



ABOUT THE MUSIC

TWIST *of* FATE

October 10, 11 & 12, 2026

MATT BROWNE

Divertimento (World Premiere)



COMPOSER: Born Burlington, VT, 1988

WORK COMPOSED: 2026

WORLD PREMIERE: Santa Rosa Symphony, October 10, 2026. Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor.

INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (3 players), harp, strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 18 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Matt Browne's first symphony, *The Course of Empire*, was written for the Santa Rosa and Eugene Symphonies in 2019 and premiered here in 2020. Browne, who received his Ph. D. at the University of Michigan, is currently based in Colorado, where he is creating a rapidly growing, extremely varied, and critically acclaimed oeuvre in all concert genres (orchestral, chamber, vocal). His 2025 orchestral work, *I Have Seen the Future*, has already been presented by several ensembles across the country. Browne has offered the following remarks on his latest composition:

A *divertimento*, a genre popular in the 18th century, embraced the lighter side of music and offered listeners a playful respite from their more serious concerns. In that same spirit, this work unfolds in three movements, each inspired by a modern form of diversion.

I. You're It

This movement captures the restless energy of a game of tag. Melodic lines dart and weave in relentless pursuit, overlapping and evading one another in quick succession. Just as the chase reaches its peak, the music dissolves into an unexpectedly gentle and playful conclusion, a reminder that, despite the intensity, it's all in good fun.

II. Whispering Gallery

Inspired by the famous whispering gallery in Grand Central Terminal, this movement explores the paradox of intimacy within a crowded space. In these spaces, a softly spoken word can travel effortlessly across great distances, resulting in a private conversation amid public noise. The music reflects this phenomenon through delicate textures and distant echoes, suggesting a quiet exchange suspended within a bustling environment.

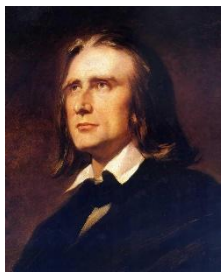
III. Tennis for Two

Tennis for Two, one of the earliest video games from 1958, simulated a simple tennis match using a glowing dot on a screen. This movement mirrors that simplicity at its outset, with sparse, pointillistic gestures that evoke the game's primitive design. Gradually, the texture intensifies into a driving and animated exchange, capturing both the competitive spirit and the surprising vitality of this early digital pastime.

SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY | 2026-2027 SEASON | FRANCESCO LECCE-CHONG, ARTISTIC & MUSIC DIRECTOR

FRANZ LISZT

Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major for Piano



COMPOSER: Born Doborján, Hungary [now Raiding, Austria], October 22, 1811; died Bayreuth, Germany, July 31, 1886

WORK COMPOSED: Begun 1830, completed 1849, revised 1856. Dedicated to Henry Litolf (pianist, conductor, composer, music publisher)

WORLD PREMIERE: Weimar, February 17, 1855. Liszt played the solo part, the orchestra was conducted by Hector Berlioz.

INSTRUMENTATION: Solo piano, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, cymbals, triangle, strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 20 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Up until his 35th birthday, Franz Liszt had been pursuing a busy concert schedule as one of the world's most celebrated virtuoso pianists, touring widely all over Europe. Yet after a while, this peripatetic life no longer satisfied him; he wanted to settle down and devote more of his time to composing. He was eager to write more for orchestra, putting into action the novel ideas that had occupied him for quite some time—ideas about musical structure and the relationships between music and the other arts. His appointment as music director at the Grand Ducal court of Weimar in 1848, with his own orchestra to work with, inspired him to write 12 symphonic poems and two symphonies (*Faust and Dante*) during the Weimar years. In addition, he completed the two piano concertos and his *Totentanz* for piano and orchestra projects begun many years earlier.

One of the main ideas Liszt brought to fruition during this time can be described as a new form of thematic transformation, one in which a theme is subjected to fundamental changes, where not only its tempo and rhythm but its very character was altered: a lyrical melody could become heroic, light-hearted, and much more. Liszt used this technique to achieve greater structural coherence, as everything in the piece grew organically out of a few basic motifs.

The E-flat major concerto is in a single movement, but the outlines of a four-movement form (allegro–slow movement–scherzo–finale) are clearly discernible. The opening *Allegro maestoso* starts with a chromatic theme, played by the orchestra (chromatic = moving in half-steps, a type of motion that always works against the main key of the piece). The piano bursts in with a virtuoso cadenza. The chromatic theme continues to dominate much of the *Allegro*.

The slow movement (*Quasi Adagio*) introduces a lyrical melody that would not be out of place in an opera. The third section—a lively scherzo—is followed by a restatement of material from the opening movement. In the finale, some of the Adagio's themes are brought to new life as the lyrical song is turned into a triumphant march, while another *cantabile* (singing) theme heard earlier becomes playful and virtuosic. The music of the scherzo, too, reappears in the final *Presto*, in which we also re-encounter the chromatic theme with which the concerto began. The work concludes with a cascade of octaves going up and down the entire keyboard in half-steps, in keeping with the concerto's initial chromatic idea.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36



COMPOSER: Born Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840; died St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893

WORK COMPOSED: May–December 1877. Dedicated “to my best friend” [Nadezhda von Meck].

WORLD PREMIERE: Moscow, February 22, 1878. Russian Musical Society, conducted by Nikolay Rubinstein.

INSTRUMENTATION: Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 45 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Those of us ever curious about what composers wanted to express with their music may think we have all the answers in Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. After all, didn't the composer offer a detailed program about the meaning of each movement in his work? Everyone who loves Tchaikovsky should know this fascinating private document, contained in a letter dated March 1, 1878, and addressed to his friend and benefactor Nadezhda von Meck. In the letter, Tchaikovsky even included a number of musical examples to illustrate his points. Here we learn that Tchaikovsky thought of "Fate" as the central concept of the symphony. The composer described human struggle, joys and sorrows, dreams and rude awakenings in the first three movements, before finding solace by watching a joyful communal celebration in the finale. Yet in the postscript of the same letter, Tchaikovsky took it all back, realizing that words were hopelessly inadequate to convey what only music could express.

The feelings described in Tchaikovsky's tentative program, then, seem to be no more than a stepping stone for the composer's musical imagination. In addition, some of the images Tchaikovsky used derive from musical sources to begin with: when he spoke about "Fate," he didn't mean "fate" in general but "Fate" as it was said to have been portrayed in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. (As Tchaikovsky wrote in the same letter to Mme von Meck, "The work is patterned after Beethoven's Fifth, not as to musical content, but as to the basic idea.") He may have been thinking, as well, of his destroyed early symphonic fantasy *Fatum*. Similarly, when he described the finale by joining a crowd of people in celebration, he probably thought about the peasants rejoicing to the sound of folk dances in Beethoven's Sixth, or perhaps even about the millions embraced by Beethoven in his Ninth. These seemingly extra-musical images clearly came to Tchaikovsky filtered through a musical tradition in which they had found expression.

In *his* finale, Tchaikovsky "embraced the millions" by quoting the well-known Russian folksong "In the fields there stands a birch-tree." Commentators have made much of the extra two beats Tchaikovsky added to the tune to make its rhythmic structure more regular; that is something his erstwhile mentor Mily Balakirev, who had used the same melody earlier in an overture, had not done. But then, Balakirev never subjected the folksong to nearly as many ingenious transformations as did Tchaikovsky who, combining "The Birch-tree" with a vigorous and dynamic first thematic group, developed one of his most rousing symphonic finales out of that simple little song.

Of course, the "Fate" idea in the Fourth Symphony's program had a more immediate personal meaning for Tchaikovsky, one that he didn't need to spell out to his friend. Mme von Meck knew all about the turmoil the composer had gone through at the time of writing the symphony: 1877 was the year of his disastrous marriage to Antonina Milyukova, which only lasted a few days. Tchaikovsky's correspondence with von Meck (he was never to meet her in person) began in the same year; the knowledge that there was someone he could confide in only made the outburst of his emotions more intense.

Ultimately, what makes Tchaikovsky's Fourth a masterpiece is neither the presence of a program nor the successful musical expression of one. Its impact is due, rather, to the sheer musical power of its themes, the force with which they are developed, and the boundless imagination displayed in tonality, rhythm, orchestration, and musical character.

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