



ABOUT THE MUSIC

ROSSINI & SCHUBERT

March 21, 22, 23, 2026

GIOACHINO ROSSINI

Overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia* [*The Barber of Seville*]



COMPOSER: Born February 29, 1792, Pesaro, Italy; died November 13, 1868, Passy, France
WORK COMPOSED: Originally written in 1813 for Rossini's opera *Aureliano in Palmira*, it was repurposed three years later for *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.
WORLD PREMIERE: Premiere performed at the Teatro Argentina, Rome on February 20, 1816.
INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, and strings
ESTIMATED DURATION: 8 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

By the 1816 premiere of *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini's fame was already formidable. Interestingly, this opera's overture was recycled from two of his earlier works, a common practice for the prolific composer.

Most of his overtures follow a specific pattern: a slow introduction featuring a *cantabile* woodwind melody, followed by a fast section. While the strings usually lead the main theme, the winds take center stage here. Lacking a formal development, the work moves straight to a recapitulation. The highlight remains the signature "Rossini crescendo," in which a motive repeats and intensifies as the harmony swings like a pendulum between the tonic and the dominant.

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SHUYING LI

Coping Cadences (World Premiere)



COMPOSER: Born November 24, 1989, China
WORK COMPOSED: 2025. Commissioned by the Santa Rosa Symphony and Texas Christian University.
WORLD PREMIERE: 2026
INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, 2 percussion, strings
ESTIMATED DURATION: 20 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Shuying Li is a rising star in the composition world who captivates her audiences through storytelling and a variety of influences, including jazz, klezmer, lullabies, rock, pop, ragtime, the blues, and classical music.

For *Coping Cadences*, Li draws on her storytelling abilities to illustrate universal themes of conflict and resolution explored in the dark comedy series *Beef*. In the orchestral version of this work—written for both orchestra and band—the piece takes the form of a concerto grosso featuring six soloists from diverse sections. *Coping Cadences* consists of six movements, each inspired by a distinct musical genre: contemporary, romantic, blues and jazz, minimalism, classical, and fusion. The work blends contemporary and traditional elements to reinvigorate the concerto form. Each movement tells a story, evoking discrete emotions or moods and illuminating narratives of shared struggle and interconnectedness through a musical lens.

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759, *Unfinished*



COMPOSER: Born January 31, 1797, Himmelfortgrund, Austria; died November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria

WORK COMPOSED: 1822

WORLD PREMIERE: December 17, 1865, conducted by Johann von Herbeck in Vienna

INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 25 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

In his brief career, Schubert composed orchestral music, dabbled in opera, produced masterpieces of chamber music, and wrote a significant body of compositions for piano. But his glory, and the world's musical treasure, lies in his Lieder (German songs). It is astounding that he composed over six hundred of them, and they constitute the defining repertory within that genre. No one else—not Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, Strauss, nor Mahler—come close to the defining mark of Schubert. And it is an understanding and appreciation of the centrality of song in Schubert's oeuvre that informs our encounter with his instrumental music, including his symphonies.

He wrote nine symphonies, but two of them have garnered the most prominence: The “Great C Major” symphony and the “Unfinished.” Many have claimed that the latter really is “finished,” (owing to its genius), and many others have finished it by composing the missing last two movements in Schubert's style. Manifestly it is unfinished, but of such gripping quality and beauty that it really doesn't matter. Ironically, the manuscript did not meet the light of day (literally) until 1865, when it was retrieved from an obscure personality's desk drawer. Schubert never heard any of his symphonies played by a professional orchestra, and none of them were published in his lifetime. Yet, here is an iconic work of early Romanticism that lay undisturbed almost from the time of its composition in 1822. In many respects, the work manifests most of the technical characteristics of late Classical symphonies such as those of late Haydn and Mozart, and perhaps early Beethoven. The essence of this great work is more elusive: its dark and reflective tone, its stunning and novel combinations of subtle instrumental color, the characteristic and striking harmonic language—and, of course, the Schubertian melodies. Technical points pale beside these qualities—the “Unfinished” opens a new atmospheric sound world of Romanticism that is palpable beyond analysis.

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GIOACHINO ROSSINI

Overture to *Guillaume Tell* [*William Tell*]



COMPOSER: Born February 29, 1792, Pesaro, Italy; died November 13, 1868, Passy, France

WORK COMPOSED: 1829

WORLD PREMIERE: Premiered August 3, 1829 at the Paris Opéra.

INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 12 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Rossini was the most important composer of nineteenth-century Italian opera before Giuseppe Verdi. And while he is historically significant for his innovations in serious Italian opera, clearly his *opere buffe*, or comic operas, are his lasting contributions for opera fans everywhere. These are works of his early maturity, roughly before 1820, before he began to focus upon a more serious style. American audiences are most familiar with *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813) and *The Barber of Seville* (1816), but there are other masterpieces, as well. After wide European success in the 1820s, Rossini wangled a lifetime annuity from the French government about the time of the composition of his crowning achievement, *William Tell* (1829)—a French grand opera—and promptly retired at the age of thirty-seven. For the next forty-odd years, he enjoyed the largess of the French government and composed very little, certainly no major operas.

William Tell is, of course, the story of the legendary archer who shot the apple from off his son's head. But that is incidental. Rather, his legend is all about honest Swiss yeomanry throwing off the yoke of tyranny, striking a blow for freedom, and ending oppressive foreign domination—arrogant Austrians, in this case. It's a perfect yarn for the demands of French grand opera and the impressive staging resources of the Paris Opera. There are virtuoso horn fanfares for the gathering of the Cantons; a precarious lake crossing during a storm; choruses of defiant soldiers; and, of course, the dramatic apple shot. Rossini's score for all of this is a masterpiece. Berlioz—no mean conjurer of ripping musical theatrics—lavished praise on Rossini's masterpiece. Rossini's orchestration is groundbreaking, his sense of drama, sure, and his skill at building to a tremendous climax, peerless. The overture is simply a reflection of a fantastic opera; if you like the former, try the latter, too.

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Photo of Shuying Li by Lauren Elle Jay Jenkins