics of the work are well known, and focus upon rhythmic vitality, a hitherto unknown sense of drama, and imaginative structural details—but most of all, upon a stunning coherence and economy of elements. The latter is the foundation of the first movement, famous for its four-note motto beginning and the wringing almost to death of every musical possibility of the short idea. Forget “fate knocking at the door,” this is simply a dramatic tour de force of musical coherence. Even if one ignores the adroit manipulation of the melodic content of the opening idea, it is astonishing how well the movement stands upon its own feet from a purely rhythmic perspective.

The second movement is an elegant set of variations on two themes. The key of the movement is Ab, and even if most of us don't have perfect pitch, it just sounds fresh and unexpected when the violoncellos and violas enter with one of Beethoven's most ingratiating melodies in that particular key. The second theme is a more triumphant one, in C major, another remote and refreshing key. The variations gracefully work themselves out with these contrasting themes in a movement quite different from the first.

The third movement is the traditional dance movement, here cast in Beethoven's innovative scherzo rhythm—the stately dance of his predecessors being sped up considerably. However, it's not a rollicking good time to be had by all, here. Rather, it opens with a mysterious arpeggio in the low strings that ends shortly on some chords with enigmatic meaning. Soon this is shatteringly interrupted by the unison horns in a virile melody that seems related to the opening of the symphony. The middle of the movement, called the trio, is usually an opportunity for contrast, and we do get it. It starts out contrapuntally with a vigorous and challenging passage for the violoncellos and double basses—it's a famous one! They snarl and shake it like a dog.

Ultimately, a truncated version of the opening returns, but even softer, and here is where real magic occurs.

Beethoven bridges the transition into the last movement with a delicate solo passage in the first violins played over pianissimo sustained notes in the seconds and violas—the basses and timpani softly throb. In one of the most eerie and tension-building passages in all the literature, the melody snakes up and down in a crescendo that jubilantly leads to the C major theme that resolves all previous troubled thought.

For this glorious moment Beethoven brings in three trombones, contra-bassoon, and piccolo—thitherto found only in the opera orchestra. The last movement is long, as three themes are worked over, interrupted only by the striking innovation of a brief, serene reference to the third movement. It's as if Beethoven is saying, "OK, we win, but it may be only a brief victory." The recapitulation ensues, followed by an enormous coda—longer than any other section so far. We hear the main three themes again, only in a kind of reverse order. The long coda is needed to erase all doubt as to what prevails over the diversions and dark moods of the other three movements. Victory is ours, and the fifty or so measures of emphatic C major chords seal the finale.

—William E. Runyan

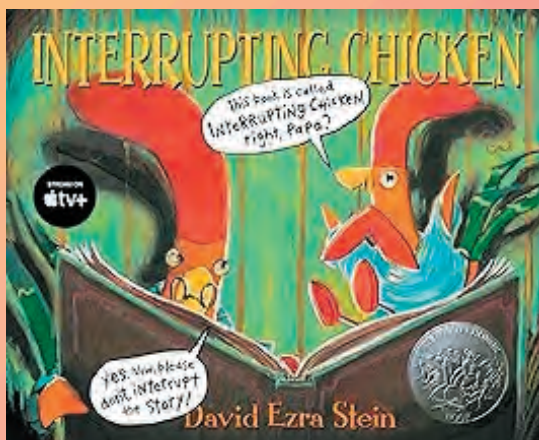
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