

Nézet-Séguin and Eberle : Romantic Ecstasy

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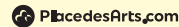


SUNDAY

26

JULY
4 P.M.

AMPHITHÉÂTRE
FERNAND-LINDSAY



PROGRAM

EMILIE MAYER (1812 – 1883)

Overture no. 3 in C major — 8 min

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 – 1827)

Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61 — 45 min

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Larghetto
- III. Rondo. Allegro

INTERMISSION – 20'

PIOTR ILITCH TCHAIKOVSKI (1840 –1893)

Symphony no. 5 in E minor, op. 64 — 48 min

- I. Andante – Allegro con anima – Molto più tranquillo
- II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
- III. Valse. Allegro moderato
- IV. Finale: Andante maestoso – Andante vivace – Meno mosso

ARTISTES

Orchestre Métropolitain

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor

Veronika Eberle, violin

NOTE DE PROGRAMME

"Soul of man, how like you are to water! Fate of man, how like you are to the wind!" In four lines from Song of the Spirits over the Waters (Gesang der Geister über den Wassern), Goethe offers an image whose simplicity is matched only by its depth. Water takes the shape of whatever it meets without ever losing its identity; it preserves, it connects, it transforms slowly. The wind, for its part, rises without warning. Invisible yet tangible, it deflects trajectories, upends landscapes, carries off what seemed immovable. Between these two forces the whole of human experience unfolds: an inner life seeking its own continuity, and a destiny endlessly crossed by the unforeseeable.

This concert proposes to inhabit that space of tension. The three works gathered here each question, in their own way, that fragile balance between what is born of us and what befalls us. Emilie Mayer's Overture, Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony offer three singular answers to a single question: how does one remain faithful to one's own voice when the winds of fate come to bend its course?

Emilie Mayer's work belongs to a nineteenth century in which women's musical voices were still largely rendered invisible within institutions. Mayer nonetheless developed a personal, energetic and tightly structured idiom that testifies to genuine mastery of orchestral form. The Overture no. 3 in C major (1850) belongs to a period in which the composer was progressively asserting her symphonic language. The writing is luminous, founded on a thematic clarity inherited from Viennese classicism yet animated by a freer Romantic tension. The dynamic contrasts, the rhythmic vitality and the care given to transitions lend this overture an impression of continuous motion, as though the music were ceaselessly seeking to exceed its own contours.

Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61, marks a turning point in the history of the genre. Premiered on 23 December 1806 in Vienna by the violinist Franz Clement, it abandons the demonstrative virtuosity that still characterised many concertos of the period in order to make the violin a true partner in the orchestral thinking. From the five timpani strokes that open the work, a discreet pulse seems to set time itself in motion. Nothing hurries. The orchestra brings a vast sound landscape into being before the violin enters with an almost improvised simplicity, as though joining a discourse already under way.

The first movement unfolds long melodic arches in which soloist and orchestra breathe as one. The Larghetto all but suspends time: the violin's song seems to float above an orchestral carpet of luminous serenity, before the Rondo recovers a dancing energy shot through with a spirit of freedom. This immense architecture gives the feeling that opposing forces are gradually finding their equilibrium. Fate no longer appears as a hostile power, but as a material that musical intelligence shapes without ever claiming to master it.

Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, composed in 1888, approaches the same question in a more tormented light. The composer himself evoked, in his sketches, the idea of a "complete submission before fate". That presence runs through the entire work in the form of a dark motif returning from one movement to the next, a true thread running through the symphony.

Yet this cyclical idea never produces a mere identical return. It transforms itself according to the musical events, as if each reappearance revealed a new facet of one and the same question. The immense cantilena of the second movement, entrusted to the horn, remains one of the most affecting songs of Romanticism; its fragile beauty seems constantly threatened by the return of the fate motif. The waltz of the third movement introduces an almost carefree lightness, soon dispelled. Finally, the finale leads the work towards a triumphant conclusion whose ambiguity continues to fascinate. A true victory, or an affirmation won at the price of illusion? Tchaikovsky leaves the question open.

Goethe set neither water against wind nor soul against fate. On the contrary, he reminded us that both belong to a single reality, forever in the making. We are shaped as much by what we choose as by what happens to us, as much by the currents that carry us as by the gusts that push us off course. Music has this singular power to make that truth palpable. For a few moments, it gives form to the invisible, turns the movements of the soul into sonic landscapes and the accidents of existence into inner necessity. Listening then becomes an experience in which each of us recognises something of our own destiny: a frail skiff following the course of the water, seeking its place among the prevailing winds.

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