

Sunday, July 31, 2:30pm | The Boston Symphony Association of Volunteers
Concert

Koussevitzky Music Shed

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ANDRIS NELSONS, conductor

Elizabeth OGONEK

Starling Variations (2022)

(world premiere; co-commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, Music Director, supported in part by the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency)

FARRENC

Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 36

Adagio—Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Scherzo. Vivace

Finale. Allegro

{Intermission}

BEETHOVEN

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 73, *Emperor*

Allegro

Adagio un poco mosso

Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

PAUL LEWIS, piano

Notes on the program

Elizabeth Ogonek (b.1989)

Starling Variations (2022)

Composition and premiere: Elizabeth Ogonek completed *Starling Variations* in late spring 2022. The piece was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, Music Director, supported in part by the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency; and the Lakes Area Music Festival in Minnesota. This is the world premiere performance.

Elizabeth Ogonek was a Composition Fellow of the Tanglewood Music Center in 2012; in 2016 her *Falling Up* for mixed ensemble was performed as part of Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music. She has been a faculty member at Oberlin Conservatory (2015-2021), and this fall returns for her second year as an assistant professor of composition at Cornell University. Ogonek attended Indiana University for her undergraduate degree, where she studied with Don Freund and Claude Baker. She worked with Donald Crockett and Stephen Hartke in earning her master's degree at the University of Southern California, and with Julian Anderson at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London for her doctoral degree. She studied with Michael Gandolfi at Tanglewood.

Ogonek was born in Minnesota, where her mother was a church organist. They moved to New York City when Elizabeth was 4 so her mother could pursue a graduate degree at Columbia University. Ogonek began piano lessons at 5, and though she says she was unenthusiastic about performance as an end in itself, she often improvised at the piano. She also sang in choirs. Because her experience with music was largely confined to long-dead composers, it didn't really occur to her that one *could* compose music until she attended the Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick, Massachusetts. She concentrated on piano but was fascinated by music theory and analysis and by the puzzle of realizing the Baroque shorthand notation of figured bass. When her theory teacher suggested she compose, she scoffed for two years until sitting down to attempt something.

Ogonek's first formal composition lessons were back in New York City with Matt Van Brink, who quickly opened her ears and awareness to the enormous plurality of contemporary classical music. It was at his suggestion that she applied to Indiana University, where, she says, the collegial and cooperative atmosphere in the composition

department was ideal for her growth. She was inspired to learn while at Indiana, where the composer Augusta Read Thomas gave guest lectures, that there were American women composers both making a living as composers *and* teaching, having discovered very few women on the faculties of major music programs. (This situation has continued to improve even in the short time since Ogonek's college years.)

Ogonek's growth was swift: she was unusually young for Tanglewood's composition program, which typically accepts composers in their late 20s and 30s. Only four years later, at age 27, she began (with Samuel Adams) a three-year position as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which entailed not only composing for the CSO but also programming and advocating for other composers. The CSO commissioned two large-ensemble works and an orchestral piece, *All These Lighted Things*, that Riccardo Muti premiered and took on tour with the orchestra. The London Symphony Orchestra commissioned her *as though birds* and *Sleep & Unremembrance* as well as giving the European premiere of *All These Lighted Things*. She has worked with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, the FLUX Quartet, pianist Xak Bjerken, and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, which premiered her *Cloudline* in August 2021 at the BBC Proms in London. That work was co-commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She is currently at work on a new orchestra piece commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and scheduled for premiere in January 2023.

Because of its virtually unlimited resources, the orchestra is for Ogonek the most interesting of musical media, and she's attuned to the differences among various ensembles. Although this is her first time working directly with the BSO, during her time at Walnut Hill she attended concerts at Symphony Hall as often as she could, experiencing her first Brahms symphony cycle, big works by Mahler, and other orchestral staples. She comes to this new commission excited about what the orchestra's individual instrumentalists and conductor will bring to the table.

Ogonek considers her Proms piece, *Cloudline*, the first part of an orchestral triptych on the broad theme of "looking up." *Starling Variations* is the second; the San Francisco piece will be the third. Whereas *Cloudline* "had some weird things" in it, including unusual techniques and explicit microtones, in *Starling Variations* she arrived at simpler, more economical ways of creating novel sounds, mostly through imaginative and non-traditional ways of combining instruments. An example might be reversing the expected positions of high and low instruments—putting, say, bass clarinet and piccolo in the same range in upper treble clef, or placing the trombones higher than the oboes. The sound from each instrument is outside its typical timbre and, in combination, might be quite striking. The idea of recasting the expected also extends to other aspects of the process such as harmony and rhythm or the shape of gesture and phrase.

The key image for *Starling Variations* is the dynamic group flight known as murmuration, in which hundreds of the birds swoop and dive, separate and recombine in ways that resemble the flow of fluids. Without attempting purely to illustrate that phenomenon, Ogonek creates five episodes or "variations," each of which represents a new murmuration in the orchestra and a new musical mood. Indications in the score call for "trippy, psychedelic," "like scurrying chipmunks," and "eerie, still," among others. The murmuration analogy lends itself to different orchestral sections moving at different speeds and in different directions, the opposition or combination of high versus low, and the melding or breaking apart of distinct timbral groups (winds, strings, brass, percussion, and subsets of each). The resulting piece is, sonically, a brilliant ensemble essay that encapsulates the particle-to-wave magic found in so many great works for orchestra.

ROBERT KIRZINGER

Composer and writer ROBERT KIRZINGER is the Boston Symphony's Director of Program Publications.

Louise Farrenc (1804-1875)

Symphony No. 3 in G Minor, Op. 36

Composition and premiere: Farrenc wrote her G minor symphony in 1847. The premiere was given by the Orchestre de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire in 1849. This is the first Boston Symphony Orchestra performance of music by Farrenc and the first time her work has been performed at Tanglewood.

The recent popularity of Louise Farrenc's Symphony No. 3 is indicative of the 21st-century revival of this French composer's music. The current increase in programming this piece, however, belies the hurdles that were present in producing an orchestral work in 19th-century France, when the symphony was out of favor and the opera ruled supreme. When the barriers Farrenc surmounted as a female composer are added to this equation, the positive reception of the symphony during her lifetime holds even greater significance.

Farrenc (née Jeanne-Louise Dumont) was known primarily as a composer of piano works. She entered the Paris Conservatoire at age 15 to pursue piano performance, the more typical domain of female musicians at that time. Women were not yet allowed to study composition formally, but she was able to arrange for private lessons with composer and professor Anton Reicha, developing a style with German Romantic and Classical influences. She paused her studies at age 17 when she married flautist Aristide Farrenc and they embarked on a concert tour together. Eventually, they settled back in Paris, where her husband opened a successful publishing company, also helping to further her compositional career with the publication of many of her piano works, starting in 1825.

Farrenc returned to the Conservatoire to become a professor of piano, remaining there for thirty years and with her daughter Victorine among her prized pupils. Her professorship is recognized as historically significant for at least two reasons: she was the only woman to hold a permanent post of her rank during the entire 19th century, and she is an early example of a woman asking for, and receiving, equal pay to that of her male colleagues, which she did following the successful premiere of her Nonet in 1850. While Farrenc continued teaching until two years before her death at age 71, the latter part of her career changed course after the tragic death of her daughter due to illness in 1859. Farrenc turned away from composition and performance, and she and her husband focused on compiling a multi-volume musical anthology as part of their interest in historical keyboard revival initiatives.

Farrenc's large-scale orchestral compositions were part of her later oeuvre, with two overtures written in 1834 and three symphonies written in the 1840s. They all remained unpublished during her lifetime but were performed multiple times across Europe. She wrote her Symphony No. 3 in G Minor in 1847, but it was not performed until two years later, by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire; the delay was perhaps due to the reluctance in French musical circles to produce symphonic works. Over the course of the next few years, however, it was performed again in Paris as well as in Geneva and Brussels.

The intensity of the symphony is palpable from the start. After an oboe ushers in a slow introduction, tinged with dark melancholy, the ensemble delves into a swirling triple meter for a robust statement of the main theme in unison strings. The movement develops energetically, picking up the pace even more with a final burst of energy in the coda. In contrast, the second movement Adagio opens with a smooth, lyrical clarinet melody, supported by horns, bassoon, and timpani. This movement provides a simple and elegant interlude, building gradually but overall remaining serene and unruffled. The third movement Scherzo begins with quiet tiptoeing in the strings but has a forward momentum and excitement constantly bubbling below the surface, paused only during the central woodwind trio. The decisive unison strings that open the final movement signal a return to a darker, bold energy. The ensemble pursues the twists and turns of thematic development with a vigor worthy of this Romantic-inflected symphony, ending with three triumphant final chords.

PAMELA FEO

Pamela Feo is a part-time Lecturer at Boston University specializing in fin-de-siècle French music, and an arts administrator with the North End Music & Performing Arts Center. She was the Tanglewood Publications Fellow in 2013.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Opus 73, *Emperor*

Composition and premiere: Beethoven composed the *Emperor* Concerto in 1809; the first known performance was given in Leipzig on November 28, 1811, by pianist Friedrich Schneider, with Johann Philipp Christian Schulz conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra. The first BSO performance featured Carl Baermann under the direction of Georg Henschel on January 28, 1882, during the BSO's first season. The first Tanglewood performances were Julius Katchen's with Eleazar de Cavalho leading the Berkshire Music Center Orchestra; the BSO's first performance here took place the following year, with Serge Koussevitzky and soloist Jacob Lateiner. Emanuel Ax was soloist with Andris Nelsons and the BSO in the most recent Tanglewood performance, on July 10, 2021.

Beethoven has always had a reputation as a revolutionary: "The Man Who Freed Music" and so on. In his lifetime, the era of the French Revolution and its aftermath, that radical frisson earned him his most fervent supporters—mainly among socially and artistically progressive Romantics—and also his bitterest enemies. There is no question that he brought a bold and singular new voice to Western music, and there is no better example than the *Emperor* Concerto. Yet a close look at the progress of his work in each of his genres, including the concertos, shows an artist better described as an *evolutionary*. As a practical and professional matter, until he saw his path clearly he was not going to issue ambitious work to challenge the competition past or present. His first two piano concertos are a case

in point. They are very much late-18th-century, though with novel touches that at the time raised eyebrows. His Third Concerto, later recognized as the transition to the mature Beethovenian voice of the last two piano concertos, is the most audibly indebted to Mozart.

Meanwhile, Beethoven generally respected the performing traditions of a given genre. Piano sonatas were expected to be played in private venues, so he never performed a sonata on the public stage. When he took up concertos, he created them as the time understood them: pieces to show off himself or the virtuosos they were written for. This is the milieu in which his first three piano concertos were created; all of them are vehicles for his virtuoso career, more *au courant* than “revolutionary.” With the Fourth Concerto of 1806, he was ready to make his statement: from the radical step of starting with the soloist (though Mozart had done that too) to the brooding, inward quality of the solo opening, the Fourth Concerto was the kind of epochal new take on tradition that his Third Symphony (*Eroica*) and *Razumovsky* string quartets had been.

As usual for a composer/performer, Beethoven himself premiered the Fourth Concerto, in 1807. By that point, however, his days as a virtuoso were ending. His hearing had been declining for years, and he had made the transition from composer/pianist to composer, period. After this he never performed a major work in public again. So he did not premiere the Piano Concerto No. 5, Opus 73, later dubbed *Emperor*, written in 1808-09, and first performed in November 1811.

The concerto is dedicated to his most generous and distinguished patron, Archduke Rudolph of Austria, who was a Beethoven pupil in piano and composition. The majestic quality that earned the concerto its name is sometimes credited to the influence of its dedicatee and his exalted position—he was brother of the emperor. More relevantly, Rudolph got the dedication of what was dubbed the *Archduke* Trio, which is elegant and aristocratic in tone. But in fact Beethoven dedicated many pieces to Rudolph, including the Fourth Piano Concerto, and their characters range widely. Some have found a connection of the Fifth’s tone to its being written in the middle of a war frenzy—Napoleon’s latest advance and his occupation of Vienna. But the exalted tone of the piece would hardly connect to Beethoven’s feelings toward the war and the occupation, of which he wrote, “What a destructive, disorderly life I see and hear around me, nothing but drums, cannons, and human misery in every form.”

A more likely reason for the tone of the Fifth Concerto is simply that Beethoven had written nothing like it, and he wanted maximum variety from his output in a given genre; for example, the Sixth Symphony, the *Pastoral*, is virtually the anti-Fifth. Like most Beethoven works, the *Emperor* Concerto lays out its essential character and ideas in the first seconds. It is in E-flat major, often a heroic key for him, and so it is here. We hear a *fortissimo* chord from the orchestra, which summons bravura torrents of notes from the piano. The radical step here is less the idea of beginning with the soloist than the cadenza-like quality, which will mark much of the solo part (and which is why the usual concluding cadenza is omitted). A second towering chord from the orchestra is answered by more heroic peals from the piano, this time sinking to some quiet *espressivo* phrases that foreshadow the second movement.

Only then does the orchestra set out on the leading theme, in a grand and sweeping military style. By now it’s clear that this piece is heroic in tone, and *the* hero is the soloist. The opening theme will dominate the movement. The appearance of a softly lilting second theme in the exotic key of E-flat minor presages a work marked by unusual key shifts, their effect ranging from startling to mysterious. At the end of the orchestral exposition the soloist sneaks back in on a rising chromatic dash that leads to a two-fisted proclamation of his own version of the orchestra’s theme. It dissolves into flashing garlands of notes, continuing the kind of endless cadenza of the solo part in what adds up to an enormous movement.

After an opening that is more consistently militant in style than in any other Beethoven concerto, the second movement unfolds in a serenely spiritual atmosphere, beginning with an eloquent theme in muted strings that Beethoven’s pupil Carl Czerny said was based on pilgrims’ hymns. It echoes the quiet *espressivo* phrases of the first movement’s opening. In turn, the gentle and spiritual quality of the second movement is punctuated with moments of the soloist’s first-movement bravura.

Picking up directly from the end of the slow movement, the rondo finale begins with a lusty, offbeat theme in the piano. Call its tone playfully heroic. As in the first movement, the opening theme dominates. Toward the end, thrumming timpani accompany what seems to be the approach of the final cadenza. But once again there is no cadenza because the soloist has been showing off in a quasi-improvisatory fashion all along. Beethoven’s last completed concerto ends with an ebullient burst of offbeat exclamations that land on the beat only at the last moment. A critic of the time noted that at the premiere the finale left the audience “in transports of delight,” and so it has done with audiences ever since.

JAN SWAFFORD

Jan Swafford is a prizewinning composer and writer whose most recent book, published in December 2020, is *Mozart: The Reign of Love*. His other acclaimed books include *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph*, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography*, *The Vintage Guide to Classical Music*, and *Language of the Spirit: An Introduction to Classical Music*. He is an alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, where he studied composition.

Guest Artist**Paul Lewis**

Paul Lewis is internationally regarded as one of the leading musicians of his generation. His cycles of core piano works by Beethoven and Schubert have received unanimous critical and public acclaim worldwide and consolidated his reputation as one of the world's foremost interpreters of the central European classical repertoire. His numerous awards have included the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year, two Edison awards, three *Gramophone* awards, the Diapason D'or de l'Annee, and the South Bank Show Classical Music award. He holds honorary degrees from Liverpool, Edge Hill, and Southampton universities, and was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours. Lewis appears regularly as soloist with the world's great orchestras, collaborating with the most well-respected conductors on the international circuit, and has performed several acclaimed Beethoven concerto cycles. In the 2018-2019 season, he concluded a two-year recital series exploring connections between the sonatas of Haydn, the late piano works of Brahms, and Beethoven's Bagatelles and *Diabelli* Variations. Lewis's recital career takes him to venues such as London's Royal Festival Hall, Alice Tully and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Berlin Philharmonie and Konzerthaus as well as some of the world's most prestigious festivals, including Tanglewood, Ravinia, Schubertiade, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lucerne, and the BBC Proms. His multi-award-winning discography for Harmonia Mundi includes the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, concertos, and the *Diabelli* Variations, among many others. Future recording plans include a multi-CD series of Haydn sonatas, Beethoven's Bagatelles, and works by Bach. Paul Lewis studied with Joan Havill at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London before going on to study privately with Alfred Brendel. In 2021 Paul Lewis became an Irish citizen. He is co-artistic director of Midsummer Music, an annual chamber music festival held in Buckinghamshire, UK. He is a passionate advocate for music education, and the festival offers free tickets to local schoolchildren. Lewis also gives master classes around the world alongside his concert performances. Paul Lewis made his Tanglewood and Boston Symphony Orchestra debuts in August 2012, as soloist in Mozart's A major piano concerto, No. 23, K.488, and his BSO subscription series debut in October 2013. In 2016 at Tanglewood he was soloist with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1. He appeared twice at Tanglewood in July 2019: with the BSO and Andris Nelsons in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 in A, K.414(385p), and in recital at Seiji Ozawa Hall.

The Boston Symphony Association of Volunteers Concert

Sunday, July 31, 2022

The Sunday afternoon performance is named in honor of the Boston Symphony Association of Volunteers (BSAV). In 1984, a group of dedicated BSO supporters founded the BSAV to ensure that all aspects of the organization are commensurate with the quality of music performed by the BSO on stage. Each year, some 600 Boston and Tanglewood volunteers express their commitment to the organization by sharing their talents, enthusiasm, and leadership. Together, they contribute more than 20,000 hours to further the BSO's mission.

There is almost no facet of the BSO that is untouched by its volunteer corps. BSAV members regularly serve as tour guides, hosts, ushers, and assistants in our shop. Whether they are Tanglewood concertgoers on the lawn or children having their first encounter with orchestral music at a Family Concert at Symphony Hall, BSAV members help patrons connect to the orchestra and are vital stewards of the organization.

The BSO's musicians, board, and staff are deeply grateful for their passionate service.

If you wish to know more about volunteering for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, please email bsav@bso.org.