

# LAUREN BERNOFSKY: *Passacaglia* for Brass Ensemble

Notes on the Program

By Noel Morris ©2020

From the Composer:

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**P**assacaglia' (pronounced "pahss-uh-CAH-lyuh") was my first foray into writing for brass instruments, written in 1990 while I was an undergraduate student at the Hartt School of Music. The piece was premiered the following year by the New England Conservatory Honors Brass Quintet, and I dedicated it to my friend Brian Diehl, who played trombone in the premiere. The piece has since been arranged for trombone choir and brass ensemble.

**LAUREN BERNOFSKY: *Passacaglia* for Brass Ensemble**

**This is an ASO premiere.**

**Instrumentation: 2 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba**

# BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 1

**W**hen Beethoven was born, the Mozart children were a recent memory. They had traveled to Bonn and astonished onlookers with their freakish abilities. No doubt, when young Beethoven began to show a gift for music, his father smelled opportunity.

There were three generations of musical Beethovens in Bonn. Ludwig the grandfather was Kapellmeister, the highest ranking musician; he was well respected and ran a prosperous wine business on the side. Ludwig's son, Johann, was the opposite—a so-so tenor, and far more accomplished at drinking wine than selling it. And then there was the grandson, little Ludwig.

Johann proved a harsh music teacher to his young son. Family friends reported seeing little Ludwig crying as he reached up to the piano.

Over the years, Johann van Beethoven squandered the elder Ludwig's estate. His wife, Maria Magdalena, was loving but depressive and neglectful of their three boys. At 13, their oldest son—the composer Beethoven—became the family's primary breadwinner.

In those years, he was handy, serving as church organist, a rehearsal pianist, and a string player and harpsichordist in the court orchestra. He grew in stature around town, entertaining and befriending members of the nobility.



In 1787, the Emperor's brother sponsored 16-year-old Beethoven on a trip to Vienna to study with Mozart. And there is a fond tale about the two geniuses coming together for an afternoon of

mutual admiration—it might have happened that way, but the account is unverified. Tragically, news from Bonn soon followed: Beethoven's mother was on her deathbed; he hurried home. In 1792, his friend Count Waldstein petitioned to again send him to Vienna. By that time, Mozart had died. Waldstein wrote to him: "You will receive the spirit of Mozart through the hands of Haydn."

The composer Franz Joseph Haydn was quite the international celebrity. His symphonies were especially popular in London. The 22-year-old Beethoven, the "unlicked bear cub," was less polished and extremely willful. The two didn't have much to say to one another, but Beethoven found his footing among the nobility.

This brings up an important distinction: Haydn, the so-called "father of the symphony," had moved into the public sphere (by definition, symphonies require large performance spaces), whereas Beethoven dazzled people in their homes. Throughout the 1790s, he was enthusiastically welcomed into the palaces of Vienna where he gave lessons and private performances at the piano. Composing lots of music for this intimate arena, he made only one false start at writing a symphony around 1795, but didn't actually produce one until age 29.

**In the spring of 1800, Beethoven acquired the use of a theater and presented a "grand concert for his benefit" that included works by Mozart and Haydn, and the premiere of his First Symphony.**

A critic noted that the new piece "displayed great artistry, innovation, and a wealth of ideas; except that the winds were overused, so that it was music for band rather than for the whole orchestra."

This would not be Beethoven's last time challenging assumptions about music.

## BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 1

First ASO Performance: **DEC 1, 1946, Henry Sopkin, conductor**

Most Recent ASO Performances: **JAN 23 – 25, 2020, James Gaffigan, conductor**

Instrumentation: **2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings**

# WAGNER: *Siegfried Idyll*

Atlanta  
Symphony  
Orchestra



**O**n the morning of April 10, 1865, Cosima von Bülow, daughter of the composer Franz Liszt, gave birth to a baby girl. Two hours later, her husband, Hans, conducted the first rehearsal of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. They named the baby "Isolde" after the opera's heroine—it wasn't Hans's baby.

Over the course of her marriage, Cosima had two children with her husband and three with Richard Wagner—all three named after principle characters in his operas.

The scandal surrounding their love affair smoldered for some six years until 1870 when the Bülows dissolved their union. Cosima and Richard married in August, no doubt to their immense relief.

On Christmas morning, the day after her birthday, Cosima was in bed at their home in Tribschen when something disturbed her sleep. She wrote:

*I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, R. came in to me with the five children and put into my hands the score of his "Symphonic Birthday Greeting." I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household; R. had set up his orchestra on the stairs and thus consecrated our Tribschen forever! The Tribschen Idyll—thus the work is called.*



At the time, Wagner was working on ***Siegfried***, the **third of his Ring operas (also the name of their youngest child)**. Themes from ***Siegfried*** find their way into this birthday tribute, but in a gentler, more tender rendering.

For more than six years, they withheld their *Tribschen Idyll* from the public until the time came when they needed the cash.

In 1877, Wagner published the piece under the name *Siegfried Idyll*.



## WAGNER: *Siegfried Idyll*

First ASO Performance: **JAN 13, 1954, Henry Sopkin, conductor**

Most Recent ASO Performances: **MAR 5 – 7, 2020, Emmanuel Villaume, conductor**

Instrumentation: **1 flute 1 oboe, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 horns, 1 trumpet, strings**