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LOUISVILLE
ORCHESTRA



BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTO

Friday, April 27, 2018 at 11 am

Courtney Lewis, guest conductor

Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, op. 58

Andrew Hsu, piano

Schumann Symphony No. 2 in C Major, op. 61

BEETHOVEN PIANO CONCERTO

Though Beethoven and Schumann were separated by two decades, they shared a number of similarities. Both were German and influenced by literature (past and of their day), both had physical impairments that hampered their ability to perform and both struggled with depression. They also had a number of differences.

While Beethoven was a transitional figure between the Classical and Romantic eras, Schumann was firmly planted in the Romantic era. Their differences extended to their personal lives with Beethoven living as a bachelor his entire life and Schumann marrying and having 8 children. Like his friend Johannes Brahms, Schumann was in awe (and perhaps a little terrified) of the genius of Beethoven and it took support from another friend, Felix Mendelssohn, before Schumann would tackle the symphonic form. But both composers moved the musical world forward, challenging the establishment.

The Composers

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770—1827)



In most traditional time lines for classical music, only two composers have their deaths mark the end of an era; Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750 that ended the Baroque era and Ludwig van Beethoven in 1827 that ended the Classical era. One could argue that the death of Haydn in 1806 likely ended the traditional Classical era but Beethoven was the rare composer whose early compositional years were firmly entrenched in Classical roots but as his style evolved, he fathered in the Romantic era.

Born in Bonn, Germany on December 16, 1770, Beethoven's father and grandfather were both musicians as were many of their family friends so Beethoven was in good hands for his musical training. From an early age, it was obvious that Beethoven was quite gifted with his first public performance in March 1778 at the age of seven. At the age of nine, Beethoven began studying composition and by age thirteen, Beethoven had published his first compositions; a set of keyboard variations followed by three piano sonatas. Beethoven traveled to Vienna in 1787 perhaps hoping to study with Mozart but had to quickly return home when his mother became ill and subsequently died. Beethoven became responsible for his two younger brothers (his father Johann was struggling with alcoholism) and stayed in Bonn for the next five years. Through a friend, young Beethoven met the von Breuning family where he was exposed to German and classical literature (he also taught their children piano) as well as meeting Count Ferdinand von Waldstein who would become a lifelong friend and supporter.

In 1790, Beethoven met renowned composer Franz Joseph Haydn but to study with this composer, he had to move to Vienna which he did in 1792. While learning counterpoint from Haydn, he also studied with Antonio Salieri. With Mozart's passing in December 1791, there was speculation that Beethoven was the "heir apparent" and early compositions from this time period seemed to have been highly influenced by the Mozart style. By the late 1790s he began more public performances of his works—and earned enough to cover much of his expenses (the patronage system in Vienna was alive and well and Beethoven benefitted from many in the aristocracy who supported his work).

Beethoven's compositional output during this time included piano sona-

tas, his first two symphonies, six string quartets and various other pieces. He also began teaching piano to the daughters of Hungarian Countess Anna Brunsvik and fell in love with younger daughter, Josephine. It has been speculated that the mysterious “Immortal Beloved” letter was for her but that has never been confirmed and there are others for whom this title could apply.

In the midst of this success, Beethoven began losing his hearing and suffered from ringing in his ears (tinnitus) - this would eventually lead to profound deafness in his later years. Beethoven also had frequent and persistent health issues including chronic abdominal pain. These would often interrupt his compositional output (which was still prolific) but it was the hearing loss in particular that inhibited his ability to play publically (which was also a good source of income) in later years.

Up to 1802 is considered Beethoven’s early period—heavily influenced by Mozart and Haydn. These years included the previously mentioned compositions as well as the piano sonata known as the [Moonlight Sonata](#) and a full ballet ([The Creatures of Prometheus](#)). The middle period (1802 to approximately 1814) is known as the “Heroic” period (due to the scope of the works rather than a more traditional sense of the word heroic) beginning with his [Third Symphony “Eroica”](#). This period contained symphonies 3—8, more string quartets, piano sonatas (including [Waldstein](#) and [Appassionata](#)), [Fidelio](#) and many more varying compositions. His output was occasionally hampered by illness and war (Napoleon’s campaign) but his popularity in 1814 regained strength and he revised [Fidelio](#) as well as composing song cycles (some dedicated to Josephine). His personal life also got messier during this period with Josephine and then dealing with custody issues over his nephew Karl after Beethoven’s brother Carl died of tuberculosis in 1815.

By 1818, things seemed to be improving for Beethoven and he had more commissions but his hearing had deteriorated to the point that conversations had to be written down (there are a number of his “conversation books” that still exist). From 1815 to the composer’s death in 1827 was the late period of his composition and include his final symphony ([Ninth Symphony “Choral”](#)), the [Missa Solemnis](#), more piano works including the [Diabelli variations](#), several sonatas, and his final string quartets.

Beethoven’s final public concert was in 1824 and died on March 26, 1827. Even though he had multiple relationships, Beethoven never married and while there has been speculation he had an illegitimate daughter with Josephine (Minona), this has never been proven.

With Beethoven’s death, the Classical period in music history ended. Beethoven’s music would continue to inspire generations of composers including Johannes Brahms, Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz, Béla Bartók, Gustav Mahler and Igor Stravinsky to name a few.

Robert Schumann

(1810—1856)

Robert Schumann was born in Zwickau, Germany, the youngest of five children. Young Schumann began studying piano at age six and was composing by age seven. As a teenager, Schumann was influenced by a number of poet-philosophers including Goethe, Schiller, Byron and Jean Paul Richter. His musical influences were Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schubert. Schumann’s father supported his son’s musical interests but when he died in 1826, Schumann no longer had the support of his family and, at their insistence, ended up going to Leipzig to study law. Schumann spent his time in Leipzig studying piano with Friedrich Wieck and composing songs. This time also acquainted Schumann with Wieck’s nine-year-old daughter Clara, a piano prodigy who was embarking on her own concert career.



During his studies with Wieck, Schumann experienced numbness in the middle finger of his right hand. There has been much speculation on the origins of this numbness. It could've been due to over practicing as Schumann dreamed of being a concert pianist. Or this might have been due to Schumann's use of a unique split to supposedly to strengthen the hand. There has even been speculation that this may have occurred due to mercury poisoning to treat Schumann's syphilis. Whatever the reason, Schumann's hand did not improve and he had to abandon his desire to become a concert pianist. It was also during this time that Schumann began exhibiting a bipolar disorder that would plague him for the rest of his life.

While much of the 1830s was challenging for Schumann due to his health, it was also a period of growth that included founding the New Journal for Music, dabbling in program music (*Papillons*), and reviving interest in Mozart and Beethoven.

Schumann also supported contemporary composers Chopin and Berlioz but was not a fan of Liszt or Wagner. Schumann had a major depressive episode in 1833 after the deaths of his brother and sister-in-law from cholera but in the following year, things were looking up with Schumann's love life. Schumann, now twenty-four, was in love with the fifteen-year-old Clara Wieck but her father was vehemently opposed to the relationship. It would take winning a court case against Friedrich Wieck before Schumann could marry Clara but they prevailed and married in September 1840. Clearly inspired, Schumann composed one hundred thirty-eight songs in 1840 (including *Widmung*!).

The Schumanns would have eight children and Clara continued to tour as a concert pianist in between children. Throughout the 1840s, Robert composed several symphonies as well as a number of works for piano and even an opera. The decade ended with music inspired by the poet Byron and the *Manfred Overture* would become one of Robert's best known pieces. But the decade also saw Robert's continued struggle with phobias and depression.



Clara Schumann

In 1853, a young Johannes Brahms showed up at the Schumanns' door with an introductory letter from famed violinist Joseph Joachim. Brahms stayed with the Schumanns for several weeks and would become an invaluable friend. In February 1854, Robert began having visions and tried to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine River. He had himself committed for fear that he might harm Clara. Robert stayed in the sanatorium for more than two years before he died on July 29, 1856. Clara, left with seven living children, continued to tour to support the family and she and Brahms would champion Robert's work to the end of their lives.

The Works

Piano Concerto No. 4

On a very cold December 22, 1808 at Vienna's Theater an der Wien, a remarkable performance was about to begin that would see multiple premieres as well as a farewell. But before we get into that performance, we must back up two years when Beethoven began work on his *Piano Concerto No. 4*. In 1806, Beethoven was 4 years into his "middle" period and had shifted his thinking on composition; "I am not satisfied with the work I have done so far. From now on I intend to take a new way." This shift began with his *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major* "Eroica" that has become recognized as a ground-breaking symphony as well as the transitional work from the Classical styles of early Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart to the herald of the Romantic era.

But in 1806, Beethoven was on fire; compositionally speaking. During that year, Beethoven composed the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, his only [Violin Concerto in D Major](#), his [Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major](#), the three [Razumovsky](#) string quartets and the [32 Piano Variations in C minor](#) in addition to rewriting his opera [Fidelio](#).

The Piano Concert No. 4 was first and from some of Beethoven's initial sketches, he was thinking about this piece as early as 1804; in particular the first five bars.



Unlike most piano concertos that begin with an orchestral introduction, Beethoven begins this concerto with the solo piano and not in a bombastic sense but in this gentle, expressive five-bar phrase that would set the tone of the rest of the concerto. From Barry Coopers' *Beethoven*: "The five-bar phrase structure, with an isolated first note that seems introductory, reappears in the main theme of the second movement, and again in the third movement (although here it is notated at ten short bars), creating an unusually strong bond between the movements. The prominence of the note B is taken up in bar 6 with an unexpected B Major chord (which reappears in bar 6 of the second movement, though in an E minor context); similarly the A minor chord in bar 3 anticipates the one in bar 29, where the second main thematic idea of the first movement first appears. In addition, the four-note rhythmic figure in bars 1-2 is taken up and treated as one of the main motifs of the movement, reminding us of several other Beethoven works period where a similar four-note rhythm is used – notably the Fifth Symphony."

In the second movement, Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny suggested that "in this movement (which, like the entire concerto, belongs to the finest and most poetical of Beethoven's creations) one cannot help thinking of an antique dramatic and tragic scene, and the player must feel with what movingly lamenting expression his solo must be played in order to contrast with the powerful and austere orchestral passages." In the third movement, Beethoven finally adds the trumpets and timpani (who only play in this movement) to finish out the concerto with the grand finale.

Beethoven premiered this concerto for his patron, Prince Lobkowitz, at a private concert at the prince's mansion in March 1807. Then he put the concerto away until the public premiere on December 22, 1808. And this was no ordinary concert; this concert ran more than 4 hours and saw the premieres of multiple Beethoven works. The program for that evening included the public premieres of the Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Beethoven as pianist), [Symphony No. 6](#) and [No. 5](#) (they were in reverse order for the program with 6 premiering before 5), and the [Choral Fantasy](#) (for piano, orchestra and choir). And that's not all—the concert included Vienna premieres of the concert aria [Ab! perfido](#), 3 movements of the [Mass in C Major](#) and a solo keyboard improvisation performed by Beethoven.

And this would be the last public performance with Beethoven at the piano—his deafness at this point was becoming so problematic that continuing as a performer was impossible. While he could (and did) conduct for many years afterwards, he did not perform as a soloist in public again.

Symphony No. 2

Schumann began sketching this symphony in September 1845. Like Beethoven, Schumann was struggling with some major health issues that included fatigue, hallucinations, ringing in his ears (tinnitus), vertigo and depression. It was very likely that he suffered from bi-polar disorder but that was not an available diagnosis at the time. He had breakdowns throughout his life starting in 1828 but when he married Clara in 1840, the breakdowns seemed to abate for a time. Unfortunately in 1842, Schumann was overworked and exhausted and this led to a collapse. And by 1844, Schumann was virtually incapacitated. Clara wrote “Robert could not sleep a single night. His imagination painted him the most fearful pictures. Early in the morning I usually found him bathed in tears. He quite gave himself up.”

To pull himself out of this state, in 1845 Schumann turned to studying the counterpoint of Johann Sebastian Bach. He composed some small exercises and slowly began to find his compositional voice again. Composing a symphony was not new as he had composed two symphonies up to this point. You might ask yourself, if this is Symphony No. 2, how could he have composed two symphonies already and shouldn't this be No. 3? Well, Schumann had actually composed Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major “Spring” in 1841 as well as another symphony in D minor that would become Symphony No. 4 in D minor because it was heavily revised in 1851. So the second symphony he wrote and later revised became No. 4 and what became No. 2 was actually the third symphony he composed (his Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major “Rhenish” was composed in 1850).

In an 1845 letter to Felix Mendelssohn, Schumann wrote: “Drums and trumpets in C have been blaring in my head. I have no idea what will come of it.” And following with another letter to Mendelssohn in September 1845, Schumann wrote: “All writing is a severe strain on me. ... I itch and twitch every day in a hundred different places. A mysterious complaint — whenever the doctor tries to put his finger on the thing, it seems to take wings.” But by December Schumann began composing what would become Symphony No. 2 in C Major. In three weeks he had completed the symphony, but now he had to orchestrate it. This would take considerably longer because he had another bout of health issues in February that delayed orchestration. After a vacation, Schumann was finally able to complete the orchestration in October 1846 with publication in 1847.

In perhaps a nod to Beethoven's triumph over fate (or in this case, Schumann's will to overcome his maladies), Schumann commented “I would say that my resistant spirit had a visible influence on [the work] and it is through that that I sought to fight my condition,” he said. “The first movement is full of this combativeness, is very moody and rebellious in character.” But it's clear that the trumpets in C Schumann was hearing in his head translated to the opening of this symphony with the trumpets, horns and trombones in unison with the quiet opening fanfare.



Variations of this fanfare will be alluded to in all of the four movements. After the slow introduction, the movement continues into a highly energetic *Allegro non troppo*. Schumann opted to buck tradition with a light-hearted scherzo as the second movement before reaching the beautiful *Adagio* third movement. But the slow third movement isn't maudlin or sorrowful; it is more dignified and graceful. By the time Schumann began work on the fourth movement, his health was improving and that shows in the fourth movement finale with an extended coda. This movement also includes a new theme based loosely on Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* perhaps as a thank you to his loving wife Clara who encouraged Schumann to move from lieder to composing for orchestra.

Guest Artist

Courtney Lewis, guest conductor



With clear artistic vision, subtle musicality, and innovative programming, Courtney Lewis has established himself as one of his generation's most talented conductors. The 2016/17 season marks his second as Music Director of the Jacksonville Symphony. Previous appointments have included Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic, where he returns on subscription in the 2016/17 season; Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra, where he made his subscription debut in the 2011/12 season; and Dudamel Fellow with the

Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he debuted in 2011. From 2008 to 2014, Courtney Lewis was the music director of Boston's acclaimed Discovery Ensemble, a chamber orchestra dedicated not only to giving concerts of contemporary and established repertoire at the highest level of musical and technical excellence, but also bringing live music into the least privileged parts of Boston with workshops in local schools.

In the 2016/17 season he made his debut with the Dallas Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and return to the Colorado Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. Highlights of the 2015/16 included debuts with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, and Colorado Symphony, as well as assisting Thomas Adès at the Salzburg Festival for the world première of Adès's opera *The Exterminating Angel*.

Lewis made his major American orchestral debut in November 2008 with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, and has since appeared with the Atlanta Symphony, Washington National Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Houston Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, and Ulster Orchestra, among others.

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Lewis read music at the University of Cambridge during which time he studied composition with Robin Holloway and clarinet with Dame Thea King. After completing a master's degree with a focus on the late music of György Ligeti, he attended the Royal Northern College of Music, where his teachers included Sir Mark Elder and Clark Rundell.

Andrew Hsu, piano



Andrew Hsu
photo: Pete Checchia

Andrew Hsu is a critically acclaimed pianist and award-winning composer. Writing music characterized as “an amorphous cloud of dissonance, slow and vibrating” (New York Times) and “deliciously atmospheric, pulseless” (Oregon Arts-Watch), his compositions have been performed across the United States, including festivals such as the Aspen Music Festival and School, Chamber Music Northwest, the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, Music from Angel Fire and the Tanglewood Music Center. A 2014 Gilmore Young Artist, his pianism has been noted for his “incendiary account[s]” (New York Times) and “[channelling] Horowitz right down to the brilliant-yet-delicate high-treble sonority” (Philadelphia Inquirer).

Hsu is a recent recipient of the 2017 Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the 2016 Hermitage Prize from Aspen.

He was selected as one of seven participants of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute in November 2017. In April 2016, Jeffrey Milarsky and the Juilliard Orchestra gave the first performance of Hsu’s orchestral tone poem *vale* in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center as the recipient of the 2016 Arthur Friedman Prize at The Juilliard School. His compositions have collectively received numerous honors over the years, including several ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards and a BMI William Schuman Prize. Upcoming projects include commissions for clarinetist Yoonah Kim, harpist Héloïse Carlean-Jones and violinist Angelo Xiang Yu.

In Summer 2015, Hsu was invited to the exclusive New Fromm Players at Tanglewood, performing many works by living composers. He performed in the 2015–16 Gilmore Rising Star Series, and has appeared on the stages of Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Kimmel Center and Seiji Ozawa Hall, among others. An avid chamber musician, Hsu currently attends Marlboro Music.

Hsu is a C.V. Starr Doctoral Fellow at The Juilliard School, where he is a pupil of Matthias Pintscher. He received degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and Juilliard, where he held the Rising Star Annual and Kovner Fellowships and his mentors included pianists Gary Graffman and Eleanor Sokoloff, and composers Samuel Adler, Richard Danielpour, David Ludwig and Steven Stucky. He was a recipient of a Williamson Foundation for Music Grant in 2013 and 2014.

Hsu's brother is Daniel Hsu, critically-acclaimed Asian-American pianist.

Connecting the dots

How to use this concert experience in the classroom

While we are unsure as to whether or not heredity played a role in Beethoven's health, but it is possible that Schumann inherited some of his mental and physical ailments. For Beethoven, it may have been environmental factors that led to his hearing loss. And for both composers, the medical science of the day used heavy elements like mercury for treatment. Today we know that mercury (aka "quicksilver") is toxic but in ancient medicine, it was used as an elixir as well as topical treatment. Mercury has also been used as a treatment for sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, an antiseptic, as well as ointments and plasters for skin diseases.

Look at Beethoven's family history to see if there were hereditary traits that contributed to his hearing loss or were there environmental causes or both. For Schumann, look at his family's history to see if there were hereditary trait that contributed to his physical or mental ailments as well as his phobias.

HS-LS3-1. Ask questions to clarify relationships about the role of DNA and chromosomes in coding the instructions for characteristic traits passed from parents to offspring.

LS1.D: INFORMATION PROCESSING

How do organisms detect, process, and use information about the environment?

An organism's ability to sense and respond to its environment enhances its chance of surviving and reproducing. Animals have external and internal sensory receptors that detect different kinds of information, and they use internal mechanisms for processing and storing it. Each receptor can respond to different inputs (electromagnetic, mechanical, chemical), some receptors respond by transmitting impulses that travel along nerve cells. In complex organisms, most such inputs travel to the brain, which is divided into several distinct regions and circuits that serve primary roles, in particular functions such as visual perception, auditory perception, interpretation of perceptual information, guidance of motor movement, and decision making. In addition, some of the brain's circuits give rise to emotions and store memories. Brain function also involves multiple interactions between the various regions to form an integrated sense of self and the surrounding world.

Questions—How did Beethoven's increasing lack of auditory perception effect his ability to perform or to compose? Do you think the gradual hearing loss impacted Beethoven's ability as a composer or performer? If so, how?

How did Schumann's tinnitus (hearing constant pitch of C) impact his ability to compose? Schumann also struggled with motor movement in one hand—how did this impact his ability to perform? Do you think the treatment helped or hurt? Do you think the tinnitus impacted his overall mental health? If so, how?

By the end of grade 12. In complex animals, the brain is divided into several distinct regions and circuits, each of which primarily serves dedicated functions, such as visual perception, auditory perception, interpretation of perceptual information, guidance of motor movement, and decision making about actions to take in the event of certain inputs. In addition, some circuits give rise to emotions and memories that motivate organisms to seek rewards, avoid punishments, develop fears, or form attachments to members of their own species and, in some cases, to individuals of other species (e.g., mixed herds of mammals, mixed flocks of birds). The integrated functioning of all parts of the brain is important for successful interpretation of inputs and

generation of behaviors in response to them.

HS-LS3-2. Make and defend a claim based on evidence that inheritable genetic variations may result from (1) new genetic combinations through meiosis, (2) viable errors occurring during replication, and/or (3) mutations caused by environmental factors.

LS3.B: Variation of Traits

In sexual reproduction, chromosomes can sometimes swap sections during the process of meiosis (cell division), thereby creating new genetic combinations and thus more genetic variation. Although DNA replication is tightly regulated and remarkably accurate, errors do occur and result in mutations, which are also a source of genetic variation. Environmental factors can also cause mutations in genes, and viable mutations are inherited.

Environmental factors also affect expression of traits, and hence affect the probability of occurrences of traits in a population. Thus the variation and distribution of traits observed depends on both genetic and environmental factors.

Questions: Do you think either Beethoven or Schumann's health issues were related to a genetic variation? Or mutations caused by environmental factors? Did Beethoven's physiological structures in his ears contribute to the deafness? If so, do you think these structures were due to a genetic variation or environmental factors? Why?

What were the environmental factors that impacted Beethoven and Schumann's health?