

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

A Fortieth Birthday in Tokyo

Saturday, October 31, 2026 · 16:00 · Suntory Hall

Riccardo Muti, conductor · Mitsuko Uchida, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Coriolan Overture in C minor, op. 62</i>	8'
2	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58</i>	34'
3	HAYASHI 1931–2012 <i>Three Film Scores</i>	
4	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550</i>	32'
TOTAL MUSIC		74'

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Coriolan Overture in C minor, op. 62

8 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* is an overture to a play that almost nobody remembers, and it has long outlived its source. It was not written for Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, as is often assumed, but for a tragedy of the same subject by the Viennese playwright and court official Heinrich Joseph von Collin, which had been staged at the Burgtheater in 1802 and had some success there. Beethoven composed the overture in 1807, when the play was no longer a fixture of the repertoire, and it was first heard not in a theatre but in a concert: at the private subscription concerts given at the palace of his patron Prince Lobkowitz in Vienna in March 1807, the same series that introduced his *Fourth Symphony*. It is, in effect, a free-standing concert overture, one of the first great examples of a genre that Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Brahms would later make their own.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The overture opens with one of Beethoven's most arresting gestures. The strings play a long, held unison C, which swells and then is cut off by a sharp, slashing chord from the full orchestra. This happens three times, each time on

a more dissonant chord, before a silence. Then the main theme bursts out in the violins, agitated and restless, pressing forward in short, driven phrases. This is Coriolanus himself: proud, stubborn, perpetually in motion.

The contrast comes soon. Listen for the second theme, in the brighter key of E-flat major: a flowing, yearning melody in the violins, far gentler than anything around it, often heard as the voice of Coriolanus's mother pleading with him. Notice how Beethoven keeps undercutting it with the restless figures of the opening; the two forces are never allowed to rest side by side for long. Through the central part of the overture the music argues back and forth between them, the aggressive material growing more fragmented, the gentle theme returning in different keys.

Save your closest attention for the end. The opening held notes and slashing chords return, but instead of building to a triumphant close, the main theme starts to break apart. It is passed down through the strings in ever smaller pieces, growing quieter and slower, until only the bare outline remains in the cellos and basses. The last three quiet notes, plucked in the low strings, are among the most final sounds Beethoven ever wrote. Let the silence after them register before the next piece begins.

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

34 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, composed largely in 1805 and 1806, belongs to the same astonishing burst of creativity that produced the Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the three 'Razumovsky' string quartets. It stands at the heart of what is often called Beethoven's 'heroic' middle period, yet it is anything but heroic in the conventional sense. Where the Third Concerto had been dramatic and stormy, and the later 'Emperor' would be all blazing grandeur, the Fourth is intimate, lyrical, and inward, a work that achieves its effects through poetry rather than force. It is, for many listeners and pianists alike, the most beautiful of the five.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, first, for the very opening. Before any orchestra is heard, the solo piano alone plays a soft, tender phrase: five gentle chords resolving into a quiet melody. This is the work's signature, and it asks you to lean in rather than be swept up. Notice how the orchestra then replies not in the home key but a step away, in a warmer, more distant colour, before the music settles. From this first exchange, the whole first movement unfolds as a dialogue

of give and take: the piano rarely dominates, more often it muses, decorates, and converses, weaving filigree around the orchestra's themes. Listen for the cadenza near the movement's end (the soloist's extended solo flight) and for how the music sinks back to quietness afterward rather than ending in a blaze.

The slow movement (*Andante con moto*) is the heart of the concerto, and it works as a piece of wordless drama. Track the two characters carefully. The strings enter alone, playing in harsh, clipped, dotted rhythms: stern, even menacing, all in unison. The piano answers, every time, with soft, flowing, beseeching phrases. Follow this alternation as a contest: the strings stern, the piano gentle. Hear how, little by little, the piano's tenderness wears the strings down. Their phrases grow quieter, shorter, less aggressive, until they are subdued altogether and the movement dissolves into a hushed stillness. This is the Orpheus-taming-the-Furies effect, and once you hear it as a dialogue you will not forget it.

The finale follows immediately, without a break, and the change of mood is delicious. A bright, bouncing rondo theme springs up in the strings, soon caught by the piano, and the music turns playful, dancing, full of rhythmic spring. Listen for trumpets and timpani entering here for the first time in the concerto, adding a festive sparkle the

earlier movements deliberately withheld. Enjoy the wit of the exchanges between piano and orchestra, the surprising harmonic side-steps, and the gathering energy toward a brilliant, high-spirited close that crowns the whole work with joy.

Hikaru Hayashi

1931–2012

Three Film Scores

ABOUT THE WORK

Hikaru Hayashi was one of the most prolific and versatile Japanese composers of the twentieth century, and one of the most important figures in the history of Japanese film music. Over a career of more than half a century he wrote the scores for well over a hundred films, alongside symphonies, more than thirty operas, choral works and a large body of songs, and he moved between the concert hall, the theatre and the cinema without ever treating one as less serious than the others. His inclusion in this anniversary concert at Suntory Hall, with the Vienna Philharmonic and Riccardo Muti, brings a distinctly Japanese voice into an otherwise all-Viennese programme of Beethoven and Mozart.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Since the exact selection has not been published, listen above all for the qualities that run through Hayashi's work for the screen. The first is melody. Hayashi was a songwriter at heart, and his best film themes are simple, singable tunes, often in a gently modal idiom that recalls Japanese folk song without quoting it directly. Notice how a single melody can be restated with small changes of colour (a solo woodwind, then strings, then the full orchestra) so that it seems to grow more poignant with each return. This is how film music works on an audience in the cinema, and heard in the concert hall it takes on the character of a series of short, lyrical tone poems.

Listen, too, for the economy of the writing. Hayashi rarely fills every bar. He often lets a theme sit over a sparse, repeated accompaniment, or leaves space and silence around it, trusting the listener's imagination to supply the images. If one of the pieces comes from *The Naked Island*, you may hear a slow, patient, circling tune, suggesting the endless rhythm of labour on the island; if from Shindō's supernatural dramas, expect starker, more percussive textures and a sense of menace.

Finally, listen for the meeting of worlds that this performance represents. The Vienna Philharmonic's sound, with its warm, rounded Viennese horns and oboes and its singing strings, is the sound of Mozart and Beethoven. Hearing it applied to music written for Japanese films, in the hall that hosts the orchestra's regular visits to Tokyo, is part of the point of this celebratory evening.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

32 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

In the summer of 1788, within the space of roughly six weeks, Mozart composed his last three symphonies: the E-flat major, No. 39, dated 26 June; the G minor, No. 40, completed on 25 July; and the C major 'Jupiter', No. 41, finished on 10 August. It is one of the most concentrated feats of creative energy in the history of music, and it came at an unpromising moment in Mozart's life. The war with the Ottoman Empire had drained Vienna's aristocracy of money and of appetite for concerts; the subscription series that had made him the toast of the city earlier in the decade had dried up; and the surviving letters from that summer include anxious appeals for loans to his friend and fellow Freemason Michael Puchberg. His infant

daughter Theresia died in June. Why he wrote three large symphonies at such a time, with no documented commission or performance in view, remains one of the enduring puzzles of his biography. The most likely answer is that he intended them for concerts he hoped to give, perhaps in Vienna, perhaps on a tour abroad, but no firm record survives of the G minor being performed in his lifetime.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (*Molto allegro*) begins without any introduction or call to attention. The violas start a soft, murmuring accompaniment, and over it the violins enter almost mid-thought with the famous main theme: a falling two-note sigh, repeated, that gives the whole movement its breathless urgency. Listen for how rarely the music settles. Even the gentler second theme, passed between strings and woodwinds in a major key, is short-lived, and in the development section Mozart drives the sighing motif through a chain of distant keys with an intensity that sounds, for a moment, like genuine anguish. When the second theme returns in the recapitulation, it comes back not in the major but in G minor, and the movement closes in the shadow in which it began.

The Andante, in E-flat major and a lilting 6/8 time, offers relief but not quite calm. Its opening builds up gradually, one string section entering after another. Listen for the

tiny, fluttering pairs of quick notes that pass through the woodwinds and strings: they give the movement a restless, glinting surface, and in the middle section they darken as the harmony moves into minor-key territory.

The Menuetto is no courtly dance. Its main theme is written so that the strong beats fall across the bar lines, producing a stubborn, lurching three-against-two feeling, and its counterpoint is tight and severe. Everything changes in the Trio, which turns to G major: here the horns, silent or in the background until now, come forward in a warm, open-air passage, one of the few moments of unclouded sunlight in the symphony.

The finale (*Allegro assai*) opens with a rising arpeggio that shoots up like a rocket and a quiet, answering phrase. The movement is swift and compact, but wait for the start of the development section. The orchestra suddenly breaks off into a harsh unison figure, leaping angularly through a whole series of unrelated notes, as if the music has lost its footing. From there Mozart spins a passage of dense, argumentative counterpoint before finding his way back to the opening material. The symphony ends as it began, in G minor, with no consoling turn to the major: as close as terse and unsentimental as anything in Mozart.

Tonight's artists

Mitsuko Uchida *piano*

Suntory Hall marks its fortieth anniversary with a gala shared between the Vienna Philharmonic, Riccardo Muti and Mitsuko Uchida, a Japanese-born pianist who grew up and studied in Vienna, and who is regarded as one of the great Beethoven and Mozart players of our time. Beethoven's Fourth Concerto, which she also plays with Muti and the orchestra in Vienna this October, is the most inward of his concertos: it begins with the piano alone, quietly, before the orchestra has spoken, and its slow movement is a dialogue in which the soloist's gentleness gradually calms the stern unison strings. It calls for exactly the qualities for which Uchida is known: a singing tone, a sense of the weight of silence, and an unhurried command of the long line.

Mitsuko Uchida, born in Atami, Japan, in 1948, is among the most revered pianists of her generation, celebrated above all as one of the supreme interpreters of the Viennese classics. She moved to Vienna as a child when her father was posted there as a diplomat, and studied at the city's Academy of Music, absorbing the tradition at its source. International recognition came through major competitions, including a prize at the 1970 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, but it was her profound affinity for Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven that defined her career. Her recordings of Mozart's piano sonatas and concertos, among them concertos directed from the keyboard, are landmarks of the discography, as are her searching accounts of

Schubert's late sonatas. Equally devoted to Schoenberg and Berg, she brings the same clarity and seriousness to twentieth-century music. Named a Dame of the British Empire in 2009, Uchida is admired for a playing of rare refinement, intellectual rigour, and luminous tone.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

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