

**Symphonic Oktoberfest**  
October 13, 2024 4:00 P.M.  
Concordia University Chapel of Our Lord

**Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, K. 216**

**W.A. Mozart**  
(1756-1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondeau: Allegro

**Yang Liu, soloist**

Intermission

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**Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, WAB 104**

**Anton Bruckner**  
(1824-1896)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante quasi allegretto
- III. Sehr schnell (Very fast)
- IV. Allegro moderato

**Jay Friedman, conductor**

*The Symphony of Oak Park & River Forest is supported in part by grants from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Illinois Arts Council, Oak Park Area Arts Council, and Cook County Arts*

**Mozart** wrote five concertos for violin and orchestra, with the Fourth and Fifth Concertos the most frequently performed. The **Third Concerto**, in G major, is nonetheless a work of very considerable charm, a fine example of how Mozart was experimenting with adventurous ideas while still adhering to an essentially Rococo-Classical idiom. It reveals common ground between symphonic and operatic music, since the opening theme of the first movement (Allegro) also appears in the aria “Aer tranquillo e di sereni” in his opera *Il rè pastore*, which had been premiered in the palace of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg on April 23, 1775, four and a half months before this concerto was completed. Indeed, in keeping with its operatic character, there is even a brief recitative for solo violin just before the recapitulation section in this sonata-form movement.

The Adagio is a lyrical aria for violin spun out at a leisurely pace. Its orchestration differs from the movements that surround it, with orchestral violins and violas (but not the soloist) using mutes, and cellos and double basses plucking their strings (pizzicato). This makes the ensemble generally quieter, but it also changes its timbre, rendering the string sound less lustrous. The pungent oboes that are prominent in the first and last movements are here replaced by flutes, another alteration that softens the overall timbre. Mozart also makes a change in the horn section for this movement, having those instruments insert crooks that change their fundamental note from G to the lower D; this modification has no sonic meaning when modern French horns are used, but with the natural horns of Mozart’s time this also would have created a darker sound.

The Rondeau (Rondo) finale, which re-establishes the instrumentation of the first movement, is interrupted by tempo and meter changes that give the movement a distinctive character. Although in triple time overall, the music comes to an unexpected halt midway through, the meter turns to duple, the tempo slows down from Allegro to Andante, and the key morphs from major to minor. The orchestral strings play a pizzicato accompaniment as the soloist plays a tip-toeing theme, which sustains a sense of mystery across thirteen measures. Suddenly the atmosphere swings into a slightly quicker Allegretto, with the orchestral strings (now back in the major key) bowing their accompaniment while the soloist plays a lusty tune. This melody is developed at considerable length before the rondo theme returns (and with it the triple meter) and the movement comes to a close. Long after Mozart’s death it was discovered that the Allegretto corresponds to a Hungarian dance “à la mélodie de Strassbourger”. With this revelation it became clear that this was the piece Mozart referred to in a letter as his “Strassbourg concerto”.

**Bruckner** composed in a unique, idiosyncratic style. Inspired by the opening of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Bruckner's symphonies do not so much begin as "appear". An excellent example of this is the opening tremolo in the **Fourth Symphony**. The modes of musical expression in all of Bruckner's symphonies are broad, arching sequential gestures and powerful repetitions, with the orchestra as a sum of various choirs -- string, wind, and brass. His symphonic writing was inspired by organ music and sounds as if it were written for a cathedral. The horns are often especially prominent, as they are in the Fourth Symphony.

Bruckner was born in Ansfelden, a village near Linz, in 1824, and he initially showed little if any potential for a symphonic career. He started as a schoolteacher and a local organist who was largely self-taught in composition. He was a very devout but a childishly naïve and awkward man who lacked social graces. German pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow was to refer to him as "half genius, half simpleton". He secured an organist position at the St. Florian monastery, near Linz, and he concentrated his compositional activity on composing choral music: masses, hymns, and motets. In 1863, after being introduced to the music of Richard Wagner, he saw his future in writing symphonies. He moved to Vienna, where he accepted a position as theory instructor at the Conservatory. His first ten years in Vienna were frustrating as he tried with great difficulty to get his works performed. The nadir of this period was the premiere of his Third Symphony. With great effort, he had managed to get the Vienna Philharmonic to perform the piece, but could find no one willing to conduct it, so, unfortunately, he did so himself. With his back to the audience and unaware that there had been a steady walkout during the performance while he was on the podium, Bruckner was shocked at the end of the concert to see a mere handful of students, friends, and supporters applauding from the balcony. Two of those left were the young Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolf.

Whether it was in response to earlier failures or a genuine expressive urge, Bruckner offered an unprecedented programmatic subtitle to his Fourth Symphony: "Romantic". Whatever the motivation, it was his first success, with the premiere conducted by Hans Richter with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1881. It is said that Bruckner went to the podium to accept his applause and gave Richter a shiny silver coin as a gratuity on a job well done! Richter was amused but kept the coin. After the composition of the Fourth, the composer gave his impressions of the work:

Medieval city—Daybreak—Morning calls sound from the city towers—the gates open—On proud horses the knights burst out into the open, the magic of nature envelops them—forest murmurs—bird song—and so the Romantic picture develops further.

The symphony is in a classic four-movement structure: Allegro—Andante—Scherzo—Finale. It opens at “daybreak” with tremolos suggesting a pre-dawn mist out of which appears an E-flat major horn call evoking a Romantic trope we associate with Beethoven, Weber, and Wagner. This gives way to a forceful tutti first theme based on what is often called the “Bruckner Rhythm” of a duple and a triple figure (one-two/one-two-three). The lyrical second theme is based on a bird call, specifically the Kohlmeise, a European chickadee. The climax of the movement is a stunning brass chorale (trumpets, horns, trombones, and tuba) at the end of the development, roughly two thirds of the way into the movement.

Bruckner described his second movement as a “song, prayer, serenade”, with the persistent walking bass evoking a religious procession. An introspective song is played by the cellos in C minor, which gives way to an extended secondary tune in the violas with lute-like pizzicato accompaniment in the other strings suggesting a serenade.

Bruckner was also quite clear about his extramusical ideas with the Scherzo, which he called “The Hunt-Scherzo” (Jagdscherzo), again with evocative triplets in the bucolic horns, full of rustic energy and drive. He was equally clear about the quiet, more relaxed Trio section, which is a picnic for the hunters taking a break under the trees.

The Finale was at one time called “Storm” and at another time “Folk Festival” or “Carnival”. Whatever the case, it is a compelling conclusion to the medieval knights, the serenade, and the hunt. The opening, with its falling octaves in the minor, is an ominous counterpart to the opening dawn theme of the first movement. The Finale is an extended movement touching upon the previous themes of the pastoral-bucolic, the lyrical, the solemn, and the ominous, but the highlight is the momentous return of the opening movement in the coda.

**Yang Liu** is a Chinese-American violinist. He has toured in North America, South America and Asia with multiple orchestras. Liu also often travels with his wife Olivia in concert tours across the United States and Asia. He is an advocate of cultural exchange via classical music, and is a founder of the Yang and Olivia Foundation and Memento Virtuosi, a chamber ensemble featuring diverse ethnicity and instrumentation.



Liu studied in Central Conservatory with Professor Yaoji Lin in Beijing and College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati with professor Kurt Sassmannshaus and Dorothy Delay. Liu became an American citizen in 2014. Liu was the winner of China's 5th National Violin Competition and a prize winner of the Twelfth International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. His first performance in North America was in 2002 with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, performing Paganini's First Violin Concerto. This success was followed by touring engagements with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Spano:

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, the Odense Symphony Orchestra, Denmark, and São Paulo Symphony, Brazil. He also completed a 5-city tour in China performing the Butterfly Concerto with the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra, as part of the China-US cultural exchange initiated by Secretary of State of the US John Kerry, and chairman of the cultural department of China, Mr. Luo. Liu was featured in a documentary called String of heart--Yang Liu, highlighting Yang's artistic life. This production was aired on CCTV (China Central Television) throughout China, together with his autobiographical book *Performing in Love*, which was published in the spring of 2014. In 2017, Liu performed on China's special New Year TV program in Qingdao. Yang was also a featured performer in Starling's Emmy Award-winning educational video, *Classical Quest*. His debut recording, "Song of Nostalgia," was released to critical acclaim. This recording, along with many of his live performances, is frequently heard on National Public Radio in the United States.

Yang Liu resides in Chicago with his wife Olivia and two boys. He has performed and taught at the Great Wall Music Academy, the Aspen Music Festival, the Ravinia Festival, the Chicago classical music radio station WFMT, SESC international music festival of Brazil, and gives master classes in major universities and music conservatories such as the VanderCook College of Music. Liu plays a Guarneri made in 1741 on loan from the Stradivari Society and Bein & Fushi Rare Violins.

For a biography of conductor **Jay Friedman**, please see your Program Book.