

The Apotheosis of the Dance

BERKSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conducted by Ronald L. Feldman

Friday, October 31 • 8 PM

Chapin Hall • FREE

Pre-concert talk:

Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 7:15 PM



Williams College

Department of Music

Music:

Rossini's *Il Signor Bruschino*

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7 in A Major*

Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D Major*

featuring **Miriam Fried**, violin

*****Program*****

Gioacchino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Il Signor Bruschino: Overture

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Violin Concerto in D Major, opus 61

I. *Allegro, ma non troppo*

II. *Larghetto*

III. *Rondo. Allegro*

Miriam Fried, violin

*****intermission*****

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, opus 92

I. *Poco sostenuto; Vivace*

II. *Allegretto*

III. *Presto; Assai meno presto*

IV. *Finale: Allegro con brio*

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Please turn off or mute cell phones, audible pagers, etc.*

Program Notes

Gioacchino Rossini: Overture to *Il Signor Bruschino*

First performance of the opera: January 27, 1813, Teatro Giustiniani (S. Moisè), Venice.

How many Rossini operas there are that the average music lover knows today only by their overtures! And how ironic Rossini would have found that fact! First of all, because his overtures were sometimes shuffled from one opera to another, so slight was their connection with the drama to follow. It is well-known, for example, that *The Barber of Seville*, one of the greatest comic operas, is performed all over the world with an overture that had already served Rossini twice for serious operas. *Il signor Bruschino*, though, has its own overture, one that has long been a special favorite.

The beginning of Rossini's career in the opera house—when he was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one—saw the creation of no fewer than eight operas, five of which were superb one-act musical farces written for the Theater of S. Moisè in Venice. *Il signor Bruschino*—actually *Il signor Bruschino, ossia Il figlio per azzardo* ("Mr. Bruschino, or Son by Accident"), to a libretto by Giuseppe Maria Foppa based on a French comedy by Alisson de Chazet and E.T.M. Ourry—is the last of these, and marks a significant enrichment of his dramatic technique and musical style. Its overture boasts a lighthearted verve and some surprising effects—particularly one in which the string players strike their bows rhythmically on the music stands, setting up the pattern that continues to play a role throughout the piece. (There is an old story, apparently invented by an early biographer, that Rossini employed this effect as a way of expressing his disgust at the manager of the theater, presumably for foisting second-rate librettos on him. Though repeated many times, it has been utterly disproven; Rossini clearly chose to use the effect purely for its unusual sonority.)

-Steven Ledbetter

Ludwig van Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D Major, opus 61

Ludwig van Beethoven was baptized in Bonn, Germany, on December 17, 1770, and died in Vienna, Austria, on March 26, 1827. Beethoven completed the Violin Concerto in 1806, shortly before its first performance by Franz Clement at the Theater-an-der-Wien in Vienna on December 23 that year.

The works Beethoven finished in the last half of 1806—the Violin Concerto, the Fourth Symphony, and the Fourth Piano Concerto among them—were completed rather rapidly by the composer following his extended struggle with the original version of *Fidelio*, which had occupied him from the end of 1804 until April 1806. The most important orchestral work Beethoven had completed before this time was the *Eroica*, in which he had overwhelmed his audiences with a forceful new musical language reflecting both his own inner struggles in the face of impending deafness and also his awareness of the political atmosphere around him. The next big orchestral work to embody this "heroic" style would be the Fifth Symphony, which had begun to germinate in 1804, was worked out mainly in 1807, and was completed in 1808. But in the meantime a more relaxed sort of expression began to emerge, incorporating a heightened sense of repose, a more broadly lyric element, and a more spacious approach to musical architecture. The Violin Concerto, the Fourth Symphony, and the Fourth Piano Concerto share these characteristics, but it is important to realize that these works, though completed around the same time, do not represent a unilateral change of direction in Beethoven's approach to music, but, rather, the emergence of a particular element that appeared strikingly at this time. Sketches for the Violin Concerto and the Fifth Symphony in fact occur side by side, and that the two aspects—lyric and heroic—of Beethoven's musical expression are not entirely separable is evident also in the fact that ideas of both the Fifth and *Pastoral* symphonies appear in the *Eroica* sketchbook of 1803-04, and that these two very different symphonies—the one strongly assertive, the other more gentle and subdued—were not completed until 1808, two years after the Violin Concerto.

The prevailing lyricism and restraint of Beethoven's Violin Concerto doubtless reflect the particular abilities of Franz Clement, the violinist for whom it was written. Like Mozart and Beethoven before him, Clement was a prodigy whose father determined to capitalize as much as possible on his son's abilities. The child's musical talent was evident by the time he was four, and as early as April 11, 1788, seven months before his eighth birthday, he was playing public concerts. Spurred by the lavish praise bestowed on Vienna's "little violin-god," the elder Clement saw fit to show the boy off throughout Europe, beginning with a three-year tour of South Germany and Belgium, continuing with a two-year stay in England, and then journeying back to Vienna via Holland, Frankfurt-am-Main, and Prague. During this time the boy carried with him a leather-bound volume that he kept as a record of his journey and in which appear the signatures and best wishes of countless aristocrats and musicians, religious, military, and government officials, conductors, and composers, including J.P. Salomon and Franz Joseph Haydn; the violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti; Antonio Salieri, alleged arch-rival to Mozart and teacher of the young Schubert; and, writing in Vienna in 1794, Ludwig van Beethoven, then "in the service of His Serene Highness the Elector of Cologne."

It is for somewhat later association with Beethoven that Clement's name is best-known. More than just a virtuoso violinist, he was also an extremely able pianist, score-reader, and accompanist; from 1802 until 1811 he was conductor and concertmaster of Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien. He also had a spectacular musical memory, playing all of the original *Fidelio* at the piano without music at the first meeting to discuss cuts and revisions (on another occasion he startled Haydn by presenting the composer with a piano reduction of *The Creation* written down after several hearings, but without benefit of an orchestral score and using only the libretto as a memory guide). Clement was concertmaster for the first public performance of the *Eroica* in April 1805, and it was for him that Beethoven wrote the Violin Concerto, heading the autograph manuscript with the dedication, "*Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement, primo Violino e direttore al Teatro a Vienna dal L.v. Bthvn 1806.*" It seems that Beethoven completed the concerto barely in time for the premiere on December 23, 1806, a concert that also included music of Méhul, Mozart, Cherubini, and Handel. Clement reportedly performed the solo part at sight, but this did not prevent the undaunted violinist from interpolating, between the two halves of the concerto(!), a piece of his own played with his instrument held upside down.

Opinion of the concerto was divided but, on the whole, the work was not well received: though much of the beauty was recognized in it, it was also felt to be lacking in continuity and marred by the "needless repetition of a few commonplace passages" (thus Vienna's *Zeitung für Theater, Musik und Poesie* of January 8, 1807). In the years following the first performance, it was heard only occasionally, in Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, and the concerto began to win its place in the repertory only after the thirteen-year-old Joseph Joachim played it in London on May 27, 1844, with Felix Mendelssohn conducting; at that concert, the enthusiastic audience was so taken with the blond youngster's performance that the first movement was several times interrupted by applause. Joachim left a set of cadenzas for the concerto that are sometimes still heard today, but those of another famous interpreter, Fritz Kreisler, are more frequently used.

By all reports, Clement's technical skill was extraordinary and his intonation no less than perfect, but he was most highly regarded for his "gracefulness and tenderness of expression," for the "indescribable delicacy, neatness, and elegance" of his playing. Gracefulness, delicacy, elegance, and clean intonation are certainly called for in the soloist's first-movement entrance, which encompasses nearly the entire practical range of the violin and rises poetically to a high D two octaves above the staff. This sort of exposed writing in the upper register is more indicative than anything else of what the solo part in this concerto is about; very often, gentle passagework will give way to an extended trill on a single of successive notes. The first movement's accompanimental figurations and the meditative commentary of the second speak the same language. Only in the finale does the music become more extrovert, but even there the determining factor is more in the nature of good humor than of overt virtuosity. But all of this is not to say that Beethoven's concerto is lacking in the virtuoso element, something that we may claim to hear more readily in, say, the violin concertos by Brahms and Tchaikovsky, both of which have more virtuosity written into the notes on the page, and which may seem bigger or grander simply because of their later-nineteenth-century, more romantically extrovert musical language. In fact, an inferior violinist will get by less readily in the Beethoven concerto than in any of the later ones: the most significant demand this piece places upon the performer is the need for utmost musicality of expression, virtuosity of a special, absolutely critical sort.

An appreciation of the first movement's length, flow, and musical argument is tied to an awareness of the individual thematic materials. It begins with one of the most novel strokes in all of music: four isolated quarter-notes on the drum usher in the opening theme, the first phrase sounding *dolce* in the winds and offering as much melody in the space of eight measures as one might wish. The length of the movement grows from its duality of character: on the one hand we have those rhythmic drumbeats, which provide a sense of pulse and of an occasionally martial atmosphere, on the other a tuneful, melodic flow of the thematic ideas and the gentle string figurations introduced into the second theme provide the basis for most of what the soloist will do throughout the movement, and it is worth noting that when the soloist gives us the second theme, the drumbeat undercurrent is conspicuously absent and the lyric element is stressed.

The slow movement, in which flute and trumpets are silent, is a contemplative set of variations on an almost motionless theme first stated by muted strings. The solo violinist adds tender commentary in the first variation (the theme beginning in the horns, then taken by the clarinet), and then in the second, with the theme entrusted to solo bassoon. Now the strings have a restatement, with punctuation from the winds, and then the soloist reenters to reflect upon and reinterpret what has been heard, the solo violin's full- and upper-registral tone sounding brightly over the orchestral string accompaniment. Yet another variation is shared by soloist and plucked strings, but when the horns suggest still another beginning, the strings, now unmuted and *forte*, refute the notion. The soloist responds with a trill and improvises a bridge into the closing rondo. The music of this movement is mainly down-to-earth and humorous, providing ample contrast to the repose of the *Larghetto*; among its happy touches are the outdoorsy fanfares that connect the two main themes and, just before the return of these fanfares later in the movement, the only pizzicato notes asked of the soloist in the course of the entire concerto. These fanfares also serve energetically to introduce the cadenza, after which another extended trill brings in a quiet restatement of the rondo theme in an extraordinarily distant key (A-flat) and then the brilliant and boisterous final pages, the solo violinist keeping pace with the orchestra to the very end.

-Marc Mandel

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 7 in A Major, opus 92

First performance: December 8, 1813, Vienna, Beethoven cond.

By 1812 much had changed in Beethoven's life and career since the extraordinary period between 1802 and 1809, when he produced a flood of masterpieces perhaps unprecedented in the history of music. In 1809, however, around the time of the premiere of the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, this stupendous level of production abruptly fell off. Though there was much extraordinary music to come, Beethoven never again composed with the kind of fury he possessed in the first decade of the century.

What happened? Beethoven was increasingly ill and his bad hearing getting worse. However, given his ability to transcend physical misery, it is more likely that his decline in production came from expressive quandaries. He had begun to sense that the train of ideas that had sustained him through the previous decade was close to being played out. He had to find something new.

It is in the Seventh and Eighth symphonies that we see the turn toward the third period taking shape. In the Seventh Beethoven put aside for good the heroic model of the Third and Fifth symphonies, but he had not yet arrived at the inward music of the late works.

If not heroic or sublime, then what for the Seventh? A kind of Bacchic trance, dance music from beginning to end. Wagner called it "the apotheosis of the dance." But the Seventh dances unlike any symphony before: it dances wildly and relentlessly, dance almost heroically, dances in obsessive rhythms whether fast or slow. Nothing as decorous as a minuet here; it's rather shouting horns and skirling strings (skirling being what bagpipes do).

The symphony's expansive and grandiose introduction strikes a note at once appropriate and misleading: the fast dance that eventually starts out from it seems something of a surprise. But from the introduction's slow-striding opening theme many other melodies will flow. Above all the introduction defines the symphony in its harmonies: wandering without being restless so much as brash and audacious, with a tendency to leap nimbly from key to key by nudging the bass up or down a notch. And the introduction defines key relationships to be thumbprints of late Beethoven: around the central key of A major he groups F major and C major, key a third up and a third down. That group of keys will persist through the symphony, just as D and b-flat persist in the Ninth.

With a coy transition from the introduction, we're off into the first movement Vivace, quietly at first but with rapidly mounting intensity. The movement is a titanic jig. Its dominant dotted rhythmic figure is as relentless as the fifth Symphony's famous figure, but here the effect is mesmerizing rather than fateful. Rhythm plays a more central role than melody here, though there is a pretty folk tune in residence. More, though, the music is engaged in quick changes of key in startling directions, everything propelled by the rhythm. From the first time you hear the symphony's outer movements, meanwhile, you never forget the lusty and rollicking horns.

Nor are you likely to forget the first time you hear the stately and mournful dance of the second movement, in A minor. It has been an abiding hit and an object of near-obsession since its first performances. The idea is a process of intensification, adding layer on layer to the inexorably marching chords (with their poignant chromaticism that Germans call *moll-Dur*, minor-major). Once again, in a slowish movement now, the music is animated by an irresistible rhythmic momentum. For contrast comes a sweet, harmonically stable B section in A major (plus C, a third up). Rondo-like, the opening theme returns twice, lightened, turned into a fugue, the last time serving as coda.

The scherzo is racing, eruptive, giddy, its main theme beginning in F major and ending up a third in A, from one flat to three sharps in a flash. We're back to brash shifts of key animated by relentless rhythm. The Trio provides maximum contrast, slowing to a kind of majestic dance tableau, as frozen in harmony and gesture as a painting of a ball. The Trio returns twice and jokingly feints at a third time before Beethoven slams the door.

The purpose of the finale seems to be, amazingly, to ratchet the energy higher than it has yet been. If earlier we have had exuberance, brilliance, stateliness, those moods of dance, now we have something on the edge of delirium, in the best and most intoxicating way: stamping and whirling two-beat fiddling, with the horns in high spirits again. Does any other symphonic movement sweep you off your feet and take your breath away so nearly literally as this one?

The Seventh was premiered in December 1813 as part of the ceremonies around the congress of Vienna, when the aristocracy of Europe gathered with the intention of turning back the clock to before Napoleon. Beethoven would despise the reactionary results of the Congress, but that was in the future; he was glad to receive its applause. The premiere of the Seventh under his baton was one of the triumphant moments of his life. For the first of many times, the slow movement had to be encored. The

orchestra was fiery and inspired, suppressing their giggles at the composer's antics on the podium. In loud sections (the only ones he could hear) Beethoven launched himself into the air, arms windmilling as if he were trying to fly; in quiet passages he all but crept under the music stand. The paper reported from the audience "a general pleasure that rose to ecstasy."

It's true that another piece premiered on the program, Beethoven's trashy and opportunistic *Wellington's Victory*, got more applause and in the next years more performances. But for the moment he was not too proud to bask a little, pocket the handsome proceeds, perhaps to enjoy with a sardonic laugh the splendid success of the bad piece and the merely bright prospects of the good one. The Seventh after all celebrates the dance, which lives in the ecstatic and heedless moment.

-Jan Swafford

Bio

Miriam Fried, violin

Miriam Fried has been recognized for many years as one of the world's preeminent violinists. A consummate musician – equally accomplished as recitalist, concerto soloist or chamber musician – she has been heralded for her "fiery intensity and emotional depth" (Musical America) as well as for her technical mastery. Her supreme blend of artistry and musicianship continues to inspire audiences worldwide.

Miriam Fried has played with virtually every major orchestra in the United States and Europe and has been a frequent guest with the principal orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as with the Israel Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic and the Vienna Symphony. Recital tours have taken her to all of the major music centers in North America and to Brussels, London, Milan, Munich, Rome, Paris, Salzburg, Stockholm and Zurich.

In recent seasons, Ms. Fried's schedule has included orchestral engagements with such prestigious ensembles as the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Milwaukee Symphony, Chautauqua Institution, the Louisville Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, the BBC Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, the Czech Philharmonic, the Jerusalem Symphony, the Orquesta Filarmonica de Mexico, the Japan Philharmonic and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. She recently premiered a violin concerto written for her by Donald Erb with the Grand Rapids Symphony and recorded the work for Koss. Since 1993 she has been Artistic Director of the Ravinia Institute, one of the country's leading summer programs for young musicians. Her involvement there has included regular performances at the Ravinia Festival, including recitals and concerts with the Chicago Symphony.

Ms. Fried's highly praised New York recitals of the complete Bach Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin were the culmination of three years of international performances. She recently returned to this music, recording the complete Sonatas and Partitas in France, which were released in the spring of 1999 on the Lyrinx label. She has also made a prize-winning recording of the Sibelius Concerto with the Helsinki Philharmonic under the direction of Okko Kamu, available on the Finlandia label, which has become a best-seller.

Chamber music plays an important role in Ms. Fried's musical life. She is a member of the Mendelssohn String Quartet and collaborates regularly with her son Jonathan Biss. Miriam Fried continues her impressive tenure as Artistic Director of the Steans Institutes at Ravinia. Miriam Fried plays a particularly noteworthy violin, a 1718 Stradivarius that is said to have been the favorite of its 18th-century owner, the composer-conductor Louis Spohr. It was also owned by Regina Strinasacchi who, it is thought, used the instrument to play with Mozart the Sonata in B-flat, K. 454, which had been written for her. A noted pedagogue, Miriam Fried is on the faculty of New England Conservatory and is invited to give master classes throughout the world.

Berkshire Symphony Personnel

Violin I

Joanna Kurkowicz, *concertmaster*
Leo Brown '11, *asst. concertmaster*
Helen Cha '11*
Sarah Briggs Cornelius
Matthew Crimp '12
Melanie Dexter
Oisa Fohrhaltz
Stephanie Jensen '12
Joseph Jewett
Teng Jian Khoo '09
Kate Reilly
Kaori Washiyama

Violin II

Joana Genova-Rudiakov, *principal*
Emily Kalish*
Caroline Kan '09
Evan Lin '11
David Moore '10
Cindy Ogulnick
Aaron Packard
Joshua Rim '11
Harriet Welther
Dorota Wilhelmi-Kol
Susan Yoon '10

Viola

Scott Woolweaver, *principal*
James Bergin *
Emily Chapman '12
Noah Fields '11
Cindy Hom '09

Bing Liu

Lauren McDonald '12
Shivon Robinson '11
Delores Thayer

Cello

Nathaniel Parke, *principal*
Mea Cook*
Mimi Lou '09
Richard K. Mickey
Julian Muller †
Katie Palmer '10
Betsy Ribble '09
Perri Zimmerman

Double Bass

Robert Zimmerman, *principal*
Jeffrey Levine*
David Monnich '12*
Julianne Russell

* *String players sitting behind the stationary desks listed alphabetically*

Flute

Floyd Hebert, *principal* ++ +++
Matthew Wollin '09 + ++
Katie Yosua '11 ++

Oboe

Carl Jenkins, *principal*
Zina Ward '12

Clarinet

Susan Martula, *principal*
Aaron Freedman '12 +
Elise Piazza '09 ++
Alexander Taylor '10 +++

Bassoon

Stephen Walt, *principal*
Elizabeth Miles '09

Horn

Orlando Pandolfi, *principal*
Peter Gottlieb '11 + +++
Colleen Shaffer++

Trumpet

Tom Bergeron, *principal*
Eric Latini, *assistant principal*

Timpani

Matthew Gold, *principal*

† Hawthorne Valley School
in Ghent, NY

+ Rossini

++ Symphony No. 7

+++ Violin Concerto

Ronald Feldman, conductor, is artist in residence in orchestral/instrumental music, and coordinator of student string chamber music here at Williams College. After a long career in the Boston Symphony Orchestra's cello section starting in 1967 at the age of nineteen, Mr. Feldman has gone on to receive critical acclaim for a wide variety of musical achievements. Formerly music director and conductor of the Worcester Symphony Orchestra and of the Boston new music ensemble Extension Works, Ronald Feldman was also music director and conductor of the New England Philharmonic for five seasons. In 1991 he and the Berkshire Symphony were awarded the American Symphony Orchestra League's ASCAP Award for Adventuresome Programming of Contemporary Music. He continues to be an active cellist, conductor, and a member of the Williams Chamber Players.

Special thanks to:

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Upcoming Events:

See music.williams.edu for full details and to sign up for the weekly e-newsletters.

- 11/2: "Pulses of the MBIRA": Cosmas Magaya and Beauler Dyoco, Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 3:00 p.m.
11/5: MIDWEEKMUSIC, Chapin Hall, 12:15 p.m.
11/7: Borromeo Quartet, Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 8:00 p.m.
11/8: Small Jazz Ensembles, Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 8:00 p.m.
11/12: MIDWEEKMUSIC, Chapin Hall, 12:15 p.m.
11/12: MIDWEEKMUSIC, Chapin Hall, 7:00 p.m. (Note evening time)
11/14: Williams Concert and Chamber Choirs, **Thompson Memorial Chapel**, 8:00 p.m.
11/15: Williams Symphonic Winds, Chapin Hall, 8:00 p.m.
11/16: Cantonese Opera: Music From China, Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 3:00 p.m.
11/18: Piano Master Class: Adam Neiman, Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall, 4:15 p.m.

Next Berkshire Symphony Concerts:

- 11/21: Schubert: Webern; Korngold; Brahms with Guest Artist Adam Neiman, piano, Chapin Hall, 8:00 p.m.
3/13: Stravinsky: Mozart; Tchaikovsky with Guest Conductor Federico Cortese, Chapin Hall, 8:00 p.m.
4/25: Featuring winner(s) of the annual Student Soloist Competition.
Brahms and Perle with Guest Conductor Julian Kuerti, Chapin Hall, 8:00 p.m.

Music program funding is provided by the

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Music Ensembles Fund

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Kusika and the Zambezi Marimba Band.

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