

A Note from Ronald Feldman, director

I began conducting the Berkshire Symphony in 1989. This is my 35th year directing the orchestra. Accepting the appointment to work at Williams came at the perfect time for me. After playing in the Boston Symphony for 34 years I was ready for a new challenge.

I don't imagine many of you remember the Berkshire Symphony in 1989. The 2024 version is very different. All of the principal players in the orchestra have changed. These Artist Associates form the backbone of the orchestra. They teach, they coach, and they mentor our students. The example they set, as well as the experience they bring to the department, has grown the Berkshire Symphony and the many ensembles they direct into something we are all very proud of.

Every year we welcome new students into the Berkshire Symphony. In addition to our Artist Associates, we have a stable core of professionals who form a critical part of each section. I seat the pros with students whenever possible. These pairings build a level of responsibility that brings out the best from everyone.

The decision to leave the Boston Symphony was easy after being hired full time as Artist in Residence at Williams. Both Williams and the Boston Symphony enjoy the reputation for excellence. I knew I would be teaching students in an environment that celebrates hard work and talent. Make no mistake about it, our talented students are the catalyst for all of the decisions the Department has made supporting the Berkshire Symphony, enhancing the superb education they enjoy at Williams. The time and effort they bring to our ensembles has contributed to making Williams a destination school.

The renovation of Chapin Hall was transformative for the Music Department. Having played in concert halls all over the world, I can confidently say Chapin stands up to the best of them. It honors the many ensembles performing in the music building.

As this is my final Berkshire Symphony concert, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Music faculty for supporting me these many years. The resources necessary to field an ensemble of this size and quality are considerable. You have provided a way for talented students to enjoy membership in an orchestra capable of playing repertoire, from early Haydn to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Thanks to Artist in Residence Joanna Kurkowicz for her leadership and to our professionals for staying the course all these years, turning the Berkshire Symphony into an award-winning regional ensemble. Special thanks to Jeff Miller, orchestra manager.

The years have sped by. I've enjoyed every one of them! I leave knowing that the next conductor will enjoy the benefit of working with a fine orchestra, fully capable of playing repertoire from any period.

23 years ago, my final concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra was at the famed Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, playing Brahms D Major Symphony, with Maestro Bernard Haitink. Performing Brahms second symphony tonight bookends my final appearance with the BSO 23 years ago.

With great appreciation,

Ronny Feldman

In recognition of our Class of 2024 Graduating Seniors...Thank you!



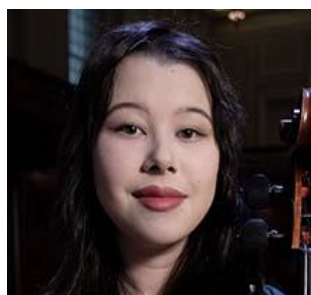
Audrey Shadle, violin



Frances Hayward, violin



Robin Wang, viola



Rachel Broweleit, cello



Gwyn Chilcoat, tuba



Paul Kim, trumpet/piano



Susanna Niu, Music Librarian



Josh Lee, percussion



“His easy virtuosity is a wonder” (*The Strad*) “Contemplative and mesmerizing” (*Los Angeles Times*): Grammy-nominated pianist **Andrius Zlabys** has received international acclaim for his appearances with many of the world’s leading orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and Philharmonic Orchestra of Buenos Aires.

Andrius Zlabys — born in Lithuania and trained at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia — was 18 years old when the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: “Pianist-composer Andrius Zlabys is one of the most gifted young keyboard artists to emerge in years.” Zlabys was also heralded by *The New York Sun* in a review titled “A Shining Hope of Pianists” after his recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

In this season Zlabys will be performing Brahms’ *Piano Concerto No. 2* for the Greenville Symphony Association and with the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Orchestra, amongst other engagements.

Mr. Zlabys’ concerts have included appearances on many of the world’s leading stages, such as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna’s Musikverein, Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, Phillips Collection, Teatro Colón, and Suntory Hall. In 2012 Andrius Zlabys made his concerto debut at the Salzburg Festival performing Mozart’s *Concerto K.467* with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra conducted by Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla.

He has also appeared at numerous festivals, including the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Lockenhaus Festival, Caramoor Music Festival, and The Gilmore International Piano Festival. Zlabys made his Carnegie Hall debut at the Isaac Stern Auditorium with the New York Youth Symphony conducted by Misha Santora in 2001 in a performance of Beethoven’s *First Piano Concerto*. He was also invited the following season as soloist with Kremerata Baltica to perform Benjamin Britten’s *Young Apollo* at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall.

A multifaceted musician of wide-ranging repertoire, Andrius Zlabys holds a special reverence for J. S. Bach, while remaining a strong advocate for the contemporary stage with numerous works commissioned by and written for him. Andrius Zlabys has enjoyed collaborations with several esteemed musicians, including violist Yuri Bashmet, violinist Hilary Hahn, and an enduring collaboration with violinist Gidon Kremer with whom Zlabys has toured extensively in Europe, Japan, South America, and the U.S.

He is a featured soloist in *Between Two Waves* by Victor Kissine for piano and string orchestra released on ECM in collaboration with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica. Zlabys received a Grammy nomination for his recording of Enescu’s *Piano Quintet* with Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica.

He was a winner of the 2000 Astral Artists National auditions. Andrius Zlabys began piano studies at the age of six in his native Lithuania with Laima Jakniuniene at the National M. K. Čiurlionis School of Art, and continued his studies in the U.S. with Victoria Mushkatkol (Interlochen Arts Academy), Seymour Lipkin (Curtis Institute of Music), Sergei Babayan (Cleveland Institute of Music), and Claude Frank (Yale School of Music).

~Program Notes~
Berkshire Symphony Orchestra
April 19, 2024

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in Bb Major, op. 83

In a letter written by Brahms in 1881 to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, a German composer, pianist, and singer, Brahms teases; “*I don’t mind telling you that I have written a tiny, tiny piano concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo.*” That “tiny, tiny piano concerto” was the Bb major.

Once Hans von Bülow, director of the Meiningen Hofkapelle Orchestra; court orchestra of Georg II, caught wind of the work, he offered Brahms a trial reading of the work. Hesitant to accept, Brahms showed up in Meiningen in October of 1881 to play the piano as Bülow conducted. It was at that moment that an invaluable relationship began that gave Brahms an exceptional 49 person orchestra at his disposal to try out new compositions at will.

The official premier of the second piano concerto was given November 9, 1881 with the Budapest Philharmonic, Alexander Erkel conducting and Brahms playing piano. However an earlier premier that month in Meiningen with Bülow and Brahms prompted a special award from Duke Georg II; the Commander's Cross of the Order of the House of Meiningen. The concerto enjoyed great success across Europe. Clara Schumann wrote in her journal: “Brahms is celebrating such triumphs everywhere as seldom fall to the lot of a composer.”

The first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is in sonata form. The movement begins with a beautiful horn solo and piano response. As the composition continues, the winds introduce some transitional material which leads to a unique cadenza concluding in the orchestral statement of the first theme and beginning of the exposition.

Most unique in this movement is the beautiful “calling” or return (recapitulation) that occurs in the horn out a majestic moody atmosphere which is created by the piano and orchestra alike. The horn solo can be compared to that moment in the early morning, when the sun first crests the horizon, an image a fisherman at sea can relate to.

The second movement, quite unique, is the “tiny scherzo.” In contrast to the first movement, the second is the opposite. When asked to explain, Brahms responded that the first movement was so “harmless” that the piece needed the passionate contrast of the scherzo. The scherzo is in sonata form with a trio inserted in the development.

The first two movements seem to omit the ever “sweetly lyrical” side of Brahms. But, he revisits this in the third movement with a beautiful and unique cello solo. This movement moves into a two-beat, five-section, and five-themed rondo.

Johannes Brahms

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, op. 73

The second symphony seemed to have flowed easily from the compositional pen of Brahms in the summer of 1877, unlike the first in which Brahms felt the glare and pressure of the mighty Beethoven. Although we do not know how much sketching and creative thought went into the second symphony, Clara Schumann, for whom Brahms played parts of the symphony later in the summer at his vacation house, found the work more original and predicted a “more telling success” with audiences. Its premiere, scheduled for early December of 1877, was postponed till December 30. Conductor Hans Richter and the Vienna Philharmonic were preoccupied with coming to grips with Wagner’s *Reingold*.

Structurally, this symphony preserves the principles of the classical symphony: two lively outer movements framing a slow second movement followed by a short scherzo. However, as Walter Frisch of Columbia University stated, “no movement among the symphonies shows quite so well as the first movement of the Second how Brahms combines two apparently contradictory compositional impulses: expansive lyricism and dense motivic-thematic working.” This “lyricism and dense motivic-thematic working” begins the movement in the cellos and double basses and is continued by the horns. The movement as a whole presents two different moods; desolation – hinted at in the timpani and trombones – and by its brighter pastoral setting, which is evident in the lyrical themes of the strings and winds.

The Adagio is constructed in a modified sonata form utilizing a compositional technique coined by Arnold Schoenberg *developing variation*; a formal technique in which variations are produced through the development of existing material. Schoenberg believed himself that Brahms used this technique in its “most advanced state.”

The second half of the symphony has a brighter feel though it has reflections of the “expressive world of the first two movements” often triggered by the trombones. The Allegretto grazioso is the shortest of any of Brahms symphonic movements; however, it is one of the most original. Its structure has often been compared to a typical baroque dance suite, a plausible comparison as the main theme undergoes “metrical-rhythmic variation characteristic of the suite.”

The last movement is the most straight-forward of all the movements; typical sonata form with an exposition, development, recapitulation, and substantial coda. As the movement as whole is bright and cheery, it does cast shadows of “haunting passages” which are evident at the end of the development section and in the syncopated episode for the brass in the coda.

As Walter Frisch so eloquently states, “Brahms builds a sequence of ideas across the entire Second Symphony, through motivic-rhythmic and timbral associations as well as more purely gestural ones, such as silence.”