





Wednesday, February 14, 2018, 8pm
Paramount Theatre, Oakland

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Nicola Benedetti, *violin and director*

Michael Gurevich, *concertmaster*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60 (1806)
Adagio – Allegro vivace
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 (1806)
Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Rondo: Allegro

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Ludwig van Beethoven
Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

Today, much of Beethoven's music sounds every bit as revolutionary as it did when was written. In the first years of the 19th century, new social impulses were surging through Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In those turbulent times, the first fully freelance composer of note was wresting musical expression from the grip of the aristocracy.

Two of the most iconic manifestations of Beethoven's struggle are his Third and Fifth Symphonies. One heroic, one tragic, both deal in the big gestures that aligned musical expression with the upheavals of the time. In between the two came a symphony that sounded rather different. Beethoven actually wrote his Fourth Symphony alongside work on his Fifth. The piece has been described variously as "delicate" and "shrinking." Perhaps it is best viewed not as a departure from the imperatives of the Third and Fifth, but as a catching of the breath in between them.

As with the Violin Concerto, to be heard later this evening, it is easy to miss the progressive characteristics in a piece that doesn't stampede or rail like its neighbours. In this symphony, Beethoven maintains the elements of surprise, shock, and suspense with which he had ensured audiences at his concerts would sit up and listen. But here, they are more guarded and obscured. As the Beethoven scholar Barry Cooper has observed, this symphony shows a far greater degree of integration between sections. It blurs its boundaries more.

We hear this in the symphony's opening movement. After a slow introduction full of suspense, the Allegro vivace seems to burst into life. A steady stream of boisterous music follows until the movement loses power and we hear ominous rumblings from the timpani, the tuned drums at the back of the orchestra.

This is an unusual gesture from Beethoven. Firstly because it is a percussion rather than a melody instrument that proceeds to herald the return of the opening music, with a 23-bar timpani rumble on the keynote, B flat. Secondly, because Beethoven creates a curiously stabilizing mixture of rootedness and expectation in

that timpani roll, an idea he would take further in the Violin Concerto.

The timpani come to the fore again in the second movement. We hear a graceful song over a pulsating accompaniment, both on strings to begin with. Not really music for drums, you might think. But Beethoven's timpani creep into the discourse once again, taking over that accompaniment figure entirely in the movement's closing bars.

Traditionally, symphonic third movements referenced aristocratic dances, a minuet alternating with a trio in three-time. As in his First Symphony, the republican Beethoven subverts his dances, obliterating them physically and aesthetically with cross-rhythms and syncopations. Point made.

All the musical themes presented so far are heard again in the symphony's final movement. But there are games in store here, as well. After a lone bassoon introduces a breakneck theme, the orchestra charges forward before appearing to completely lose power again, twice. The second time, the music stops completely. First violins play the same theme quietly and at half speed, the bassoon follows hesitantly, and suddenly the full orchestra lunges in again to bring the symphony to its close.

Some claim the Fourth Symphony sounds different because it is concerned more with arguments that are musical than social or philosophical. The final movement adds weight to this theory. Beethoven wrote the symphony quickly, over the summer, rocked by poor performances of his opera *Fidelio* and deeply worried by his brother Carl's ill-advised decision to marry. If Beethoven *had* sought to escape in "pure music," the result suggests it was a fruitful and happy place to be.

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61

Yet another piece was brewing inside Beethoven in 1806, one that also prompts thoughts of an emotional escape. In the very same notebooks as he was sketching the Fifth Symphony, Beethoven was playing with ideas for a work that would share some of its characteristics but would sound entirely different. It was a violin concerto in the sunny key of D Major, the

brightest and most contented orchestral work the composer would write.

The concerto was commissioned by Franz Clement, leader of the Theatre an der Wien's orchestra, which had introduced the composer's Third Symphony the year before. There was not a great deal of time separating Beethoven's completion of the piece in mid-December and Clement's booking to perform it later that month. Either way, the first performance was a notorious fiasco in which Clement resorted to showmanship in an attempt to maintain the audience's attention. It took the more committed partnership of violinist Joseph Joachim and conductor Felix Mendelssohn to rescue the concerto from obscurity, in London, almost 40 years later.

The demands placed on both Clement and Joachim were sizeable. Despite its cheerful nature, Beethoven's concerto is a tricky customer. It is also a piece from which many of our modern notions of virtuosity stem. Beethoven was insistent that the role of music in society be changed, an ideal he reflected musically as well as physically in his five piano concertos. The Violin Concerto may be genial and tender, but its solo line is a triumphant endorsement of individual will, spirit, and integrity that almost all subsequent concertos for the violin have built on.

Once again, we experience a determined but quiet sense of revolution in this music. And once again, the timpani are to the fore. Five rooted but understated drumbeats secure the concerto's foundations and are followed by a theme that does much the same via a combination of grandeur and economy. When the solo violin enters soon afterwards, it does so on the sharpened pitch of the keynote D, with Beethoven asking that it be played "sweetly."

This was an unorthodox way to begin a concerto but one that gave the piece its distinctively genial footing. These first pages establish the work's tonal and rhythmic centers of gravity despite—or perhaps because of—that semitone diversion. Listen for the return of the drumbeats, at pivotal moments, as the concerto proceeds (sometimes they are reimagined by the orchestra itself).

Another vital example of the concerto's unusual disposition comes in the middle movement. Here the violin presents variations on a contemplative theme over a muted accompaniment that includes touching pizzicatos. In Beethovenian terms, this is music of comparatively little action. But it rises to poignant climaxes before the strings hurl the music back into the home key with a sudden *fortissimo* outburst.

The soloist's cadenza—an improvised flourish—then places the orchestra on the rails of the playful final movement, which employs a theme Beethoven doesn't once feel the need to alter. The music charges along until it veers into a quiet diversion, and then into another strange key (A flat), before halting conclusively once and for all.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Three decades ago, a group of inquisitive London musicians took a long hard look at that curious institution we call the "orchestra," and decided to start again from scratch. They began by throwing out the rulebook. Put a single conductor in charge? No way. Specialize in repertoire of a particular era? Too restricting. Perfect a work and then move on? Too lazy. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was born.

And as this distinctive period-instrument ensemble began to get a foothold, it made a promise to itself. It vowed to go on questioning and inventing as long as it existed. Residencies at the Southbank Centre and Glyndebourne Festival encouraged an experimentalist bent. A major recording deal didn't iron out the quirks. Instead, the OAE examined musical compositions with more freedom and resolve than ever.

That creative thirst remains unquenched to this day. Informal evening performances now are redefining concert formats. Searching approaches to varied repertoire find the OAE working frequently with other symphony and opera orchestras. New generations of exploratory musicians are encouraged to join its ranks. Accomplished performances are now captured as recordings by the orchestra's own CD label. The OAE thrives internationally with a growing list of admirers from New York to Amsterdam.

—Andrew Mellor

Nicola Benedetti (*violin*) is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences with her innate musicianship and dynamic presence, coupled with her wide appeal as a high-profile advocate for classical music, has made her one of today's most influential classical artists.

With concerto performances at the heart of her career, Benedetti is much in demand as a guest with major orchestras and conductors around the world. Conductors with whom she has worked include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Jiří Bělohlávek, Stéphane Denève, Christoph Eschenbach, James Gaffigan, Hans Graf, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Jakub Hrůša, Kirill Karabits, Andrew Litton, Vladimir Jurowski, Zubin Mehta, Peter Oundjian, Donald Runnicles, Thomas Søndergård, Krzysztof Urbanski, Edo de Waart, Pinchas Zukerman, and Jaap van Zweden.

Benedetti enjoys working regularly with the finest orchestras and has collaborated with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC), Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Camerata Salzburg, Czech Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival, among others.

The summer of 2017 saw Benedetti make her debut at the Gstaad Menuhin Festival with Antonio Pappano and the Orchestra dell' Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. She returned to the BBC Proms with Thomas Søndergård and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and to the Edinburgh International Festival with Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra. This season she makes her debut with the Orchestre de Paris and collaborates with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Philadelphia Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Bremen Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, New World Symphony, and Baltimore Symphony.

Fiercely committed to music education and developing young talent, Benedetti has formed associations with schools, music colleges, and local authorities. In 2010 she became Sistema Scotland's official musical "Big Sister" for the Big Noise project, an initiative partnered with Venezuela's El Sistema (Fundación Musical Simón Bolívar). As a board member and teacher, Benedetti embraces her position of role model to encourage young people to take up music and work hard at it, and she continues to spread this message in school visits and master classes, not only in Scotland, but all around the world.

In addition, Benedetti has developed her own education and outreach initiative, The Benedetti Sessions, which gives hundreds of aspiring young string players the opportunity to rehearse, undertake, and observe master classes, culminating in a performance alongside Benedetti. She has presented The Benedetti Sessions at the Royal Albert Hall, Cheltenham Festival, and Royal Concert Hall Glasgow, and has plans to develop this project on an international scale.

Winner of Best Female Artist at both the 2012 and 2013 Classical BRIT Awards, Benedetti records exclusively for Decca (Universal Music). Her most recent recording of Shostakovich and Glazunov violin concertos has been met with critical acclaim.

Benedetti was awarded the Queen's Medal for Music in 2017, the youngest ever recipient, and was appointed as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2013 New Year Honours, in recognition of her international music career and work with music charities throughout the United Kingdom. In addition, she has received eight honorary degrees to date.

Born in Scotland of Italian heritage, Benedetti began violin lessons at the age of five with Brenda Smith. In 1997 she entered the Yehudi Menuhin School, where she studied with Natasha Boyarskaya. Upon leaving, she continued her studies with Maciej Rakowski and then Pavel Vernikov. She continues to work with multiple acclaimed teachers and performers.

Benedetti plays the Gariel Stradivarius (1717), courtesy of Jonathan Moulds.



Michael Gurevich (*concertmaster*), a Dutch violinist and violist, enjoys a varied performing career. Devoted to chamber music, he is a member of the London Haydn Quartet and performs regularly as a guest with the Nash Ensemble and many other groups. He has appeared in chamber music series at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, the Concertgebouw, the Louvre, Melbourne Recital Centre, and at the Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, Aix-en-Provence, and Verbier festivals. Gurevich is also a frequent leader and guest principal of ensembles including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Arcangelo, the English and Scottish Chamber Orchestras, and the Amsterdam Sinfonietta. He has recorded extensively for

the Hyperion label, appearing on critically acclaimed discs with the London Haydn Quartet, the Nash Ensemble, and Arcangelo. He also appears frequently in radio broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, SWR2 in Germany, ABC Classic FM in Australia, CBC Radio in Canada, and NHK in Japan.

As a teacher, Gurevich served on the faculty of Chetham's School of Music in Manchester for nine years and has given chamber music master classes at the Juilliard School, Indiana University, Yale University, Oxford University, the Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, Royal Northern College of Music, Sydney Conservatorium, the Australian National Academy of Music, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory in Singapore, and at Domaine Forget in Canada.

Gurevich studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was awarded the Sir John Manduell Prize "for outstanding contribution to the college," concluding his time there as the Leverhulme Junior Fellow in violin and viola. Subsequently, he was a chamber music fellow at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He was a prize winner in a number of competitions, including the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition in 2011. Gurevich greatly benefited from the guidance of the late Dr. Christopher Rowland, Gaby Lester, Jan Repko, Maciej Rakowski, Ivry Gitlis, and Pauline Nobes, as well as from master classes at the RNCM, the Britten-Pears School, IMS Prussia Cove, and the Aix-en-Provence and Verbier Academies with András Keller, Ferenc Rados, James Boyd, Leonidas Kavakos, Menahem Pressler, Gabor Takács-Nagy, Mitsuko Uchida, and members of the Florestan and Gould trios and Endellion String Quartet.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

John Butt, *principal artist*

Sir Mark Elder, *principal artist*

Iván Fischer, *principal artist*

Vladimir Jurowski, *principal artist*

Sir Simon Rattle, *principal artist*

William Christie, *emeritus conductor*

Sir Roger Norrington, *emeritus conductor*

Violin I

Michael Gurevich,
concertmaster

Alice Evans

Andrew Roberts

Kinga Ujszaszi

Claudia Norz

Silvia Schweinberger

Jayne Spencer

Violin II

John Crockatt

Dominika Fehér

Declan Daly

Iona Davies

Debbie Diamond

Stephen Rouse

Viola

Max Mandel

Nicholas Logie

Marina Ascherson

Kathryn Heller

Cello

Andrew Skidmore

Catherine Rimer

Helen Verney

Ruth Alford

Bass

Cecelia Bruggemeyer
Carina Cosgrave

Flute

Lisa Beznosiuk

Oboe

Daniel Lanthier
Allan-Leo Duarte-Potter

Clarinet

Antony Pay
Katherine Spencer

Bassoon

Meyrick Alexander
Sally Jackson

Horn

Phillip Eastop
Martin Lawrence

Trumpet

David Blackadder
Phillip Bainbridge

Timpani

Adrian Bending

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