



KITCHENER-WATERLOO  
SYMPHONY



PODIUM SPONSOR



PROGRAMMING SPONSOR

# GLORIOUS BRAHMS

**Nov 3 & 4 | 8pm**

Centre In The Square, Kitchener

Andrei Feher, conductor

Krisztina Szabó, mezzo-soprano

---

Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883)

Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*

9'

Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883) / Mottl/Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder, WWV 91

21'

*Der Engel*

*Stehe still*

*Im Treibhaus*

*Schmerzen*

*Träume*

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D major, op. 73

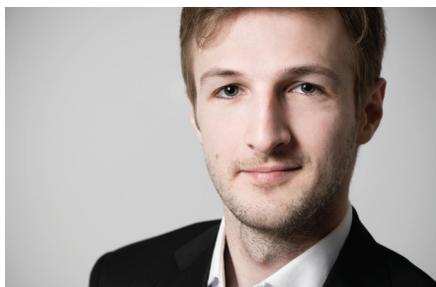
40'

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio non troppo

III. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andantino)

IV. Allegro con spirito



## Andrei Feher

Conductor

Rapidly establishing himself as one of the rising stars of his generation, Andrei Feher was recently appointed as the new Music Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra effective August 2018. Feher, chosen after a thorough 18-month long search, was noted for his conducting prowess and musicianship, as well as his imaginative approach to performance, repertoire and community connection.

Having gained early experience as assistant to Fabien Gabel at the Québec Symphony Orchestra at the age of 22, in September 2014, Andrei joined the Orchestre de Paris as Assistant Conductor to its Music Director, Paavo Järvi, during which time he collaborated with conductors including Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, Christoph von Dohnányi, Thomas Hengelbrock and Jaap van Zweden, as well as being regularly invited to conduct the orchestra in their highly popular 'Young Public' concerts at the Philharmonie de Paris.

In 2013 he was invited to conduct the closing concert of the Young Prague Festival, in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum before going on to work with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, whom he replaced at the head of the Orchestre Métropolitain, Montreal, in 2014 in a programme of music by Richard Strauss after which he was immediately re-invited to conduct in the orchestra's subscription series.

The 2015/16 season saw Andrei return to conduct both the Québec Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris in performances of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, *Peter and the Wolf* by Prokofiev and Strauss' *Til Eulenspiegel*.

A strong advocate of contemporary music, he has recently performed works by Eric Champagne, Pierre Mercure, George Dimitrov,

Ciprian Pop and Abigail Richardson and in November 2015 gave the world premiere of *Soleil noir* by Pierre Jodkowski with the Orchestre de Pau-Béarn, an engagement which resulted in an immediate re-invitation to work with the orchestra in the 17/18 season as well as a reprise of *Soleil noir* in Toulouse for November 2016.

In the 2016/17 season Andrei Feher made his debuts with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Filarmonica de Stat 'Transilvania' in Cluj and the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony Orchestra. His debut with the Orchestre de chambre de Lausanne led to two re-invitations to the orchestra, to conduct in their popular Sunday series as well as the world premiere of Thierry Besançon's opera for children 'Les Zoocrates'. His return to the Quebec Symphony Orchestra conducting Mozart and Dvorak received great critical acclaim.

Forthcoming highlights in the 17/18 season include debuts with the Romanian Radio National Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, les Violons du Roy, Orchestre nationale d'Île de France as well as reinvitations to the Orchestre de chambre de Lausanne, Filarmonica de Stat 'Transilvania' and concerts with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

Born in Romania to a family of musicians, Andrei Feher began his musical education as a violinist in his hometown Satu-Mare before continuing his studies at the Montreal Conservatoire when his parents relocated to Canada.

## Krisztina Szabó

Mezzo-soprano

Canadian mezzo-soprano Krisztina Szabó has become highly sought in both North America and Europe as an artist of supreme musicianship and stagecraft. Following recent performances of *Ottavia* in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* the Chicago Tribune exclaimed "Krisztina Szabó stole every scene with her powerful, mahogany voice and deeply poignant immersion in the empress' plight." The New York Times praised her Lincoln Center debut as *Dorabella* in *Così fan tutte* as "clear, strong, stately and an endearingly vulnerable *Dorabella*."

This season, Ms. Szabó makes her Royal Opera House, Covent Garden debut in multiple

# BIOGRAPHIES & PROGRAM NOTES



roles for the highly anticipated world premiere of George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence*, and she reprises the roles with the Dutch National Opera in 2018. She also sings as Second Angel and Marie in Benjamin's *Written on Skin* with Opera Philadelphia, and joins Toronto Masque Theatre as the heroine in a double bill performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and James Rolfe's *Aeneas and Dido*. Her concert engagements in the 2017-18 season include *Messiah* with Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody* with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, and a triple bill performance of Bruckner's *Te Deum*, Brahms' *Schicksalslied*, and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Pax Christi Chorale.

Recent highlights include *Musetta* in *La bohème* with Vancouver Opera; *Giulietta/Stella* in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* with Edmonton Opera; as soloist in *Messiah* with the Calgary Philharmonic; debuted with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in Bach's *Mass in B Minor*; with Vancouver Bach Choir in Adams' *El Niño*; returned to Toronto Mendelssohn Choir as soloist in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*; and to Queen of Puddings Music Theatre in a new work by Chris Paul Harmon.

Kristztina Szabó is a frequent performer of recital, concert and chamber repertoire. She performed as soloist in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, in Verdi's *Requiem* at the Elora Festival, in Haydn's cantata *Arianna a Naxos* with Les Violons du Roy in its United States tour, in staged performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and in the Mozart *Requiem* with the Oregon Symphony. In recital, she has appeared with Ravinia Festival, Aldeburgh Connection, Music Toronto, and Off Centre Music Salon.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)**

#### **Prelude: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg), WWV 96 (1862)**

The idea of a comedy based on the *Mastersingers of Nuremberg* had been percolating in Wagner's highly active mind since 1845, when he was 32. Sixteen years later, in August 1861, he visited Nuremberg for a day. Not long after, on a train from Venice to Vienna, depressed over a love affair that was, uncharacteristically, stalled, he wrote: "I heard something like an echo of an overture to *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*." He told the publisher Schott: "It is transparent, yet pithy music," and sold the publication rights to the opera for 10,000 francs. That 'pithy' music eventually turned into his longest musical score to date at four-and-a-half-hours, with by far the largest cast in any of his music dramas. He completed it only by halting work on his music drama *Siegfried*. First, he wrote the libretto, which was drafted in less than six months. Then, curiously, he composed and then conducted the overture in Leipzig, four years before the rest of the immense work was completed. Wagner tells the story: "During a beautiful sunset . . . I contemplated a splendid view of 'Mainz the Golden' and the majestic Rhine streaming past it, and the prelude to my *Meistersinger*, just as I once had previously seen it as a distant apparition rising from a mood of despair, now returned, suddenly clear and distinct to my soul. I set about putting the prelude down on paper and wrote it down precisely as in the score today, that is, setting forth very definitely the main motives of the entire drama."

### **RICHARD WAGNER (1813-1883)**

#### ***Wesendonck Lieder*, WWV 91 (1857-8)**

While living in forced exile in Zürich because of his role as an activist in the 1849 Dresden insurrection, Wagner persuaded Otto Wesendonck, a wealthy silk merchant, to become his patron. Wesendonck proved extraordinarily generous, and made a peaceful house in the grounds of the Wesendonck villa in the Zürich suburb of Enge available to Wagner and his wife Minna, so that the composer might continue work on *Siegfried*, the third drama in his epic four-part Ring cycle. Wagner rewarded Wesendonck by dropping work on

Siegfried and falling in love with his young and beautiful wife, Mathilde. She became the inspiration for a new opera, *Tristan und Isolde*, the most passionate and explicit music drama to have been thus far written, which reflects many of the facets of the love triangle. During the early days of its creation, Wagner would frequently spend evenings reading Mathilde verses he had written for the drama. She, a poet and dramatist, wrote five poems on characteristically Tristanesque themes – the shared passion of lovers, imagery of sunlight and daylight, life and death, renunciation, oblivion and, in *Schmerzen*, the heroism of such mythic heroes as Siegfried.

Late in 1857, after completing the *Prelude and Act One* of the new opera, Wagner orchestrated one of these poems (*Träume*) and had the song performed by a small orchestra of 18 musicians under her window as a birthday serenade, with the vocal line played by solo violin. He regarded this song and *Im Treibhaus* as “sketches for *Tristan*.” He subsequently incorporated much of *Träume* into the opera’s Act 2 love duet and a version of *Im Treibhaus* into the *Prelude to Act 3*, where it portrays the suffering of the wounded *Tristan*. The five songs date from the winter and spring of 1857-8 and underwent several revisions. Wagner only orchestrated *Träume*; the other songs were scored by the Austrian opera conductor, composer and ardent Wagnerian Felix Mottl (1856-1911).

## **JOHANNES BRAHMS** **Symphony No. 2, in D, Op. 73 (1877)**

Brahms found it difficult to step out of the shadow of Beethoven’s symphonies. He waited till he was over 40 before releasing his heroic, hard-won First Symphony and cast it in the characteristic Beethovenian key of C minor. ‘It’s Beethoven’s Tenth,’ the Viennese proclaimed, even as they began to link his name with that of Bach and Beethoven as one of the ‘three B’s.’ “Any jackass can see the similarity between the finale of my First and the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth,” was Brahms’s gruff reply. He then turned to his Second Symphony shortly afterwards, though the vigilance with which he destroyed sketches make it possible that he worked on the two symphonies together.

Written in the sunny Carinthian countryside where he spent the summer of 1877, the

Second was right away dubbed ‘Brahms’s Pastoral.’ But, for all its rich melodic writing, the score is touched with a sense of dark shadows and impressive heights, like the Carinthian landscape in which the music was born. The symphony raises questions and reveals an undercurrent of foreboding. The seed from which much of the symphony grows is found in the four-note figure (D, C-sharp, D, A) at the very opening. The process of thematic transformation is as subtle and carefully worked-out as that of Beethoven, but the expansiveness with which Brahms unfurls his melodies is clearly influenced by Schubert. The slow movement is richly brooding, meditative and introspective. It recalls something of the tragic vein that underlines so much of the earlier, C minor symphony. The third is a gentle intermezzo. The finale is tautly constructed, another of Brahms’s miracles of concentration, with complex relationships between the themes and the ever-present four-note figure with which the symphony begins. The movement broadens from a subdued, hazy opening to a concluding blaze of joy in one of the most exuberant finales Brahms ever wrote.

– Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner.  
Comments welcomed: [khnotes@sympatico.ca](mailto:khnotes@sympatico.ca)

### ***Wesendonck Lieder*** ***Der Engel (The Angel)***

In my childhood’s early days  
oft I heard tales of angels  
who trade heaven’s blissful sublimity  
for the earth’s sunshine;

heard that, when a heart in sorrow  
hides its grief from the world,  
that it bleeds in silence, and  
dissolves in tears,

offers fervent prayers  
for deliverance:  
then the angel flies down  
and bears it gently to heaven.

Yes, an angel came down to me also  
and on shining wings  
bears my spirit from all pains  
heavenwards.

# BIOGRAPHIES & PROGRAM NOTES

## ***Stehe still! (Stand Still!)***

Rushing, roaring wheel of time,  
you measure of eternity,  
shining spheres in the vast firmament,  
you that encircle our earthly sphere:  
Eternal creation, stop!  
Enough of becoming: let me be!

Cease, generative powers,  
primal thought, that endlessly creates;  
stop every breath,  
still every urge, give but one moment of peace!  
Swelling pulses, restrain your beating:  
end, eternal day of the will!  
So that in sweet forgetfulness  
I may taste the full measure of my joy!

When eye gazes blissfully into eye,  
soul drowns in soul;  
being finds itself in being,  
and the goal of all hopes is near;  
when lips are mute in silent amazement  
and the soul has no further wish:  
man knows eternity's footprint  
and solves your riddle, divine Nature!

## ***Im Treibhaus (In the Hothouse)***

High-arching leafy crowns,  
canopies of emerald  
you children of distant lands,  
tell me, why do you lament?

Silently you incline your branches,  
tracing signs in the air,  
and, mute witness to your sorrows,  
there rises a sweet perfume.

Wide in longing and desire  
you spread your arms out  
and embrace, in self-deception  
barren emptiness, a fearful void.

Well I know it, poor plant!  
We share the same fate.  
Although the light shines brightly round us,  
our home is not here!

And, as the sun gladly quits  
day's empty brightness,  
so he who truly suffers  
wraps himself in the dark mantel of silence.

It grows quiet, an anxious rustling  
fills the dark room;  
I see the heavy drops hanging  
from the leaves' green edges.

## ***Schmerzen (Sorrows)***

Sun, you weep every evening  
until your lovely eyes are red,  
when, bathing in the sea,  
you are overtaken by your early death:

But you rise again in your former splendour,  
the glory of the dark world;  
fresh awakened in the morning  
like a proud and conquering hero!

Ah, then, why should I complain,  
why should my heart be so heavy,  
if the sun itself must despair,  
if the sun itself must go down?

And, if only death gives birth to life,  
if only torment brings bliss:  
then how thankful I am that Nature  
has given me such sorrows.

## ***Träume (Dreams)***

Say, what wondrous dreams  
hold my soul captive,  
and have not, like bubbles,  
disappeared into darkest night?

Dreams, which in every hour  
of every day beautifully bloom  
and with their heavenly imitations  
blissfully float through my mind?

Dreams, that like glorious rays  
penetrate the soul,  
there to leave an everlasting impression:  
All-forgetting, single-minded!

Dreams, as when the spring sun  
kisses blossoms from the snow,  
that to undreamed-of bliss  
the new day can greet them,

So they grow, so they flower,  
dreamily casting their scent,  
softly fade upon your breast,  
and then sink into their grave.

(Mathilde Wesendonck (1828-1902))