

Augustin Hadelich Plays Beethoven's Violin Concerto

BEETHOVEN AND WAGNER

June 6-8, 2025

ASHER FISCH, GUEST CONDUCTOR
AUGUSTIN HADELICH, VIOLIN

Helzberg Hall,
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

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Augustin Hadelich Plays Beethoven's Violin Concerto

BEETHOVEN AND WAGNER

Friday, June 6, 2025 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

The Prelude and Good Friday Spell from *Parsifal* and Beethoven's complete Violin Concerto will be performed with no intermission for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, June 7, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 8, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

ASHER FISCH, GUEST CONDUCTOR

AUGUSTIN HADELICH, VIOLIN

RICHARD WAGNER /
arr. Henk de Vlieger

Parsifal: An Orchestral Quest

- I. Vorspiel (Prelude)
- II. Parsifal
- III. Die Gralsritter I (The Knights of the Grail I)
- IV. Die Blumenmädchen (The Flower Girls)
- V. Karfreitagszauber (Good Friday Spell)
- VI. Die Gralsritter II (The Nights of the Grail II)
- VII. Nachspiel (Epilogue)

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, op. 61

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Larghetto
- III. Rondo: Allegro

Augustin Hadelich, violin

Asher Fisch

GUEST CONDUCTOR



Making music with equal ease and command in the opera and symphonic worlds, Asher Fisch conducts a broad repertoire from Gluck to 21st-century premieres, with a special command and following for German Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire. Fisch has been the principal conductor and artistic advisor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) since 2014, and starting with the 2024/25 season is also the music director of the Tyrolean Festival Erl in Austria. He was previously music director of the New Israeli Opera (1998-2008) and Wiener Volksoper (1995-2005) and principal guest conductor of the Seattle Opera (2007-2013).

In addition to his concerts with WASO, Fisch guest-conducts the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Sydney Symphony and Oregon Symphony this season. Opera productions include *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Israeli Opera and *La bohème*, *Parsifal* and the “Verdi trilogy” of *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* and *La traviata* in Erl.

Born in Israel, he began his conducting career as Daniel Barenboim’s assistant and kappellmeister at the Berlin Staatsoper. He has built his versatile repertoire at the major opera houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, Bayerische Staatsoper and Semperoper Dresden. Fisch has conducted leading American symphony orchestras including those of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Philadelphia. In Europe he has appeared at the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Orchestre National de France, among others.

Fisch’s award-winning discography includes Bruckner’s Symphony No. 8 and Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*; tenor Stuart Skelton’s first solo album, recorded with WASO; and a recording of Ravel’s *L’heure espagnole* with the Munich Radio Orchestra. In 2016, he recorded the complete Brahms symphonies with WASO, released on ABC Classics to great acclaim. His recording of Wagner’s Ring Cycle with the Seattle Opera was released in 2014. His first Ring Cycle recording, with the State Opera of South Australia, won ten Helpmann Awards, including best opera and best music direction. Fisch is also an accomplished pianist and has recorded a solo disc of Wagner piano transcriptions for the Melba label.

Augustin Hadelich

VIOLIN



Augustin Hadelich is one of the great violinists of our time. Known for his phenomenal technique, insightful and persuasive interpretations, and ravishing tone, he appears extensively on the world's foremost concert stages. Hadelich has performed with all the major American orchestras as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic and many other eminent ensembles.

During the 2024 summer festivals season, Hadelich appeared at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tanglewood Music Festival with the Boston Symphony, Bravo! Vail with the New York Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival with the Chicago Symphony, Aspen Music Festival in Colorado and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería in Mexico City.

Highlights of the 2024/25 season include returns to the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, Vienna Philharmonic, Gewandhausorchester

Leipzig, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Cleveland Orchestra. Hadelich will also perform with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Vienna Symphony, London Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, New Zealand Symphony and Orquesta Nacional de España as well as the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Dallas and Seattle.

Hadelich received a GRAMMY® Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo in 2016 for his recording of Dutilleux's Concerto "L'Arbre des songs" with Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot. A Warner Classics Artist, his most recent album "American Road Trip", a journey through the landscape of American music with pianist Orion Weiss, was released in August 2024.

Hadelich, a dual American-German citizen born in Italy to German parents, rose to fame when he won the Gold Medal at the 2006 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. Further distinctions followed, including an Avery Fisher Career Grant (2009). Hadelich holds an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Joel Smirnoff, and in 2021, he was appointed to the violin faculty at the Yale School of Music. He plays a 1744 violin made by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, known as "Leduc, ex Szeryng," on loan from the Tarisio Trust.



Henk de Vlieger

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Arranged by Henk de Vlieger (b. 1953)

Parsifal: An Orchestral Quest

(1993)

55 minutes

3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bells, tenor drum, 2 harps and strings.

THE STORY

German composer Richard Wagner wrote almost exclusively operas, and unlike most opera composers he wrote both the libretto (text) and the music for all of them. Over his career he developed a philosophy he called Gesamtkunstwerk (total artwork), which called for all the elements of a production to be brought together in an artistic synthesis to serve the singular purpose of the drama. As a result, he not only wrote the libretto and music but also had input on the set design and choreography, among other things. He even had an opera house built to his own specifications that would help

fulfill his vision — the Festspielhaus (Festival Theatre) in the German city of Bayreuth.

The first operas performed in the Festspielhaus were the operas of Wagner's Ring cycle: *Das Rheingold* (The Rhinegold), *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods). The complete cycle of all four operas was performed three times during the first year of the Bayreuth festival, in 1876. Following that festival, Wagner commenced the composition of *Parsifal*, which was to be his final work.

Wagner had initially conceived *Parsifal* in 1857, 20 years previously, but since he actually composed it in the late 1870s he was able to tailor it for the acoustics of the Festspielhaus. The libretto was freely adapted from several sources telling the story of the title character in the 12th and 13th centuries. Wagner blended elements from those sources with his own philosophy, heavily influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as borrowing from Christian mysticism and Buddhism. (See a synopsis of the opera's story on page 7.) It is notable that while the story deals with the Holy Grail and Holy Spear, both myths connected with Christ's crucifixion, Christ is never named in the opera but only referred to as "the Redeemer." Wagner wrote of this: "Art can show that the symbols which religions would have us believe literally true are actually figurative. Art can idealize those symbols, and so reveal the profound truths they contain."

Prominent composers who attended performances at the festival in 1882 and following years lavished praise on the music:

Hugo Wolf: "Colossal — Wagner's most inspired, sublimest creation."

Jean Sibelius: "Nothing in the world has made so overwhelming an impression on me. All my innermost heart-strings throbbed ... I cannot begin to tell you how *Parsifal* has transported me."

Claude Debussy: "Incomparable and bewildering, splendid and strong. *Parsifal* is one of the loveliest monuments of sound ever raised to the serene glory of music."

Max Reger: "When I first heard *Parsifal* at Bayreuth I was 15. I cried for two weeks and then became a musician."

Dutch percussionist, arranger and composer Henk de Vlieger is a member of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and its artistic advisor. He has composed original music but is better known for his arrangements of Wagner's music, including *The Ring: An Orchestral Adventure*, *Tristan und Isolde: An Orchestral Passion* and *Meistersinger: An Orchestral Tribute*. His arrangement of *Parsifal*, completed one hundred and eleven years after the opera's premiere, brings together several of the most famous passages of music with originally composed transitions.

THE MUSIC

In composing his orchestral quest for orchestra alone, without voices, de Vlieger sometimes removes the vocal lines and sometimes gives them to instruments instead. His arrangement follows a symmetrical pattern, with the Vorspiel (prelude) and Nachspiel (epilogue) framing two movements subtitled “The Knights of the Grail,” with the “Flower Girls” and “Good Friday Spell” at the center.

The knights movements both describe the preparation of the Grail Knights’ rituals, and are characterized by the use of four deep bells. The two movements at the center are

contrasted both musically and symbolically: The flower girls, who attempt to seduce Parsifal, are represented by sensual music featuring multiple violin solos, while the meditative Good Friday music connects the beauty and renewal of nature with a vaguely Christian concept of redemption.

The short second part of de Vlieger’s arrangement, titled simply “Parsifal,” introduces motifs that recur at the beginning of each excerpt, forming the pillars of the arrangement’s arc.

— AJ Harbison

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Parsifal Synopsis

Adapted from www.opera-online.com

ACT 1

In the kingdom of Montsalvat, the chaste Knights of the Grail and their king, Amfortas, watch over the sacred relics of Christ, the Holy Spear that pierced him and the Holy Grail, the chalice in which his blood was collected on the cross. Klingsor, a fallen knight of Montsalvat and master of an enchanted estate, has stolen the Spear and plunged it into the side of the Priest-King Amfortas, inflicting an eternal wound that only a pure and compassionate being can deliver him from. Then comes young Parsifal, spontaneous and ignorant of everything, especially of evil, believed by the wise Gurnemanz, the senior Knight, to be the long-awaited savior. However, the young man's lack of enthusiasm during the celebration of the Grail causes him to be dismissed.

ACT 2

In his enchanted garden where flower girls seduce and abandon the Knights of the Grail, Klingsor enjoins the diabolical Kundry, a disturbing character because she is also the servant and messenger of the Grail, to charm Parsifal. She gives him a voluptuous kiss, which Parsifal pushes away, understanding that that temptation was the cause of Amfortas' wound, and forgiveness its only remedy. Kundry, having laughed at Christ on his Way of the Cross, has been condemned to lose herself forever unless she is redeemed by Parsifal's compassion. In the face of his rejection, she curses him, reducing him to wandering far from Montsalvat. Parsifal triumphs over Klingsor who has been called to the rescue by Kundry, recovers the Spear and flees.

ACT 3

Years later, on Good Friday, in a clearing near Montsalvat, at the end of his initiatory path, Parsifal arrives in the guise of a black knight, finally returning the Holy Spear. Amfortas now desires only death; he neglects the rite of the chalice, and the knights, deprived of their divine comfort, fade away. Titurel, Amfortas' father, has also succumbed. In an act of penitence, like the prostitute in the Gospel, Kundry washes and anoints Parsifal's feet with a perfume before drying them with her hair. Gurnemanz, having become an old hermit, like an allegory of a biblical character, baptizes Parsifal and gives him the balm, making him the new Priest-King of Montsalvat. His first official act is to baptize Kundry, who falls into the sleep of death and forgiveness. He then approaches Amfortas and rests the Spear on the wound, healing it. Finally, he announces that the Grail will henceforth be displayed forever for all to see. Later, he will have a son, Lohengrin. But that's another story!



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, op. 61

(1806)

42 minutes

Solo violin, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

The year 1806 was one of the most prolific years of Beethoven's life. It saw the composition of the three "Razumovsky" string quartets (longer and more difficult than any quartets that had preceded them), the "Appassionata" piano sonata, the Fourth Symphony and the Fourth Piano Concerto. At the end of the year Beethoven found time to squeeze in the writing of his only violin concerto. It was dedicated to Franz Clement, a child prodigy Beethoven had met a decade before. The composer was impressed with the 14-year-old violinist and kept in touch with him. Clement commissioned the

concerto, which Beethoven wrote hurriedly at the end of 1806, completing it only two days before the premiere. Clement may have had to sightread parts of the piece at the performance. (This could be the inspiration behind Beethoven's punny dedication on the score, which read "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement" [Concerto by Clemency for Clement]).

Beethoven's piano concertos had been written for himself to perform up to this point, and in a similar way he tailored the Violin Concerto to Clement's particular strengths. A critic had described the violinist's playing as "indescribably delicate, neat and

elegant; it has an extremely delightful tenderness and cleanness that undoubtedly secures him a place among the most perfect violinists.” The refinement, delicacy and tenderness are all reflected in Beethoven’s piece.

The premiere performance was given on December 23, 1806. In addition to the under-rehearsed musicians and sightreading soloist, the concerto also suffered the indignity of being upstaged by another piece Clement played at the same concert — a solo performed on one string with the violin held upside down. (Sources differ, though, as to whether this was inserted between the first and second movements of the concerto or played after it.) Critics were unimpressed, with one calling the concerto “merely a fiddling affair,” and it languished in obscurity thereafter. Clement performed it a few more times, but eventually dropped it, saying (rather snobbily), “The music could soon fail to please anyone not completely familiar with the rules and difficulties of the art.”

Fortunately for us, the concerto was rescued in 1844 through a performance by the 12-year-old virtuoso Joseph Joachim that was

conducted by Felix Mendelssohn. Joachim championed the piece throughout his career and it took its rightful place as one of the greatest of all violin concertos.

THE MUSIC

The concerto begins in a most unconventional way — not with the orchestra or violin introducing the main melody but with taps on the timpani. These do bring in the woodwinds with the first theme, but then they are interrupted with more taps; only in the third phrase do the timpani and woodwinds play together. Immediately after that, the violins play four D-sharps, which are very much out of the movement’s key of D major, and this would have shocked the audiences of Beethoven’s day just as much as the timpani starting things off. A few bars later, we are suddenly in the far-off key of B-flat major. (Beethoven may have lost listeners at the premiere a mere 60 seconds into the piece!) After more harmonic exploration and hearing a theme in both D major and D minor, the solo violin makes its entrance and leisurely makes its way high up into the stratosphere of the instrument’s range. Over the course of the rest of the movement, multiple themes

(including the timpani's insistent rhythm) are developed and passed between the soloist and orchestra. Toward the end there is a cadenza, an extended passage for the soloist alone that provides a chance for virtuosic display. Beethoven did not write out a cadenza for this concerto, and Clement probably improvised one at the premiere; the one most frequently performed today was written by the early 20th-century violinist Fritz Kreisler. The ending of the movement is rather abrupt for Beethoven.

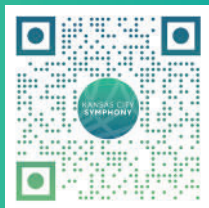
The second movement is a set of variations on two different themes. The first one is introduced by the strings and passes to the horns and clarinet, then to the bassoon and back to the strings, with the solo violin

mainly providing decoration. After some flourishes, the soloist introduces a second theme, which gets its own variation. The movement closes with a very short cadenza and moves without a pause into the final movement — something else that would have thrown off Beethoven's first listeners.

The violin takes the lead at the start of the third movement, introducing a lively “hunting horn”-style theme that returns several times throughout. The episodes in between recurrences of the themes again explore far-flung harmonic territory. At the end, the orchestra starts to fade out quietly, but an upward figure by the soloist leads to two loud, decisive chords.

— AJ Harbison

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In only its 42nd season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomes conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians from around the world bring a diverse and dynamic range of musical experiences to our audiences in both orchestral and chamber music formats each season. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the

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