

Andris Nelsons, Ray and Maria Stata Music Director
Boston Symphony Orchestra
141st season, 2021–2022

Thursday, January 27, 8pm
Friday, January 28, 1:30pm
Saturday, January 29, 8pm

Week 13

THOMAS ADÈS conducting

BERG THREE PIECES FOR ORCHESTRA, OPUS 6
Präludium [Prelude]
Reigen [Round Dance]
Marsch [March]

RAVEL PIANO CONCERTO IN D FOR THE LEFT HAND
KIRILL GERSTEIN

{INTERMISSION}

THOMAS CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA (2019)
ADÈS (Commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons,
Music Director, through the generous support of Catherine and
Paul Buittenwieser, and through the generous support of the
New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural
Council, a state agency)
I. Allegramente (q= 112)
II. Andante gravemente (e= 66 intimo)
III. Allegro giojoso (q= 120)
KIRILL GERSTEIN

RAVEL *LA VALSE, POÈME CHORÉOGRAPHIQUE*

The evening concerts will end about 10:00 and the afternoon concert about 3:30.

Bank of America is proud to sponsor the BSO's 2021-22 season.
Friday-afternoon concert series sponsored by the Brooke family
See the end of this program for credits and further information.

The Program in Brief..

Boston Symphony Orchestra Artistic Partner Thomas Adès wrote his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra for Kirill Gerstein, who premiered it with the BSO here at Symphony Hall under Adès's direction in March 2019. Their recording of the premiere of this virtuosic, jazzy, and dancing three-movement concerto was released in 2020. Kirill Gerstein also performs the French composer Maurice Ravel's dynamic 1932 Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, one of the last pieces the composer wrote. The concerto was commissioned by Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein, whose right arm was amputated after he was shot while serving in the German army during World War I.

Ravel and the Austrian Alban Berg, born about 10 years apart, are in most ways radically different composers, but there are some interesting musical and biographical parallels between them. Both suffered from chronic ill-health, both were ancillary participants in World War I (on opposite sides of the conflict), and the musical careers of

both were unexpectedly cut short in the 1930s. They also shared a love for dramatic works and for the coloristic possibilities of the modern orchestra.

Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra and Ravel's *La Valse*, composed respectively in 1915 and 1920, were responses to the twilight of the Romantic era, and the European Belle Époque that ended with the onset of World War I. Ravel chose the Viennese waltz to represent the era but daubed it with intense colors and molded it into unfamiliar shapes, creating what often sounds like the memory of a waltz. The conductor Pierre Monteux added it to the BSO repertoire almost exactly a century ago, in January 1922. The Viennese waltz model also features as the second movement of Berg's Three Pieces, but Berg pushed the form even further than did Ravel. Influenced by his teacher Arnold Schoenberg and by Claude Debussy's impressionism, in his Three Pieces Berg creates a kind of musical cubism, sometimes combining several streams of music in holding up a mirror to the multilayered, often conflicting realities of 1910s Vienna.

Robert Kirzinger

Alban Berg

Three Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 6

Albano Maria Joannes Berg was born in Vienna on February 9, 1885, and died there on December 23, 1935. He began composing the Three Pieces for Orchestra in the spring of 1914 and completed the orchestral scores of the "Präludium" and "Marsch" in time to send them to his teacher Arnold Schönberg for a birthday present in September; the score of the second piece, "Reigen," was not completed until the following summer. The "Präludium" and "Reigen" were performed for the first time in Berlin on June 5, 1923, at a concert for the Austrian Music Week; the conductor, Anton Webern, omitted the "Marsch" because of limited rehearsal time, and the complete work had to wait until April 14, 1930, for its first performance, at Oldenburg under Johannes Schüller. For this occasion, Berg touched up many small details in the score, which had been published in facsimile in 1923; the revised edition, published in 1954 in a new engraving, includes Berg's change of the first trombone part from an alto to a tenor trombone, replacing a rare instrument with an easily available one but making the high-register part much more difficult to play.

The Three Pieces call for an orchestra of 4 flutes (all doubling piccolos), 4 oboes (4th doubling English horn), 4 clarinets (3rd doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons and contrabassoon, 6 horns in F, 4 trumpets in F, 3 trombones and bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, glockenspiel, suspended cymbals, crash cymbals, large tam-tam, small tam-tam, triangle, heavy hammer ("with nonmetallic sound"), snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum with cymbal attached), 2 harps, celesta, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses). The piece is about 20 minutes long.

At the beginning of 1914 Berg was at a critical point in his artistic development. He had not yet reached the crossroads of his opera *Wozzeck*, which was to occupy him for five years between 1917 and 1922 and which would permanently alter the history of opera. But in 1914 he was fully involved with problems that had paralyzed his creativity for months and that would be resolved only by time, dogged effort, and the turn of events.

Berg's first independent effort as a composer—independent in the sense that he did not show his work to his teacher Arnold Schoenberg until it was entirely completed—was the Five Orchestral Songs on Picture-postcard Texts of Peter Altenberg, Opus 4, composed in the summer of 1912. This was also Berg's first attempt at writing for orchestra, and he was especially eager to gain Schoenberg's approval for what had been, for Berg, a bold step. Schoenberg was at first encouraging, and invited Berg to have two of the songs performed in a concert in Vienna on March 31, 1913, under Schoenberg's direction. The concert was unexpectedly a catastrophe; a sizable audience in the Grosser Musikvereinssaal hooted Berg's songs off the stage, fistfights broke out, and the police had to be called in. Disgusted by the experience, Berg never again attempted to get the Altenberg Songs performed. (They did not receive a complete performance anywhere until 1953.)

There was another reason as well. Berg's public humiliation was followed shortly afterwards by a private one: Schoenberg's rejection of the songs. We do not know all the details, but Berg's letters reveal clearly that Schoenberg judged Berg to be on the wrong track in the Altenberg Songs; there was too much abstract technical artifice, he felt, too much willful novelty, and, above all, the short, aphoristic form of some of the songs violated Berg's own better nature as a composer. After nearly a century, with better hindsight, we can show that Schoenberg's summary judgment of Berg's songs was wrong. But Berg took it to heart all the same, and after a year of soul-searching (during which he composed only the Four Pieces for clarinet and piano, Opus 5, another exercise in brevity that he was later to find unsatisfactory), began to write the Three Pieces for Orchestra. If Schoenberg wanted from Berg a

work which in terms of dimensions and development would be the opposite of the two songs which he had performed, he certainly got one. Berg wrote to his wife on July 11, 1914:

If I dedicate the new orchestra pieces to Schoenberg, it's because I've owed him, as my teacher, the dedication of a big work for a long time. In Amsterdam he asked me for them directly—indeed, he ordered them. He was their inspiration, too, as much from my hearing *his* orchestra pieces [Five Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 16] (although please note: mine don't resemble his at all in feeling, they will even be fundamentally different!) as in his cautionary advice to me to write character pieces.

The Three Pieces did turn out as “fundamentally different” from Schoenberg's Five Pieces as two masterworks could be. Berg's effort constantly strives beyond the already exaggerated extremes of musical expression and gesture that so strongly characterize Schoenberg's Five Pieces. No other work of Berg's shows such a feverish complexity of texture; no other printed score of his contains such a density of expression marks or changes of tempo (some 75 of the latter in the March alone, an average of more than one every three measures), and only *Wozzeck* has an orchestra of comparable size. Even more than Mahler's Ninth Symphony, another work that profoundly influenced the Three Pieces, they tend to symbolize the feeling of utmostness, the last gasp of Imperial splendor of the decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire that would soon be torn apart. Small wonder, then, that Berg did not finish the Three Pieces until nearly a year after the Great War began, and then did not compose anything at all for two years, when his absorption with *Wozzeck* would conquer his disillusionment.

The formal precision of Berg's Altenberg Songs is continued and expanded in the Three Pieces, with greater maturity, though perhaps without the same blaze of originality that marks the earlier work. There is an obsessive concern with motivic manipulation and transformation that makes the Altenberg Songs seem by comparison a mere exercise. It is not too much to say that a century of tradition in cyclic form, beginning with such works as Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* and Liszt's *Faust Symphony* and carrying through Brahms, Mahler, Strauss, and Schoenberg, reaches a peak in this work. The Three Pieces are fundamentally unified by Berg's use of five recurring themes in the Prelude, four of which appear in “Reigen” (“Round Dance”), and four in March. Beyond these, there are themes that appear exclusively in the individual pieces—just one in the *Präludium*, five in *Reigen*, and no less than thirty-one in the *Marsch*.

The Prelude demonstrates the most obviously symmetrical overall structure in the Three Pieces. Its formal outlines are easily perceived, beginning and ending in unpitched percussion. As tones begin to appear, first vaguely and then more definitely, they are distributed in constantly changing rhythmic layers; at the end of the piece, they die away in retrograde fashion, leaving only a single tam-tam stroke at the end. The center of the movement's arch is represented by a climax of activity, as massive as anything Berg ever wrote.

The second piece, “Reigen,” though initiated by the closing theme of the Prelude, is wholly different in character. The greater part of the piece emphasizes the harmony and instrumental color, with nothing like the relentless contrapuntal development of motives that characterizes the other two pieces. The various episodes of “Reigen” are well separated from each other by the prominence of one or another melody or by appearance and disappearance of the character of the Ländler (a rustic, Austrian dance much beloved by Joseph Haydn and Gustav Mahler).

The March is as long as the first two pieces combined, more consistently frantic than either of them, and serves not only as a climax to the Three Pieces but as a spectacular capstone to all of Berg's pre-war achievement. As George Perle says in his book on Berg's operas:

The *Marsch* was completed in the weeks immediately following the assassination at Sarajevo and is, in its feeling of doom and catastrophe, an ideal, if unintentional, musical expression of the ominous implications of that event. Fragmentary rhythmic and melodic figures typical of an orthodox military march repeatedly coalesce into polyphonic episodes of incredible density that surge to frenzied climaxes, then fall apart. It is not a march, but music *about* a march, or rather about *the* march, just as Ravel's *La Valse* is music in which the waltz is similarly reduced to its minimum characteristic elements. In spite of the fundamental differences in their respective musical idioms, the emotional climate of Berg's pre-war “marche macabre” is very similar to that of Ravel's post-war “valse macabre.”

The textural complexity of the *Marsch* was never again approached by Berg and has indeed been approximated by only a few composers since. The overall form is essentially episodic, from one kind of texture to another. As in the other two pieces, a symmetrical arch form is indicated by the opening and closing events of the March (if one ignores the final five-measure coda), but a larger arch form defines the span of the entire Three Pieces, resulting from a “flashback” to a moment early in the Prelude. Otherwise, there is no actual “march form,” just as in any ordinary march by Sousa or Fučík or Blankenburg, where one strain follows another without thematic integration or development. There is a march style, but this too is often submerged entirely in the welter of changing textures and tempi.

Berg himself seems to have realized the conceptual barriers that the Three Pieces posed for performer and listener. In the opera *Wozzeck*, his next work, the orchestral body is nearly as large, but the textural complexity, though still dominated by the thematic structure, is the servant of the dramatic conception, and that is surely as it should be. Berg's uncanny instinct for form survived translation into the operatic domain with natural ease, with complete success, and at a new psychological level of musical maturity.

Mark DeVoto

Mark DeVoto taught at Tufts University for 19 years before his retirement in 2000. He studied at Harvard and Princeton, earning his doctorate with a dissertation on Berg's Altenberg Songs; his score of that work, for the new critical edition of all of Berg's works, appeared in 1997. He wrote the revised fourth (1978) and fifth (1987) editions of Harmony by his teacher Walter Piston. In 2004 he published a book of analytical essays, Debussy and the Veil of Tonality, and in 2011, Schubert's Great C major: Biography of a Symphony.

The earliest documented performance by a major American orchestra of Berg's Three Pieces—billed as the first New York performance, not as the American premiere—was given by the New York Philharmonic with Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting on November 20, 1952.

The first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra (billed as the first Boston performances) were given by Pierre Boulez in February 1969. The most recent BSO performances were led by James Levine in February 2010 at Symphony Hall, followed by a performance conducted by Juanjo Mena at Tanglewood in July 2010.

Maurice Ravel

Piano Concerto for the Left Hand

Joseph Maurice Ravel was born on March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, near Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Basses-Pyrénées, in the Basque region of France just a short distance from the Spanish border, and died on December 28, 1937, in Paris. He composed his Concerto for the Left Hand, along with his other piano concerto, the G major, in the years 1929-31, completing the left-hand concerto in August 1930. Paul Wittgenstein, the pianist for whom it was composed, played the first performance on January 5, 1932, with Robert Heger and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Wittgenstein was also soloist for the first American performances, given with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on November 9 and 10, 1934, followed by the New York premiere (also with Koussevitzky and the BSO) on November 17.

In addition to the solo piano, the score of the concerto calls for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes and English horn, E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, and bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, side drum, cymbals, bass drum, wood block, tam-tam, harp, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses).

About 1930, Ravel found himself simultaneously with two commissions for piano concertos, one from his longtime interpreter Marguerite Long, and the other from Paul Wittgenstein, a concert pianist who had lost his right arm in World War I. Ravel worked on both commissions at the same time, but the results were quite different. The G major concerto, composed for Ravel's own use, but eventually given to Marguerite Long when Ravel realized he was too ill to perform it himself, is a three-movement concerto part brilliant, part ravishingly melancholy. The Concerto for the Left Hand, perhaps inevitably, is altogether more serious, one of the most serious of all the works of that urbane master.

Paul Wittgenstein was a remarkable member of a remarkable Viennese family. He was the brother of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who also possessed considerable musical talent. Paul had barely begun his concert career when he was called into the Austrian reserves in 1914. Only a few months later he was wounded, and his right arm had to be amputated. After being captured by the Russians (when the army hospital in which he was located was overrun), Wittgenstein was exchanged as an invalid and returned to Vienna, where he resumed his concert career in the season of 1916-17. He quickly made a name for himself as a pianist with only one arm, and he induced many leading composers to write substantial works for him in all the genres—chamber and orchestral—that made use of a piano. Among those who responded to his requests were Richard Strauss, Franz Schmidt, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Benjamin Britten, Sergei Prokofiev, Paul Hindemith, and, most famously, Ravel.

There are few sources of music for the left hand alone to which Ravel might have gone to study the problems involved, among them Saint-Saëns's six studies for the left hand and Leopold Godowsky's transcriptions for left hand alone of the Chopin etudes. He might also have seen Brahms's mighty transcription for piano left-hand of the Bach D minor Chaconne for unaccompanied violin and Scriabin's Prelude and Nocturne. But for the most part Ravel was on his own, especially as he wanted the piano part to be as full and active as if it were intended for a pianist who had both hands. The result, needless to say, is a fantastically difficult work perfectly gauged for the shape of the left hand (which can have, for example, a rather large stretch between the thumb and index finger in the higher pitch levels and the upper ends of chords, an arrangement that would be reversed if the piece were conceived for right hand).

Ravel once discussed his two piano concertos with the critic and musicologist M.D. Calvocoressi. Of the left-hand concerto he commented: "In a work of this sort, it is essential to avoid the impression of insufficient weight in the sound-texture, as compared to a solo part for two hands. So I have used a style that is more in keeping [than that of the lighter G major concerto] with the consciously imposing style of the traditional concerto."

The concerto is in one long movement divided into Lento and Allegro sections. Beginning low and dark in strings and contrabassoon, a long orchestral section avoids the first appearance of the soloist until a climax brings the piano in with a cadenza designed to show right off the bat that limiting the conception to a single hand does not prevent extraordinary virtuosity. Ravel describes this as being "like an improvisation." It is followed by what Ravel called a "jazz section," exploiting ideas he had picked up during his visit to America. "Only gradually," he noted, "is one aware that the jazz episode is actually built up from the themes of the first section." The level of virtuosity required by the soloist increases—if that is possible—to the end. Ravel rightly considered this, his last completed large-scale work, a supreme piece of illusion. Who can tell, just from listening, the nature of the self-imposed restriction under which he completed his commission?

Steven Ledbetter

Steven Ledbetter, a freelance writer and lecturer on music, was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

The first Boston Symphony performances, which were also the first American performances, of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand were given by Paul Wittgenstein with Serge Koussevitzky and the BSO on November 9 and 10, 1934. The most recent BSO performances were given by Jean-Yves Thibaudet at Symphony Hall in February 2018, Jacques Lacombe conducting.

Thomas Adès

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2019)

Thomas Joseph Edmund Adès was born in London on March 1, 1971, and lives there. He wrote his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in 2018-19 for Kirill Gerstein on commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, through the generous support of Catherine and Paul Bittenwieser, and through the generous support of the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. The BSO and Kirill Gerstein gave the world premiere performances under the composer's direction in March 2019, at Symphony Hall, followed by a Carnegie Hall concert two weeks later and the European premiere with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig on April 25 and 26, 2019.

In addition to the solo piano, the score of Adès's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra calls for 2 flutes, piccolo (doubling alto flute), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets (first in B-flat, second in A), bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and rototom, percussion (3 players: glockenspiel, xylophone, bass marimba, 2 suspended cymbals, choke cymbal, sizzle cymbal, small crash cymbals, castanets, wood block, small tambourine, large cowbell [or reco-reco], guero, 2 or more whips, tam-tam, side drum, bass drum [with mounted cymbals-machine]), and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses). The concerto is about 20 minutes long.

Thomas Adès composed his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra for soloist Kirill Gerstein and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The idea was born in fall 2012 when Gerstein and Adès were preparing for performances with the BSO of Adès's earlier concerto, *In Seven Days*. As they worked together, Gerstein demurely suggested to Adès that he would like to "get in line" to commission a new work from the busy composer. Adès replied, "Does it have to be a solo work?" and said he might like to write "a proper concerto." When they arrived in Boston to work with the orchestra, the two proposed the new concerto commission to BSO artistic director Anthony Fogg, who immediately

said, “We’ll do it.” Gerstein calls it the quickest commissioning agreement in history. He later learned that he had “cut the line”; Adès became so involved in writing his concerto that he put off writing pieces that would otherwise have taken precedent. Although Gerstein and Adès first collaborated a dozen years ago performing Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*, since their 2012 BSO concerts they’ve developed a deep musical friendship. Along with performing *In Seven Days* with several different orchestras, they also devised a two-piano recital that they first performed at Tanglewood. Adès ultimately did write Gerstein a solo work as well, a piano version of the Berceuse from his 2017 opera *The Exterminating Angel*.

Adès’s concerto also celebrates the composer’s important ongoing relationship with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Having led the orchestra on several occasions since his debut in 2011, for the 2016-17 season he was named the BSO’s first-ever Artistic Partner, an unprecedented role created to showcase the composer-conductor-pianist-curator’s many interests and talents on various collaborative levels. In addition to conducting the BSO, he has performed as pianist with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, with tenor Ian Bostridge in Schubert’s *Winterreise*, directed the Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood, performed as solo pianist with the BSO, and conducted the TMC Orchestra.

The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra is just the latest in the series of large-scale, high-profile orchestral and dramatic projects that have dominated Adès’s compositional activity in the 2000s. These have included his operas *The Tempest*, based on Shakespeare’s play and first performed in 2004 at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and *The Exterminating Angel*, based on the film by Luis Buñuel and premiered in 2016 at the Salzburg Festival, which commissioned it along with the Royal Opera in London, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Danish Royal Opera. Between and concurrent with these undertakings were his Violin Concerto, *Concentric Paths* (2005); the piano concerto *In Seven Days* (2008); the orchestral works *Tevot* (2007) and *Polaris* (2010); *Totentanz* for mezzo-soprano, baritone, and orchestra (2013), and *Lieux retrouvés* for cello and orchestra (2016). He made a foray into film music, writing the score for Wash Westmoreland’s widely released 2018 biopic *Colette*, starring Keira Knightley as the French writer; created *The Exterminating Angel* Symphony based on music from the opera, and composed a ballet score based on Dante’s *Commedia*.

Adès has continually developed his art via traditional compositional genres and, occasionally, stylistic mimicry. His *Asyla* is a symphony in all but name, though by not calling it a symphony he could deflect direct comparisons to the genre. His concertos for violin (*Concentric Paths*) and piano (the eight-minute *Concerto Conciso* from 1997 as well as *In Seven Days*), though acknowledged as concertos, are works with perspectives unique to themselves. *In Seven Days*, for example, doubles as a tone poem on the creation myth from the Book of Genesis. The overall form is far removed from the concertos of Mozart, Brahms, or even Ravel.

By contrast, Adès’s approach to his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra—as its unleavened title hints—comes from the very heart of the piano genre: it is a “PROPER” piano concerto of a sort that Gerstein suggests we’ve seen very few of since the days of Bartók (without dismissing the significance of such works as Ligeti’s Piano Concerto, among others). The three-movement, fast-slow-fast overall form has its roots in the Classical tradition. Adès employs clearly audible thematic ideas with an almost traditional opposition of characters, e.g., the rhythmically charged opening piano idea in contrast with the “more expressive second subject.” That he calls the second subject a “second subject”—synonymous with “theme” in musical parlance—is telling, redolent of descriptions of sonata form. The concerto even calls for solo cadenzas.

Adès’s musical voice suffuses the piece, deploying rigorous craft in the service of musical fluidity and expressiveness. The flexibility of meter and rhythm is characteristic: the careful, unusual notation belies the push-pull of the rhythm, a composed rubato typical of Adès’s music. The concerto’s harmonic clarity, idiosyncratically tonal and developing with organic rigor, is also Adès through and through. The orchestra is brilliant and sparkling but also supplies dimension and depth. Its colors and harmonies often seem to have been catalyzed by the piano’s moods and material. (The composer’s own note on his piece appears below.)

After hearing hints of what the concerto might be like for months, Gerstein first saw it in substantially completed form at Tanglewood in 2018 when visiting Adès socially with his family. The composer pointed to a score on the piano, saying, “there’s your concerto,” and was persuaded to talk and play through parts of it. Since receiving the completed score, Gerstein said the process of learning it proceeded in a very “21st-century” way—he’d text or email Adès a flurry of questions, or record a snippet of video on his phone to ask about his approach to a particular passage. When they were able to meet in person with Gerstein playing through the solo part, Adès would lean over his shoulder to make infinitesimal adjustments in pencil to chord spacings or rhythms. As for its challenges, Gerstein says they’re “no joking”: the concerto calls for “piano playing on a grand scale, very virtuosic,” but, after years of working with Adès, the composer’s music has become a natural part of Gerstein’s own style.

Robert Kirzinger

Composer and writer Robert Kirzinger is the BSO's Director of Program Publications.

Thomas Adès on his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

The first movement *Allegro moderato* opens with a statement of the theme by piano and then *tutti*. A march-like bridge passage leads to the more expressive second subject, first played by the piano and then taken up by the orchestra. The development section interrogates the first theme before an octave mini-cadenza leads to the recapitulation *ff*. There is then a solo cadenza based on the second subject, first played tremolo and then over many octaves, the piano joined first by horn and then by the full orchestra. The movement ends with a coda based on the first theme and the march.

The second movement *Andante gravemente* consists of a chordal introduction and a melody, which is joined by a countermelody, and a second idea with a simple falling melody over rising harmony. The first melody reappears, leading to a *fortissimo* climax, subsiding to a final statement of the original theme and a coda based on the countermelody.

The finale *Allegro giocoso* begins with a three-chord call to arms, and then a tumbling theme for piano and orchestra, which is interrupted by the blustering entry of a clarinet solo, heralding a burlesque canon. There is a good deal of argument, with frequent differences of opinion as regards key, brought to an end by the call to arms. Eventually the piano takes up a new theme in the style of a ball bouncing downstairs and develops it to a chorale climax. The tumbling material is developed, and the call to arms is heard in multiple directions leading to an impasse, a winding down of tempo, and a new slow (*Grave*) section in three time with a new falling theme. This leads to a precipice which the piano falls off with the original tumbling theme, and a coda lining up all the other themes for a final resolution on the call to arms.

Thomas Adès

Maurice Ravel

La Valse, Poème chorégraphique

Joseph Maurice Ravel was born on March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, near Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Basses-Pyrénées, in the Basque region of France just a short distance from the Spanish border, and died on December 28, 1937, in Paris. Ravel composed *La Valse* in 1919 and 1920, basing it on sketches he made before the war for a symphonic poem with the intended title *Wien* ("Vienna"). Ravel and Alfredo Casella performed a two-piano version of *La Valse* in November 1920 at a concert of Arnold Schönberg's Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna. The orchestral version was given its premiere by Camille Chevillard and the Lamoureux Orchestra of Paris on December 12 that year.

The score for *La Valse* calls for 2 flutes and piccolo (doubling third flute), 2 oboes and English horn (doubling third oboe), 2 clarinets and bass clarinet, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, triangle, tambourine, side drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, tam-tam, crotales, 2 harps, and strings.

Ravel found it difficult to return to normal work after the ravages of the First World War. Quite aside from the long interruption in his compositional activity and the loss of many friends, he was suffering from a recurring insomnia that plagued him for the rest of his life and played a considerable role in the dramatic reduction of new works. He had already started sketching a symphonic poem that was intended to be a musical depiction of Vienna; naturally it was a foregone conclusion to cast the work as a grand orchestral waltz. Ravel had never yet visited the Austrian capital (he was only to do so in 1920, after finishing his big waltz composition), but he "knew" Vienna through the composers, going back to Schubert and continuing with the Strauss family and many others who had added a special Viennese lilt to the waltz. (In this sense Ravel was as familiar with Vienna as Bizet and Debussy were with Spain when they composed what many regard as the most convincing "Spanish" music ever written.)

The first sketches for *Wien* apparently date from 1907, when Ravel was completing another musical travelogue, the *Rapsodie espagnole*. He began orchestrating the work during 1914 but ceased after the outbreak of hostilities; he complained in his letters that the times were not suitable for a work entitled "Vienna." After the war, Ravel was slow to take up the composition again. Only a commission from Serge Diaghilev induced him to finish it, with the new title *La Valse, Poème chorégraphique*, and intended for production by the Russian Ballet. When the score was finished, however, Diaghilev balked. He could see no balletic character in the music, for all its consistent exploitation of a dance meter, and he refused to produce the ballet after all. (This marked the end of good relations between the composer and the impresario.)

So *La Valse* was first heard in concert form; only in 1928 did Ida Rubenstein undertake a ballet production of the score, for which Ravel added a stage direction: “An Imperial Court, about 1855.” The score bears a brief scenic description:

Clouds whirl about. Occasionally they part to allow a glimpse of waltzing couples. As they gradually lift, one can discern a gigantic hall, filled by a crowd of dancers in motion. The stage gradually brightens. The glow of chandeliers breaks out *fortissimo*.

The hazy beginning of *La Valse* perfectly captures the vision of “clouds” that clear away to reveal the dancing couples. The piece grows in a long crescendo, interrupted and started again, finally carried to an energetic and irresistible climax whose violence hints at far more than a social dance.

Ravel’s date of “1855” for the *mise-en-scène* was significant. It marked roughly the halfway point of the century of Vienna’s domination by the waltz—the captivating, carefree, mind-numbing dance that filled the salons, the ballrooms, and the inns, while the whole of Austrian society was slowly crumbling under an intensely reactionary government, the absolutism of Emperor Franz Joseph, who was twenty-five in 1855 and reigned until the middle of the First World War. The social glitter of mindless whirling about concealed the volcano that was so soon to explode. Ravel’s *La Valse* has the captivating rhythms in full measure, but the music rises to an expressionistic level of violence, hinting at the concealed rot of the society. Would *La Valse* have been different if composed before the horrors of the war? Who can tell? In any case, consciously or not, Ravel’s brilliantly orchestrated score captures the glitter and the violence of a society that, even as he was composing, had passed away.

Steven Ledbetter

Steven Ledbetter, a freelance writer and lecturer on music, was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

The American premiere of La Valse was given on October 28, 1921, with Alfred Hertz conducting the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

The first Boston Symphony performances of La Valse were on January 13 and 14, 1922, with Pierre Monteux conducting. Andris Nelsons led the most recent BSO performances, at Symphony Hall in April 2016, on tour in Germany and Austria in May 2016, and at Tanglewood in July 2019.

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.

Thomas Adès’s website, www.thomasades.com, is the most comprehensive source for up-to-date information about the composer. Basic information can also be found on the websites of his publisher, Faber Music (fabermusic.com), and his record label, EMI Classics (emiclassics.com). Published in November 2021 is the specialist-oriented but useful *Thomas Ades Studies*, edited by Edward Venn and Philip Stoecker (Cambridge University Press). *Thomas Adès: Full of Noises, conversations with Tom Service* (2012), presents Adès as a widely knowledgeable polemicist and offers some commentary on method and on specific pieces (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Tom Service is a respected and thoughtful English critic writing for *The Guardian*. The brief Adès article in *New Grove II*, originally written more than a dozen years ago and not yet updated, was written by Arnold Whittall.

Kirill Gerstein’s recording of Thomas Adès’s Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with the composer conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra was taken from the work’s world premiere performances in March 2019 (Deutsche Grammophon); the disc was nominated for three Grammy Awards. Gerstein and Adès’s performance with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra of his earlier piano concerto *In Seven Days* was released in 2020 along with the two-piano Concert Paraphrase on *Powder Her Face* with Gerstein and Adès, pianos, and several solo works (myrios classics). Adès was both soloist and conductor in his tiny 1997 *Concerto Conciso* for piano and ensemble in a recording with the London Sinfonietta (EMI). The composer’s three operas—*Powder Her Face*, *The Tempest*, and *The Exterminating Angel*, are all available on CD or video. Adès released a recital of works by Grieg, Busoni, Janáček, Stanchinsky, Kurtág, and Castiglioni, and, with tenor Ian Bostridge, Janáček’s song cycle *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* (both EMI). With cellist Steven Isserlis he recorded works by Liszt, Fauré, Kurtág, Janáček, and Adès (Hyperion). As conductor, Adès led the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and various soloists in Gerald Barry’s opera *The Importance of Being Earnest*, recorded live in concert performances in 2012 (NMC). He also recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Britten Sinfonia paired with works by Gerald Barry.

The Cambridge Companion to Berg, edited by Anthony Pople, is a useful source of information on the composer and his music (Cambridge paperback). The best general studies of the composer's life and music are Douglas Jarman's *The Music of Alban Berg* (University of California) and George Perle's two-volume *The Operas of Alban Berg*, which deals with the non-operatic music as well (also University of California). Jarman also provided the Berg entry for the 2001 edition of *The New Grove*. Perle's 1980 Grove entry on Berg was reprinted in *The New Grove Second Viennese School: Schoenberg, Webern, Berg* (Norton paperback). Willi Reich's somewhat hagiographic biography of Berg includes Reich's analyses of Berg's works in consultation with the composer, including an essay on the Three Pieces for Orchestra. Mark DeVoto's extensive analysis of the Three Pieces and an essay on the March movement that appeared in the journal *Perspectives of New Music* 22, 1983-84, can be found on DeVoto's website (www.tufts.edu/~mdevoto).

Recordings of the Three Pieces include those by conductor Claudio Abbado with the Vienna Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon); Pierre Boulez with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Sony), Sir Colin Davis with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (Philips), Antal Dorati with the London Symphony Orchestra (Mercury Living Presence), Daniele Gatti with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (RCO), Michael Gielen with the SWR Symphony Orchestra (Hänssler), Herbert von Karajan with the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), James Levine with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra (Sony), Hans Rosbaud with the SWF Symphony Orchestra Baden-Baden in a very early recording (Deutsche Grammophon), and Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra (SFS Media).

Roger Nichols's *Ravel*, published in 2011 (Yale University Press), replaced his earlier biography of the composer that was part of the "Master Musicians" series. Nichols also assembled *Ravel Remembered*, which brings together recollections from musicians and non-musicians who knew the composer personally (Farrar Straus & Giroux). Gerald Larner's *Maurice Ravel* is one of the many well-illustrated volumes in the biographical series "20th-Century Composers" (Phaidon paperback). Also useful are *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*, edited by Deborah Mawer (Cambridge University Press); Arbie Orenstein's *Ravel: Man and Musician* (Dover); Orenstein's *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews* (also Dover), and Benjamin Ivry's *Maurice Ravel: a Life* (Welcome Rain). Michael Steinberg's program notes on both of Ravel's piano concertos are in his compilation volume *The Concerto—A Listener's Guide* (Oxford paperback).

Jean-Yves Thibaudet recorded Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon) and with Charles Dutoit and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Decca). The Boston Symphony Orchestra recorded Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with pianist Leon Fleisher under Seiji Ozawa's direction in 1990 (Sony Classical). Also noteworthy are the recordings of both Ravel piano concertos by Pierre-Laurent Aimard with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon), Jean-Efflam Bavouzet with Yan Pascal Tortelier and the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Chandos), Philippe Entremont also with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra (Sony), Yuja Wang with Lionel Bringuier and the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon), and Krystian Zimerman also with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon). A noteworthy historic release paired the two Ravel piano concertos in recordings with their original soloists: Marguerite Long plays the G major concerto with Ravel conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra, from 1932, and Paul Wittgenstein, for whom it was written, plays Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand with Bruno Walter conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, from 1937 (Urania).

There have been five commercial recordings by the Boston Symphony Orchestra of *La Valse*: from 1930 under Serge Koussevitzky; from 1955 (monaural) and 1962 (stereo) under Charles Munch (both RCA), from 1974 under Seiji Ozawa (Deutsche Grammophon), and from 1995 under Bernard Haitink (Philips). An exciting 1962 Munch/BSO broadcast is in the 12-disc box "Boston Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Hall Centennial Celebration: From the Broadcast Archives 1943-2000." Other choices of varying vintage include Ernest Ansermet's with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (Decca), Pierre Boulez's with the Berlin Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon), Philippe Jordan's with the Orchestre de l'Opéra National de Paris (Warner Classics), Yannick Nézet-Séguin's with the Rotterdam Philharmonic (EMI), and François-Xavier Roth's with Les Siècles (harmonica mundi).

Robert Kirzinger/Marc Mandel

GUEST ARTISTS

Thomas Adès

Thomas Adès, CBE, is the BSO's Deborah and Philip Edmundson Artistic Partner, a position to which he was appointed in 2016. His activities with the BSO include conducting the orchestra as well as the Tanglewood Music

Center Orchestra, performing as pianist with BSO and TMC musicians, and curating Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music.

Born in London in 1971, Mr. Adès is renowned as both composer and performer, working regularly with the world's leading orchestras, opera companies, and festivals. His compositions include three operas, the most recent of which, *The Exterminating Angel*, premiered at the 2016 Salzburg Festival and has been performed at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and the Royal Opera House, London. His orchestral works include *Asyla*, *Tevot*, *Polaris*, the Violin Concerto *Concentric Paths*, and the piano concerto *In Seven Days*. His Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, composed for Kirill Gerstein and commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was premiered in March 2019 under the composer's direction and has received worldwide acclaim. The live recording, released by Deutsche Grammophon with the BSO's recording of Adès's *Totentanz* for mezzo-soprano, baritone, and orchestra, was nominated for three Grammy awards. He conducted the premiere of his ballet *The Dante Project* with the Royal Ballet in October 2021, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic with Gustavo Dudamel will give the American premiere this April.

Mr. Adès appears regularly with such ensembles as the Los Angeles and London philharmonic orchestras, the Boston, London, BBC, and City of Birmingham symphony orchestras, the Royal Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, and Czech Philharmonic. In opera, in addition to *The Exterminating Angel*, he has conducted *The Rake's Progress* at the Royal Opera House and the Zürich Opera, *The Tempest* at the Metropolitan Opera and Vienna State Opera, and Gerald Barry's *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* in Los Angeles (world premiere) and in London (European premiere). Engagements as pianist include solo recitals at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium and Wigmore Hall in London and concerto appearances with the New York Philharmonic and the BSO. Mr. Adès's many awards include the Grawemeyer Award for *Asyla* (1999), Royal Philharmonic Society large-scale composition awards for *Asyla*, *The Tempest*, and *Tevot*, Ernst von Siemens Composers' prize for *Arcadiana*, and British Composer Award for *The Four Quarters*. His recording of *The Tempest* from the Royal Opera House (EMI) won the Contemporary category of the 2010 *Gramophone* Awards and his DVD of the production from the Metropolitan Opera was awarded the Diapason d'Or de l'année (2013), a Grammy for Best Opera recording, and Music DVD Recording of the Year (2014 ECHO Klassik Awards). His *The Exterminating Angel* won the World Premiere of the Year at the International Opera Awards (2017). In 2015 he was awarded the prestigious Léonie Sonning Music Prize and in January 2021 he judged the Toru Takemitsu composition award. Mr. Adès coaches piano and chamber music annually at the International Musicians Seminar, Prussia Cove.

Mr. Adès's most recent appearances with the BSO were at Tanglewood in July 2021, leading the orchestra in Haydn's Symphonies Nos. 45 and 64, Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds, with Kirill Gerstein, and Adès's own *O Albion*. That summer he also led performances as part of the TMC's Festival of Contemporary Music. His most recent subscription concerts were in March 2019, conducting Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and the world premiere of his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with soloist Kirill Gerstein.

Kirill Gerstein

Pianist Kirill Gerstein's heritage combines the traditions of Russian, American and Central European music-making with an insatiable curiosity. In music from Bach to Adès, Gerstein's playing is distinguished by its clarity of expression, discerning intelligence and virtuosity, and an energetic, imaginative musical presence that places him at the top of his profession. Born in the former Soviet Union, Gerstein is an American citizen based in Berlin. Highlights of the 2021-22 season include performances of Kurtág, Beethoven, Strauss, and Rachmaninoff with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and NDR Elbphilharmonie under Alan Gilbert; Mozart with Camerata Salzburg and Andrew Manze; Schumann with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Karina Canellakis; Schoenberg with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and François-Xavier Roth; and all five Beethoven piano concertos over two nights with the Grand Rapids Symphony, among much else. In recital, he performs at London's Wigmore Hall; with his student Mao Fujita on tour in Japan; with Garrick Ohlsson on a U.S. tour; and in Budapest with the Hagen Quartet. Mr. Gerstein is on the faculty of Kronberg Academy and Professor of Piano at Berlin's Hanns Eisler Hochschule. Under the auspices of Kronberg Academy, he hosts "Kirill Gerstein invites," a series of free and open online seminars he started in 2018 and featuring conversations with leading musicians, artists, and thinkers including Thomas Ades, Deborah Borda, Brad Mehldau, Alex Ross, Emma Smith, and Elizabeth Wilson, among many others. Over the past two years, his decade-long relationship with Thomas Adès resulted in the release of two acclaimed recordings: the world premiere recording with the Boston Symphony Orchestra of Adès's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, written for Gerstein and released by Deutsche Grammophon; and a compendium of Adès's works for piano on myrios classics. Both garnered an impressive series of accolades, including a 2021 International Classical Music Award, a 2020 *Gramophone* Award, and three Grammy nominations. This season, he plays the concerto in

France, Belgium, and Russia with the composer conducting, in Italy with Sir Antonio Pappano, and in Brazil with Thierry Fischer. In May 2021 in Amsterdam, he premiered another new concerto written for him by the Austrian composer Thomas Larcher. Kirill Gerstein's latest recording is of Mozart four-hand piano sonatas with his mentor of 17 years, Ferenc Rados, for myrios classics. Born in 1979 in Voronezh, Russia, Kirill Gerstein attended one of the country's special music schools for gifted children and taught himself to play jazz by listening to his parents' record collection. Following a chance encounter with jazz legend Gary Burton in St. Petersburg when he was 14, he was invited as the youngest student to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied jazz piano in tandem with his classical piano studies. At age 16, Gerstein decided to focus on classical music completing his undergraduate and graduate degrees with Solomon Mikowsky at New York's Manhattan School of Music, followed by further studies with Dmitri Bashkirov in Madrid and Ferenc Rados in Budapest. Gerstein is the sixth recipient of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award, First Prize winner at the 10th Arthur Rubinstein Competition and an Avery Fisher Career Grant holder. In May 2021, he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Manhattan School of Music. Kirill Gerstein made his BSO and Tanglewood debuts in July 2010 performing the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1. His most recent appearances with the BSO were at Symphony Hall in March 2019, giving the world premiere of Thomas Adès's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, and at Tanglewood in July 2021, playing Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds, both with Thomas Adès conducting.

Credits and Further Information

First associate concertmaster Tamara Smirnova performs on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the "ex-Zazofsky," and James Cooke performs on a 1778 Nicolo 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.

In consideration of the performers and those around you, please turn off all electronic equipment during the performance, including tablets, cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms, messaging devices of any kind, anything that emits an audible signal, and anything that glows. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices and taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs or videos—are prohibited during the performance.