

***Concerto for Orchestra***  
**Béla Bartók (1881–1945)**

Written: 1943

Movements: Five

Style: Contemporary

Duration: 36 minutes

Bela Bartók was safe in America after fleeing the horrors of World War II Europe, but he was not a happy or well man. He was poor, desperately homesick and, although he didn't know it yet, dying from a form of leukemia. And he wasn't writing any new music. Finally, two Hungarian compatriots, Joseph Szigeti and Fritz Reiner, approached Serge Koussevitsky—the conductor of the Boston Symphony—and asked him to commission a work from Bartok. Even though Koussevitsky wasn't particularly fond of Bartok's music, he agreed and personally delivered the first check to Bartok.

Bartok wrote the *Concerto for Orchestra* in less than two months. Bartok provided a short outline of it: "The general mood of the work represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death song of the third, to the life assertion of the last one."

Bartok got virtually all of the important material for the various movements from his studies of folk music. But this is not obvious to the listener. Bartok's genius is the way he abstracts those elements and then uses them within "traditional" classical music.

The first and last movements of the *Concerto for Orchestra* are in a standard "sonata" form with an exposition area introducing the main themes, a development section, and then a restatement of those main themes. A chain of short sections, each played by a pair of wind instruments, makes up the second movement. The brass interrupt with a short chorale, and then the five pairs of winds return. The fourth movement features two folk-like melodies. Bartok interrupts that movement with a quotation from Dmitri Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony* and then restores the peace with a return of the two themes. The central movement, what Bartok calls the "death song," is a nocturnal setting of one of the themes from the first movement.

Bartok's health was good enough for him to hear the premiere of his *Concerto for Orchestra* in December of 1944. However, he was still desperately homesick: ". . . I would like to go Home – forever." The war had ended but he didn't get his wish. In September of 1945, his health took a turn for the worse. He died in New York.

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## ***Travels in Time for Three***

**Chris Brubeck (1952–)**

Written: 2010

Movements: Four

Style: Contemporary/Eclectic

Duration: Twenty minutes

“One of the goals that I have in any piece I write,” says composer Chris Brubeck, “[I] want the musicians on stage to have a really good time.” Chris Brubeck comes from a *very* musical family. First there is his father, the legendary Dave Brubeck. Then there are his brother, Darius (piano) and Daniel (drums). Chris plays bass, trombone, piano, guitar and sings and has earned international acclaim as a performer and leader of his own groups. He is also a much sought-after composer, and in the last few years has been commissioned to write many innovative works.

A consortium of seven orchestras, including the Boston Pops, Indianapolis, Wichita, Portland (Maine), Youngstown, Anchorage, IRIS, and the Colorado Music Festival commissioned Chris Brubeck to write a “triple concerto” for the group *Time for Three*. As the composer wrote for the premier with the Boston Pops:

The piece is tailor-made for the versatile members of *Time for Three*, and embraces many musical genres, from jazz to country, funk to classical, and even some gospel! The common thread throughout the work’s movements and various styles is the main theme, which reappears in many guises. This theme came to me as I was riding a train to Philadelphia in 2009 to work with the group. Zach, Nick, Ranaan, and I had several jam sessions that I recorded, giving me a sense of what musical directions Tf3 wanted to explore. The “train” theme stuck, and you will hear it in the first movement in its original, jazzy style before it is transformed through a series of musical adventures, appearing finally in a very Baroque presentation. Moving quickly from the 1700s to the 21st century, the piece conveys the feeling that the musicians are “musical time travelers,” hence the title *Travels in Time for Three*.

In the last movement, *Clouseau’s Mardi Gras*, I made the note *Misterioso burlesco* in the score, as this movement takes the audience on a humorous ride from a sneaky, Mancini-influenced opening, to a Cajun fiddle / Mardi Gras funk parade, to a gospel-funk-country groove in 7/4 time, complete with blazing fiddles on top, that matches the intensity of rock ‘n’ roll. After individual cadenzas, the entire piece climaxes into a fast 7/8 version of the original theme. This serves as a vehicle to propel the celebratory music to an exciting conclusion.

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***Songs of Joy—World Premiere***

***Commissioned by the Sun Valley Summer Symphony***

***Composed by Nick Kendall, Ranaan Meyer and Charles Yang***

***Arranged and orchestrated by TJ Cole***

Composed: 2017

Length: ca. 22 minutes

Songs of Joy is the product of a special synergy between all three members of the group as well as of the creative process. “Within the larger orchestral moments, we pick out themes and turn them into pop

songs.” The group was inspired by the kind of work that Steve Hackman has done for them, heard in the first half of tonight’s program—finding themes from Classical works and melding them with pop songs—but here, Time for Three has come up with original themes, which end up in seamless structural dialogue between the orchestra and the smaller trio.

The piece, played without pause, laces together three songs, interspersed with purely instrumental sections played by the orchestra and Time for Three. Charles explains that while joy is the overarching message of the piece, the musical journey, as in life, is not as straightforward as it might initially seem: “The big picture of this piece is the idea of a blessing in disguise. Within the negative comes the positive, and it is up to us to find that. The themes we use go together, and come together at the end.” The Prelude serves as an introduction to the work. Conceived of as an elegy for strings, the section is based on three themes, one from each of three songs heard later in the work. Musically then, the Prelude provides the inspiration for the Songs of Joy that follow. The first song, “She Don’t Care,” expresses distinct responses to artistic ambition. TJ’s lush harmonies here are designed for communicative directness, and the orchestra melodically mirrors Charles’s incredible vocal range in full display in this song.

The first Interlude is built mostly on what will eventually become the themes from the song “Joy.” TJ’s ingenious orchestration layers these melodies over one another in more than ten individual musical lines, which enter one-by-one. The result is a blanket of sound creating a free-flowing canon which will culminate in the appearance of a new theme, what will eventually become the chorus melody from “Joy.” The second song, “Vienna,” is a story of complete vulnerability within a relationship. Ranaan notes that this song explores a “dive deep into the unknown while already committed to love or belief” in such a bond. (Although the storyline of the song is completely fictional, it is based on individual experiences of Time for Three.) The score draws on the style of a relaxed waltz in the spirit of a carnival to capture a dream-like state.

The atmospheric fade-out of the second song eventually coalesces into the melody of the second Interlude, with a high-energy, 16th-note patter in orchestral homorhythm, bringing in themes that will be heard in the final song. As the orchestra builds to a climax, suddenly it drops out, leaving Charles, Nick and Ranaan in a wordless, a cappella introduction to “Joy.” The character of the upbeat finale has a resonance with the figure of Beethoven, whose own exuberant Ode to Joy came towards the end of his life, one that mixed loneliness with the highest acclaim, utter hopelessness

with great triumph. Can we experience full-throated joy in the face of adversity and uncertainty? Time for Three answers this question with a resounding “Yes!” here, and in a final coup, bring all three songs together in a culminating mash-up.

These notes were originally written for the Sun Valley Summer Symphony’s world premiere performance on August 3, 2017 by Jon Kochavi. Used by permission from the Sun Valley Summer Symphony and Jon Kochavi.