

Friday, October 28, 2011, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

San Francisco Opera Orchestra

Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1817) Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67
(1804–1808)

Allegro con brio
Andante con moto
Allegro —
Allegro

INTERMISSION

Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92
(1811–1812)

Poco sostenuto — Vivace
Allegretto
Presto
Allegro con brio

San Francisco Opera
David Gockley, *General Director*
Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director*

*This concert is made possible, in part, by San Francisco Opera's
Amici di Nicola of the Camerata group.*

Cal Performances' 2011–2012 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Composed between 1804 and 1808. Premiered on December 22, 1808, in Vienna, conducted by the composer.

Surprisingly, for this Symphony that serves as the *locus classicus* of orchestral music, little is known about its creation. There are vague hints that it may have been occasioned by an aborted love affair with either Therese von Brunswick or Giulietta Guicciardi. The theory has been advanced that it was influenced by a surge of patriotism fueled by an Austrian loss to the Napoleonic juggernaut. Even the famous remark attributed to Beethoven about the opening motive representing “Fate knocking at the door” is probably apocryphal, an invention of either Anton Schindler or Ferdinand Ries, two young men, close to the composer in his last years, who later published their often-untrustworthy reminiscences of him.

It is known that the time of the creation of the Fifth Symphony was one of intense activity for Beethoven. The four years during which the work was composed also saw the completion of a rich variety of other works: Piano Sonatas, Opp. 53, 54 and 57; Fourth Piano Concerto; Fourth and Sixth Symphonies; Violin Concerto; the first two versions of *Fidelio*; Razumovsky Quartets, Op. 59; *Coriolan Overture*; Mass in C major, Op. 86; and Cello Sonata No. 3, Op. 69. As was his practice with many of his important works, Beethoven revised and rewrote the Fifth Symphony for years.

Beethoven’s remarks about this Symphony are vague and elusive rather than concrete. The compositional problems he set for himself were abstract, musico-emotional ones that were little affected by external experiences, and not accessible to translation into mere words. In one of his few comments about the Symphony, he noted that, after the creation of the theme, “begins in my head the working-out in breadth, height and depth. Since I am aware of what I want, the fundamental idea never leaves me. It mounts, it grows. I see before my mind the picture in its

whole extent, as if in a single grasp.” By “picture” Beethoven meant not a visible painting, but rather an overview of the total structure of the Symphony, from its tiniest fragmentary component to the grand sweep of its total structure.

So completely did composition occupy Beethoven’s thoughts that he sometimes ignored the necessities of daily life. Concern with his appearance, eating habits, cleanliness, even his conversation, all gave way before his composing. There are many reports of his trooping the streets and woods of Vienna humming, singing, bellowing, penning a scrap of melody, and being, in general, oblivious to the people or places around him. (One suspects that his professed love of Nature grew in part from his need to find a solitary workplace free from distractions and the prying interest of his fellow Viennese.) This titanic struggle with musical tones produced such mighty monuments as the Fifth Symphony. With it, and with the Third Symphony completed only four years earlier, Beethoven launched music and art into the world of Romanticism.

In the history of music, Beethoven stands, Janus-faced, as the great colossus between two ages and two philosophies. The formal perfection of the preceding Classical period finds its greatest fulfillment in his works, which at the same time contain the taproot of the cathartic emotional experience from which grew the art of the 19th century. Beethoven himself evaluated his position as a creator in the following way: “Music is the mediator between intellectual and sensuous life...the one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of knowledge which comprehends mankind but which mankind cannot comprehend.” The Fifth Symphony is indeed such a “mediator.” Its message of victory through struggle, which so deeply touches both the heart and the mind, is achieved by a near-perfect balance of musical technique and passionate sentiment unsurpassed in the history of music. This Symphony was the work that won for Beethoven an international renown. Despite a few early misunderstandings due undoubtedly to its unprecedented concentration of energy, it caught on very quickly, and was soon recognized in Europe, England and America as a

path-breaking achievement. Its popularity has never waned.

Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, more than any work in the musical repertory, is the archetypal example of the technique and content of the form. Its overall structure is not one of four independent essays linked simply by tonality and style, as in the typical 18th-century example, but is rather a carefully devised whole in which each of the movements serves to carry the work inexorably toward its end. The progression from minor to major, from dark to light, from conflict to resolution is at the very heart of the “meaning” of this Symphony. The triumphant, victorious nature of the final movement as the logical outcome of all that preceded it established a model for the symphonies of the Romantic era. The psychological progression toward the finale—the relentless movement toward a life-affirming close—is one of the most important technical and emotional legacies Beethoven left to his successors. Schumann, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Mahler—their symphonies are indebted to this one (and to the Ninth Symphony, as well) for the concept of how such a creation could be structured, and in what manner it should engage the listener.

The opening gesture is the most famous beginning in all of classical music. It establishes the stormy temper of the *Allegro* by presenting the germinal cell from which the entire movement grows. Though it is possible to trace this memorable four-note motive through most of the measures of the movement, the esteemed English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey pointed out that the power of the music is not contained in this fragment, but rather in the “long sentences” built from it. The key to appreciating Beethoven’s formal structures lies in being aware of the way in which the music moves constantly from one point of arrival to the next, from one sentence to the next. It is in the careful weighting of successive climaxes through harmonic, rhythmic and instrumental resources that Beethoven created the enormous energy and seeming inevitability of this monumental movement. The gentler second theme derives from the opening motive, and gives only a brief respite

in the headlong rush that hurtles through the movement. It provides the necessary contrast while doing nothing to impede the music’s flow. The development section is a paragon of cohesion, logic and concision. The recapitulation roars forth after a series of breathless chords that pass from woodwinds to strings and back. The stark hammer-blows of the closing chords bring the movement to its powerful end.

The form of the second movement is a set of variations on two contrasting themes. The first theme, presented by violas and cellos, is sweet and lyrical in nature; the second, heard in horns and trumpets, is heroic. The ensuing variations on the themes alternate to produce a movement by turns gentle and majestic.

The following *Scherzo* returns the tempestuous character of the opening movement, as the four-note motto from the first movement is heard again in a brazen setting led by the horns. The *fughetta*, the “little fugue,” of the central trio is initiated by the cellos and basses. The *Scherzo* returns with the mysterious tread of the plucked strings, after which the music wanes until little more than a heartbeat from the timpani remains. Then begins another accumulation of intensity, first gradually, then more quickly, as a link to the finale, which arrives with a glorious proclamation, like brilliant sun bursting through ominous clouds.

The finale, set in the triumphant key of C major, is jubilant and martial. (Robert Schumann saw here the influence of Étienne-Nicolas Méhul, one of the prominent composers of the French Revolution.) The sonata form proceeds apace. At the apex of the development, however, the mysterious end of the *Scherzo* is invoked to serve as the link to the return of the main theme in the recapitulation. It also recalls and compresses the emotional journey of the entire Symphony. The closing pages repeat the cadence chords extensively to discharge the enormous accumulated energy of the work.

Concerning the effect of the “struggle to victory” that is symbolized by the structure of the Fifth Symphony, a quote that Beethoven scribbled in a notebook of the Archduke Rudolf, one of his aristocratic piano and composition

students, is pertinent. The composer wrote, “Many assert that every minor [tonality] piece must end in the minor. *Nego!* On the contrary, I find that...the major [tonality] has a glorious effect. Joy follows sorrow, sunshine—rain. It affects me as if I were looking up to the silvery glistening of the evening star.”

Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92

Composed in 1811–1812. Premiered on December 8, 1813, in Vienna, under the composer's direction.

In autumn 1813, Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, the inventor of the metronome, approached Beethoven with the proposal that the two organize a concert to benefit the soldiers wounded at the recent Battle of Hanau—with, perhaps, two or three repetitions of the concert to benefit themselves. Beethoven was eager to have the as-yet-unheard A major Symphony of the preceding year performed, and he thought the financial reward worth the trouble, so he agreed. The concert consisted of this “Entirely New Symphony” by Beethoven, marches by Dussek and Pleyel performed on a “Mechanical Trumpeter” fabricated by Mälzel, and an orchestral arrangement of *Wellington's Victory*, a piece Beethoven had concocted the previous summer for yet another of Mälzel's musical machines, the “Panharmonicon.” The evening was such a success that Beethoven's first biographer, Anton Schindler, reported, “All persons, however they had previously dissented from his music, now agreed to award him his laurels.”

The orchestra for that important occasion included some of the most distinguished musicians and composers of the day: Spohr, Schuppanzigh, Dragonetti, Meyerbeer, Hummel and Salieri all lent their talents. Spohr, who played among the violins, left an account of Beethoven as conductor. “Beethoven had accustomed himself to indicate expression to the orchestra by all manner of singular bodily movements,” wrote Spohr. “So often as a *sforzando* [a

sudden, strong attack] occurred, he thrust apart his arms, which he had previously crossed upon his breast. At *piano* [soft] he crouched down lower and lower as he desired the degree of softness. If a *crescendo* [gradually louder] then entered, he slowly rose again, and at the entrance of the *forte* [loud] jumped into the air. Sometimes, too, he unconsciously shouted to strengthen the *forte*.”

The Seventh Symphony is a magnificent creation in which Beethoven displayed several technical innovations that were to have a profound influence on the music of the 19th century: he expanded the scope of symphonic structure through the use of more distant tonal areas; he brought an unprecedented richness and range to the orchestral palette; and he gave a new awareness of rhythm as the vitalizing force in music. It is particularly the last of these characteristics that most immediately affects the listener, and to which commentators have consistently turned to explain the vibrant power of the work. Perhaps the most famous such observation about the Seventh Symphony is that of Richard Wagner, who called the work “the apotheosis of the Dance in its highest aspect...the loftiest deed of bodily motion incorporated in an ideal world of tone.” Couching his observation in less highfalutin language, John N. Burk believed that its rhythm gave this work a feeling of immense grandeur incommensurate with its relatively short forty-minute length. “Beethoven,” Burk explained, “seems to have built up this impression by willfully driving a single rhythmic figure through each movement, until the music attains (particularly in the body of the first movement and in the Finale) a swift propulsion, an effect of cumulative growth which is akin to extraordinary size.”

A slow introduction, almost a movement in itself, opens the Symphony. This initial section employs two themes: the first, majestic and unadorned, is passed down through the winds while being punctuated by long, rising scales in the strings; the second is a graceful melody for oboe. The transition to the main part of the first movement is accomplished by the superbly controlled reiteration of a single pitch. This device

not only connects the introduction with the exposition but also establishes the dactylic rhythm that dominates the movement.

The *Allegretto* scored such a success at its premiere that it was immediately encored, a phenomenon virtually unprecedented for a slow movement. Indeed, this music was so popular that it was used to replace the brief slow movement of the Eighth Symphony at several performances during Beethoven's lifetime. In form, the movement is a series of variations on the heartbeat rhythm of its opening measures. In spirit, however, it is more closely allied to the austere chaconne of the Baroque era than to the light, figural variations of Classicism.

The third movement, a study in contrasts of sonority and dynamics, is built on the formal model of the scherzo, but expanded to include a repetition of the horn-dominated Trio (Scherzo–Trio–Scherzo–Trio–Scherzo).

In the sonata-form finale, Beethoven not only produced music of virtually unmatched rhythmic energy (“a triumph of Bacchic fury,” in the words of Sir Donald Tovey), but did it in such a manner as to exceed the climaxes of the earlier movements and make it the goal toward which they had all been aimed. So intoxicating is this music that some of Beethoven's contemporaries were sure he had composed it in a drunken frenzy. An encounter with the Seventh Symphony is a heady experience. Klaus G. Roy, the distinguished musicologist and former program annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra, wrote, “Many a listener has come away from a hearing of this Symphony in a state of being punch-drunk. Yet it is an intoxication without a hangover, a dope-like exhilaration without decadence.” To which the composer's own words may be added. “I am Bacchus incarnate,” boasted Beethoven, “appointed to give humanity wine to drown its sorrow... He who divines the secret of my music is delivered from the misery that haunts the world.”

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA

Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director, Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair*Patrick Summers, *Principal Guest Conductor*Giuseppe Finzi, *Resident Conductor***FIRST VIOLIN**Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*Laura Albers, *Associate Concertmaster*Heidi Wilcox, *Assistant Concertmaster*

Jennifer Cho

Dawn Harms

Lev Rankov

Barbara Riccardi

Robert Galbraith

Leonid Igudesman

Mariya Borozina

Asuka Annie Yano

Joseph Edelberg[‡]**SECOND VIOLIN**Virginia Price-Kvistad, *Principal*Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*Beni Shinohara, *Assistant Principal*

Eva Karasik

Leslie Ludena

Gerard Svazlian

Linda Deutsch Twohy

Craig Reiss

VIOLACarla Maria Rodrigues, *Principal*Sergey Rakitchenkov, *Associate Principal*Paul Nahhas, *Assistant Principal*

Patricia Heller

Jonna Hervig

Natalia Vershilova

Joy Fellows

CELLODavid Kadarau, *Principal*Thalia Moore, *Associate Principal*David Budd, *Assistant Principal*

Nora Pirquet

Emil Miland

Victoria Ehrlich

Ruth Lane

DOUBLE BASSJoseph Lescher, *Principal*Jonathan Lancelle, *Associate Principal*Steven D'Amico, *Assistant Principal*

Shinji Eshima

Mark Drury

FLUTEJulie McKenzie, *Principal*

Patricia Farrell

Stephanie McNab

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

OBOEMingjia Liu, *Principal*Deborah Henry, *Assistant Principal*

Janet Popesco Archibald

ENGLISH HORN

Janet Popesco Archibald

CLARINETJose Gonzalez Granero, *Principal*Joanne Burke Eisler, *Assistant Principal*

Anthony Striplen

BASS CLARINET

Anthony Striplen

BASSOONRufus Olivier, *Principal*Rufus David Olivier[†]Robin Elliott[†]Shawn Jones[‡]**CONTRABASSOON**Robin Elliott[†]Shawn Jones[‡]**HORN**William Klingelhoffer, *Co-Principal*Kevin Rivard, *Co-Principal*

Keith Green

Brian McCarty

Lawrence Ragent

TRUMPETAdam Luftman, *Principal*

William Holmes

John Pearson

TROMBONEMcDowell Kenley, *Principal*

Donald Kennelly

David Ridge

TUBA & CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman

TIMPANI

John Burgardt

PERCUSSIONRichard Kvistad, *Principal/Associate Timpani*

Patricia Niemi

HARP

Olga Rakitchenkov

LIBRARIAN

Lauré Campbell

Carrie Weick, *Assistant***ORCHESTRA MANAGER**

Tracy Davis

Carrie Weick, *Assistant*[†] *Leave of absence*[‡] *Season substitute*

San Francisco Opera, one of the world's leading producers of opera since its inception in 1923, has long been a pioneer in introducing world and North American premieres, as well as presenting major artists in celebrated role debuts. Gaetano Merola and Kurt Herbert Adler were the Company's first two general directors. Maestro Merola led the Company from its founding in 1923 until his death in 1953; Maestro Adler headed the organization from 1953 through 1981. Legendary for both their conducting and managerial skills, these two leaders established a formidable institution that is internationally recognized as one of the premiere opera companies in the world and heralded for its first-rate productions and roster of international opera stars. Following Adler's tenure, the Company was headed by three visionary leaders: Terence A. McEwen (1982–1988), Lotfi Mansouri (1988–2001) and Pamela Rosenberg (2001–2005). Originally presented over two weeks, the Company's season now contains approximately 75 performances of ten operas between September and July.

In 2007, San Francisco Opera celebrated the 75th anniversary of its performing home, the War Memorial Opera House. The venerable Beaux-Arts building was inaugurated on October 15, 1932, and holds the distinction of being the first American opera house that was not built by and for a small group of wealthy patrons; the funding came thanks to a group of private citizens who encouraged thousands of San Franciscans to subscribe.

David Gockley became San Francisco Opera's sixth general director in January 2006 after more than three decades at the helm of Houston Grand Opera. During his first months as general director, Mr. Gockley took opera to the center of the community with a free outdoor simulcast—the first in the Company's history—of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in May 2006. Subsequent simulcasts, including six at AT&T Park, have reached nearly 150,000 opera fans. In 2007, Mr. Gockley led San Francisco Opera to take these innovations even further and created the Koret-Taube Media Suite. The first permanent high-definition broadcast-standard video

production facility installed in any American opera house, the Koret-Taube Media Suite gives the Company the permanent capability to produce simulcasts and other projects, including OperaVision, where retractable screens provide full stage, close-up and mid-range ensemble shots in high-definition video for patrons in balcony seats. Mr. Gockley ushered in another first for San Francisco Opera in spring 2008, when the Company presented four operas in movie theaters across the country. These operas, in addition to eight other titles, are now available to theaters and performing arts venues as part of the Company's Grand Opera Cinema Series. In 2007, Mr. Gockley also launched radio partnerships with San Francisco's Classical KDFC and the WFMT Radio Network in Chicago, returning regular San Francisco Opera broadcasts to the national and international radio airwaves for the first time in 25 years.

San Francisco Opera's first two general directors, Maestri Merola and Adler, regularly conducted for the first six decades of the Company's history. In 1985, the Company appointed Sir John Pritchard as its first permanent music director, and he was followed by Donald Runnicles in 1992. During his tenure, Maestro Runnicles championed new repertory ranging from world premieres to American and West Coast premieres. After 17 years with San Francisco Opera, Maestro Runnicles stepped down as music director in the summer of 2009. Nicola Luisotti succeeded Donald Runnicles as music director in fall 2009. Born and raised in Italy, Maestro Luisotti made his international debut in 2002, leading a new production of *Il Trovatore* at the Stuttgart State Theater, and has since led productions with the world's leading opera companies. Maestro Luisotti also serves as principal guest conductor of the Tokyo Symphony.

Since its inception, San Francisco Opera has embodied a spirit of innovation by presenting the world premieres of *Blood Moon* (1961), *Angle of Repose* (1976), *The Dangerous Liaisons* (1994), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998), *Dead Man Walking* (2000), *Arshak II* (2001) and *Doctor Atomic* (2005). Under the leadership of David

Gockley, the Company has added three new operas to that list: Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton's *Appomattox* (2007), Stewart Wallace and Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2008) and *Heart of a Soldier* (2011) by Christopher Theofanidis and Donna Di Novelli.

San Francisco Opera offers a comprehensive array of acclaimed training programs and performance opportunities for young artists under the auspices of the San Francisco Opera Center and the Merola Opera Program (each a separate institution). Both are led by renowned soprano Sheri Greenawald.



Italian conductor **Nicola Luisotti** has been music director of San Francisco Opera since fall 2009 and holds the Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair. This season he leads *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, a

new co-production with Milan's La Scala of *Attila*, and two special performances with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in concert presented by Cal Performances. Maestro Luisotti's other engagements during the 2011–2012 season include *Tosca* at La Scala and the rarely performed *I Masnadieri* with the Naples Teatro di San Carlo, in addition to many orchestral engagements that include the Berlin Philharmonic and the orchestras of Cleveland and Philadelphia.

Called "both an original thinker and a great respecter of tradition" by *Opera News*, which featured him on the cover of the July 2011 special issue on conductors, Maestro Luisotti made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2005 conducting *La Forza del Destino* and returned in November 2008 to conduct *La Bohème*. As the Opera's music director, he has led acclaimed performances of *Il Trovatore*, *Salome*, *Otello*, *La Fanciulla del West*, *Aida*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Madama Butterfly*. Maestro Luisotti has garnered enthusiastic praise from both audiences and

critics for his work at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (*Aida*, *Turandot*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Il Trovatore*); the Metropolitan Opera (*La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *La Fanciulla del West*); Paris Opera (*La Traviata*, *Tosca*); the Vienna State Opera (*Simon Boccanegra*); La Scala (*Attila*); Genoa's Teatro Carlo Felice (*Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Fanciulla del West*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Il Viaggio a Reims*); Venice's La Fenice (*Madama Butterfly*); Munich's Bavarian State Opera (*Macbeth*, *Tosca*); Frankfurt Opera (*Il Trittico*); Madrid's Teatro Real (*Il Trovatore*, *La Damnation de Faust*, *Mefistofele*); Los Angeles Opera (*Carmen*, *Pagliacci*); Dresden's Semperoper (*Tosca*, *Die Zauberflöte*); Toronto's Canadian Opera Company (*Un Ballo in Maschera*); Seattle Opera (*Macbeth*); Bologna's Teatro Comunale (*Salome*); Valencia's Palau de les Arts (*Mefistofele*); and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall (*Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*). Maestro Luisotti was awarded the 39th Premio Puccini Award in conjunction with the historic 100th anniversary of Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* at the Metropolitan Opera, which he conducted last season.

Equally at home on the concert stage, Maestro Luisotti serves as principal guest conductor of the Tokyo Symphony and has also established growing relationships with the orchestras of London (Philharmonia Orchestra), Genoa, Budapest, Turin, Munich (Bavarian Radio Orchestra), Palermo and Rome (Santa Cecilia Orchestra), as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and Atlanta Symphony.

His recent and upcoming orchestral engagements include concerts with orchestras of Milan, Philadelphia, Berlin, Madrid, Cleveland, Frankfurt, Rome and Atlanta, among others. The conductor's expanding discography includes a complete recording of *Stiffelio* (Dynamic) with the orchestra of Trieste's Teatro Verdi and the critically acclaimed *Duets* (Deutsche Grammophon), featuring Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón. He is also on the podium of a DVD recording of the Met's *La Bohème*, with Angela Gheorghiu and Ramón Vargas (EMI).