

by Noel Morris
Program Annotator

Concerts of
Thursday,
May 26, 2022,
8:00pm

Saturday,
May 28, 2022,
8:00pm

NICOLA LUISOTTI,
conductor

ELIZABETH KOCH
TISCIONE,
oboe

This weekend's concerts
are dedicated to Gary Lee
in honor of his extraordinary
support of the 2020/21
Annual Fund.

ELISABETTA BRUSA (b. 1954)
Adagio for String Orchestra (1996) 13 MINS

ALESSANDRO MARCELLO (1673-1747)
Oboe Concerto in C Minor (c. 1717) 12 MINS

- I. Allegro moderato
 - II. Adagio
 - III. Allegro
- Elizabeth Koch Tiscione, oboe

INTERMISSION 20 MINS

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98 (1885) 39 MINS

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro giocoso
- IV. Allegro energico e passionato

The use of cameras or recording
devices during the concert is
strictly prohibited. Please be
kind to those around you and
silence your mobile phone and
other hand-held devices.

Adagio

Adagio is scored for strings.

From the composer:

Elisabetta Brusa was born in Milan, and as a child wrote 32 piano pieces. At the Milan Conservatory, she studied Composition with Bruno Bettinelli and Azio Corghi, graduating in 1980. She also received instruction from Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Hans Keller. After winning first prize at the Washington International Competition for Composition for String Quartet in 1982, she was awarded the Fromm Music Foundation Fellowship, a Fulbright Commission for the Tanglewood Music Center, and three Fellowships from the MacDowell Colony later in the decade.

She is best known for her orchestral works recorded in four volumes on the Naxos Records label. Her music has been performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, RSNO Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Philharmonisches Gera Altenburg Orchester, Aachener Kammerorchester, CBC Vancouver Orchestra, State Hermitage Orchestra, St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra and The Women's Philharmonic of San Francisco. She taught Composition in various conservatories since 1978 and at the Conservatory of Milan from 1985 to 2018. In 1997 she married the conductor Gilberto Serembe.

Brusa's *Adagio* (1996) for string orchestra is a freely structured composition in a single movement inspired by well-known masterpieces such as those of Albinoni, Mahler (*Adagietto*), Rodrigo and Barber. Independent of a pre-established form (sonata or suite), it originated as an autonomous composition in which neo-tonal techniques are amalgamated with contrapuntal techniques, and it follows a certain formal tradition and an expressive style that have distinguished the numerous *Adagios* of the past. The composition is permeated by a dark atmosphere with some lyric moments and a strong tension that captures the attention of the listener.

⋮ These are the first
⋮ ASO performances.



First ASO performances:
January 22–23, 1959
Henry Sopkin, conductor
Raymond Toubman, oboe

Most recent
ASO performances:
March 22–25, 1979
Louis Lane, conductor
Elizabeth Camus, oboe

Oboe Concerto in C Minor

In addition to the solo oboe, this concerto is scored for strings and basso continuo.

As much as people love Baroque music, a lot of it has fallen by the wayside. For all the performances of Handel, Vivaldi and Bach, much more music has landed in the trash heap or, perhaps, in a dusty vault somewhere in Europe. When a modern performer falls in love with a previously unknown gem, a flurry of detective work follows.

The Oboe Concerto of Alessandro Marcello is a good example of the convoluted history of a 300-year-old composition. It is a much-loved piece by oboe players but has a background that causes head-scratching.

Marcello was a Venetian nobleman who wrote music to enjoy with his friends. He felt no imperative to be anything but an amateur musician. Nevertheless, the Oboe Concerto found its way into an anthology that traveled northward, where it fell into the hands of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach liked the concerto so much he transcribed it for harpsichord in the key of D minor. Thinking it was written by Vivaldi (another Venetian), Bach added the name “A. Vivaldi” to his manuscript.

For a hundred years or so, interest in Bach’s music receded until Felix Mendelssohn staged a revival in the 19th century. With this came legions of devotees who scoured archives, private collections, choir books and rare-book shops for everything Bach. From Bach came an interest in performing the “Vivaldi” Oboe Concerto in its original form.

Just outside Berlin, a scholar named Arnold Schering (1877–1941) discovered the orchestral parts of the Oboe Concerto at a library in Schwerin. Unlike the Bach arrangement, the concerto was in C minor and attributed to “Marcello.” Baroque music lovers celebrated the discovery and went digging for more information about *Benedetto Marcello*, the brother of Alessandro (Benedetto had been the more famous composer of the two). It wasn’t until a 1717 copy of the concerto surfaced in the British Library that scholars finally understood the piece to be the work of Alessandro Marcello.



Since then, different editions have filtered into the public sphere. One is a D-minor version based on Bach’s arrangement and includes his ornamentation. The other adheres to the original key of C minor, with some string parts rewritten to fit the range of the modern viola (the original was composed for an earlier stringed instrument called the viola da gamba).

The scholar Eleanor Selfridge-Field offers a brief profile in her book *Venetian Instrumental Music*. In it, she quotes Apostolo Zeno:

“[Alessandro Marcello] is a distinguished student of mathematics. He composes verses in Latin and Italian... has a knowledge of many languages...is most ingenious in working with mathematical instruments and globes, and even in drawing and painting. He plays many instruments and knows a good deal about music...He dresses impeccably and is incomparably kind.”

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98

Symphony No. 4 is scored for two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion and strings.

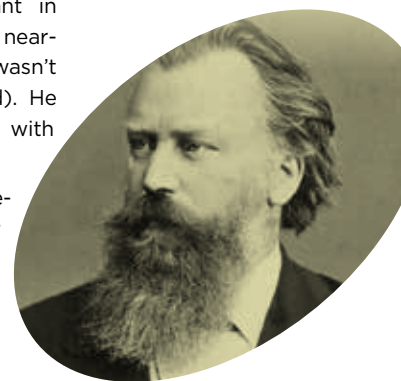
Johannes Brahms spent half his career making aborted attempts at writing symphonies. And it seems there were a couple of reasons. For one thing, he dreaded being compared to Beethoven, who was a giant in the genre. For another, Brahms held himself to a near-impossible standard. As far as he was concerned, it wasn’t enough to write beautiful melodies (which he did). He aspired to be a great craftsman, infusing his works with almost mathematical perfection.

On September 30, 1853, the shy, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, 20-year-old Brahms had knocked on the door of Robert and Clara Schumann. He played some of his piano works for them. Robert, who was editor of a music journal, shared the experience with the greater music community.

“I thought...that someone would suddenly come along... one whose mastery would not gradually unfold but, like Minerva, would spring fully armed from the head of

First ASO performance:
March 10, 1952
Henry Sopkin, conductor

Most recent
ASO performances:
March 3–5, 2016
Marc Piollet, conductor



Jupiter,” he wrote. “And now he has arrived, a young blood, at whose cradle graces and heroes kept watch. His name is Johannes Brahms.”

It was high praise for a youth who had written a few piano pieces. For years after, Brahms was burdened by Schumann’s prophesy. Not long after the article was published, he got it in his head that he needed to write a symphony, and thus began a long series of frustrated attempts, one of which became his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1858. Others became his First and Second Serenades.

Over the following decade, Brahms produced his *German Requiem*, his variations on a theme by Haydn, and a number of important chamber works, songs, piano pieces—but still no symphony. The first real glimmer came in 1862 when he shared the first movement of his First Symphony with Clara Schumann (Robert was long dead). It seemed he was on his way, but no—he wouldn’t finish the piece for another 14 years.

With the premiere of the First Symphony in 1876, Brahms slew his demons (at least that one). The next three symphonies came much more quickly. By then he was a celebrity, earning good money and living for his art. And he fell into a routine: during the fall and winter months, he stayed in Vienna, giving concerts, supervising his publications and pursuing various scholarly interests (he edited a number of Baroque works for publication). During the summer, he wrote music, always at some picturesque getaway.

In the summer of 1884, the composer traveled to the mountain village of Mürrzuschlag where he registered with the local police as an “itinerant musician.” He rented rooms on the main street, befriended people in the local tavern, and took daily hikes. His landlady said she often heard him pacing the room and humming to himself. Out of that came the first two movements of his Fourth Symphony. He returned to the village the following summer and wrote the last two movements. For some added inspiration, Brahms looked to one of his greatest passions: the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

“On one staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful

feelings,” Brahms said of Bach. He was referring to Bach’s Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 for violin (the chaconne is a Baroque form in which the composer spins a yarn over repetitions of a bassline).

Brahms modified a sequence from Bach’s Cantata 150 to serve as a bassline and crafted a chaconne for the finale of his Fourth Symphony, building a great drama across thirty variations. At the time, people close to him questioned this choice (they considered the chaconne to be outmoded). Ignoring their misgivings, Brahms conducted the Fourth Symphony’s premiere in October of 1885. Within a year, it was played throughout Europe and in New York City.

In the spring of 1897, he heard the Fourth performed for the last time in Vienna. According to witnesses, people craned their necks to get a look at him and broke into a thunderous ovation after each movement. He died less than a month later.



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NICOLA LUISOTTI,
CONDUCTOR
See biography on
page 32.

ELIZABETH KOCH TISCIONE, OBOE

Principal Oboe Elizabeth Koch Tiscione joined the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 2007 and currently holds the George M. and Corrie Hoyt Brown Chair. She also performs at the Grand Teton Music Festival, Strings Music Festival, Festival Mozaic and the Colorado College Summer Music Festival.

Tiscione has appeared as guest principal with New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Jacksonville Symphony. She has also performed at the Aspen Music Festival, Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Bellingham Music Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Music in the Vineyards. Tiscione can be heard on recent broadcasts of NPR's "From the Top" and PBS's "Now Hear This."

A native of Hamburg, NY, Tiscione studied at Curtis Institute of Music with Richard Woodhams and at Interlochen Arts Academy with Dan Stolper. She currently serves as a Kennesaw State University faculty member, a Curtis Institute of Music temporary faculty member and is an active private instructor.



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