

# Tchaikovsky's 4th & Brahms Violin

"ASO at 80-oh!"

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2023 • 7:30 PM**

RACHEL M. SCHLESINGER CONCERT HALL AND ARTS CENTER

**OCTOBER 1, 2023 • 3:00 PM**

GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC MEMORIAL

**James Ross, conductor**

## PROGRAM

LESTER GREEN

### ***Toast\****

**\*WORLD PREMIERE** - Commissioned by  
Classical Movements for the *ASO at 80 Project*

**Lester Green**, piano

QUINN MASON

### ***Toast of the Town (2020)***

JOHANNES  
BRAHMS

### **Violin Concerto in D Major**

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace  
– Poco più presto

**Elissa Lee Koljonen**, violin

- INTERMISSION -

PYOTR  
TCHAIKOVSKY

### **Symphony No. 4 in F Minor**

I. Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima –  
Moderato assai, quasi Andante – Allegro vivo

II. Andantino in modo di canzona

III. Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato – Allegro

IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Performance runtime will be approximately 120 minutes which includes a 20 minute intermission

*Concerts sponsored by*  
**FRAN AND GANT REDMON**

## ***Toast***

Lester Green (b. 1973)

Program notes from the composer

*Program Notes by James Reel  
unless where otherwise noted*

*Toast* is my musical adaptation, born from a collection of verses I penned to mark the ASO's 80th anniversary. The original verses span from nostalgic reflections on moments shared around music with family and friends to Dr. Seuss-inspired musings about the humorous personalities within orchestras.

I also explored the public relations factors that shape the financial and communal lives of artistic organizations navigating the industry's challenges. The result is a lighthearted homage to life as a music enthusiast—an experience I hope you thoroughly enjoy!



## ***Toast of the Town***

Quinn Mason (b. 1996)



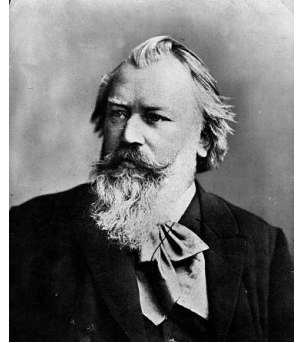
Dallas-born and -based composer Quinn Mason is not content to sequester himself with notation software and a head full of ideas; whether at home or during his 2022-23 stint as Artist in Residence for the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, he strives to reach out into the community—schools, retirement homes, Urban League meetings—to evangelize on behalf of classical music, and to bring people back with him into the concert hall. He undertook formal studies at the Southern Methodist University Meadows School of the Arts and at the University of Texas at Dallas. Now only 27 years old, he has already produced scores that have been performed by more than 130 orchestras in the United States and Europe, as well as music in almost every other genre.

Although many of his works are narrative-driven, his sparkling 2020 concert overture *Toast of the Town* is intentionally vague in its inspiration. Mason describes it as “a festive and fun overture to an operetta that doesn't exist. It is designed in the style of light operetta, comparable to Gilbert and Sullivan or Offenbach overtures.”

## **Violin Concerto in D Major**

Johannes Brahms (1770-1827)

Johannes Brahms spent the summer of 1878 in a congenial little lakeside resort in the eastern Alps. The serene locale energized him creatively, and he quickly produced the first draft of his violin concerto. At 45, Brahms was a seasoned composer and excellent pianist, but as usual, he consulted trusted advisers on the new work's overall structure and its suitability for the violin. His collaborator was Joseph Joachim, an old friend, one of Europe's leading violinists and an accomplished composer himself. Further drafts wended their way through the mail between them, with Joachim making countless suggestions (some but not all of which Brahms accepted). Rewrites even continued over the weeks following the work's premiere on New Year's Day, 1879.



The extensive first movement alternates between turbulent declamation and intensely poignant, soulful lyricism. It was Joachim's favorite movement, but Tchaikovsky called the introduction "an admirable pedestal for a statue," complaining that it supported not a statue but yet another pedestal. The central movement is an intensely beautiful Adagio whose principal theme is introduced at length not by the violin but by the oboe. For the final movement, Brahms provided the Hungarian-born Joachim with a stamping, paprika-spiced romp, though one that also allows a songlike interlude.

## **Symphony No. 4 in F Minor**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Some music is purely abstract; other music explains exactly what it's all about, like the "Hokey Pokey." Tchaikovsky tried to have it both ways in his Fourth Symphony, in which he simultaneously grappled with the technicalities of European sonata form, struggled not to rely excessively on his love of Russian folk music for themes, and finagled a way to



express a complex state of being and sense of fate purely through music.

It was 1877, and the 36-year-old Tchaikovsky was in crisis. True, he had recently cemented a close but strictly epistolary relationship with a generous patron, Nadezhda von Meck, but he had also allowed himself to be pressured into marriage with a demanding young woman—possibly to prove to his elderly father that, despite his homosexuality, he was a “real man.” The marriage fell apart immediately, and Tchaikovsky suffered a nervous breakdown.

Yet within a few weeks he had sufficiently recovered to put the finishing touches on the Fourth Symphony, which he had begun a few months before the marriage fiasco.

Tchaikovsky tended not to reveal the secret programs that guided him through many of his compositions, but he did provide von Meck an account of his thinking behind the first movement, which famously begins with a stern, perilous brass fanfare:

*The introduction is the seed of the whole symphony, undoubtedly the central theme. This is Fate, i.e., that fateful force which prevents the impulse towards happiness from entirely achieving its goal, forever on jealous guard lest peace and well-being should ever be attained in complete and unclouded form, hanging above us like the Sword of Damocles, constantly and unremittingly poisoning the soul. Its force is invisible and can never be overcome.*

The two inner movements are far less tortured: a melancholy, nostalgic slow movement followed by a balletic scherzo, with its woodwind dance sandwiched between fleet sections for plucked strings. The volcanic fourth movement, however, plunges us into a manic carnival atmosphere, based primarily on the folk tune “The Little Birch Tree.” Near the end, the brass section calls the action to a halt with its revival of the Fate motif, but the festivity resumes, and the symphony ends in Tchaikovsky’s characteristic joyful noise.

Recognized as one of the most celebrated violinists of her generation, **Elissa Lee Koljonen** has thrilled audiences and critics in over one hundred cities throughout the world. Ms. Koljonen initially received international acclaim when she became the first recipient of the prestigious Henryk Szeryng Foundation Award and silver medalist of the Carl Flesch International Violin Competition. Her playing has been hailed by the Helsingin Sanomat (Helsinki) as “sparkling, sensual and personal.” Dan Tucker of the Chicago Tribune has written that “she displayed boundless technique and musicianship.”

Ms. Koljonen’s engagements have included a return to the Philadelphia Orchestra to perform the Shostakovich Violin Concerto #1, her debut in Spain with James Judd and the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, performances with José-Luis Novo and the orchestras in Annapolis and Binghamton, the Delaware Symphony, Reading Symphony, the Kimmel Center’s Summer Solstice and the Philadelphia premiere of Behzad Ranjbaran’s Violin Concerto with JoAnn Falletta. She has also made appearances with the Boston Pops, Minnesota Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic and the symphonies of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Oregon, Pittsburgh, Helsinki and Seoul. Ms. Koljonen has collaborated with such noted conductors as Mattias Bamert, James DePriest, Lawrence Foster, Richard Hickox, Neeme Järvi, Louis Lane, Andrew Litton, Eiji Oue and the late Bryden Thompson.



She has performed in some of the world’s most important venues, including the Musikverein in Vienna, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Barbican Centre in London, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Seoul Arts Center, the Symphony Hall in Boston, and the Academy of Music and Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. Also an avid chamber musician, Ms. Koljonen appears regularly at festivals throughout North America, Europe and Asia. She garnered critical acclaim for her debut at the Queen Elisabeth Hall in London and her appearances with the London Mozart Players and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo in a special concert celebrating the 700th anniversary of the Grimaldi Dynasty. Ms. Koljonen is a protégée of the great Aaron Rosand at the Curtis Institute of Music. Incorporating his influence, she carries on the legacy and tradition of Leopold Auer and his legendary school of violin playing.