ANDRIS NELSONS, RAY AND MARIA STATA MUSIC DIRECTOR
Boston Symphony Orchestra
141st season, 2021–2022

Thursday, January 20, 8pm
Friday, January 21, 1:30pm
Saturday, January 22, 8pm

ELIM CHAN conducting

BRAHMS	PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN B-FLAT, OPUS 83 Allegro non troppo Allegro appassionato Andante Allegretto grazioso
	IGOR LEVIT
	{intermission}
BRIAN RAPHAEL NABORS	*PULSE*
TCHAIKOVSKY	SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN C MINOR, OPUS 17 Andante sostenuto—Allegro vivo Andantino marziale, quasi moderato Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace Finale: Moderato assai—Allegro vivo

This week's performances of Brian Raphael Nabors's *Pulse* are supported in part by income from the Morton Margolis Fund in the BSO's endowment.

The evening concerts will end about 10:10 and the afternoon concert about 3:40.

First associate concertmaster Tamara Smirnova performs on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the "ex-Zazofsky," and James Cooke performs on a 1778 Nicolò Gagliano violin, both generously donated to the orchestra by Michael L. Nieland, M.D., in loving memory of Mischa Nieland, a member of the cello section from 1943 to 1988.
Todd Seeber performs on an 1835 Kennedy bass, the "Salkowski Kennedy," generously donated to the orchestra by John Salkowski, a member of the bass section from 1966 to 2007.
Steinway & Sons Pianos, selected exclusively for Symphony Hall.
The BSO's Steinway & Sons pianos were purchased through a generous gift from Gabriella and Leo Beranek.
The program books for the Friday series are given in loving memory of Mrs. Hugh Bancroft by her daughters, the late Mrs. A. Werk Cook and the late Mrs. William C. Cox.
Special thanks to Fairmont Copley Plaza and Commonwealth Worldwide Executive Transportation.
Broadcasts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra are heard on 99.5 WCRB.

The Program in Brief…

The Alabama-born composer Brian Raphael Nabors was a Composition Fellow of the BSO's Tanglewood Music Center in summer 2021. His celebratory *Iubilo* was performed by the TMC Orchestra in the Koussevitzky Music

Shed in August. He describes his exciting 10-minute orchestra work *Pulse* as "an episodic rhapsody" reflecting the many varieties of experience—natural and man-made—that we might encounter every day.

Opening these concerts is Johannes Brahms's mighty Piano Concerto No. 2 performed by the Russian-born pianist Igor Levit in his first Symphony Hall appearances with the BSO. The concerto is of symphonic scope, one of the biggest concertos in the repertoire, largely due to the composer's decision to cast it in four movements rather than the more typical three by adding a big scherzo to the usual fast-slow-fast movement pattern. Brahms himself was soloist in the concerto's public premiere, which took place in November 1881 in Budapest, Hungary.

Composed in the 1870s, the second of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's six symphonies has a longstanding nickname relating to a now-outmoded name for the Ukraine region, "Malorossiskaya," translated as "Russia Minor" or "Little Russia." First proposed after the composer's death, the nickname has stuck because of the work's brilliantly colorful use of Ukrainian folk songs for many of its main themes.

Robert Kirzinger

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Johannes Brahms
Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat, Opus 83
Johannes Brahms was born in the free city of Hamburg on May 7, 1833, and died in Vienna on April 3, 1897. He made the first sketches for this work in the late spring of 1878 and completed the score at Pressbaum, near Vienna, on July 7, 1881. After a private tryout of the concerto with Hans von Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra, Brahms gave the first performance on November 9, 1881, in Budapest, with Alexander Erkel conducting the Orchestra of the National Theater.

In addition to the solo piano, the score calls for 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses).

"...and a second one will sound very different," wrote Brahms to Joseph Joachim, rendering a report on the disastrous reception in Leipzig of his First Piano Concerto. More than twenty years would pass before there was "a second one." They were full years. Brahms had settled in Vienna and given up conducting and playing the piano as regular activities and sources of livelihood. Belly and beard date from those years ("clean-shaven they take you for an actor or a priest," he said). The compositions of the two decades include the variations on themes by Handel, Paganini, and Haydn; the string quartets and piano quartets (three of each), as well as both string sextets, the piano quintet, and the horn trio; a cello sonata and one for violin; the first two symphonies and the Violin Concerto; and, along with over a hundred songs and shorter choral pieces, a series of large-scale vocal works including the *German Requiem*, the Alto Rhapsody, the *Song of Destiny*, and *Nänie*. He was resigned to bachelorhood and to never composing an opera. He had even come to terms with the fact that at the beginning of the century there had been a giant called Beethoven whose thunderous footsteps made life terribly difficult for later composers. To the young Brahms, Beethoven had been inspiration and model, but also a source of daunting inhibition. Fully aware of what he was doing and what it meant, Brahms waited until his forties before he sent into the world any string quartets or a first symphony, both being genres peculiarly associated with Beethoven. In sum, the Brahms of the Second Piano Concerto was a master, confident and altogether mature.

In April 1878, Brahms made what was to be the first of nine journeys to Italy and Sicily. His companion was another bearded and overweight North German who had settled in Vienna, Theodor Billroth, an accomplished and knowledgeable amateur musician, and by profession a surgeon, a field in which he was even more unambiguously "*princeps*" than Brahms in his. Brahms returned elated and full of energy. His chief task for that summer was to complete his Violin Concerto for Joseph Joachim. He planned to include a scherzo, but dropped the idea at Joachim's suggestion. He had, however, made sketches for such a movement after his return from the south, and he retrieved them three years later when they became the starting point of the new piano concerto's second movement.

The year 1881 began with the first performances of the *Academic Festival* and *Tragic* overtures, and there were professional trips to Holland and Hungary as well as another Italian vacation. In memory of his friend, the painter Anselm Feuerbach, he made a setting of Schiller's *Nänie*, and then set to work on the sketches that had been accumulating for the piano concerto. On July 7 he reported to his friend Elisabet von Herzogenberg, perhaps his closest musical confidante of those years, that he had finished a "tiny, tiny piano concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo." Writing on the same day to the pianist Emma Engelmann, he is not quite so coy, though Billroth was sent his copy with a remark about "a bunch of little piano pieces."

The measure of Brahms's sureness about the work is to be found in his singling it out for dedication "to his dear friend and teacher Eduard Marxsen." Brahms had begun studying with Marxsen as a boy of seven and his devotion lasted until the end of Marxsen's life in 1887. The choice of the B-flat concerto as occasion for the long-delayed formal tribute to his master is surely significant: not only was the piano Marxsen's instrument as well as his own, but Brahms must have felt that he had at last achieved what had eluded him in the wonderful D minor concerto, namely the perfect fusion of inspirational fire with that encompassing technique whose foundations were laid in those long-ago lessons in Hamburg.

It was the last work Brahms added to his repertory as a pianist, and for someone who had long given up regular practicing to have gotten through it at all is amazing. After the premiere, Brahms took the work on an extensive tour of Germany with Hans von Bülow and the superb Meiningen Orchestra; Leipzig resisted once again, but elsewhere the reception was triumphant. People tended to find the first movement harder to grasp than the rest, and almost universally a new relationship between piano and orchestra was noted, phrases like "symphony with piano obbligato" being much bandied about. With respect to the latter question, it is mainly that Brahms knew the concertos of Mozart and Beethoven better than his critics and was prepared to draw more imaginative and far-reaching conclusions from the subtle solo-tutti relationship propounded in those masterpieces of the classical style.

Brahms begins by establishing the whole range of the solo's capabilities. The piano enters with rhythmically cunning comment on the theme sung by the horn. This is poetic and reticent, though there is also something quietly assertive in the way the piano at once takes possession of five-and-a-half octaves from the lowest B-flat on the keyboard to the F above the treble staff. When, however, the woodwinds and then the strings continue in this lyric vein, the piano responds with a cadenza that silences the orchestra altogether. But this cadenza, massive and almost violent though it is, settles on a long dominant pedal and demonstrates that its "real" function is to introduce, as dramatically as possible, an expansive and absolutely formal orchestral exposition. Perhaps the greatest moment, certainly the most mysterious and original, of this magisterial movement is the soft dawning of the recapitulation, the horn call and its extensions in the piano being now gently embedded in a continuous and flowing texture, an effect that suggests that the opening of the movement should be played not as an introduction in a slower tempo, but as the real and organic beginning. When all this occurs, you remember the piano's earlier eruption into the cadenza, and the contrast now of the entirely lyrical continuation is the more poignant for that memory. One tends to think of this concerto as essentially declamatory and as the quintessential blockbuster, but the expression mark that occurs more often than any other is "*dolce*" (followed in frequency by "*leggiero*").

Brahms was constantly asked to explain the presence of his "extra" *Scherzerl*. He told Billroth that the first movement appeared to him "too simple [and that] he required something strongly passionate before the equally simple Andante." The answer half convinces: simplicity is not the issue as much as urgency and speed. Long-range harmonic strategy, particularly with respect to the Andante to come, must have had a lot to do with Brahms's decision. The contrast, in any event, is welcome, and the movement, in which one can still sense the biting double-stops of Joachim's violin, goes brilliantly.

The first and second movements end in ways meant to produce the ovations they got at their early performances. From here on, Brahms reduces the scale of his utterance, trumpets and drums falling silent for the remainder of the concerto. The Andante begins with a long and famous cello solo, which, like its oboe counterpart in the Adagio of the Violin Concerto, becomes increasingly and ever more subtly enmeshed in its surroundings. The piano does not undertake to compete with the cello as a singer of that kind of song. Its own melodies stand on either side of that style, being more embellished or more skeletal. The key is B-flat, the home key of the concerto and thus an uncommon choice for a slow movement; there are some precedents in Beethoven, to say nothing of Brahms's own earlier piano concerto, but the excursions from B-flat are bold and remarkable in their effect. For an example, it is its placement in the distant key of F-sharp that gives the return of the cello solo its wonderfully soft radiance.

The sweetly charming finale moves gently in that not-quite-fast gait that is so characteristic of Brahms. A touch of Gypsy music passes now and again, and just before the end, which occurs without much ado, Brahms spikes the texture with triplets.

Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1976 to 1979, and after that of the San Francisco Symphony and New York Philharmonic. Oxford University Press has published three compilations of his program notes, devoted to symphonies, concertos, and the great works for chorus and orchestra.

The first Boston Symphony performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto no. 2 took place on March 15, 1884, with B.J. Lang as soloist and Georg Henschel conducting. Emanuel Ax played the BSO's most recent Symphony Hall performances in May 2018, Bernard Haitink conducting, and Kirill Gerstein the most recent Tanglewood performance, on August 17, 2019, François-Xavier Roth conducting.

Brian Raphael Nabors
Pulse
Brian Raphael Nabors was born April 10, 1991, in Birmingham, Alabama, and lives there. *Pulse*, originally composed for chamber orchestra, was premiered at the inaugural concert of the Midwest Composers Symposium at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on November 10, 2017; Oriol Sans led the Contemporary Directions Ensemble. The composer expanded the score for symphony orchestra for the Nashville Symphony Orchestra's Composer Lab Showcase; it was premiered by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra under Giancarlo Guerrero's direction on September 9, 2019. These are the first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of music by Brian Raphael Nabors.
The score of *Pulse* calls for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (3 players: vibraphone, wood blocks, hi-hat cymbal, bass drum; crotales, marimba, cymbal, whip, 3 tom-toms; xylophone, tam-tam, triangle, bongos), harp, piano and celesta, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses). The piece is about 12 minutes long.

Brian Raphael Nabors considers himself an "everything composer"—equally at home in chamber music, song, solo piano music, choral music, and orchestral works—but, when nudged, admits, "I *love* the orchestra!" The depth and breadth of possibilities for texture and timbre with the modern symphony orchestra Nabors compares to the variety of textures, colors, and figures a painter might deploy on a canvas. As with painting, with the rich sonic palette available to the composer, deciding what and when to leave something out, rather than using everything all the time, has come with experience and a good sense of where an individual piece is taking him.

Nabors grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, in an artistically engaged family. His father is a visual artist, and his mother plays keyboards for church and for other functions. Nabors was mostly self-taught as a keyboardist, picking out tunes on the piano from a young age, and had little formal training until he was about 12. As a composer, he began with piano music and in his teens started writing for chorus. Gospel, jazz, and R&B were his "daily bread," but he expanded his awareness of the classical tradition via piano method books. Meanwhile, the deft and characterful film music of such composers as John Williams and Danny Elfman revealed the possibilities of the orchestra. By age 16, he says—already having strongly contemplated a career in architecture—he knew that composing was his "destiny."

Like his father, Nabors grew up interested in drawing and painting; linking his visual and auditory worlds, he has the trait of synesthesia, which in his case correlates visual colors with aural harmonies. His music explores his interests in art, nature, science, and history, including his own lived experience as an African American. Some of his works explicitly address issues of race in U.S. history and in the present day, such as his Paul Laurence Dunbar setting *We Wear the Mask*, composed for Castle of Our Skins' I AM A MAN concerts in 2019.

Nabors attended Birmingham's Samford University as an undergraduate, since returning to join the faculty in a variety of roles. He went on to graduate school at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where his teachers included Douglas Knehans, Ellen Ruth Harrison, and Miguel Roig-Francolí. He was a 2020 Fulbright

Fellowship recipient for study in Sydney, Australia, and has participated in programs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Current projects include a consortium commission via NewMusicUSA for orchestras in Berkeley, Detroit, and Seattle as well as the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO) in Houston and the Landmarks Orchestra in Boston. For the 2018-19 season he was composer in residence with the Boston-based ensemble Castle of Our Skins, and in 2021 he was a Fellow of the BSO's Tanglewood Music Center. The Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra performed his brief orchestra work *Iubilo* in the Koussevitzky Music Shed in August 2021. In addition to these BSO performances of *Pulse* this week, during the 2021-2022 season Nabors's orchestral music will also be performed by the Atlanta, Fort Worth, and Nashville symphony orchestras, the Rochester Philharmonic, and the Munich Symphony Orchestra in Germany. Upcoming projects include *Of Earth and Sky: Tales From the Motherland*, an orchestra work on African legends commissioned by the Fort Worth Symphony for a premiere under Robert Spano's direction in April 2023, and a new orchestra work for the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, *Letters from Birmingham*, about the history of the composer's hometown. The well-traveled *Pulse* will be played this year by the American Youth Symphony at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles in March and by the Chineke! Orchestra at Switzerland's Lucerne Festival in September. Nabors is also at work on an ambitious Concerto for Orchestra.

As noted above, Nabors's *Pulse* began life as a work for a chamber orchestra—single instruments on each part, plus three percussion and a quartet of saxophones. The expanded version for full orchestra gave Nabors an even greater range of instrumental colors and combinations to work with in illustrating the rapidly changing images and concepts in his piece. He writes,

> My conception of *Pulse* began as a long contemplation of daily life as we know it, combined with thoughts of life in nature. The universe seems to have this natural rhythm to it. It is as if every living and moving thing we are aware and unaware of is being held together by a mysterious, resolute force. *Pulse* is an episodic rhapsody that explores several phases and colorful variants of rhythm all held together by an unwavering pulse. Each episode is meant to symbolize a different scenario of life for the listener, be it a buzzing modern metropolis, a deep wilderness abundant with animalia, or the scenic endless abyss of the ocean. All of these worlds and their philosophical meanings are then brought together in a contemplative theme of "unification" in the strings that symbolizes our deep connection as living beings to everything within, over, under, and around us.

The quote reveals Nabors's deep interest in the natural world and our place in it. *Pulse* is also, though, an exuberant display of expressive virtuosity: a demonstration of his ability, like a film composer, to shift through emotional gears quickly while strongly maintaining the thread of the musical narrative. The driven music is enhanced by quick changes in orchestration and occasionally offset by sustained, long-line melodies. A percussion episode in the middle of the piece encourages percussive sounds and behaviors from other quarters, especially the winds; this section ends with a brief pause that marks one of the few resting-points. The constant energy of the pulse is sometimes the foreground, sometimes receding, present largely in the listener's memory and expectation of its continuation. The onset of glissandos in the strings marks a complete breakdown of both rhythm and harmony for a short time. Lyrical string melodies emerge from this miasma, underpinned by quiet pulsing in the piano and harp—subdued but still present.

Robert Kirzinger

Composer and writer Robert Kirzinger is the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Director of Program Publications.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY was born at Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka Province, Russia, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893. He composed his Symphony No. 2 between June and December 1872, and it was first performed on January 26, 1873, in a concert of the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society, with Nicholas Rubinstein conducting. The symphony was dedicated to the Imperial Russian Musical Society. This version, however, was published only in a piano-duet arrangement made by the composer, and not

in full score or parts. Tchaikovsky completed a major revision in early 1880. This was first performed on January 31, 1881, in St. Petersburg, with K.K. Zike conducting, in a concert of the Russian Musical Society. The revised 1880 version is the standard performing edition.

THE SCORE OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S SYMPHONY NO. 2 calls for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, tam-tam, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses).

First, about the unfortunate nickname of this charming, joyful symphony—"Little Russian" ("*Malorossiskaya*"). It was not Tchaikovsky but the influential music critic Nikolai Kashkin (1839-1920) who bestowed this descriptive title on what is one of the composer's most cheerful and extroverted compositions. Kashkin suggested the moniker in his 1896 book *Memories of Tchaikovsky* because the Symphony No. 2 draws heavily on Ukrainian folk tunes, and the label stuck. The Russian adjective he used—"*Malorossiskaya*"—does indeed translate literally into English as "Little Russian," but really means "Ukrainian."

For Ukrainians, the term "*Malaya Rossiya*" ("Little Russia") was a source of shame and embarrassment. This was especially true in the late 19th century, when the Russian government, afraid of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, enacted severe anti-Ukrainian language policies. Use of the terms "Ukraine" (*"Ukraina")* and "Ukrainian" was actually banned between 1863 and 1905. Because it was associated with Tsarist oppression and Great Russian chauvinism, the phrase "*Malaya Rossiya*" virtually disappeared (except in historical texts) during the Soviet era. And since the creation of an independent Ukraine in 1991, the term has become so pejorative that you'd likely get a black eye if you used it on the streets of Kiev. Whether Tchaikovsky would have approved of Kashkin's label we will never know, since the composer died three years before it was first suggested.

We do know that Tchaikovsky was in fact very fond of Ukraine, and spent a good deal of time there. After her marriage, his beloved sister Alexandra (Sasha) lived in Ukraine at her husband's estate near Kamenka, not far from Kiev, and Tchaikovsky frequently spent summers there, often with other members of his family present. Kamenka became a kind of second home and refuge for the chronically wandering composer. It was also there, in the lush Ukrainian countryside, that he began work on a new symphony during a month-long stay in early summer 1872.

The work continued after Tchaikovsky returned to Moscow in the autumn and took up residence in a new apartment with two servants and a dog he had found on a Moscow street. In November he wrote to his brother Modest that "the symphony which I am just finishing has so occupied me that I am in no state to undertake anything else. I think this is my best work with respect to perfection of form, a quality in which I have not shone before now." In December, while visiting St. Petersburg, Tchaikovsky performed the new symphony on the piano at the home of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, one of the most important members of the so-called "Mighty Handful" group of Russian nationalist composers and a professor at St. Petersburg Conservatory. The reaction of those present was overwhelmingly positive: "The whole company nearly tore me to pieces in rapture, and Mme. Korsakov, with tears in her eyes, asked if she might arrange it for piano duet." The first public performance of the Symphony No. 2, on January 26, 1873, was an unqualified success, and others soon followed.

So pleased was Tchaikovsky with the warm reception that he wrote to his brother and confidant Modest, not entirely in jest, that "in general, the time is drawing near when Kolya, Tolya, Ippolit, and Modya will no longer be the Tchaikovskys, but merely the brother of *the* Tchaikovsky. I shall make no secret of the fact that this is the desired end of all my efforts. To grind into the dust everything around one by one's own greatness—is not this supreme pleasure?! So tremble, for soon my fame will crush you."

But the chronically insecure Tchaikovsky would never be pleased with himself or his work for very long. He had expressed dissatisfaction with the first three movements in a letter to the critic Vladimir Stasov the day after the very first performance; so when the publisher Bessel failed to publish the score of the 1872 version as promised, Tchaikovsky decided in 1879 to undertake a major revision of the Symphony No. 2. Most of the work was done quickly in Rome in December 1879. Writing to Bessel in early January 1880, Tchaikovsky reported on the changes he had made:

1. I have composed the first movement afresh, leaving only the introduction and coda in their previous form. 2. I have rescored the second movement. 3. I've altered the third movement, shortening and rescoring it. 4. I've shortened the finale and rescored it.

Composer Sergei Taneyev (and Kashkin) disliked the changes Tchaikovsky had made, finding the original version far superior. Not everyone was so discerning, however: when the new version was performed in Russia in 1881, none of the critics apparently noticed the revisions.

Rimsky-Korsakov and his crowd admired Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 for its extensive use of Ukrainian and Russian folk tunes as basic thematic material, since they believed that the new Russian national music should exploit the empire's rich tradition of folk song and folk dance. The first movement opens with a lengthy introduction based on the Ukrainian version of a well-known Russian folk song, "Down along the Volga" ("*Vniz po matushke po Volge*"), which then reappears briefly in the development section. In the following Andantino marziale, Tchaikovsky includes a short quotation from the Russian folk song "Spin, oh my spinner," contrasted with the wedding march from his early unproduced opera *Undine*. Only the third-movement scherzo lacks authentic folk material, although the central Trio section strives for a "folk-like" sound.

The brilliant fourth-movement finale especially dazzled the "Mighty Handful" group, with its twenty-four toe-tapping variations on the Ukrainian folk song "The Crane" ("*Zhuravel*"), constructed with the same "changing background" technique used by Mikhail Glinka in his treatment of a folk tune in his orchestral tone poem *Kamarinskaya*. What is unusual here is the use of a folk tune not just as ornament or introduction, but as the main subject of a sonata-form finale movement. While admitting that the Symphony No. 2 "does not probe the psychological depths in the manner of his later symphonies," musicologist Edward Garden observes that it does succeed in penetrating to the essence of Russian folk song perhaps even more successfully than the symphonies of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Harlow Robinson

Harlow Robinson is an author, lecturer, and Matthews Distinguished University Professor of History, Emeritus, at Northeastern University. His books include Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography *and* Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians. *His essays and reviews have appeared in the* Boston Globe, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Cineaste, *and* Opera News, *and he has written program notes for thew Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, and Metropolitan Opera.*

The first American performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 took place on December 7, 1883, with Leopold Damrosch conducting the Symphony Society of New York at Steinway Hall. Damrosch also led that same orchestra in the first Boston performance on December 9, 1891, at the Music Hall.

The first Boston Symphony performances of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 were led by Emil Paur in February 1897. Ken-David Masur led the most recent BSO performance, which took place at Tanglewood in July 2017; the most recent Symphony Hall performances were conducted by Julian Kuerti in April 2010.

To Read and Hear More…

For a complete BSO performance history of any piece on the program, readers are encouraged to visit the BSO Archives' online database, "HENRY," named for BSO founder Henry Lee Higginson, at archives.bso.org.

Important books about Brahms include Jan Swafford's *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (Vintage paperback); Malcolm MacDonald's *Brahms* in the "Master Musicians" series (Schirmer); Michael Musgrave's *A Brahms Reader*, which offers wide-ranging consideration of the composer's life and work (Yale University Press), and *The Compleat Brahms*, edited by conductor/scholar Leon Botstein, a compendium of essays on Brahms's music (Norton). For detailed analysis of the works, go to Michael Musgrave's *The Music of Brahms* (Oxford paperback) or Bernard Jacobson's *The Music of Johannes Brahms* (originally Fairleigh Dickinson). Michael Steinberg's notes on

the four Brahms symphonies are in his compilation volume *The Symphony–A Listener's Guide* (Oxford paperback). Donald Francis Tovey's notes on the Brahms symphonies are among his *Essays in Musical Analysis* (also Oxford).

The BSO has recorded the Brahms piano concertos with Bernard Haitink and soloist Emanuel Ax (Sony) and with Charles Munch with Arthur Rubinstein (RCA). Andris Nelsons recorded both concertos with soloist Hélène Grimaud and the Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon). Other recordings include Daniel Barenboim's with Gustavo Dudamel and Staatskapelle Berlin (Deutsche Grammophon); Leon Fleisher's with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra (Sony), Nelson Freire's with Riccardo Chailly and the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig (Decca), and Maurizio Pollini's with Christian Thielemann and the Staatskapelle Dresden (Deutsche Grammophon). Important historic recordings include Vladimir Horowitz's with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, Edwin Fischer's with Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic, and Solomon's with Issay Dobrowen conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra (various labels).

The most comprehensive source of updated information on Brian Raphael Nabors is the composer's website, briannabors.com, where one can read about upcoming projects and individual pieces, including links to scores and recordings. One can find recordings of his music on the music-sharing site SoundCloud: soundcloud.com/brian-raphael-nabors. A recording of the chamber-orchestra version of *Pulse* can be found there, along with many other works.

David Brown's four-volume *Tchaikovsky* is the major biography of the composer (Norton). Brown is also the author of the excellent, single-volume *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music*, geared toward the general reader (Pegasus Books). Anthony Holden's *Tchaikovsky* is a single-volume biography that gives ample space to the theory that Tchaikovsky committed suicide for reasons having to do with his homosexuality (Bantam Press). The useful BBC Music Guide volume on Tchaikovsky's symphonies and concertos is by John Warrack (University of Washington Press). The Tchaikovsky article in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is by Roland John Wiley, whose several books on the composer include the Tchaikovsky volume in the Oxford University Press Master Musicians series.

Claudio Abbado with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Sony), Mariss Jansons with the Oslo Philharmonic (Chandos), Igor Markevitch with the London Symphony Orchestra (Philips), Riccardo Muti with the Philharmonia Orchestra (Brilliant Classics), and Yuri Temirkanov with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RCA) all recorded Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2 as part of complete traversals of the composer's symphonies. Other recordings of the Symphony No. 2 include Valery Gergiev's with the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO Live!), Vladimir Jurowski's with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), Kurt Masur's with the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig (Warner Classics), and Evgeny Mravinsky's with the Leningrad Philharmonic (Brilliant Classics).

Robert Kirzinger/Marc Mandel

ARTISTS

Andris Nelsons
Ray and Maria Stata Music Director, endowed in perpetuity

The 2021-2022 season is Andris Nelsons' eighth as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Ray and Maria Stata Music Director. In summer 2015, following his first season as music director, his contract with the BSO was extended through the 2021-2022 season. In February 2018, he was also named Gewandhauskapellmeister of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig. In October 2020, the BSO and GHO jointly announced extensions to Mr. Nelsons' contracts. His contract with the BSO was extended until 2025, and his GHO contract until 2027. An evergreen clause in his BSO contract reflects a mutual intention for long-term collaboration beyond the years of the agreement. In fall 2019, Mr. Nelsons and the BSO hosted the Gewandhausorchester in historic concerts at Symphony Hall that included performances by the GHO as well as concerts featuring the players of both orchestras together.

The fifteenth music director in the orchestra's history, Andris Nelsons made his BSO debut at Carnegie Hall in March 2011, his Tanglewood debut in July 2012, and his BSO subscription series debut in January 2013. He

has led the orchestra on three European tours and one of Japan; a scheduled February 2020 tour to East Asia was canceled due to the COVID-19 emergency. In the pandemic-affected 2020-2021 BSO season, Mr. Nelsons led the BSO in six of the fifteen concerts streamed as part of the orchestra's BSO NOW virtual season recorded in Symphony Hall. The diverse repertoire ranged from Beethoven symphonies and music of Schumann and Brahms to several recent works by leading young American composers. His BSO repertoire in the 2021-2022 season ranges from favorites by Rachmaninoff and Sibelius to world and American premieres of BSO-commissioned works by HK Gruber, Jörg Widmann, Unsuk Chin, and Kaija Saariaho. This season also marks the culmination of Mr. Nelsons' multi-season joint project with the BSO and GHO to perform and record major works of Richard Strauss, to be released by Deutsche Grammophon.

Andris Nelsons and the BSO's ongoing series of recordings of the complete Shostakovich symphonies for Deutsche Grammophon, so far encompassing ten of the fifteen symphonies, has earned three Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance and one for Best Engineered Album. The latest installment, featuring symphonies nos. 1, 14, and 15 and the Chamber Symphony, Op. 110a, was released in June 2021. Future releases will explore the composer's concertos for piano, violin, and cello, and his monumental opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Mr. Nelsons' other recordings with the BSO include the complete Brahms symphonies for the BSO Classics label and a Naxos release of recent American works commissioned and premiered by the orchestra. Under an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, he has also recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic (released in 2019) and is recording the Bruckner symphonies with the GHO.

Mr. Nelsons frequently leads such orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and appears with such opera companies as the Bayreuth Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Born in Riga in 1978 into a family of musicians, Andris Nelsons began his career as a trumpeter in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra before studying conducting. He was Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (2008-2015), Principal Conductor of Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Herford, Germany (2006-2009), and Music Director of the Latvian National Opera (2003-2007).

Elim Chan

Making her BSO debut with this week's concerts, Elim Chan is a widely admired and sought-after young conductor. In the 2019-20 season she became chief conductor of the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra. She has held the position of principal guest conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra since 2018-19. In 2014 Ms. Chan became the first female winner of the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition. Her 2021-22 season started with an appearance at the Edinburgh International Festival, followed by her debut leading the Sinfonieorchester Basel; she makes further debuts with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, European Union Youth Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien. Ms. Chan also returns to orchestras with whom she is closely connected, among them the Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Gürzenich Orchester Cologne. Elim Chan became assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra in 2015-16 and was appointed to the Dudamel Fellowship program with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the following season. In 2012 she led the Orchestre de la Francophonie as part of the Canadian National Arts Centre's Summer Music Institute, where she worked with Pinchas Zukerman, and she participated in the Musical Olympus Festival in St. Petersburg as well as workshops with the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (with Marin Alsop, Gerard Schwarz, and Gustav Meier). She took part in masterclasses with Bernard Haitink in Lucerne in spring 2015. Elim Chan holds degrees from Smith College and the University of Michigan, where she served as music director of the University of Michigan Campus Symphony Orchestra and the Michigan Pops Orchestra. She received the Bruno Walter Conducting Scholarship in 2013.

Igor Levit

Pianist Igor Levit, who makes his Symphony Hall debut this week, was named *Musical America*'s Recording Artist of the Year 2020, *Gramophone*'s Artist of the Year 2020, and the 2018 Gilmore Artist. Mr. Levit regularly performs as a recitalist at the world's most renowned concert halls and festivals, and he is a frequent soloist with leading orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Vienna Philharmonic. His upcoming schedule includes concerts in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, and Tokyo. In 2022 Igor Levit premieres two

works written for him: at Carnegie Hall, a work for piano solo by Fred Hersch, and at the Heidelberg Spring Festival, a piano concerto by William Bolcom with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Elim Chan. In spring 2021, Mr. Levit and the Lucerne Festival announced a multi-year collaboration for a new piano festival that he will curate starting in 2023. At the Heidelberg Spring Festival, Mr. Levit is artistic director of both the Chamber Music Academy and the Standpunkte (Viewpoints) Festival. Igor Levit is an exclusive recording artist for Sony Classical. His 2019 recording of the 32 Beethoven sonatas earned several honors in 2020, including *Gramophone* and Opus Klassik awards and a Grammy nomination for Best Classical Instrumental Solo. He has since released *Encounter* (September 2020), featuring arrangements of Bach and Brahms by Ferruccio Busoni and Max Reger as well as Morton Feldman's *Palais de Mari*, and *On DSCH* (September 2021), a triple album pairing Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues and Ronald Stevenson's *Passacaglia on DSCH*. Born in Nizhni Novgorod, Russia, Mr. Levit moved to Germany with his family at age 8. In spring 2019 he was appointed professor of piano at his alma mater, the University of Music, Theatre, and Media Hanover. Mr. Levit has been recognized for his political commitment with the Fifth International Beethoven Prize in 2019, followed in 2020 by the "Statue B" of the International Auschwitz Committee and the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. In Berlin, where he makes his home, he plays a Steinway D grand piano kindly given to him by the Trustees of Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells. Igor Levit made his BSO debut at Tanglewood in August 2016 as soloist in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with David Afkham conducting; he returned in August 2018 for Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* under Michael Tilson Thomas, followed the next week by a concert of solo and chamber music at Ozawa Hall.