

MAHLER'S "TITAN" WITH KAHANE'S WORLD PREMIERE PIANO CONCERTO

Friday and Saturday, September 24-25, 2021 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, September 26, 2021 at 2 p.m.

HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*
JEFFREY KAHANE, *piano*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN *Overture to The Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43*

GABRIEL KAHANE

Heirloom

Jeffrey Kahane, piano

I. Guitars in the Attic

II. My Grandmother Knew Alban Berg

III. Vera's Chicken-Powered Transit Machine

World Premiere

— INTERMISSION —

GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony No. 1 in D Major, "Titan"

I. Langsam, Schleppend

II. Kräftig bewegt

III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen

IV. Stürmisch bewegt

The 2021/22 season is generously sponsored by
SHIRLEY and BARNETT C. HELZBERG, JR.

The Classical Series is sponsored by the

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KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus*, op. 43 (1801)

5 minutes

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

In 1801, Beethoven was ensconced in Vienna, needing money and eager to write a substantial work for the stage in order to build his reputation as a composer. That opportunity arrived in the person of Salvatore Viganò, a dancer, poet, musician and actor (and the nephew of the acclaimed composer Luigi Boccherini). Empress Maria Theresa commissioned a ballet from Viganò and he decided to ask Beethoven to write the music, given the stature of the commission. The Promethean subject doubtless appealed to Beethoven; he dove into the task energetically and completed the score in only 11 days.

The ballet premiered at Vienna's Burgtheater on March 28, 1801. Although the original libretto has been lost, the theatrical playbill describes the work as follows:

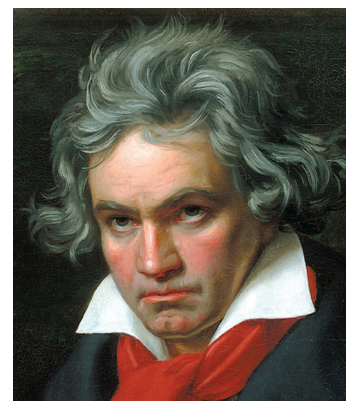
This allegorical ballet is based on the myth of Prometheus ... a lofty spirit who, finding the human beings of his time in a state of ignorance, refined them through art and knowledge and gave them laws of right conduct. In accordance with this source, the ballet presents two animated statues who, by the power of harmony, are made susceptible to all the passions of human existence. Prometheus takes them to Parnassus to receive instruction from Apollo, god of the arts.

Critics were not especially kind but audiences were charmed and the ballet received more than 20 performances. Despite this initial success, the work fell into disuse. Only the overture has remained popular.

THE MUSIC

Hinting at the revolutionary music soon to come, the overture amply displays Beethoven's inimitable style. Bold anticipatory chords open the work, followed by a slow regal melody that gives way to quickly darting strings. Playful arpeggios and scales are boisterously punctuated by accented chords poking through the texture. Vivacious rhythms and contrasting dynamics all combine for a superb opener, whetting the appetite for more. *ETW*

Program notes by *AJ Harbison (AJH)* and *Eric T. Williams (ETW)*.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Known for:

- 9 symphonies
- 5 piano concertos
- 16 string quartets

- Widely considered one of the greatest composers of all time, Beethoven did not have an idyllic childhood. His alcoholic father regularly beat him and deprived him of sleep while forcing him to practice piano and violin incessantly. Ludwig's formal education ended at age 10 and he struggled with math and spelling his entire life.
- Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792 and began studying composition with Franz Joseph Haydn. However, he first made his reputation as a virtuoso pianist, dazzling one and all with his formidable technique and exceptional prowess at improvisation.
- Although an urban dweller, Beethoven loved the great outdoors. He was fascinated by nature's elemental power and regularly walked in the woods around Vienna. He even contemplated moving to a more rural setting. He moved a lot; by one count, he moved 67 times during his 35 years in Vienna.
- Beethoven's deafness became manifest in his late 20s and he struggled to hide it. In the famous Heiligenstadt Testament, a letter Beethoven wrote to his brothers in 1802 but never sent (it was discovered among his papers at his death in 1827), he detailed the anguish of his affliction and how he resolved to continue living solely because of music.
- Whether due to his thorny personality or physical appearance, Beethoven never married or had children. There is tremendous speculation about his love interests, especially one known as the "Immortal Beloved," but certainty is elusive.
- Beethoven's groundbreaking Ninth Symphony includes four vocal soloists and a chorus singing his glorious setting of Friedrich Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy." Since its premiere in 1824, the Symphony's brilliant music and message of friendship has inspired people the world over. *ETW*

GABRIEL KAHANE

Heirloom (2021) • 26 minutes

Solo piano, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, contrabass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, piccolo trumpet, bass trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, crotales, finger cymbals, glockenspiel, guiro, high hat, kick drum, marimba, shakers, slapstick, sleigh bells, snare drum, tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, tubular bells, vibraphone, xylophone, harp and strings.

In my creative path, songs and storytelling share the road with the Austro-German musical tradition. That tradition comes to me through the music I heard as a child, but also through ancestry. My paternal grandmother, Hannelore, escaped Germany, arriving in Los Angeles in 1939. For her, there was an unspeakable tension between her love of German music and the horror of the Holocaust. In this piece I ask: how does that complex set of emotions get transmitted across generations?

“Guitars in the Attic” wrestles with the challenge of bringing vernacular song into formal concert music. The first theme, poppy and effervescent, undergoes a series of transformations that render it increasingly unrecognizable. A lugubrious second tune, first introduced in disguise by the French horn, finally reveals itself paraphrasing a song of mine called “Where are the Arms.” That song, in turn, with its hymn-like chord progression, owes a debt to German sacred music. A feedback loop emerges: German art music informs pop song, which then gets fed back into the piano concerto.

“My Grandmother Knew Alban Berg” picks up the thread of intergenerational memory. Grandma didn’t actually know Alban Berg, but she did babysit the children of Arnold Schoenberg, Berg’s teacher. Why make something up when the truth is equally tantalizing? I wanted to evoke the slipperiness of memory and indirect modes of cultural inheritance. In this movement, the main theme is introduced by trumpet, accompanied by a bed of chromatic harmony that wouldn’t be out of place in Berg’s musical universe. By movement’s end, time has run backward, and the same tune is heard in a nocturnal, Brahmsian mode, discomfited by interjections from the woodwinds, which inhabit a different, and perhaps less guileless, temporal plane.

To close, we have a kind of fiddle-tune rondo, an unabashed celebration of childhood innocence. In March 2020, my family and I were marooned in Portland, Oregon by the coronavirus pandemic. Separated from our belongings — and all of our daughter’s toys — my ever-resourceful partner, Emma, fashioned a “vehicle” out of an empty diaper box, on which she wrote Vera’s Chicken-Powered Transit Machine. (Vera had developed a strong affinity for chicken and preferred to eat it thrice daily.) We would push her around the floor in her transit machine, resulting in squeals of delight. In this brief finale, laughter and joy are the prevailing modes, but not without some mystery. I have an idea of what I have inherited from my ancestors. What I will hand down to my daughter remains, for the time being, a wondrous unknown.

Heirloom is dedicated with love, admiration, gratitude, and awe to my father, Jeffrey Kahane.

GABRIEL KAHANE (B. 1981)



Hailed as “one of the finest songwriters of the day” by *The New Yorker*, Gabriel Kahane is known to haunt basement rock clubs and august concert halls alike, where you’ll likely find him in the green room, double-fisting coffee and a book.

His most recent album, “Book of Travelers” (Nonesuch Records), chronicles his 8,980 mile railway journey in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election. As a composer, he has been commissioned by, among others, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Public Theater, which in 2012 presented his musical *February House*.

In 2019, Kahane was named the inaugural creative chair for the Oregon Symphony, following the premiere of his oratorio *emergency shelter intake form*, a work exploring inequality through the lens of housing issues. The piece was released as an album in March of 2020, and will be performed by several other orchestras in the coming years.

Kahane’s discography also includes 2014’s “The Ambassador,” which received an acclaimed staging at BAM, directed by Tony Award-winner John Tiffany; an album of chamber music, “The Fiction Issue,” with the string quartet Brooklyn Rider; a recording of his orchestral song cycle *Crane Palimpsest* with The Knights; as well as the original cast album for *February House*. Other collaborations have included work with Paul Simon, Phoebe Bridgers, Sufjan Stevens, Andrew Bird, Caroline Shaw, and Chris Thile.

A two-time MacDowell Colony fellow, Kahane received the 2021 Charles Ives Fellowship Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. After nearly two decades in Brooklyn, Kahane relocated with his family to Portland, Oregon, in March of 2020.

GUSTAV MAHLER

Symphony No. 1 in D Major, "Titan" (1884-1888; rev. 1893-1896, 1899-1906)

56 minutes

3 piccolos, 4 flutes, 4 oboes, English horn, 2 E-flat clarinets, 4 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 7 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani (2 players), bass drum, cymbals, gong, triangle, harp and strings.

THE STORY

For late 19th-century audiences, Mahler's First Symphony was a perplexing mix of folk melodies, funeral march, bird calls, fanfares, dances, chorales and more. Mostly composed while he was second conductor at Leipzig's Stadttheater, the Symphony premiered in Budapest in 1889, following Mahler's appointment as artistic director of the Royal Hungarian Opera. The audience was bewildered because the work was titled "A Symphonic Poem in Two Parts" but no further explanation was provided nor was the music itself readily descriptive of a particular story. Mahler shelved the Symphony during the remainder of his time in Budapest while navigating opera house politics and contending with ill health.

After taking a job in Hamburg, Mahler revised his First Symphony for an 1893 performance. He added program notes and inserted "Titan" into the title, alluding to a convoluted popular novel of the same title by Jean Paul. Mahler continued revising the Symphony, eventually discarding one movement, the programmatic synopsis and the "Titan" title. The Symphony's current shape was set on its publication in 1899.

THE MUSIC

At the Symphony's meditative opening, the strings intone a single note stretched over seven octaves accompanied by brief sighs from the winds, punctuated by offstage trumpets. The cellos finally break into song — Mahler quoting himself, a song entitled "I Went This Morning Over the Field" from *Songs of a Wayfarer*. Mahler weaves together the various melodic fragments with precisely calculated dynamics and imaginative orchestral colors.

Mahler's second movement ländler is earthy and boisterous, with rhythmic stamping and hopping in triple meter evoking the dance. He sometimes instructs the clarinets and horns to raise the bells of their instruments, creating an especially bold sound. A lone horn leads the transition from the first dance to a more relaxed second dance and back again.

A funeral march on the children's round "Frère Jacques" ("Are you sleeping...") played by double bass is hardly conventional. As the doleful melody makes its way around the orchestra, happier times are recalled. A steady timpani beat brings the ensemble back to its funereal duties. The harp takes over from the timpani, as the violins sing a sweet melody tinged with sadness. The original march returns and, following somewhat macabre outbursts, eventually disappears into the distance.

The last movement begins with an extended outburst setting the stage for the driven march that finally emerges. The furor subsides and the violins lead the strings in a soulful melody worlds apart from the earlier uproar. Mahler's penchant for juxtaposition of wildly different sounds and characters is on full display. Amid the constant drama, motifs from the first movement return. Contentment is brief as angry outbursts from the violas lead the ensemble to a final victorious cavalcade. **ETW**



GUSTAV MAHLER (1860-1911)

Known for:

- **Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection" (1888-1894)**
- **Symphony No. 8, "Symphony of a Thousand" (1906)**
- **Adagietto from Symphony No. 5 (1901-1902)**

- Born into a Jewish family in Bohemia (now in the Czech Republic), Gustav Mahler was the second of 14 children. He showed musical talent at a relatively early age and began piano lessons at age 6. He was admitted to the Vienna Conservatory in 1875 and later attended Vienna University, studying music, history, and philosophy.
- Known today for his monumental symphonies, Mahler was most highly regarded during his own lifetime as a conductor. He began his conducting career in 1880 with a job at a summer theater, ambitiously moving almost yearly to successively larger opera houses. From Bad Hall, he went to Ljubljana, Olomouc, Vienna, Kassel, Prague, Leipzig, and Budapest. His growing prominence led to an appointment at the Hamburg Opera in 1891, where he stayed until 1897. Converting to Catholicism to obtain the much-coveted post as director of the Vienna Opera, Mahler launched into his duties with zeal, greatly raising the artistic standards — and making enemies along the way.
- Mahler's conducting duties engulfed his time during the concert season so composing was largely relegated to summers, often spent at pastoral lakeside settings.
- It was in late 1901 that Mahler met Alma Schindler, a vivacious pianist and composer nearly 20 years his junior. He composed the Adagietto movement of his Fifth Symphony as a declaration of love for her. They became engaged after less than two months of courtship. They had two daughters, the eldest dying of diphtheria at age 4. Theirs was not an idyllic marriage and had as many moments of despondency as elation.
- Frequently subjected to anti-Semitic attacks in the press and newly diagnosed with a heart disease, Mahler resigned from the Vienna Opera in 1907 to conduct a season at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, earning critical and popular acclaim. He returned to New York in 1910 to lead the New York Philharmonic. Falling seriously ill in February 1911, he went to Paris for an unsuccessful treatment and was then taken to Vienna where he died in May 1911 at age 50. **ETW**

JEFFREY KAHANE, PIANO



Equally at home at the piano or on the podium, Jeffrey Kahane is recognized around the world for his mastery of diverse repertoire. He has appeared as soloist with major orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and the Chicago and San Francisco symphonies among many others, and is also a popular artist at all of the major U.S. summer festivals, including Aspen, Blossom, Caramoor, Mostly

Mozart and Ravinia. In August 2016, he was appointed music director of the Sarasota Music Festival and he is currently also artistic adviser of the Sarasota Orchestra.

Kahane made his conducting debut at the Oregon Bach Festival in 1988. Since then, he has guest conducted many of the major U.S. orchestras including the New York and Los Angeles philharmonics, Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, and the Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, St. Louis, Baltimore, Indianapolis and New World symphonies among others. Kahane served as music director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra for 20 years and the Colorado Symphony for five years. For ten seasons, he was music director of the Santa Rosa Symphony, where he is now Conductor Laureate.

A native of Los Angeles and a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Kahane is an avid linguist who reads widely in a number of ancient and modern languages. He received a master's degree in classics from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2011. He is currently a Professor of Keyboard Studies at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music.

Kahane resides in Los Angeles with his wife, Martha, a clinical psychologist in private practice. They have two children — Gabriel, a composer, pianist and singer/songwriter and Annie, a dancer and poet.

STEPHEN TAVANI, VIOLIN



Violinist Stephen Tavani joined the Cleveland Orchestra as assistant concertmaster in the fall of 2018. The New York Times commented about his playing that "...Tavani sometimes cooled his tone to the smoothness of frosted glass, adding a soft-focus filter to the chiseled melodies..." He has collaborated as soloist with conductors Carlos Miguel Prieto and Andrew Litton, and given performances around the world. Tavani has served as guest concertmaster with the Houston Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Jacksonville

Symphony, and Louisiana Philharmonic. Before joining the Cleveland Orchestra, he was concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.

An avid chamber musician, Tavani has collaborated with many great musicians, such as Edgar Meyer, members of Quatuor Ébène, Roberto Díaz, Peter Wiley, Paul Katz, Jon Kimura Parker, Ronald Leonard, Clive Greensmith, and Daniel Hope. He has appeared at numerous music festivals and toured with Musicians from Marlboro, Dresden Music Festival, Music From Angel Fire, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Colburn Chamber Music Society, Curtis Recital Series, and the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble.

Tavani has appeared at the Sibelius International Violin Competition in Helsinki, the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, and the Michael Hill Violin Competition in New Zealand. He holds an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Ida Kavafian and Arnold Steinhardt. He earned a bachelor's degree from the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles, where he studied with Robert Lipsett. He completed his studies in the Concertmaster Academy program at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he worked with William Preucil. Other previous teachers include Aaron Rosand, Shirley Givens, and Ronda Cole. He uses a W.E. Hill & Sons bow generously loaned by Tom Frisina.

Tavani resides in Cleveland with his wife Amanda, a double bassist and music educator, and their son, Gabriel. He grew up in Northern Virginia in a musical family of six brothers. His mother is a voice teacher and lyric soprano, his father a family physician and pianist. Learn more about Tavani at his website: stephentavani.com, and visit his youtube page at youtube.com/stavani1 to see many of his performances.