

PROGRAM NOTES

BY CANA F. MCGHEE

The notion of music as communicative is age-old. Many cultures understand music as an aesthetic form of expression in sacred and secular settings alike. A piece of music is often thought to transcend the power of verbal expression, time, and even memory. Similar to how language moves ideas in written, visual, and spoken forms, musical forms reflect our expectations about music's production and desired impact. Importantly, music communicates and carries seemingly non-musical messages about nationhood, political belief, and much more.

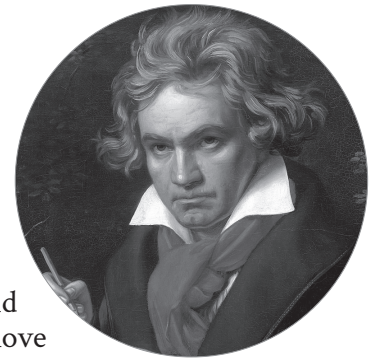
For this first concert of 2022, we invite you to consider music as a mode and a medium of communication. The overture to *Fidelio* carries the now emblematic narrative of Beethoven as a heroic genius struggling for artistic perfection. Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos reinforces the role of cooperative collaboration for crafting the classical era's tidy sound. Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 reveals a composer in search of a "politically correct" voice, even without words that articulate those goals. In each case, contextual awareness from our vantage point informs how to hear what a piece, in turn, has to say about its own time and place.

Overture to *Fidelio*, Op. 72c (1814, 6 minutes)

Ludwig van Beethoven

BORN December, 1770; Bonn, Germany

DIED March 26, 1827; Vienna



As innovative and prolific as Beethoven was, the overture to his only opera, *Fidelio*, challenged him. Hailed by the likes of Wagner and Mahler, the opera chronicles the journey of Leonore who, while dressed as a man named Fidelio, rescues her husband from political imprisonment. The celebration of Enlightenment ideals like marital love and individual liberty would not have fallen on deaf ears at the opera's 1806 premiere. After all, just days prior, Emperor Napoleon's army invaded Vienna, Beethoven's city of employment and the largest city in the Habsburg Empire.

Beethoven wrote and rewrote the overture to find the right balance of grandeur and tone. After writing three other versions now known as the "*Leonore* overtures" (after the opera's original title), version four is the exception to the rule for early nineteenth century grand opera. Overtures in the Italian grand operatic tradition tended to foreground melodic ideas from throughout the upcoming drama. But the *Fidelio* overture, and indeed other operas composed after Beethoven's death, is unusual in its diversion from that practice and avoidance of allusions to operatic material. With subdued chorales interrupted by punchy syncopations; speedy passages juxtaposed against whispered lyricism; tightly contained metric pulse and warm timbres: no two moments of the overture are the same. The curtain has risen, and an evening of musical play is on the horizon.

Events of 1814 (Overture to *Fidelio* revision completed)

- Napoleon abdicated and was exiled to Elba; Louis XVIII became king
- British troops captured Washington D.C. and burned Capitol and White House
- *Star Spangled Banner* written by Francis Scott Key
- First locomotive built in the U.S.
- Sir Walter Scott began the vogue for romantic historical novels

Cana F. McGhee is currently a PhD candidate in Historical Musicology at Harvard University. An Atlanta native, she earned her BA in Music and French from Emory University in 2019. There, she completed thesis work about the song cycles of composer Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) in the context of linguistic politics in France and Belgium. Currently, she focuses on musical engagements with natural science, climate change, and environmental activism. Apart from her academic life, she also enjoys choral singing, running, and writing short stories.

Piano Concerto No. 10 for Two Pianos, K. 365/316a (1779, 25 minutes)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

BORN January 27, 1756; Salzburg, Austria

DIED December 5, 1791; Vienna



After a two-year concert and performance tour of Europe, Mozart returned to his native Salzburg feeling defeated from not having found more lucrative employment. But as a world-traveler coming of age, he was also inspired by the new popularity of genres like the concerto. Whereas most concertos are for a single soloist, the double concerto form enables an exchange of musical ideas between two instruments and creates possibilities for back-and-forth with the orchestra. New challenges are created as well: how do soloists match each other's tone while maintaining their own flair? How can the soloists and orchestra remain clear and crisply separated without muddying into one another?

Mozart's solutions involve lightening the orchestral role and allowing the pianos to accompany one another. Throughout the concerto, Mozart's characteristic lightness and whimsy percolates the lively interplay amongst instruments. The opening Allegro is lyrical and in a steady 4/4-time signature. Even with a nod to the relative minor halfway through, the piece returns to the major key to conclude this lively opener. Moving to the dominant key, the Andante second movement waltzes along at a slower tempo and bears a restrained orchestral background texture while the pianos babble with one another. The final movement, a rondo, is full of strong rhythms and features a more regal scoring of the similar lively tone of the first movement.

Events of 1779 (Piano Concerto composed)

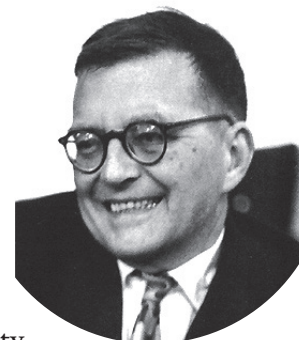
- *Blue Boy* painted by Gainsborough
- "I have not yet begun to fight!" – John Paul Jones
- First iron bridge erected in England

Symphony No. 5 in D minor (1937, 50 minutes)

Dmitry Shostakovich

BORN September 25, 1906; St. Petersburg, Russia

DIED August 9, 1975; Moscow



Living under Stalinist totalitarianism was tenuous at best and life-threatening at worst. When Shostakovich completed his Fifth Symphony in 1937, he was responding to critics who claimed his earlier compositions were too "modern" (here, code for atonal) for the Communist agenda. Across his expansive oeuvre, Shostakovich wrote in a neoclassical style that infused traditional western classical forms with ambivalent tonality and similarly ambiguous political motivations. However, he redeemed his reputation with a symphony praised for its emotionality and conservative tonal palette. Symphony No. 5 seemed to align with the new vision for the USSR, therein enabling Shostakovich's survival during the purge of anti-Communist sentiments known as the Great Terror.

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The opening movement follows a loose sonata form. After an introductory string canon, a piercing lyric tune emerges from the first violins as the primary theme. The secondary theme is more angular with large intervallic leaps. The development expands these themes through variations, including one played by rotund low brass and a snare-filled march. In the recapitulation, the flutes repeat the jerking secondary theme, which then gets taken up as a canon involving the whole orchestra. The movement only concludes after several false endings. The second movement then moves to the minor dominant key and opens with rich low strings. The strong downbeats and sharp flickers of melodic content take on the quality of an elephantine dance: heavy, yet without a hint of clunky footwork. The third movement draws on this heaviness with its stretched and plodding tempo. Woodwinds and harps take center stage atop subdivided tremolo strings to counter the previous movement's brass dominance. After a crescendo towards the upper register of all string parts, the movement descends into humming legato melodies and nods to F# Major near the closing cadence.

The final movement opens with an austere brass theme that is equal parts heroic and ominous. The movement continues with swirling melodic lines that, while lengthy, still prove to be memorable and singable. The movement hovers in d minor until the final moments, when upper-voice instruments force the dominant pedal of A into being. This pre-cadential gesture is followed up by a timpani flourish that leads to a somewhat surprising final resolution to D major. Though, the key's usual brightness remains dimmed by the aural memory of three movements of minor key tonalities. Today's ears cannot help but hear this as embodying the tension amongst Shostakovich's early works, the western classical past he inherited, and conflicting visions about a more modern future.

Events of 1937 (Symphony No. 5 composed)

- Detroit celebrated Centennial of Michigan statehood
- *Lone Ranger* program begins over radio station WXYZ
- Joe Louis of Detroit wins world's heavyweight boxing championship
- President Roosevelt's second of four inaugurals
- Duke of Windsor marries Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson
- Golden Gate Bridge is completed
- First blood bank for preserving blood for transfusions established in Chicago
- *How to Win Friends and Influence People* tops best-seller list



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ORIOI SANS



Hailed as “refreshing and expressive in his handling of the orchestra” (*El Informador*, Jalisco) Catalan conductor Oriol Sans has inspired musicians and audiences across North America and Europe. Mr. Sans has conducted concerts with outstanding orchestras and ensembles including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, the Santa Fe Symphony, the Michigan Chamber Winds and Strings, the New Mexico Philharmonic, the San Juan Symphony (Colorado), the Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco in Guadalajara (Mexico), the Flint Symphony Orchestra, the Sheboygan Symphony, the International Contemporary Ensemble and the Four Corners Ensemble. He has led performances with a long list of renowned soloists that includes Yoonshin Song, Wey Yu, Tony Arnold, Amy Porter, Aaron Berofsky, Jourdan Urbach, Álvaro Bitrán, Íride González, Alan Pingarrón, Jason Vieaux, Alexander Gavrylyuk, Anderson & Roe Piano Duo, Alon Goldstein and Wu Han.

Mr. Sans is Assistant Professor and Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His responsibilities include directing the Symphony Orchestra, conducting the opera productions, and teaching graduate conducting students. Under his musical direction, the University production of *Così fan tutte* received 2nd prize from the National Opera Association. Before joining the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he was Associate Director of Orchestras at the University of Michigan where he directed both the University Philharmonia Orchestra and the Contemporary Directions Ensemble (CDE). With CDE, Mr. Sans fostered projects with celebrated composers such as John Luther Adams, Ted Hearne, Julia Wolfe, David T. Little, Tyshawn Sorey and Augusta Read-Thomas.

As Music Director of the Detroit Symphony Youth Orchestra, a position he has held since 2016, Mr. Sans has initiated collaborations with other musical institutions in the community, like the Young Artists Program at the Michigan Opera Theater. Further involved in Michigan, he is one of the finalists for the position of Music Director with the A²SO.

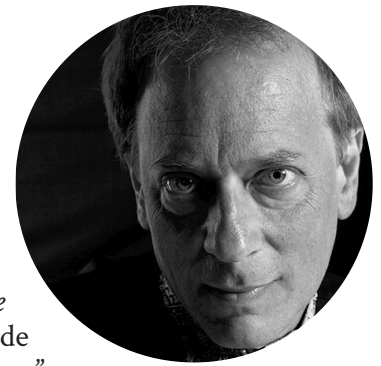
His reputation for working with young musicians has led to several invitations to serve as conducting faculty at leading educational institutions including the Interlochen Summer Academy and Sewanee Summer Music Festival. He is also a frequent conducting clinician and guest conductor for other youth ensembles across North America.

As an opera conductor, his eclectic repertoire includes performances of Verdi’s *Falstaff*, Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*, Britten’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and Jake Heggie’s *Two Remain*. In 2018 he conducted a production of Menotti’s *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at the Michigan Opera Theatre, and more recently he collaborated with the Opera Theatre Saint Louis in a workshop of *Awakenings*, a new opera by composer Tobias Picker that will be premiered in 2022. In the Fall of 2021 he conducted a production of Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* with the Tulsa Opera.

A native of Catalonia, Spain, Mr. Sans studied Orchestral and Choral Conducting at the Barcelona Conservatory, receiving the school’s Honors Award in both specialties upon graduation. Following his training in Spain, he studied with Kenneth Kiesler at the University of Michigan where he received his Master’s degree in Orchestral Conducting and his Doctorate in Musical Arts. In addition to his degrees in music, Mr. Sans also holds a degree in Humanities from the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona.

This is Mr. Sans’s second appearance with the A²SO.

ARTHUR GREENE



Arthur Greene grew up in New York City and Sheffield, Massachusetts. He now lives in Ann Arbor and spends summers in Lviv, Ukraine. He graduated from Yale University, and then received degrees from Juilliard and Stony Brook, where he studied with Martin Canin. He has been described as “a profound musician” – *The Washington Post*, and “a masterful pianist” – *The New York Times*. Accolades include “Intoxicating appeal” – *Mainichi Daily News*, Japan; “A romantic splendor of sound-colors” – *Ruhr Nachrichten*; “Stellar Scriabinist” *American Record Guide*.

Arthur Greene won first prizes in the William Kapell and Gina Bachauer International Piano Competitions and was a top laureate at the Busoni International Competition. He presented the complete solo piano works of Johannes Brahms in a series of six programs in Boston and recorded the complete études of Alexander Scriabin for Supraphon. Mr. Greene has played the 10 Sonata Cycle of Alexander Scriabin in many important international venues, including multi-media presentations with Symbolist artworks. He has joined in performing mazurkas with the Janusz Prusinowski Kompania, a Polish folk ensemble.

Mr. Greene has made six recordings together with his wife, the violinist Solomia Soroka, for Naxos and Toccata Classics, including the Violin-Piano Sonatas of William Bolcom. All of these were works never before recorded in the West. Greene recently recorded the *Concord Sonata* of Charles Ives, available for free high-resolution download on his homepage.

Arthur Greene has played with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco, Utah, and National Symphonies, the Czech National Symphony, the Tokyo Symphony, and many others. He has played recitals in Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Moscow Rachmaninov Hall, Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Lisbon Sao Paulo Opera House, Hong Kong City Hall and concert houses in Shanghai and Beijing. He toured Japan and Korea many times. He was an Artistic Ambassador to Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia for the United States Information Agency. He has participated in numerous music festivals, and currently teaches at the Rebecca Penneys Piano Festival and at Music Fest Perugia.

Arthur Greene is Professor of Piano at the University of Michigan, where he has won the Harold Haugh Award for Excellence in Studio Teaching. Among the highlights of his teaching career was the presentation, together with his supremely talented students, of a recital series with the complete solo works of Chopin performed in chronological order, in nine concerts.

Mr. Greene is a frequent judge of piano competitions around the world. His current and former students include prizewinners in international competitions, and his former students hold important teaching posts throughout the United States.

This is Mr. Greene’s third appearance with the A²SO.

CHRISTOPHER HARDING



Pianist Christopher Harding maintains an active international career, generating acclaim and impressing audiences and critics alike with his substantive interpretations and pianistic mastery. He has given frequent solo, concerto, and chamber music performances in venues as far flung as the Kennedy Center and Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., the IBK and Recital Halls of the Seoul Art Center, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the National Theater Concert Hall in Taipei, the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Calgary, and halls and festival appearances in Newfoundland, Israel, Italy, Romania, Russia, and China. His concerto performances have included concerts with the National Symphony and the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestras, the San Angelo and Santa Barbara Symphonies, and the Tokyo City Philharmonic, working with such conductors as Andrew Sewell, Eric Zhou, Taijiro Iimori, Gisele Ben-Dor, Fabio Machetti, Randall Craig Fleisher, John DeMain, Ron Spiegelman, Daniel Alcott, and Darryl One, among others.

Mr. Harding's chamber music and duo collaborations have included internationally renowned artists such as clarinetist Karl Leister, flautist Andras Adorjan, and members of the St. Lawrence and Ying String Quartets, in addition to frequent projects with his distinguished faculty colleagues at the University of Michigan. He has recorded solo and chamber music CDs for the Equilibrium and Brevard Classics labels. He has additionally edited and published critical editions and recordings of works by Claude Debussy (*Children's Corner*, *Suite Bergamasque*, the Arabesques and shorter works) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Viennese Sonatinas) for the Schirmer Performance Editions published by Hal Leonard.

Professor Harding has presented master classes and lecture recitals in universities across the United States and Asia, as well as in Israel and Canada. He is a Permanent Guest Professor at the Sichuan Conservatory in Chengdu, China, where he holds the privilege of presenting yearly masterclasses; he has additionally served as a Fulbright Senior Specialist at both the Sichuan Conservatory (2008) and Seoul National University (2011). While teaching at SNU, he simultaneously held a Special Chair in Piano at Ewha Womans' University. He has taught masterclasses and performed lecture recitals at all the major universities and schools of music in South Korea.

In addition to serving as Chair of Piano and teaching undergraduate and graduate piano performance and chamber music at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Mr. Harding also serves on the faculty of the Indiana University Summer Piano Academy and is a frequent guest artist and teacher at the Rebecca Penneys Piano Festival in Tampa, Florida. He is a founding faculty member of the White Nights International Piano Festival in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Harding was born of American parents in Munich, Germany and raised in Northern Virginia. His collegiate studies were with Menahem Pressler and Nelita True. Prior to college, he worked for 10 years with Milton Kidd at the American University Department of Performing Arts Preparatory Division, where he was trained in the traditions of Tobias Matthay. He has taken 25 first prizes in national and international competitions and in 1999 was awarded the special "Mozart Prize" at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, given for the best performance of a composition by Mozart.

This is Mr. Harding's first appearance with the A²SO.