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BOSTON PHILHARMONIC
Youth Orchestra
BENJAMIN ZANDER
CONDUCTOR

NOVEMBER 2012

BEETHOVEN /
EGMONT OVERTURE

ELGAR /
CELLO CONCERTO
ALISA WEILERSTEIN, CELLO
RAFAEL PAYARE, GUEST CONDUCTOR

STRAUSS /
EIN HELDENLEBEN
TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 A Greeting from Our Music Director
6 Benjamin Zander's Biography
8 BPYO Musicians
11 Board of Directors and Administration
13 Concert Program
15 Soloist Biography: Alisa Weilerstein
17 Guest Artist Biography: Rafael Payare
19 Notes on the Program
26 BPYO Musician Spotlight: Hikaru Yonezaki
29 BPYO "White Sheets"
33 Enthusiasm for BPYO
37 Acknowledgements
40 Committed Partners
41 Supporters
A GREETING FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

We are about to embark on an unusual and extraordinary journey, with 117 very young, very accomplished, very wise and very great leaders to show us the way. This orchestra, the only one like it in Boston, came together over the last six months in a groundswell of youthful enthusiasm. These young people arrived prepared, responsive and responsible, ready to help and ready to make it work.

I have never felt so privileged as I did when I walked into the first rehearsal in our new home, the beautiful and acoustically refurbished hall at the Benjamin Franklin Institute, knowing that every person sitting in those 117 chairs was there because they chose to be there, that they’d made a decision to take a leap of faith with a new organization, without history or security. I knew I had a group of adventurers and risk-takers—necessary characteristics for artists of all kinds. I knew, also, that the age range, from the youngest at twelve to the oldest at twenty-one, would encompass those crucial years of growth and development during which an artistic nature is formed.

We discovered through the audition process that we had as challenging and thrilling and well-prepared a group of young people as was ever likely to gather in a single room. But nothing could have prepared me for the glorious, resonant sound that emerged from the cellos and basses and the horns at beginning of Ein Heldenleben at the very first rehearsal. The whole first section of Ein Heldenleben soared, plunged, and rose to ecstatic heights. When we came to the place where the music stops right after the hero has thrown down his gauntlet, we looked at each other and gasped in disbelief. This was already an amazing orchestra.

A short two months of weekly rehearsals followed, during which the notorious difficulties of Ein Heldenleben were progressively overcome. Some of the best musical minds in the city, including first chair players from the Boston Symphony and the Boston Philharmonic, were brought in to coach individual sections. But our work doesn’t only involve music. Each rehearsal begins with an assignment in the arena of leadership, relationship, or life skills for the players to experiment with over the week to come: “Throw yourself into life like a pebble into a pond and watch the ripples”; “Come from the power of a child”; “Walk with spirit and love.” These assignments encourage the players to look in new directions, overcome assumptions, and practice new ways of being that we believe will increase their capacities as musicians and as communicators.

Then there are the “white sheets!” Each player is invited to share his or her experience, insights, questions, and suggestions on the “white sheets” handed out at every rehearsal. What a treasure-trove of brilliance, insight, and emotional richness! I post many on my Facebook page to allow people to read and respond to them. We have received delighted comments from around the world, including from a reader in India, a young musician in England and a business leader in Japan. It makes us feel part of a large human family, striving for excellence, revealing our souls, and wrestling with the issues that face us all: how do we make a difference, how do we overcome our resistance and our assumptions and how do we reach and affect other people? Even in these two short months, these young people through the medium of the “white sheets,” have leapt ahead in their capacity to express what is meaningful to them.

For the privilege of sharing great music with these young people, I am grateful to several cherished colleagues, whose clarity, passion, and commitment guided me every step of the way: Frank Tempesta and Mark Cantrell, the visionary Chairman and Executive Director of the Boston Philharmonic, who from the outset saw the addition of the BPO as a vital new asset to the work of the orchestra. Mark Churchill, friend, colleague for over thirty-five years, and now, along with the brilliant Elisabeth Christensen, critical partners in this venture. There are many others: Assistant Conductor Ben Vickers, Johnny Helyar, and the tireless staff of the BPO, and the people who stepped up to the plate and became founding donors for our new initiative. I especially want to thank the parents of the players themselves, many of whom have become donors, but most important of all have entrusted us with the education of their remarkable children.
SHAPING FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH MUSIC

This concert is the Debut Performance of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. An artistic institution of the 21st century, the BPYO provides an environment for musical excellence and leadership development that strengthens communication and deepens the human experience. BPYO offers a unique opportunity for young instrumentalists who want to study great orchestral repertoire in a musically dynamic and intellectually challenging community.

BPYO members are asked not only to master their parts and to gain a deep understanding of the musical score, but also to engage in dialogue with Mr. Zander, through weekly "white sheets," where they are invited to share their thoughts on all aspects of the music and the rehearsal process. These conversations often lead to stimulating discussions on personal leadership and effective contribution.

The 117 enthusiastic and talented young musicians of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra range in age from 12 to 21 and come from throughout New England, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Rehearsals take place on Saturday afternoons at the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in Boston's South End.

Introducing the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra
Benjamin Zander started his early musical training in his native England, with cello and composition lessons under the guidance of his father. When he was nine, Benjamin Britten, England’s leading composer, took an interest in his development and invited the family to spend three summers in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, where he lived. This led to a long association with Britten and lessons in theory and composition from Britten’s close associate Imogen Holst, daughter of Gustav Holst.

Benjamin Zander left school when he was fifteen, moving to Florence at the invitation of the great Spanish cello virtuoso, Gaspar Cassadó, who became his teacher and mentor for the next five years. He completed his cello training at the State Academy in Cologne, traveling extensively with Cassadó and performing recitals and chamber music. In 1964 Mr. Zander completed his studies at London University, winning the University College Essay Prize and a Harkness Commonwealth Fellowship for post-graduate work at Harvard University. Boston has been his home ever since.

Mr. Zander served on the New England Conservatory faculty for forty-five years, beginning in 1967, where he taught an interpretation class, conducted the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, and regularly conducted the conservatory orchestras. In 1989 he also became the artistic director of the joint program between New England Conservatory’s Preparatory School and The Walnut Hill School for the Performing Arts in Natick, Massachusetts.

During his thirty-eight year tenure as conductor of the New England Conservatory Youth Philharmonic Orchestra Mr. Zander led them on fifteen international tours and made five commercial recordings, in addition to several documentaries for Public Broadcasting Service.

In 1979, Mr. Zander became the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic. In their thirty-two seasons together they have performed an extensive repertoire, with an emphasis on late romantic and early twentieth century composers, especially the symphonies of Gustav Mahler. In celebration of its 25th anniversary in 2003/2004, the Boston Philharmonic performed an all-Mahler season, including a concert in Carnegie Hall. In 2009, Mr. Zander conducted the orchestra and a combined choir of New England Conservatory and Tufts University singers to celebrate both the Boston Philharmonic’s 30th anniversary and Mr. Zander’s 70th birthday in a performance of Mahler’s Second Symphony at Boston’s Symphony Hall.

Benjamin Zander has established an international reputation as a guest conductor. He has a unique relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra (London), and is currently recording a series of Beethoven and Mahler symphonies for the Telarc label. Beethoven’s Fifth and Seventh Symphonies, and Mahler’s First, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth Symphonies have been released thus far. Each of these recordings includes a full-length discussion disc with Benjamin Zander explaining the music. High Fidelity named the recording of Mahler’s Sixth as “the best classical recording of 2002.” The recording of Mahler’s Third was awarded the “Critics’ Choice” by the German Record Critics’ Award Association in 2004, and the recording of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony was nominated for a Grammy Award. Their recent recording of Bruckner’s 5th Symphony was received with remarkable acclaim for both the performance and Mr. Zander’s now famous full-length disc of musical explanation. The recording was nominated for a 2010 Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance.

Benjamin Zander has traveled the world lecturing to organizations on leadership. He has appeared several times as a keynote speaker at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he was presented with the Crystal Award for “Outstanding Contributions in the Arts and International Relations.” The best-selling book, The Art of Possibility, co-authored with his partner, leading psychotherapist Rosamund Zander, has been translated into sixteen languages.

In 2002, Mr. Zander was awarded the Caring Citizen of the Humanities Award by the International Council for Caring Communities at the United Nations. In 2007, he was awarded the Golden Door award by the International Institute of Boston for his “outstanding contribution to American society” as a United States citizen of foreign birth. In March of 2009, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from New England Conservatory of Music. Mr. Zander was named Arts Ambassador by Guide to the Arts for the 2010/2011 season. In 2012 he was awarded Faculty Emeritus status at New England Conservatory.

In 2012, Benjamin Zander inaugurated the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, made up of talented musicians up to age twenty-one, with performances in Boston’s Symphony Hall and Sanders Theatre. The orchestra’s unique focus is on building leadership skills through music.
VIOLIN I
Francesca Bass *
Yuki Beppu
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Chelsea Kim
Amos Lee
Eric Mrugala
Dillon Robb
Max Tan +
Leland Wu
Weiqiao Wu
Faye Yang
Hikaru Yonezaki ^
Misuru Yonezaki
Ilana Zaks
Shishi Zhou

VIOLIN II
Daniel Getlin
Lila Chang
Emily Chen
Julia Churchill
Roland Clark
Laura Dynes
Njoma Grevioso
Mirella Gruesser-Smith
Clark Ikezu *
Yoobin Kim
Wei Li
Joshua Newburger ^
Hallie Smith
Alexandra Stoica
Nikole Stoica
Michelle Tan
Amy Thacker
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Lauren Brown
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Robert Connelly
Thomas Cooper
Raymond Dineen
Nicholas Gallitano
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Gerald Karmi
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Eric Farnan ^
James Hotchkiss
John Krause
Kathryn Nottage
August Ramos *
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Nicholas Tishermer
Samuel Waring +

ENGLISH HORN
Nicole Caligiuri

CLARINET
Hunter Bennett +
Nicholas Brown
Noel Hwang *
Tom Jeon ^

Eb CLARINET
Hunter Bennett

TROMBONE
Ian Maser ^
Alexander Mayhew +

BASS CLARINET
Scott Sonnenberg

BASSOON
Josh Baker *+
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Isaac Schultz ^
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BOSTON PHILHARMONIC 2012/2013 season • 11
SUNDAY, November 25th, 2012 at 3 pm
Symphony Hall, Boston

BEETHOVEN
Overture to Goethe's Egmont, Op. 84

ELGAR
Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85
Alisa Weilerstein, cello
Rafael Payare, guest conductor

INTERMISSION

STRAUSS
Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40

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Unauthorized use of cameras, video and tape recorders is not permitted. Listening devices are available; please ask an usher for assistance.
ALISA WEILERSTEIN, CELLO

American cellist Alisa Weilerstein has attracted widespread attention worldwide for playing that combines a natural virtuoso command and technical precision with impassioned musicianship. The intensity of her playing has regularly been lauded, as has the spontaneity and sensitivity of her interpretations. Alisa made her debut with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in June 2012 when she toured with the orchestra and conductor Pablo Heras-Casado to France, Germany and the Netherlands. In September 2011 she was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow, and in 2010 she became an exclusive recording artist for Decca Classics, the first cellist to be signed by the prestigious label in over 30 years. Her debut album, released in November 2012, features the Elliott Carter and Elgar Cello Concertos with Daniel Barenboim and the Berlin Staatskapelle.

She has appeared with all of the major orchestras throughout the United States and Europe with conductors including Marin Alsop, Daniel Barenboim, Pablo Heras-Casado, Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Mark Elder, Christoph Eschenbach, Manfred Honeck, Marek Janowski, Paavo Järvi, Jeffrey Kahane, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Ludovic Morlot, Tadaaki Otaka, Peter Oundjian, Matthias Pintscher, Yuri Temirkanov, Juraj Valcuha, Osmo Vänskä, Simone Young and David Zinman. She has also appeared at major music festivals throughout the world as a soloist, recitalist and as a chamber musician.

Ms. Weilerstein has appeared at major music festivals throughout the world, including Aspen, Bad Kissengen, Delft, Edinburgh, Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla Summerfest, Mostly Mozart, Schleswig-Holstein, Tanglewood and Verbier. In addition to her appearances as a soloist and recitalist, Ms. Weilerstein performs regularly as a chamber musician. She has been part of a core group of musicians at the Spoleto Festival USA for the past eight years and she also performs with her parents, Donald and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, as the Weilerstein Trio, which is the Trio-in-Residence at the New England Conservatory in Boston.

Ms. Weilerstein's 2012-13 season includes engagements in Canada, Belgium, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Russia, and across the United States. In September 2012 she returned to Germany to perform the Elliott Carter Cello Concerto with Daniel Barenboim and the Berlin Staatskapelle. She will appear with conductor Gianandrea Noseda and the Philadelphia Orchestra in December (Elgar Cello Concerto), conductor Lionel
Bringuier with the Atlanta Symphony in April (Shostakovich Cello Concerto No. 1), and at the Kennedy Center with conductor Christoph Eschenbach and the National Symphony Orchestra in May (Elgar Cello Concerto). In January 2013 Ms. Weilerstein will tour Europe with pianist Inon Barnatan, visiting Germany, Spain and the Netherlands. Ms. Weilerstein will make her debut with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields in March for a 16-city tour with Mr. Barnatan.

In 2009, Ms. Weilerstein was one of four artists invited by the First Lady, Michelle Obama, to participate in a widely-applauded and high profile classical music event at the White House that included student workshops hosted by the First Lady, and playing for guests including President Obama and the First Family.

In 2008 Ms. Weilerstein was awarded Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal prize for exceptional achievement and she was named the winner of the 2006 Leonard Bernstein Award. She received an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2000 and was selected for two prestigious young artists programs in 2000-01; the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) “Rising Stars” recital series and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s Chamber Music Society Two.

Alisa Weilerstein, who was born in 1982, made her Cleveland Orchestra debut at age 13, playing the Tchaikovsky “Rococo” Variations. She made her Carnegie Hall debut with the New York Youth Symphony in March 1997. Ms. Weilerstein is a graduate of the Young Artist Program at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Richard Weiss. In May 2004, she graduated from Columbia University in New York with a degree in Russian History. In November 2008 Ms. Weilerstein became a Celebrity Advocate for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

RAFAEL PAYARE, CONDUCTOR

Rafael Payare recently came to international attention by winning the 2012 Malko Competition in Copenhagen. Since he began his formal conducting studies in 2004 with José Antonio Abreu, Rafael has developed a flourishing career, having conducted all the major orchestras in Venezuela including the Simón Bolívar Orchestra both in Caracas and in Toronto as part of their 2009 Canadian tour. Maestro Abreu remains Rafael’s principal conducting mentor.

At the age of 32, Rafael is already attracting interest at the highest level and will make his subscription debuts with Cincinnati Symphony, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Gothenburg Symphony and Hamburger Symphoniker in the coming seasons. He has also been invited by Krzysztof Penderecki to conduct the premier of his Opera ‘King Ubu’ in Gdansk and Krakow in September 2013.

As an assistant conductor, he has worked under Gustavo Dudamel, most notably for his co-production of "Carmen" with the Teatro alla Scala, as well as for the Simón Bolívar Orchestra’s 2010 European tour. Rafael also served as assistant conductor to Claudio Abbado for his performance of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony with the Simón Bolívar Orchestra, and in August 2010, Daniel Barenboim personally invited him to observe his rehearsals with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in preparation for their international tour. Rafael was also selected to participate in Bernard Haitink’s Luzern master-classes in April 2011 and March 2012.
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Overture to Goethe’s Egmont, Opus 84

On the morning of June 5, 1568, the counts Egmont and Horn were beheaded in the marketplace in Brussels; their heads were displayed on poles until three in the afternoon. They had been arrested the previous September on orders from the Duke of Alba, the Spanish governor of the Netherlands, and condemned to death for lèse majesté and for joining with “rebels against the holy, apostolic, and Roman church as well as for favoring the intolerable conspiracies of the Prince of Orange and other gentlemen.” In Europe’s complicated dynastic arrangements, the Netherlands had been subject to Burgundian kings and Spanish Hapsburg emperors since the fifteenth century, though the situation became unbearable only with the abdication in 1555 of Emperor Charles V and the succession to the Spanish throne of the stiff-necked Philipp II. Serious unrest began early in the 1560s, and in August 1568 the Duke of Alba was sent north to bring the situation under control at all costs and by any means. Count Lamoral van Egmont, a popular military leader, was one of Alba’s first victims. What Egmont fought for and came uniquely to symbolize was beyond the reach of Spanish executioners. The process was slow and bloody, but in 1648, as part of the Treaty of Westphalia that concluded the Thirty Years’ War, the United States of the Netherlands were recognized by Philipp IV of Spain as an independent political entity.

Friedrich von Schiller wrote a famous history of these events, and his friend and Weimar neighbor Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made them the subject of a play on which he worked between 1775 and 1787. At the end of the new century’s first decade, with Napoleon, his French troops, and his puppet kings spread all over Europe, the drama of the rebellious disaffection of the Netherlands took on a new and vivid relevance. Beethoven was happy to contribute to a production of Egmont. Besides the Overture, he provided two songs, four entr’actes, music for the death of Egmont’s beloved Klärchen, a melodrama (that is, music to accompany and punctuate declaimed speech), and, as specified in Goethe’s text, a final Victory Symphony. The Overture begins with a grave introduction, which moves into an impassioned allegro. In the striking contrast of musical characters, commentators have seen the portrayal of oppression and of pleading. The brilliant closing music is that of the drama’s Victory Symphony, played as Egmont goes proudly to his death, confident in the rightness and the coming triumph of his cause.

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The soloist begins the Concerto with a sentence of recitative that is spacious, extroverted, noble, and tinged by melancholy. What happens in the orchestra, a few notes of accompaniment and a brief woodwind echo of the first phrase, is a miracle of unostentatious mastery. Picking up the cello’s last sound, the violas begin a gentle, ambling theme; this was the first idea Elgar had jotted down for this work. It descends beyond the violas’ range, is carried on by the cellos, and is then reiterated and expanded by the soloist. Unaccompanied at first, it gets a lovely series of subtly oblique harmonizations once the soloist has taken it on. Clarinets and bassoon propose a lilting new theme, on which the cello makes sweetly tristful comment— which does not, however, keep the tune from moving into warm E major. The first section is recapitulated with ever more beautiful scoring: enjoy, for example, the delicately placed notes for the timpani.

The first movement subsides on a low E, plucked by the solo cello, bowed in the orchestra. The sound of that note in the orchestral cellos and basses seems to remind the soloist of the way the Concerto began. It is enough, at any rate, to start the cello on reminiscences, still in pizzicato, about the recitative. The orchestra is quick to discourage any such sentimental musings and urges the soloist to get going. The scherzo, when it is finally under way, is a virtuosic study in repeated notes, full of rhythmic surprises, and the orchestra accompanies with the utmost deftness. A new theme with a delightful touch of swagger makes a few visitations, but the dominant style of the movement is lighter-than-air.

Now the stage is darkened. The songful Adagio is a great page by a great composer of slow movements. Brief and simple, a wistful Schumann romance rather than an outburst of Mahlerian anguish, it tends to bring out the worst in cellists. (Just look at Elgar’s metronome marking of 8 = 50 and of his choice to write the music in 3/8 rather than 3/4.) For only a moment, the music rises to an urgent climax, sinking then to a close on a question mark (that, too, a Shumannesque touch.)

The orchestra takes the hint and begins a distant marchlike music to rouse the solo cello from its Adagio musings, at the same time modulating rapidly so as to bring things back to the main key of E minor. The effort, however, is to send the solo cello into its recitative mood again. The brief unaccompanied cadenza done, the march takes off and the finale is under way. Up to a point it seems to be a cheery, uncomplicated rondo. Then a newer and slower theme in a broader meter and rich chromatic harmony changes the mood. That new and somber atmosphere established, another change of meter, now to 3/4, brings the music to its most impassioned climax. We catch just a ghost of the Adagio, followed by one more recollection of the opening recitative, and then the Concerto hurries to its close.

© Michael Steinberg

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)
Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40

When it came to his prodigious gift for tone painting, Richard Strauss was not exactly a modest man: he once said he could set a spoon to music! But even by his standards Ein Heldenleben is a masterpiece of characterization and storytelling in music.

The subject is The Life of a Hero and, because Strauss was not a modest man, he chose himself as the heroic subject of his tone poem. Thus, the Hero’s enemies are the music critics with their barbed and cruel pens; the Hero’s beloved companion is portrayed in a vivid and accurate portrait of the composer’s own wife Pauline; and the Hero’s good deeds are represented by quotations from the composer’s earlier compositions. But Strauss’ immodesty goes even beyond that. When he came to choose a key and a theme to represent his embodiment of the heroic ideal he chose the key (E-Flat) and the thematic shape (the rising arpeggio) of Beethoven’s own essay in the genre: The Eroica Symphony.

There is no real story line to Heldenleben, rather it is a record of reactions and responses on the theme of heroism. It opens with the Hero swaggering, plunging, soaring, and striding in a theme spanning three octaves against a pounding rhythm, followed by several other themes that represent the gentler side of his character. Sometimes the music gets so complicated and opaque that we can hardly make out all the myriad voices – for, in Strauss’ view, complexity, as much as power, is an aspect of heroism. In the two bars of silence that end the first section, the Hero seems to defiantly await the world’s response to his challenge.

What follows is one of the most surprising passages in all of music. The woodwinds, in their spikiest, meanest and most petty mode, represent the Hero’s adversaries: the music critics. These narrow minded and smug enemies seem unworthy opponents of a great hero but their attacks succeed in affecting his mood enough to depress his heroic theme and cause him to fall into a doleful state. Finally he becomes angry and shakes them off.

With the entry of the solo violin we meet his companion and wife. What a character she is! At once seductive, shrewish, nagging and deeply loving, the section culminates in a glorious soaring passage expressing their passionate love for each other. It subsides in music of deep and real affection to which the critics’ irritating bickering is merely a muted background. Suddenly, with the sound of distant trumpets, the Hero arises and, with his beloved’s help, puts on his armor. His adversaries are routed in the most splendid battle that has ever been painted in music. We know that the love of his companion has been a major factor in the Hero’s success, for when we return to the opening statement (the recapitulation) the Hero’s theme is now accompanied by his
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SEVEN VARIATIONS ON A THEME FROM “THE MAGIC FLUTE” FOR CELLO AND PIANO
Lucas van Beethoven (1770-1827)

SUITE FOR SOLO CELLO NO. 1 IN G MAJOR BWV 1007
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

PRELUDE
ALLEGRO
COUPLAND
SARABANDE
MINUETS I AND II
GIGUE

SONATA IN G MINOR OP. 65 FOR CELLO AND PIANO
Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

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Companion’s theme, whereas when it first appeared he stood alone. New ideas now burst out all over, suggesting the highly creative nature of the Hero who must not for a moment rest on his laurels, but be ever driven on by ambition. The music surges towards a great climax quoting the heroic theme from Don Juan and Zarathustra amongst the composer’s mightiest conceptions.

Now we are told of the Hero’s Accomplishments in Times of Peace which are composed as snatches of themes from Strauss’ other works—Don Juan, Zarathustra, Death and Transfiguration, Don Quixote and Till Eulenspiegel—all woven into a gorgeous tapestry of sound.

The Hero has one more skirmish with his enemies (internal ones this time, it seems) before he contemplates his Retirement and Life’s Fulfillment. The Hero considers withdrawing from the world to become a shepherd (suggested by the quotation of the pastoral English-Horn theme from Don Quixote), but, by the end, he has learned renunciation and achieved peace of mind. That too, we discover, he learned from his wife, for the serene and noble violin song suggesting his transformation is the very theme with which the hero had lashed out at the critics, which in turn had derived from his companion’s love theme. He has a brief nightmarish reminder of his struggles against the critics but his beloved companion is there to comfort him and restore his faith. The music almost dies out on the violin’s high E-flat but is followed by a slow rising crescendo in the brass, outlining the first six notes of the Hero’s theme from the opening of the piece, in a simple, profoundly dignified harmonization.

Perhaps, after all, it was not Strauss’ immodesty that led him to dramatize his own life in Ein Heldenleben. Rather, it is that he saw that all experience, including his own, could be made to gain universality through the transforming process of art. The “critics” in Ein Heldenleben are not of course merely local music critics, but all those barriers and doubts, internal and external, that stand in the path of our most cherished dreams and aspirations. That the deep love of a companion can give us super-human strength and that creativity and virtuosity are our best armor in the struggle of life are universal truths. But the greatest truth of all is embodied in the final exquisite phrases of Heldenleben: that a warm, true heart wedded to noble ideals and shared with another is the highest, most heroic path for human beings.

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MEET HIKARU YONEZAKI

Seventeen year old Hikaru Yonezaki first discovered the violin as a little girl living in Japan. “I saw someone playing violin on a commercial, and I begged my parents to let me play too,” she recalls. The next Christmas, she received a violin as a present, and quickly discovered that this was her passion. Now a senior at Newton South High School, Hikaru has been a dedicated violinist for the past thirteen years, and will be performing as concertmistress for Ein Heldenleben in the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra’s debut concert. In the midst of final rehearsals for the performance, Hikaru sat down with Program Book Editor Pamela Feo to talk about how the BPYO has brought out new qualities in her playing and in her life, and she also shared her wish to bring people the same joy through music that she experiences every time she plays the violin.

What do you think makes the BPYO different from other orchestras?

I think everyone is really passionate about this orchestra, and they come here because they love it and not because they are forced to be here. You can feel the energy in rehearsal, and it really is coming from everyone. Often times you see orchestras where people in the back are not as enthusiastic—Mr. Zander calls it “second fiddle-its”—but with us, everyone is giving their all. And we are doing it in a loving environment that nurtures us. I’m really looking forward to creating good music together and having fun this season.

One of the reasons I really like Mr. Zander is because he gives us the opportunity to express ourselves and communicate with him. He really takes time to get to know every member. It means a lot to know that there is this one person who really cares about my thoughts and really cares about me. Last year, a group of us celebrated his birthday and I’ll always remember how he was so happy about the balloons we got him, and he took them home with him—he was just so overjoyed! His spirit carries through the whole room, and after we perform with him, we are even more energized than we were before we started. I’ve never seen such an enthusiastic conductor.

What has the experience of playing concertmistress taught you as a performer?

As concertmistress, I’ve learned a lot about leading. It’s a characteristic I had never seen in myself before—I was hiding in my shell when I first met Mr. Zander. He taught me to open up. I remember he called me on the phone to tell me I would be playing as concertmistress and he said, “Remember to lead others and not just yourself.” I tried and it was hard at first, but he believed in me, and the teamwork of the orchestra was so strong—no one said that I was too small or that I couldn’t do it. They were so supportive, and every week I felt like I was growing more.

What are some of your interests outside of music, and how do you balance your practicing with schoolwork and friends?

Music is my top priority, along with my health—eating, sleeping, and music, those are my top three priorities. I try to fit in a couple of hours of practicing a day, and homework can be squeezed in there somewhere. I tend to hang out with my music friends more than my school friends because I can connect with them so well. We play chamber music together and help each other out with music questions, like giving each other advice for what strings to use. Even on Facebook, we have a lot of discussion about how to play particular passages.

Outside of music, I love learning foreign languages. They are so beautiful! Right now I am learning French at school, and up until last year I took Russian, plus I speak Japanese at home and English with my friends. I also love to cook. One summer I cooked every night for my family—I was the family chef, and I loved it! I am also really good at burning food, so I don’t always trust myself, but cooking is art, and I love to create in that way.

What is your advice for younger musicians who might want to one day have a role like yours in an orchestra?

Keep at it. You can’t give up. I never would’ve imagined that I would be playing concertmistress for BPYO, and it’s all because of those little efforts that everyone puts into creating something new. It’s important to try your hardest. And I think that if you want to be a musician, you shouldn’t be disturbed by other people who don’t take you seriously.

What are your goals for the future?

I really want to have music be a vital part of my life. I don’t think I could live without it; music is my life. My dream is to help people through music, by going to countries where there is poverty and disease, and where they don’t have the opportunity to hear as much music, and performing for people there. I really want to travel to these places to show that music can bring light into your life. I want to perform music to create happiness.
A longstanding and beloved tradition in Benjamin Zander’s orchestras is the use of “white sheets” to foster open communication between the musicians and the conductor. These blank pages are passed out at every rehearsal, to encourage musicians to comment about the music, the process, or the weekly leadership assignments. Here we have a selection of “white sheets” in which BPYO musicians reflect on the journey they have undertaken with the orchestra.

Dear Mr. Zander,

This week's rehearsal was fantastic. To get to play a concert with the orchestra I love so dearly was so much fun, and to play the music we were playing was a tremendous honor. To think high schoolers get the chance to play the notes Beethoven, Elgar and Strauss wrote shows that music is universal, music can stand the test of time and music truly is more powerful than human beings. But what I saw today was something even more extraordinary. It was the passion that humans can create with music. I saw people laughing in the audience during our concert with huge smiles on their faces because they sensed something remarkable was happening. And it was.

Keith’s face was the best part of my week. When he was sitting in the principal chair after break for Ein Heldenleben, he could not possibly have looked any happier! And everyone was smiling, laughing, really enjoying the music, and I have never seen an orchestra enjoy what they play so much. It’s easier to play the notes on the page when you’re laughing because you’re not worried about how you sound, how you look. When we played Ein Heldenleben for the second time, I was more relaxed and not at all nervous about an audience. We were just 117 instrumentalists and a conductor having the time of our lives! And that freed me up to fully enjoy the music.

Thank you for this experience. Each rehearsal is more wonderful and magical than the one before, and I just can’t wait to see where this fantastic orchestra goes. See you next week!

Love,

Joe, 15 years old
Dear Mr. Zander,

This last assignment was an enigmatic one; on Saturday when you described it to us, I had no idea how to go about “making a space” around myself. What could that mean? The only thing I knew for sure was that it had to do with my interactions with others, so I began to talk to people, and smile at people, and hope that at some point your words might become more clear. And something did become very clear, indeed – until this week, I have been seriously missing out.

I don't have any particularly extraordinary experiences to describe to you; nothing earth-shattering occurred these past few days, except that I was constantly and consistently amazed by people everywhere that I went. People that I see every day – people that I foolishly thought I could glance at and mentally ‘categorize’ – with only the smallest encouragement, began to offer me stories, and emotions, and ideas the extent of which I could not have begun to imagine. A quiet, older man in my Italian class spent thirty years traveling the world as an architect and writer; the tales and romances of his life have been available to me for months, and I never even thought to ask! The woman who sat next to me at a local symphony concert on Sunday glowed as she told me about her love for Dvořák and the folk music of her homeland. I felt honored to talk with her.

This is the first of your assignments that has been firmly centered on others, and yet it is this week that I have seen the most dramatic change in myself. Because I am looking for shining eyes, I see them all around me. Whether or not this has to do with my own ability to foster possibility, I do not know. It feels much more as if those around me are the ones simply radiating spirit and love (or in many cases waiting patiently for the invitation to do so). But maybe living in possibility comes not only from who we are, but also from our perception. Before, I saw the people around me as two-dimensional – as players in a story about me and my life. Now, they look like miracles. I feel lucky to be able to witness even a few moments of the fullness and complexity of their lives. And that change, I believe, has the potential to transform the way in which I see the world.

It's all invented, right? I've never been so excited by the thought!

Sincerely,

Anna, 16 years old

Dear Mr. Zander,

I've been meaning to write to you about my experience these past two weeks thinking about walking with spirit and love. To be honest, I have to say that I caught myself falling to follow the assignment many, many times. I frequently found myself becoming stressed about all the commitments and responsibilities I have taken on, and doubting whether I can keep up with all of them. When my mind starts wandering in that doubtful, stressful direction, I retreat into myself, stop paying attention to what's happening around me, and start walking like I'm carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. My college campus is full of people who seem to be spending most of their time walking this way - staring down at their phones, looking at what's coming up next on their calendars, or checking to see whether their teacher has sent out their grades.

When I found myself walking without spirit and love, I felt I was also sliding back into thinking in terms of success and failure, not contribution, and certainly not coming from the power of a child! So I began to realize that all the different assignments you have given us relate to different aspects of exactly the same way of thinking - the way of thinking in possibility. When you're walking with spirit and love, you can't help but throw yourself into life, notice the contribution you are, and come from the power of a child! But the moment you stop doing one of them, you tend to stop doing all of them, and that's why it's so crucial that we think carefully about all the different aspects of living in possibility.

Thankfully I had the chance today to read some of Bloch's “Philosophy of Music,” in his Spirit of Utopia. In it, he writes that music is uniquely powerful because it gives us access to the “not yet.” I puzzled over what he must have meant by this, analyzing the importance of the “not yet” idea in relation to both his idea that composers throughout history have continually invented, broken through, and reinvented musical forms, and his idea that the essence of music is as of yet unanalyzable in terms of our concepts and language. Then I started thinking about how the “not yet” relates to possibility, and it occurred to me that these are quite similar notions. The “not yet” is in fact the most exciting place to be, just like thinking in possibility is the most exciting way to think! Understanding the “not yet” through music is what liberates us and inspires us, and perhaps most importantly, listening to music helps us realize that the “not yet” will always be part of our experience. Arriving at some putative transcendent truth is boring in comparison! We can analyze and re-analyze music in countless new ways, but something about it will always defy our analysis, and so the music stays alive, and we stay alive through it.

So I have to work on walking with spirit and love. But all of us do, because if we're truly thinking in possibility, we'll know we're always "not yet" there.

Rainer, 20 years old
Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I send warm greetings as you gather for the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra's Premier Concert.

The Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra provides young musicians with a unique and all-encompassing educational opportunity. Under the tutelage of Maestro Benjamin Zander, young instrumentalists have the chance to develop their musical talents and perform for audiences around the world while mastering the art of self-discipline and leadership. I thank Maestro Zander for his commitment to tomorrow's leaders and congratulate the members of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra on your hard work and achievement.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful performance and inaugural season.

Best regards,
The creation of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra is wonderful news for young musicians and music-lovers throughout the Boston area. Through his vision, passion and artistry Benjamin Zander will provide extraordinary leadership for this exciting new project."

- Yo-Yo Ma

"I was greatly thrilled to hear that Ben Zander is founding a new youth orchestra, because I can't think of anyone who has such a special talent for working with young people. Ben has a unique way of teaching, coaching, inspiring and presenting the young minds with the wonderful disciplines that are involved in the art of making great music."

- Gunther Schuller

"The formation of the Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra is great news. Everywhere that I travel I meet musicians who began their musical journey with Ben Zander. They retain, gratefully, their enthusiasm, determination, and high ideals!"

- John Harbison

"Even in far away Berlin, the news that Ben Zander is founding a new youth orchestra is extremely important. These fortunate young people will experience an intense musical and emotional engagement which will remain with them for a lifetime. My warmest best wishes for your new adventure, and long may it prosper!"

- Simon Rattle

"Benjamin Zander was put on this earth to set young people on their path to a lifelong relationship with music, whether they become professional performing musicians or not. Zander does many things well, but no one does what he does best any better – his work with youth orchestras is inspiring both to the players and to the audiences who hear them. He leads the young musicians to play better, to dig more deeply into the meanings of the music, than they ever thought they could. When confronted with music-making on the level Zander achieves with young players, audiences find themselves listening on a new level as well. His youth orchestras are not just training themselves for music but also training themselves for adult lives; they learn social skills as well as musical skills, and learn the habits of discipline. Rehearsing with like-minded youngsters, performing to Europe, South America and Asia, are profoundly educational activities. They not only change perspectives, they change lives. With his unique zest, Zander opens the doors that swing wide to reveal new worlds."

- Richard Dyer

Chief Music Critic of the Boston Globe from 1973-2006
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We would also like to thank the private teachers of BPYO members, the BPO office and production staff, and the parents of BPYO members, all of whom have contributed in ways too numerous to list!

BPYO rehearsals begin each week with sectionals: an opportunity for each instrumental section to work on specific technical and musical challenges. We are enormously grateful to the sectional coaches who have played an invaluable role in preparing the orchestra for this concert. They include principal players in the Boston Symphony and the Boston Philharmonic, as well as freelancers and revered teachers. They have taught with great care and wisdom, inspiring the students to rise to ever greater levels of musicianship. We are pleased that many of them are in attendance at the concert today, to hear the fruit of their labors. Thank you!

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