

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

AUGUST 13 · ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra
Rafael Payare *conductor*
Sergey Khachatryan *violin*
Bing Wang *violin*

WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61
R. STRAUSS: Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life), op. 40

LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote this violin concerto—a piece performed by a soloist playing with an orchestra—for a friend, Franz Clement, in 1806. Beethoven didn't complete the piece until right before the first performance. The riskiness of the soloist part and the longer length of the piece were disliked by the audience, and the piece wasn't played again for a long time. After Beethoven's death, a young violinist named Joseph Joachim played it again at a concert in 1844, and since then, it has become one of the best-known violin concertos in the world.

- How do you think Beethoven felt when the audience didn't like this piece? How do you think he would feel now?
- Can you think of other pieces of art or music that were not very popular in the beginning but are very popular now?

R. STRAUSS: Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life), op. 40

German composer Richard Strauss wrote this tone poem—a piece that evokes a setting or story—in 1898. This tone poem is a little different than most because it is not based on a specific story. Instead, it follows the common story of a hero defeating his enemies. Many people believed that the hero in the work was supposed to represent Strauss himself, with his wife Pauline as the hero's companion and critics of his work as his enemies.

In the first movement, the audience is introduced to the hero with horns and cello playing notes in the key of E-flat. This piece includes a large brass section made up of horns, trumpets, trombones, and tubas that triumphantly follows the hero as he defeats his enemies. The woodwinds represent the hero's enemies, and a solo violin is the hero's companion.

- Can you hear how the woodwinds (enemies) and the solo violin (companion) affect the hero's journey throughout the piece?
- This piece has a large brass section. How do the brass instruments sound compared to the strings or the woodwinds?
- What characteristics does a hero have? What makes them heroic?

music is what feelings sound like