

PERSONNEL | Nicholas Sharma, Conductor

VIOLIN I

Miya Saito-Beckman
Tina Glausi
Ryan Downs*
Emma Thormodsen
Simeon Brown
Darian Douglas
Bashar Matti

VIOLIN II

Clara Fuhrman*
Scott Hermanns*
Ben Gardner*
Ellie Van Hattem*
Jonathan DeBruyn*
Erika Parisien
Kaydee Willis
Lauren Scott
Gillian Frederick
Leah Jacobo
Lan Le
Stefania Ashby
Emily Lawhead

VIOLA

Forrest Walker
Nicole Mowery
Devin Burgess
Katie Siegfried
Rubi Yan
Nicole Mowery
Myles Davis
Lily Coker

Shae Skiles
Darlyn Fiallos
Montufar
Kailie DeBolt

CELLO

Joseph Eggleston
Titus Young
Clair Dietz
Hendrik Mobley
Connor Balderston
Drew Faatz
Erik Okel
Sally Clark

BASS

Andrew Mell
Garret Baxter
Alexandre Pabst
Rylee McConnell
Dylan Bauer
Niels Miller

FLUTE

Annabel McDonald
Tori Calderone
Brynna Paros

OBOE

Noah Sylwester
Wesley Becherer

CLARINET

Anthony Aguayo
Darlene Mueller

BASSOON

Cameron Joublin
Richard Krishnan

HORN

Justin Stanley
Shae Wirth
Sean Brennan
Kamuela Akeo

TRUMPET

John Davison
David Jacobs
Eli Simantel

TROMBONE

Josh Thomas-Urlik
Brandon Pressley
Cory Francis

TUBA

Juan Valdez

TIMPANI

Robby Carr

PERCUSSION

Kathie Hsieh
Natalie North
Chandler Larson

**in different violin section for Tannhäuser*



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

**THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Nicholas Sharma, conductor



BEETHOVEN

WAGNER

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Season 118, Program 39

Beall Concert Hall
Wednesday, March 13, 2019 | 7:30 p.m.



Symphony No. 2 in D Major Op. 36 (1803) Ludwig van Beethoven
 Adagio – Allegro con brio (1770-1827)
 Larghetto [33 min]
 Scherzo: Allegro
 Allegro molto

Overture to *Tannhäuser* (1845) Richard Wagner
 (1813-1883)
 [14 min]

Tonight's program consists of works by two of the giants in Romantic music history. With this program, the orchestra has been asked to be a little more flexible than usual, adapting to different seating plans, different playing styles, and different conceptions of these pieces than is often seen in modern performances. This rendition is the culmination of many months of research to uncover some of the performance practices that were in use in the 19th century that have been lost in time. The most noteworthy is the change in seating for the strings. Both at the beginning of the 19th century in Vienna, and Leipzig in the 1840s, it was customary to seat the first violins on the right, the second violins on the left, the celli in the middle and the basses and violas off to either side. This is a tradition that has been overlooked for the past hundred years and is one that we are reintroducing tonight for the first time as far as records indicate. This different seating has many fascinating acoustical properties and allows us to create a different set of orchestral colors and soundscapes that leads to some very beautiful results. In addition, we have worked hard to recapture some of the older playing techniques as described in the treatises and instrument instruction manuals of the time. The combination of these elements will hopefully allow for an experience of these two standard pieces that provides a unique performance, a new perspective, and a thought-provoking interpretation.

We begin tonight's program with **Beethoven's Symphony No. 2** which was premiered in 1803 at the Theater an der Wien. While this hidden gem is often overlooked due to its place next to Beethoven's iconic First, and revolutionary Third Symphony, there is a definite development in style and length in his Second as well as a character that allows it to stand strongly next to all his other symphonies with its beauty and an amazing balance between tranquility and joyousness. What is even more striking is that while this Symphony sparkles and shines with brilliance, it stands in complete contrast to the events in Beethoven's life at the time. During the summer preceding its premiere, Beethoven was having to face his deteriorating hearing, and this culminated in his famous Heiligenstadt Testament, an unsent letter expressing thoughts of suicide due to his hearing loss. These inner ghosts, however, seems completely absent from this Symphony and the work is written with amazing clarity and creativity. As Berlioz later would describe it, "This Symphony is smiling throughout." The first movement begins with an extended introduction which, unlike his first symphony introduces the key right away. However, Beethoven quickly moves away from D Major, exploring

more remote tonal areas, such as Bb Major. The Allegro is very fast and virtuosic and has lots of imitative passages and exciting energy. In the second movement, Beethoven opts for a simple song which he embellishes with light interjections, and allows to sing in a very pastoral quality, which seems to evoke an atmosphere somewhat similar to that of his later Symphony No. 6. The third movement is noteworthy as it is a first in the symphonic genre to be written as a scherzo, rather than a minuet. It is an extremely fragmented movement, with a motto which gets repeated in many different forms with different instruments and different dynamics. The fourth and final movement is extremely lively and playful, and Beethoven uses the split violins for exciting effects, passing melodies back and forth across the front of the orchestra. While this symphony today is highly regarded, it was received with somewhat mixed reviews originally, with one writer complaining that its "striving for [the] new and surprising" was too obvious, but nonetheless remarking that it had, "brilliant passages of beauty." It was well enough received, however, to receive new performances in other cities already in the following year. One of such performances was by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester in 1804.

It was this same orchestra that was to premiere **Wagner's Tannhäuser Overture** just over 40 years later. This performance was led by none other than Felix Mendelssohn, and as was the case with Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 it was received with somewhat mixed feelings. This was likely because at the time the Leipzig public was used to hearing works of contemporary composers writing in the style of Mendelssohn with his refined, clean and subtle characters. Wagner's overture, like the opera that follows however, is quite the opposite, starting with a serenely beautiful chorale which continues to passionately build until we reach a series of progressively more epic climaxes of overwhelming proportion. Much of the musical content from the overture comes from important moments in the opera, and the beginning is no exception with its woodwind chorale. This melody conveys a group of chanting pilgrims, of which Tannhäuser is ultimately condemned to join, before ascending to heaven after hearing that his beloved has died at the end of the opera. The opera begins with a very different atmosphere however – in the mythical Venusberg mountain, where Venus, the goddess of love presides in an underworld realm of lust and pleasure. The music that evokes this can be heard after the opening chorale returns, with a shimmering string section, highly chromatic twists and turns and a mysterious viola melody. After Tannhäuser leaves this realm, he is reacquainted with his long-lost love who is a princess at the Wartburg castle. He is challenged by another suitor of the princess, and the two decide to stage a singing competition to win her affections and the approval of the rest of the court. The competition is short-lived, however, as Tannhäuser becomes enraptured and starts singing of his time at the Venusberg, to the horror of the court, who sends him on a pilgrimage to Rome. This song is also included in the overture, played by the violins and upper woodwinds with an exciting and exclamatory melody. After facing more temptation from Venus, calling after him in a beautiful solo by the clarinet, two solo violins portray his feelings of temptation. He resists Venus, however, and ends his pilgrimage after hearing of the death of his beloved princess, and is ultimately saved by his true and pure love for her. The overture ends with the same pilgrims' theme from the opening, this time played in a most heroic and magnificent version.

-Nicholas Sharma