



ABOUT THE MUSIC

# BEETHOVEN & BERNSTEIN

October 11, 12, 13, 2025  
Program Notes by Elizabeth Schwartz

---

## UMBERTO GIORDANO

Intermezzo from *Fedora*



**COMPOSER:** Born August 28, 1867, Foggia; died November 12, 1948, Milan

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1898

**WORLD PREMIERE:** *Fedora* premiered on November 17, 1898, at Milan's Teatro Lirico.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, timpani, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 2.25 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

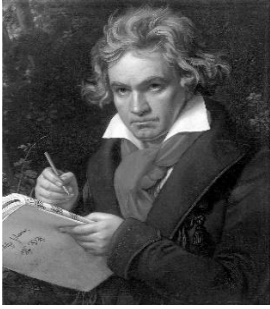
Around 1890, Italian opera librettos began to move away from the epic plots and exalted characters that populated the grand operas of Giuseppe Verdi and others. In their place, a new kind of narrative emerged known as *verismo* (Italian for “realistic” or “true”). *Verismo* operas featured compelling stories about ordinary people rather than aristocratic or larger-than-life figures. Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Cavalleria rusticana*, which premiered in 1890, is considered the first *verismo* opera. Within a decade, works by Pietro Mascagni (*Pagliacci*), Giacomo Puccini (*La bohème*, *Tosca*), and Umberto Giordano (*Andrea Chénier*, *Fedora*) had made *verismo* the most appealing and popular form of opera.

Umberto Giordano's *Fedora* is an adaptation of a play by the French dramatist Victorien Sardou, who created it as a vehicle for Sarah Bernhardt. *Fedora*, a 19th-century Russian princess, is about to marry Vladimiro when he is killed. *Fedora* believes Count Loris is the murderer and shares her suspicions with the authorities. The events that follow from *Fedora*'s actions lead to a tragic end.

The Intermezzo from Act II, although barely two minutes long, has emerged as a stand-alone work and has been frequently recorded; it also makes regular appearances on orchestral concerts. Its lyrical string theme provides a gentle respite from the dramatic tension of the story.

# LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

## Triple Concerto in C major for Piano, Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, Opus 56



**COMPOSER:** born December 16, 1770, Bonn; died March 26, 1827, Vienna

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1803-4, possibly written for Beethoven's piano student, 16-year-old Archduke Rudolph, along with violinist Ferdinand August Seidler and cellist Anton Kraft. Dedicated to Beethoven's then patron, Prince Franz Joseph von Lobkowitz.

**WORLD PREMIERE:** The first performance may have been given by Archduke Rudolph's private orchestra in 1804, but there is no documentation. Violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, Beethoven's friend and teacher, organized the first public performance at the Augartensaal in Vienna in April 1808.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Solo violin, solo cello, solo piano, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 34 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

Unlike Ludwig van Beethoven's concertos for piano and violin, the Concerto for Piano, Violin and Cello, known simply as the Triple Concerto, is rarely programmed, and most listeners, even Beethoven fans, are unfamiliar with it. Documentation regarding the work is scant; even the most basic information, like for whom the solo parts were written, is a matter of debate. Some scholars believe Beethoven wrote the piano part for his student Archduke Rudolph of Austria, who later became his patron. Given the timing of when the concerto was composed and the relative simplicity of the piano part, this is a possibility. Others have speculated that although Beethoven may have written the piano part with the Archduke in mind, he himself performed the solo at the premiere. The other soloists may have been violinist Georg August Seidler and cellist Anton Kraft. Beethoven's first biographer, Anton Schindler, who attended the premiere, declared, "The Concerto enjoyed no success because the performers took the matter too lightly." We should take Schindler's comments with a grain of salt, however, because as critic Michael Steinberg pointed out, "Schindler was a forger and one of the world's most uninhibited liars."

1803 to 1804 was a productive period for Beethoven. In addition to the Triple Concerto, he began work on his famous *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* piano sonatas, as well as *Fidelio*, and also revised the *Eroica Symphony*. It is interesting to juxtapose the *Eroica*, with all its forward-looking innovations, and the Triple Concerto, a work that looks back to Baroque-era *sinfonia concertante* and *concerto grosso* forms. Both the *sinfonia concertante* (Beethoven's original title for the Triple Concerto) and the *concerto grosso* feature multiple soloists accompanied by an orchestra. Unlike the *Eroica*, the Triple Concerto, which has been described as a concerto for piano trio and orchestra, does not make great demands on the listener. Beethoven's friend and pupil Carl Czerny described the Triple Concerto as "grand, tranquil, harmonious and lively." In this music, Beethoven does not overwhelm the listener with new ideas; instead, the Triple Concerto could be considered, in the best sense, a piece of salon music written for an evening's entertainment. Its most innovative aspect is the central role of the solo cello, which Beethoven used to introduce many of the Triple Concerto's themes.

# JULIA PERRY

## A Short Piece for Large Orchestra



**COMPOSER:** Born March 25, 1924, Lexington, KY; died April 29, 1975, Akron, OH

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1952, rev. 1955, 1965

**WORLD PREMIERE:** 1952, in Turin, Italy

**INSTRUMENTATION:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, bass drum, suspended cymbal, snare drum, xylophone, celesta, piano, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 6 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

American composer Julia Perry was the first Black woman to have her music performed by the New York Philharmonic. However, as happened with other composers of color and female composers in past decades, Perry's music dropped out of

SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY | 2025-2026 SEASON | FRANCESCO LECCE-CHONG, MUSIC DIRECTOR

sight after her untimely death. As part of the current racial reckoning taking place in cultural and artistic organizations worldwide, Perry and her music have been “rediscovered” by musicians and audiences alike, and her artful, accomplished works are regaining their place in the orchestral canon.

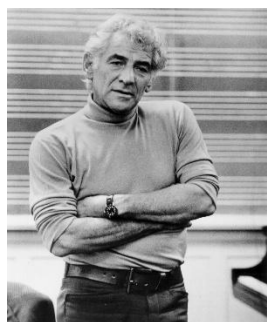
The daughter of a doctor and amateur pianist, Perry took both piano and violin lessons as a child growing up in Akron, OH. She later earned both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in music from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ, and continued her musical studies at The Juilliard School and Tanglewood. In the 1950s, Perry was awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships, which she used to study composition in Italy with Luigi Dallapiccola and with Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

While working with Dallapiccola in 1952, Perry’s *A Short Piece for Orchestra* was performed for the first time in Torino, Italy. She reorchestrated it in 1955 and again in 1965, giving it a new title *Study for Orchestra*.

The music opens with dramatic flair and three contrasting motifs; an agitated ascending scale for trumpet, followed by a taut theme in the strings, woodwinds, and horn, which leads to strong syncopated punches for lower brasses. Each motif repeats twice, generating material for the rest of the work. A pensive interlude for flute and strings leads to a reprise of the opening music, which Perry then subjects to a series of variations featuring xylophone and brasses, with contrasting tempos, timbres, and moods.

## LEONARD BERNSTEIN

### Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*



**COMPOSER:** Born August 25, 1918, Lawrence, MA; died October 14, 1990, New York City

**WORK COMPOSED:** The musical *West Side Story* was written in 1957. Bernstein, along with orchestrators and colleagues Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal, made a suite of central themes from the score in 1961. The *Symphonic Dances* are dedicated “To Sid Ramin, in friendship.”

**WORLD PREMIERE:** Lukas Foss led the New York Philharmonic on February 13, 1961

**INSTRUMENTATION:** 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bongos, bass drum, chimes, congas, 3 cowbells, cymbals, drum kit, finger cymbals, glockenspiel, gourds, guiro, maracas, police whistle, 3 snare drums, tenor drum, tambourine, tam-tam, timbales, tom-toms, triangle, vibraphone, woodblock, xylophone, celesta, piano, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 22 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

*Romeo and Juliet*’s tale of tragic love transcends time and place; it retains its emotional intensity whether performed in Shakespearean costume or modern dress, with words in English, German, or Japanese. In fact, Shakespeare’s story is itself an adaptation, taken from the Greek myth of star-crossed lovers Pyramus and Thisbe.

In 1957, Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story* transformed Shakespeare’s Verona into the gang-infested streets of New York City, and the young lovers into Tony and Maria, members of warring gangs of whites and Puerto Ricans. Bernstein’s groundbreaking musical, conceived with choreographer Jerome Robbins, fundamentally changed the nature of musical theater. Since its premiere, *West Side Story* has become synonymous with Bernstein’s vibrant, energetic style.

The nine movements of the *Symphonic Dances* were assembled in 1961 and follow the basic outline of the musical. The Prologue introduces the Jets and Sharks and their constant gang war, which is broken up by a piercing blast from a policeman’s whistle. This segues into a tender dream sequence, set to the music of *Somewhere*, in which the two gangs cease their warfare and become friends. In the Scherzo, this dream world continues as the gang members escape the stifling atmosphere of the city to enjoy fresh air and sunshine. This dream is abruptly snuffed out in the exhilaratingly ominous Mambo, in which the Jets and Sharks continue their rivalry through an exciting and violent dance of one-upmanship. The heat and energy of the Mambo dissolve into an intimate Cha-Cha, when Tony and Maria first speak to one another. Tony’s gang, the Jets, then take the stage to demonstrate their unshakeable Cool. The Sharks confront the Jets in a climactic Rumble, in which the leaders of both gangs are killed. Tony’s funeral procession, set to the music of *Somewhere*, brings the *Symphonic Dances* to its affecting conclusion.

© Elizabeth Schwartz

**Elizabeth Schwartz** is a writer and music historian based in the Portland area. She has been a program annotator for more than 20 years and works with music festivals and ensembles around the country. Schwartz has also contributed to NPR's "Performance Today," (now heard on American Public Media.)

NOTE: These program notes are for Santa Rosa Symphony patrons and other interested readers. Any other use is forbidden without specific permission from the author, who may be contacted at [classicalmusicprogramnotes.com](http://classicalmusicprogramnotes.com)