

THE  
**CLEVELAND  
ORCHESTRA**  
FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

**BRONFMAN & BEETHOVEN**

**2020-21 Season Week 2**

performance/filming: **October 15-16, 2020**, at Severance Hall

**In Focus Episode No. 2**

broadcast premiere: Thursday, **October 29** at 7 p.m. via Adella

**THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA**

**Franz Welser-Möst**, conductor

**Yefim Bronfman**, piano

**ALFRED SCHNITTKE** (1934-1998)

**Concerto for Piano and Strings**

(in one movement)

Moderato — Allegro — Temp di valse

— Moderato — Tempo 1

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827)

**String Quartet No. 10 ("Harp")**

in E-flat major, Opus 74

(performed by string orchestra)

1. Poco adagio — Allegro

2. Adagio ma non troppo

3. Scherzo: Presto

4. Finale: Allegretto von variazioni

*A warm welcome to guests attending these performances in person at Severance Hall. The concert filming is presented without intermission and will run about one hour from start to finish. There will be a pause to re-set the stage between pieces; please remain in your seats.*

*In addition to the concert performance, each episode of our In Focus broadcasts this season includes behind-the-scenes features about the music and musicmaking. Learn more by going to [www.Adella.live](http://www.Adella.live) or by downloading the Adella app. Each In Focus broadcast presentation is available for viewing for three months from its premiere.*



## CONCERT OVERVIEW

For this program, Franz Welser-Möst has chosen a pair of pieces reflecting the sensibilities of two very different centuries.

First comes a work by Soviet-German composer Alfred Schnittke. His virtuosic and bravura piano concerto is performed by Yefim Bronfman, a Cleveland favorite, playing music filled with wry humor, intense beauty, rhythmic drive, and Shostakovich-like sarcasm.

Next, Welser-Möst continues his collaboration and exploration with The Cleveland Orchestra's string section, expanding Beethoven's "Harp" Quartet to an orchestra of strings. With Cleveland's famous chamber music approach — of listening and breathing together — this offers to showcase the group's extraordinary ensemblework and artistry. (The "Harp" nickname comes from plucked pizzicato sections in the first movement, but only hint at the beautiful verse-like melodies throughout this piece.)

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: SCHNITTKE

### CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND STRINGS

by **Alfred Schnittke** (1934-1998)

*Composed: 1979*

*Scored for: piano and string orchestra, in one movement*

*Duration: nearly 25 minutes*

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BORN IN SOVIET RUSSIA to German parents, Schnittke later claimed to be a Russian composer "without any Russian blood." But he was much more than that, embracing a wide range of styles, many of which surface in any single work. He was inevitably influenced by Prokofiev and Shostakovich; he dabbled in twelve-tone music; he had a feeling for light music and jazz; he became a devout mystic who expressed a deep spirituality, especially in his later music. He eventually left the Soviet Union and settled in Hamburg, Germany.

Schnittke composed concertos for cello and for violin, and three for the piano. The first, an early work, employs a full orchestra and is set in three movements. In the second, presented on this concert, the piano is supported by strings alone and is set in a single movement. It was written in 1979, in the middle of his career. His third piano concerto was for two players, duettists, together with a chamber orchestra.

A notable feature of his piano concerto for string orchestra is the composer's fondness for "scrunch chords," where dense groups of keys are played, sometimes with force, sometimes more delicately. In hearing, the listener's sense is almost immediately that more than two hands are involved. At other times, the piano writing is thin and delicate, so that every detail is clearly audible. The opening is a

good example, where notes are heard in isolated pairs, one immediately after the other. This quiet, bleak texture will return at the end.

For a good while, the first section of the work, the tempo is marked a calm *Andante*, with simple textures for the pianist and occasional whirrings from the strings. Dissonances take many forms here, often with the two hands almost, but not quite, reproducing each other a great distance apart.

Some shrieks from the strings usher in an *Allegro* section strongly reminiscent of Prokofiev, with pounding rhythms. This is followed, in contrast, by an improvisatory passage, with single lines appearing to trace out a fugue. Another stylistic surprise arrives in the form of a waltz, which builds to a climax, followed by a cadenza. And then the isolated pairs of notes from the opening are brought back to guide a miraculous fade-out.

The piano part has not been deliberately made difficult, as is so often the case with concertos that explore virtuosity for its own sake. The player here needs sensitivity, delicacy, and a grasp of dissonance when the fingers have to be configured, and even distorted, in unfamiliar ways.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

## ABOUT THE MUSIC: BEETHOVEN

**STRING QUARTET NO. 10 (“HARP”) in E-flat major, Opus 74**  
by **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1879-1936)  
(performed by string orchestra)

*Composed: 1809*

*Nickname: the “Harp” nickname was assigned by the work’s publisher for the pizzicato sections early in the piece that sound like the plucked strings of a harp*

*Scored for: string quartet; performed here by string orchestra including basses selectively doubling the cello line*

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MOST OF THE MUSIC Beethoven wrote in 1809, the year of this string quartet, is for solo piano or for chamber groups. An exception is the “Emperor” Piano Concerto, No. 5, which shares the key of E-flat major with the quartet.

Beethoven’s first quartets were bundled as a set of six, designed as Opus 18, in emulation of the of Haydn’s and Mozart’s quartet sets, which were his models. The next set included only three, under Opus 59, and known as the “Rasumovsky” quartets after the Russian aristocrat to whom they were dedicated. These were much larger and more explorative works than the first set, with many familiar gestures that we now associate with the heroic middle-period Beethoven.

The next quartet, Opus 74, seems to disregard the great aspirations of the previous set and to opt instead for a more poised and classical mood. The scherzo

is perhaps an exception, but the other three movements cross no new frontiers, working a now familiar idiom with ingenuity and the freshest imagination.

And it is, perhaps, this transitional feeling, of a musical language undergoing a change — of extending new vocabulary while not leaving behind the familiar — which makes this work a particularly interesting one to play not as a quartet but with full string orchestra. It is a neat feat for those symphony orchestras who can manage it, those attuned enough to play together, to listen and respond in a collaborative and undogged way. And, thus, give weight to the emotional journey of this quartet. It is a feat that The Cleveland Orchestra strings have clearly demonstrated in recent seasons, with several of the later Beethoven's quartets, and excellent exercise — and showcase — for musicians who have this year had to do without playing together for too long a stretch.

## THE MUSIC

The slow introduction to the **opening movement** is evocative and mysterious, a mood dispersed by the straightforward Allegro that follows with a theme constituted of many elements, of which the first, a rising triad, is soon heard played pizzicato in the lower instruments. This is the origin of the nickname "The Harp," which this quartet rather misleadingly bears.

The movement's exposition is repeated, and the development moves to a fuller "harp" passage on the lower instruments before the returning to the recapitulation. The coda brings a surprise when the first violin (or violins as a group, in this concert's version for string orchestra) takes off in a great show of crazy bravura, like a study in arpeggios. The other players continue calmly on their way.

The beautiful **slow second movement**, in A-flat major, hovers between the simpler slow movements of Beethoven's early period and the transcendental hymns of his late quartets. Three appearances of the main section (beautifully varied at each return) enclose two contrasting episodes, the first in the tonic minor, the second in D-flat major, with a constant delicate murmuring in the inner parts while first violins and cellos discourse ecstatically. A coda recalls the first episode and lingers quietly to prolong the close.

The scherzo **third movement** is marked "leggieramente," but nonetheless has a ferocious, dynamic force and some extreme contrasts. The movement's Trio section goes even faster with a frantic fugal texture. Scherzo and Trio both return, and then the scherzo itself again, which subsides in necessary preparation for the finale **fourth movement**. Here, the mood is now orderly and urbane. A relaxed and gentle theme, with a characteristic dotted phrase in almost every bar, is given six variations, easily followed, and a coda that quickens a little, not a lot, at the end.

Adapting string quartets for string orchestra gives us a new perspective on these great works, taking them out of the chamber into a larger space, and giving double basses the chance to share in a repertory they sorely miss.

—program note by Hugh Macdonald © 2020

## SOLOIST: YEFIM BRONFMAN

Russian-American pianist Yefim Bronfman is regarded as one of today's most talented piano virtuosos, praised for his technique and lyricism, and in demand for performances around the world. He made his Cleveland Orchestra debut in April 1986, and has returned regularly since that time for musical collaborations with the ensemble. His most recent appearances were in January 2020 at Severance Hall and October 2019 at Carnegie Hall.

As a guest artist, Mr. Bronfman performs with the world's most esteemed ensembles, from North America's major orchestras to those of Amsterdam, Berlin, Dresden, Israel, London, Paris, Vienna, and Zurich, among others. Recent engagements include as artist-in-residence with the Vienna Symphony, a tour to Asia with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and a series of recitals celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. He is a frequent guest at international festivals and has served as artist-in-residence with Carnegie Hall as well as with the Dresden Staatskapelle, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic.

A devoted chamber musician, Yefim Bronfman has collaborated with the Cleveland, Emerson, Guarneri, and Juilliard quartets, as well as the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He also has performed with Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Magdalena Kožená, Yo-Yo Ma, Shlomo Mintz, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Pinchas Zukerman, and many others, and presents solo recitals throughout Asia, Europe, and North America.

Mr. Bronfman's recordings are highly praised. He is featured on The Cleveland Orchestra's recent DVD release performing both Brahms piano concertos recorded with Franz Welser-Möst at Severance Hall. His album of Bartók's three piano concertos won a 1997 Grammy Award, and both his album featuring Esa-Pekka Salonen's piano concerto and recording of Magnus Lindberg's second piano concerto have received Grammy nominations. His discography also includes the complete Prokofiev piano sonatas and concertos, Beethoven's five piano concertos and triple concerto, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, and sonatas by Bartók, Brahms, and Mozart recorded with Isaac Stern.

Yefim Bronfman was born in 1958 in Tashkent. After moving to Israel with his family in 1973, he worked with Arie Vardi at Tel Aviv University. Following his family's relocation to the United States in 1976, he studied at the Curtis Institute, Juilliard School, and Marlboro. His teachers included Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin. In 1991, he returned to Russia for the first time since emigrating, to perform recitals with Isaac Stern. Mr. Bronfman's honors include the Avery Fisher Prize in 1991.

For additional information, visit [www.yefimbronfman.com](http://www.yefimbronfman.com).

*"After six or seven months of not playing in public, we are hungry and thirsty for playing music. I think that music has this incredible factor: it actually cures sickness and souls."*

—Yefim Bronfman

## CONDUCTOR: FRANZ WELSER-MÖST

*Music Director, Kelvin Smith Family Endowed Chair, The Cleveland Orchestra*

Franz Welser-Möst is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2020-21 season marks his nineteenth year as music director of The Cleveland Orchestra, with the future of their acclaimed partnership extended to 2027, making him the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble's history. The *New York Times* has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be "America's most brilliant orchestra," praising its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

With Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra has been praised for its inventive programming, its ongoing support for new musical works, and for its innovative work in presenting semi-staged and staged operas. An imaginative approach to juxtaposing newer and older works has opened new dialogue and fresh insights for musicians and audiences alike. The Orchestra has also been hugely successful in building up a new and, notably, a young audience. To date, the Orchestra and Welser-Möst have been showcased around the world in nineteen international tours together. In 2020, they launched the ensemble's own recording label and a brand-new digital streaming platform to continue and extend sharing their artistry globally; the 2020-21 season is also inaugurating an original digital concert series titled *In Focus*, for viewing worldwide.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic. He has twice appeared on the podium for their celebrated New Year's Concert, and regularly conducts the orchestra in subscription concerts in Vienna, as well as on tours in Japan, China, Australia, and the United States. Highlights of recent and upcoming guest conducting appearances include performances of Strauss's *Die Aegyptische Helena* at Teatro alla Scala and *Elektra* at the Vienna State Opera, and concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic. He is a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, where his work leading a series of opera performances has been widely acclaimed. These have included *Rusalka*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Die Liebe der Danae*, Aribert Reimann's *Lear*, and Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra*. The success of both *Salome* and *Rosenkavalier* led the Festival to schedule encore performances in subsequent years.

From 2010 to 2014, Franz Welser-Möst served as general music director of the Vienna State Opera. His partnership with the company included a wide-ranging repertoire, including a series of critically-praised new productions. Mr. Welser-Möst had earlier led the Zurich Opera across a decade-long tenure, conducting more than forty new productions.

During the 2020 Salzburg Festival, Mr. Welser-Möst was awarded the festival ruby pin and the Salzburg Badge of Honor. In 2019, he was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts in recognition of his long-lasting impact on the international arts community. Other honors include the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor" for his longstanding personal and artistic relationship with the ensemble, recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, and the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America.

## THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

ONE OF THE FEW major American orchestra's founded by a woman, The Cleveland Orchestra's inaugural concert took place in December 1918, at a time of renewed optimism and progressive community ideas. By the middle of the century, with its own concert hall, the decades of growth and sustained effort had turned the ensemble into one of the most-admired around the world. Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, The Cleveland Orchestra has extended its artistry and musical abilities and remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world — year after year setting standards of extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. In recent years, The New York Times has it “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion, “virtually flawless,” and “one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world).”

The partnership with Franz Welser-Möst, begun in 2002 and entering its 19th year with the 2020-21 season, has earned The Cleveland Orchestra unprecedented residencies in the U.S. and around the world, including one at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra. It also performs regularly at important European summer festivals. The Orchestra's 100th season in 2017-18 featured two international tours, concluding with the presentation on three continents of Welser-Möst's Prometheus Project featuring Beethoven Symphonies and overtures; these Beethoven concerts were presented in May and June 2018, at home in Cleveland, in Vienna's Musikverein, and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra has a long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. A series of DVDs (available through Clasart Classics) and CD recordings under the direction of Mr. Welser-Möst continues to add to an extensive and widely praised catalog of audio recordings made during the tenures of the ensemble's earlier music directors. In addition, Cleveland Orchestra concerts are heard in syndication each season on radio stations throughout North America and Europe.

From 2020 forward, a number of new digital media initiatives are being launched to share and extend the ensemble's artistry globally. These include debut releases on the Orchestra's own recording label, an ongoing series of podcasts titled “On A Personal Note,” a new digital streaming platform named Adella (after the Orchestra's founder Adella Prentiss Hughes), and a series of premium concert broadcasts created from the 2020-21 season titled In Focus. For more information, visit: [www.clevelandorchestra.com](http://www.clevelandorchestra.com).



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