

Tyrannosaurus Sue: A Cretaceous Concerto

Bruce Adolphe (1955–)

Written: 2000

Movements: Seven

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Twenty-five minutes

If you visit the Field Museum in Chicago, a must see exhibit is Sue, the largest, most complete, and best preserved Tyrannosaurus rex ever discovered. Sue is named after Sue Hendrickson who discovered the fossil in South Dakota in the summer of 1990. There was an strong ownership debate that ended up with the Field Museum purchasing Sue for \$8.4 million dollars. Conservators spent more than 30,000 hours preparing the skeleton—more than 250 bones and teeth, about 90% of the total—for the exhibit, and making exact and fully articulated replicas to send out on tour. Sue is 42 feet long from snout to tail and 13 feet tall at the hip.

In 2000, the Chicago Chamber Musicians commissioned Bruce Adolphe to write a piece for the unveiling of Sue at the Field Museum. He wrote it for oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, strings, and percussion. The piece serves as a narrated concerto for trombone, who gets to play the appropriate role of Sue. Á la “Peter and the Wolf,” other instruments get leading roles as well: for example, the horn represents the triceratops and the clarinet plays the troodon, a bird-like dinosaur.

A renowned composer whose music is performed throughout the world, Bruce Adolphe is also the author of several books on music, an innovative educator, and a versatile performer. His multi-faceted career in music is obvious from the positions he holds concurrently: resident lecturer and director of family concerts for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; composer-in-residence at the Brain and Creativity Institute in LA; founding creative director of The Learning Maestros; and the Piano Puzzler on the public radio’s *Performance Today*.

Adolphe studied at the Juilliard School where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. Some career highlights have included: Itzhak Perlman's world premiere performances of his solo violin music at The Kennedy Center and Avery Fisher Hall; Yo-Yo Ma playing the world premiere of *Self Comes to Mind*, a work based on a text written for the project by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio; and Joshua Bell performing the world premiere of *Einstein's Light* with pianist Marija Strobe at UNESCO in Paris as the finale of the United Nations Year of Light, 2015. His score for the documentary on the history of anti-Semitism introduces the permanent exhibition at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

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Symphony with eight obligato timpani
Johann Carl Christian Fischer (1752–1807)

Written: circa 1780

Movements: Three

Style: Classical

Duration: 15 minutes

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Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Written: 1806

Movements: Four

Style: Classical and Romantic

Duration: 32 minutes

Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* seems to suffer most from a curious lack of interest on the part of scholars. No one has found any sketches for it. Robert Schumann described the *Fourth* as standing between its neighbors "like a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants." Nevertheless, the *Fourth* is a graceful and wonderfully constructed work.

All the movements are bright and light in a Classical style. In fact, you might compare this symphony to the "London" symphonies of Franz Joseph Haydn, who was still living when Beethoven wrote it. Like Haydn, Beethoven begins the first movement with a slow introduction that immediately proceeds to the brilliant first theme. Beethoven meticulously notated every nuance of style for the players. It's hard to imagine, given these strict requirements, that it can sound so delightfully simple and intuitive!

The second movement is one of the most passionate expressions found in all of Beethoven's symphonies. He composed it at the same time that he wrote the now-famous letters to his "immortal beloved:"

. . . My thoughts press to you, my Beloved One, at moments with joy, and then again with sorrow, waiting to see whether fate will take pity on us. Either I must live wholly with you or not at all. Yes, I have resolved to wander in distant lands, until I can fly to your arms, and feel that with you I have a real home . . . be calm—love me—today—yesterday—what tearful longing after you—you—you—my life—my all—Oh, continue

to love me—never misjudge the faithful heart.

The beautiful duets, the imaginative combinations of instruments, and the flawless artistry of this movement prompted Hector Berlioz to write “. . . the being who wrote such a marvel of inspiration was not a man. Such must be the song of the Archangel Michael.”

The brief third movement is a minuet in form, but it is a Beethoven minuet. He wrote it not as a dance, but as a whimsical, rhythmic contrast to the passions of the second movement. This whimsy yields to a vigorous, almost impatient finale.

Beethoven found it impossible to separate his life and circumstances from his art. Fortunately for us there was, in 1806, a brief period of true joy that he wonderfully reflected in the *Fourth Symphony*.

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