

Heroic Beethoven

October 26, 2025 4:00 P.M.

Concordia University Chapel of Our Lord

Triple Concerto in C major, Op. 56

**L. van Beethoven
(1770-1827)**

- I. Allegro**
- II. Largo**
- III. Rondo alla polacca**

**Michelle Wynton, violin
William Cernota, cello
David Leehey, piano**

intermission

Symphony No. 3 in Eb major, Op. 55 (*Eroica*)

Beethoven

- I. Allegro con brio**
- II. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai**
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace**
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto**

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.

Today's concert is being performed in memory of Thomas R. Tumma

Beethoven composed his **Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Piano (Triple Concerto) in C Major, Op. 56** for his pupil and patron, the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, who was an amateur pianist and composer. The concerto was intended for performance by the Archduke himself, along with his court violinist and cellist. It is not clear if the Archduke ever performed the work, but one thing that is certain is that Beethoven was very taken with the skills of Rudolph's court cellist. This accounts for the marked difficulty of the cello part, which is often set in a high register and requires the cellist to play passages that are just as fast as those for the violinist and pianist. The Triple Concerto is Beethoven's only concerto written for more than one solo instrument. Indeed, although this combination of solo instruments is frequently employed in chamber music (in the form of a piano trio), it is rarely used in a concerto format, with the Beethoven work being the only one that has remained in the repertory. However, in the pre-classical era, "triple concertos" for various groups of solo instruments were not uncommon. For instance, Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 is written for solo violin, flute, and harpsichord, and there are many other pieces from the baroque era that showcase three soloists with orchestra.

Beethoven composed the Triple Concerto in 1803 and 1804. At about the same time he was composing the *Eroica* Symphony (Op. 55) and two of his most famous piano sonatas—the *Waldstein* (Op. 53) and the *Appassionata* (Op. 57)—and the first of the *Razumovsky* quartets (Op. 59, No. 1). Thus, the Triple Concerto falls squarely into Beethoven's prolific "middle" compositional period, often called his "Heroic Period". Like these other famous works, the Triple Concerto is expansive, with the length generated in part by the presence of three soloists, each of whom requires a separate statement of the material in the exposition. This format also means that the concerto tends more toward lyric elaboration than to dramatic transformation of the material more typical of the composer. Beethoven called the Triple Concerto a *Konzertant*, reminiscent of the genre of *symphonie concertante* popularized in France during an earlier era. Indeed, the work can even be heard as a throwback to the Baroque *concerto grosso* for multiple soloists and orchestra.

The first movement opens with a hushed theme which serves as the anchor for the entire movement. The structure is a typical concerto double exposition form, with a repeated exposition, a development section, a recapitulation, and a coda, where the tempo is suddenly accelerated to generate excitement in Beethovenian fashion. To follow the long first movement, Beethoven employed the same

procedure he had already tried in the *Waldstein Sonata* of having a short set of variations that link directly to the final movement. The rondo finale uses the stately polonaise rhythm that was popular all over Europe for festive music of a particularly ceremonial type.

Of all Beethoven's concerto compositions, the Triple Concerto is least often played and most often criticized. To be sure, the presence of three soloists results in more repetition than we expect from Beethoven, but the sheer breadth of the work and the intrinsic beauty of many of the ideas mark it as a fascinating step in Beethoven's progression. We can already sense the two broadly lyrical concertos, the Fourth Piano Concerto (Op. 58) and the Violin Concerto (Op. 61), that evolved directly from the Triple Concerto.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 55, was originally going to be titled the "Bonaparte" as a tribute to Napoleon Bonaparte, the French Consul who had begun to radically reform Europe after conducting sweeping military campaigns across the continent. However, in 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor, a move which angered Beethoven. As legend has it, the composer ripped out the title page and renamed the symphony the "Eroica" because he refused to dedicate one of his pieces to the man he now considered a "tyrant". Nevertheless, he still allowed the published manuscript to carry the inscription "composed to celebrate the memory of a great man" despite dedicating the work to his patron Prince Lobkowitz.

The Eroica-Napoleon link has been a source of great scholarly interest for the past two centuries. In a particularly unusual commentary, Peter Conrad discussed Alfred Hitchcock's subconscious use of the symphony in his movie *Psycho*:

In Hitchcock's films, the most innocuous object can rear up threateningly. What could possibly be sinister about the record of Beethoven's Eroica, which Vera Miles finds on a gramophone turntable during her investigation of the Bates house? At the age of 13, I had no idea - though I felt an unmistakable chill when the camera peered into the gaping box to read the label of the silent disc. Now I think I know the answer. The symphony summarizes one abiding undercurrent of Hitchcock's work. It is about Napoleon, a man who - like many of Hitchcock's psychopaths - set himself up as a god, and it includes a funeral march for the toppled idol. It first rejoices in the hero's freedom from moral inhibitions, then recoils in dismay.

The influence of Bonaparte, the French Revolution, and the German enlightenment on Beethoven were considerable factors in explaining the development of the so-called “Heroic” style that came to dominate Beethoven’s middle period. Traits of the Heroic include driving rhythms (often, the works of the period could be identified as much by rhythm as melody / harmony), drastic dynamic changes, and in some cases, the use of martial instruments. The “Eroica” is one of the major milestones in the development of this trademark Beethoven style. It is here that we first see the breadth, depth, orchestration, and spirit that mark a breaking away from the more classical style of earlier periods. Innovations include the use of a new theme in the development section of the first movement, the employment of the winds for expressive rather than coloristic purposes, the use of three French horns for the first time in symphonic orchestration, and the introduction of a ‘Marcia funebre’ and a set of variations in the Finale.

-- Program Notes by David Leehey



Michelle Szamarzewska Wynton

began her violin studies at age 5 with Idel Low in Los Angeles, California. As a child, Michelle and her sister were featured on several television programs such as Real People, Hour Magazine and Omnibus, hosted by Princess Grace of Monaco. As a teenager, Michelle studied with Robert Lipsett through the USC School of Performing Arts, where she won a half scholarship. She also studied with Michelle Bovyer, a first violinist in the Los Angeles Philharmonic. During this time, she won several competitions and performed concerti with Pasadena

Community Orchestra and Pasadena Young Musician's Orchestra. After graduating from high school and before entering studies at the University of California at Berkeley, Michelle studied with Tadeus Kochanski at the Gdansk Conservatory of Music, Poland. Michelle earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology at UC Berkeley while continuing her musical studies with Serban Rusu. At this time she also studied with William Barbini (New York Philharmonic and Concertmaster of Sacramento Symphony), Yukiko Kamei (San Francisco Symphony), Philip Levy (Stanford University), Barbara Riccardi (SF Opera) and Mariko Smiley (SF Symphony). Michelle received a full tuition scholarship to study with Glen Dicterow at Manhattan School of Music. She continued these studies in Chicago with Emira

Darvarova (Assistant Concertmaster, Metropolitan Opera and Concertmaster Emeritus, Grant Park Symphony), Albert Igochnikov (Assistant Principal Second Violin, CSO) and David Taylor (Assistant Concertmaster, Chicago Symphony) and was again awarded with a full tuition scholarship, this time to attend Roosevelt University, where she studied with Joe Golan (Principal Second Violin Emeritus, Chicago Symphony) and Robert Chen, (Concertmaster, Chicago Symphony). In 2016 Michelle graduated with distinction earning a Masters in Violin from DePaul University where she was a scholarship student with Ilya Kaler. Michelle was a faculty member at the Music Institute of Chicago for ten years and has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Ravinia Festival Orchestra, Chicago Civic Orchestra, Chicago Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony, Ars Viva Master Singers, Lake Forest Symphony, Northwest Indiana Symphony, Elgin Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, Rockford Symphony, South Bend Symphony, New York City Opera, Westchester Symphony, West Palm Beach Opera Company, Binghamton Symphony, Staten Island Philharmonic, Sacramento Symphony, Fresno Symphony, Monterey County Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, Santa Cruz Symphony, Vallejo Symphony, Napa Valley Symphony and Berkeley Symphony.

William Cernota, cellist, has been a member of the Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra since 1982. From 1982 to 1996 he was a permanent substitute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. While a student of Chicago Symphony Principal Cellist Frank Miller, he was Principal Cellist of the Chicago Civic Orchestra. William performed as soloist in Strauss's Don Quixote and Bloch's Schelomo with that orchestra. He has also held principal cello positions with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Concertante di Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, and Peninsula Music Festival. In 2012 he was appointed Principal Cellist in the Southern Illinois Music Festival. He performed the Schubert Arpeggione Sonata on a national broadcast from WFMT and was a soloist on two European tours of the Chicago Chamber Orchestra. Since 2011, he has annually performed live global recital broadcasts on WFMT with pianist Eric Weimer. With pianist Thomas Zeman, he performed Lutosławski's works for cello and piano at Orchestra Hall, Symphony Center in Chicago with the composer in attendance. With pianist Joy Doran, he issued a CD: On or About December, 1910. William is on the adjunct music faculty of Loyola University Chicago. Following graduation in Ideas & Methods and Biology from the University of Chicago he served for three years in the Peace Corps, Sierra Leone as a biology teacher and band director. He resides with his wife Maria, daughter Naomi, and son-in-law cellist Alex in Chicago. He completed the Masters in Engineering Degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago, where he also works as a Research Scientist at Fernalogic Incorporated. William is a founding member of the Renoir Trio.

For biographies of piano soloist **David Leehey** and conductor **Jay Friedman**, please see your program book.