

**BEETHOVEN AND BOLOGNE  
NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Jonathan Heyward, *conductor***

**Francesca DeGo, *violin***

**PROGRAM NOTES**

***Fate Now Conquers (2020)***

**Carlos Simon**

**Born April 13, 1986 in Atlanta, Georgia.**

Carlos Simon was named Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence in April 2021 and will serve in the position for three years. Simon's music was first heard at Kennedy Center in April 2018, when then Resident Composer Mason Bates included the string quartet *An Elegy: A Cry from the Grave* (2015), honoring the lives of shooting victims Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner, in his JFK Jukebox Series. The following year, Washington National Opera, as part of its American Opera Initiative, commissioned a one-act opera from Simon, and his *Night Trip*, with a libretto by Sandra Seaton, premiered on January 10, 2020. During his residency, Simon will compose and present music for the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, act as an ambassador for new music, and participate in educational, social impact, community engagement, and major institutional initiatives.

Simon, born in Atlanta in 1986, grew up playing organ at his father's church, immersed himself in music in high school, earned degrees from Georgia State University and Morehouse College, and completed his doctorate at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Evan Chambers and Grammy-winning composer Michael Daugherty. Simon also studied in Baden, Austria and at the Hollywood Music Workshop and New York University's Film Scoring Summer Workshop. He taught at Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta before being appointed in 2019 to the faculty of Georgetown University, where his projects include a new composition dedicated to the slaves who helped build the school. In addition to his recent opera, Simon has composed works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo voice, chorus, concert band, and film, several of them on commissions from such noted organizations as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Opera, and Philadelphia Orchestra. He has also performed as keyboardist with the Boston Pops, Jackson Symphony, and St. Louis Symphony, toured Japan in 2018 under the sponsorship of the United States Embassy in Tokyo and US/Japan Foundation performing in some of the country's most sacred temples and important concert venues, served as music director and keyboardist for Grammy Award-winner Jennifer Holliday, and appeared internationally with Grammy-nominated soul artist Angie Stone. Simon received the 2021 Medal of Excellence of the Sphinx Organization, which is dedicated to promoting and recognizing Black and Latinx classical music and musicians. His additional honors include the Marvin Hamlisch Film Scoring Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Award, ASCAP's Morton Gould Young Composer Award, fellowships from the Sundance Institute and Cabrillo Festival for Contemporary Music, and a residency at the 2021 Ojai Festival.

*Fate Now Conquers* was commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra to pair with a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony on a concert in March 2020. That concert was postponed by the pandemic and the work was premiered, digitally, on October 8, 2020 under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Simon wrote of it, "*Fate Now Conquers* was inspired by a journal entry from Ludwig van Beethoven's notebook written in 1815:

*Iliad. The Twenty-Second Book*

But Fate now conquers; I am hers; and yet not she shall share  
In my renown; that life is left to every noble spirit  
And that some great deed shall beget that all lives shall inherit.

Using the beautifully fluid harmonic structure of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, I have composed musical gestures that are representative of the unpredictable ways of fate — jolting stabs, coupled with an agitated groove with every persona; frenzied arpeggios in the strings that morph into an ambiguous cloud of free-flowing running passages depicting the uncertainty of life that hovers over us.

We know that Beethoven strived to overcome many obstacles in his life and documented his aspirations to prevail, despite his ailments. Whatever the specific reason for including this particularly profound passage from the *Iliad*, in the end it seems that Beethoven relinquished himself to fate. Fate now conquers."

## **Violin Concerto in A major, Op. 5, No. 2 (published ca. 1775)**

**Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges**

**Born December 25, 1745 in Baillif, Guadeloupe.**

**Died June 9, 1799 in Paris.**

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, one of music history's most fascinating figures, was born on Christmas Day 1745 on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, where his father, a French civil servant, was stationed as comptroller-general; his mother was a Black islander. The family moved to Paris when the boy was ten. Joseph was enrolled in the academy of Nicolas Texier de La Boëssière, one of France's most renowned fencing masters, and there received a good general education as well as rigorous training in swimming, boxing, horse riding, and other physical and social skills; he became one of the finest fencers in Europe. Saint-Georges' musical education was less well documented, though he apparently had shown talent as a violinist even before leaving Guadeloupe and seems to have been a student of the celebrated composer François Gossec for several years. He joined Gossec's orchestra at the *Concert des Amateurs* in 1769, made his debut there as a soloist three years later (in two of his own violin concertos), and became concertmaster and conductor of the group shortly thereafter.

In 1777, Saint-Georges entered the employ of the Duke of Orléans, and four years later took on the additional position of concertmaster of the *Concert de la Loge Olympique*, for which Claude-François-Marie Rigoley, Comte d'Ogny commissioned Haydn's "Paris" symphonies. Saint-Georges acted as intermediary in finalizing the arrangements with Haydn, and he presumably directed the premieres of the works. Following the death of the Duke of Orléans in 1785, Saint-Georges spent some time in London, where he gave exhibition fencing matches before the Prince of Wales and other aristocrats, and posed for a portrait by the Boston-born painter Mather Brown that shows him to have cut an extremely handsome figure. Saint-Georges returned to Paris two years later, and resumed his work with the *Loge Olympique*. That orchestra was disbanded following the upheavals of 1789, however, and he again went to England. He was back in France the next year to demonstrate his revolutionary sympathies and tour as violinist through the northern provinces, and in 1791 he settled in Lille, where he became a captain of the National Guard. The following year he was made a colonel in the *Légion des Américains et du Midi*, which comprised "citizens of color" (one of whose mulatto officers was the father of the novelist Alexandre Dumas *père*), but he was accused of misappropriation of regimental funds and imprisoned at Houdainville for more than a year. He was eventually cleared of the charge and released, and made his way back to Paris, where he lived in considerable poverty. He briefly became director of a new musical organization, *Le Cercle de l'Harmonie*, but died of a stomach ulcer in 1799.

Saint-Georges' dozen concertos for violin were all written during the 1770s for his own performances with the *Concert des Amateurs*; most were published in Paris before 1779. They are exactly contemporary with the violin concertos Mozart was then writing for himself in Salzburg, but exceed them in their technical demands, whose extreme high registers and flamboyant virtuosity give a foretaste of the great 19<sup>th</sup>-century virtuosos. The opening movement of the A major Concerto, Op. 5, No. 2, published around 1775, is in a melodically rich sonata form, with at least four distinct themes presented in the orchestral introduction before they are taken over with some elaboration by the soloist. Several of these ideas figure in altered form but without significant motivic development in the central episode and are returned in the recapitulation with some breathtaking figural additions. Saint-Georges' lyrical gifts are evident in the *Largo*, whose gently rocking rhythms and pervasive peacefulness make it almost an instrumental lullaby. The finale is a *Rondeau* based on the infectious theme whose returns are separated by moderately contrasting episodes.

## **Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92 (1811-1812)**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

**Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn.**

**Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna.**

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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."

A slow introduction, almost a movement in itself, opens the Symphony. The transition to the main part of the first movement is accomplished by the superbly controlled reiteration of a single pitch. This device both connects the introduction with the exposition and also establishes the dactylic rhythm that dominates the movement. The *Allegretto* 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.