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2023-24 Season



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Philharmonia Orchestra

Radiance

Renee Gilliland, conductor

7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2023

Grusin Music Hall

Program

The Impresario Overture

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Radiance

Peter Boyer (b. 1970)

—Intermission—

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op.93

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro vivace e con brio
- II. Allegretto scherzando
- III. Tempo di menuetto
- IV. Allegro vivace

Program notes

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink and can be clicked or tapped for more information.

The Impresario Overture

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna, Austria, on December 5, 1791. The first performance of *The Impresario* took place at the Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, on February 7, 1786. The Overture to *Impresario* is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. Approximate performance time is five minutes.

1786 was incredibly productive for Mozart, even by his lofty standards. During that year, Mozart completed his *opera buffa* masterpiece, *Le nozze di Figaro*, the singspiel, *Der Schauspieldirektor*, and a revision of his earlier opera seria, *Idomeneo*. Mozart also composed several chamber pieces, solo vocal works, his Fourth Horn Concerto, K. 495, and three Piano Concertos—No. 23 in A Major, K. 488, No. 24 in C minor, K. 491 and No. 25 in C Major, K. 503.

Der Schauspieldirektor (“The Impresario”), alternating spoken dialogue and sung music, tells the story of an impresario’s struggles to control the egos of two operatic divas. With its humorous depiction of operatic backstage intrigue, *The Impresario* is a predecessor to Richard Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*. While *The Impresario* is rarely performed as a complete work, its vibrant Overture has long enjoyed a favored place in the concert hall.

—Program note by Ken Meltzer

Radiance

Peter Boyer (b. 1970)

Unlike most of my music, *Radiance* did not originate with a commission. While planning a recording project with the London Symphony Orchestra consisting mostly of existing music, I saw an opportunity to create a new piece specifically for that album. I believed that work which could explore the lyricism of the LSO's superb string section would be a welcome addition to the recording. The composition of *Radiance* took place during the dark days of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and I sought to remain focused on a mood of serenity and beauty, looking ahead to a more optimistic time. The work was played for the first time during recording sessions with the LSO at Henry Wood Hall in January 2022.

—Program note Peter Boyer

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op.93

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

The Eighth Symphony has always seemed out of place in the progression of Ludwig van Beethoven's symphonies. It comes after the dramatic Fifth, expansive Sixth and powerful Seventh, and it precedes the grand Ninth. Within this sequence, the Eighth seems all wrong: it is brief, relaxed, and—in form and its use of a small orchestra—apparently a conscious throwback to the manner of Haydn and Mozart.

Beethoven had in mind more than an homage to his forebears, though, as the late musicologist Michael Steinberg notes: "If we think of the Eighth as a nostalgic return to the good old days, we misunderstand it. What interests Beethoven is not so much brevity for its own sake as concentration. It is as though he were picking up where he had left off in the densely saturated first movement of the Fifth Symphony to produce another tour de force of tight packing."

And perhaps the symphony fits a pattern after all, in approach if not content. Beethoven composed his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies together between 1807 and 1808, intentionally crafting two very different types of symphonies, and he took a similar path with his contrasting Seventh and Eighth, writing them

essentially side-by-side in 1811 and 1812. In any case, the Eighth is one of those rare things: a genuinely funny piece of music, full of high spirits, what (at first) seem wrong notes, unusual instrumental sounds and sly jokes.

Allegro vivace. The symphony explodes to life with a six-note figure stamped out by the whole orchestra; this figure will give rhythmic impulse to the opening movement and function as its central melodic idea. This music seems always to be pressing forward, sometimes spilling over itself with scarcely restrained power, sometimes erupting violently.

Allegretto scherzando. The second movement brings some of the symphony's most clever moments. Beethoven's friend Johann Nepomuk Maelzel had invented a metronome, and the woodwinds' steady tick-tick-tick at the beginning is Beethoven's rendering of the metronome's sound. Over this mechanical ticking, the violins dance happily until the music suddenly explodes in short bursts of rapidly played notes.

Tempo di menuetto. In the third movement Beethoven delights in unexpected twists. The trio section of this movement brings a moment of unexpected beauty as a mysterious, romantic horn solo takes the lead in the middle of the standard, stately form.

Allegro vivace. The blistering finale is full of humor. Racing violins present the main idea, and this opening section zips to what should be a moment of repose on the strings' unison C, but Beethoven slams that C aside with a crashing C-sharp, and the symphony heads off in the "wrong" key. The jokes come so quickly in this movement that many of them pass unnoticed: the "wrong" notes, the "oom-pah" transitions scored for just timpani and bassoon, and so forth. The ending brings the best joke of all, for the coda refuses to quit. Finally—finally!—Beethoven wrenches this most good-natured and energetic music to a resounding close.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns,
2 trumpets, timpani and strings
—Program note by Eric Bromberger

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Sam Nixon
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Emilie Feve
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Clarinet

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Horn

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Trumpet

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