

WEBER • BEETHOVEN • BRAHMS



MASTER SINFONIA  
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



David Ramadanoff  
**MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR**

with H el ene Wickett, piano

**Weber** *Overture to Oberon*

**Beethoven** *Piano Concerto No. 4*

**Brahms** *Symphony No. 1*

**SATURDAY –**

**February 3, 7:30 p.m.**

Palo Alto High School  
Performing Arts Center

*In partnership with Palo Alto Adult School*

**SUNDAY –**

**February 4, 2:30 p.m.**

Los Altos United Methodist  
Church

## PROGRAM

**CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786 – 1826)**  
*Overture to Oberon, J. 306*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 – 1827)**  
*Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58*  
featuring Hélène Wickett, piano

1. *Allegro Moderato*
2. *Andante con moto*
3. *Rondo (Vivace)*

## INTERMISSION

**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833 – 1897)**  
*Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*

1. *Un poco sostenuto – Allegro*
2. *Andante sostenuto*
3. *Un poco allegretto e grazioso*
4. *Adagio – Più andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio – Più allegro*

## MASTER SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA David Ramadanoff, Music Director and Conductor



**David Ramadanoff** is currently in his 38th season as Conductor and Music Director of Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, he began his musical studies at the age of five on the piano and timpani. After completing a B.A. in History and Political Science at the College of Wooster in Ohio, he started his professional musical studies at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. A year later, he began his graduate studies in music theory and conducting at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

He continued his musical education as a master's candidate at Temple University from 1968 to 1971 and as a doctoral candidate at the Juilliard School from 1972 until 1975, where he studied with Jean Morel and Sixten Ehrling. He also studied with Herbert Blomstedt and Otto Werner Mueller at

the Aspen Music Festival, and with Seiji Ozawa, Leonard Bernstein, Eugen Jochum, Gunther Schuller and Joseph Silverstein at Tanglewood.

During his Juilliard years, he taught conducting, served as Music Director of the Olney Symphony of Philadelphia, and conducted in special seminars with Franco Ferrara and Pierre Boulez. In 1973, he was a prize winner in the Georg Solti conducting competition. He led his first opera in the New York premiere of William Walton's "The Bear" for the American Opera Center, and was the recipient of a special grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to serve as Assistant Conductor to the Syracuse Symphony (1973-1974). In 1975, Seiji Ozawa appointed Mr. Ramadanoff Assistant Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony. In 1976, he was appointed Music Director for all of San Francisco Symphony's educational and community concerts. In 1977, under Edo de Waart he was made Associate Conductor. During his six years with the San Francisco Symphony, he regularly conducted subscription concerts.

In 1977, Mr. Ramadanoff was awarded the prize for the best performance of a modern Hungarian work at the International Hungarian Radio and Television Conducting competition. He was also awarded the Leopold Stokowski Conducting Award in 1981 as the Most Outstanding Young American Conductor and, under its auspices in 1982, he made his Carnegie Hall debut with the American Symphony. In 1983 he was appointed Music Director and Conductor of the Vallejo Symphony. During his tenure in that post (1983-2015) he guided the Vallejo Symphony in its transition from a community orchestra into one of the Bay Area's finest small professional orchestras.

From 1984 to 1988, Mr. Ramadanoff was Director of Orchestral Activities at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, as well as Principal Conductor of its orchestra. In 1988, he was appointed Music Director of the Young Peoples Symphony Orchestra of Berkeley, an ensemble composed of musicians between the ages of 13 and 21. In 2000, he conducted his young musicians at Carnegie Hall. Over the years, Mr. Ramadanoff has made guest appearances with orchestras throughout the country to critical acclaim. And here in California, his high standards and diverse repertoire have resulted in building high quality orchestras that continually gain in reputation.

**MASTER SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**, founded in 1965, is a high-caliber community orchestra that serves local audiences by making classical music accessible and inspiring. As a chamber ensemble we offer an intimate experiences in venues ideal for orchestral performances. Master Sinfonia presents both well-known works spanning the 17th through the 21st centuries, as well as new and lesser known music. The orchestra's esteemed conductor, David Ramadanoff, gives a short talk before each piece to enhance audience engagement and appreciation of the music.

We are a nonprofit organization and rely on ticket sales and donations to bring you these amazing musical experiences – Please consider donating money or your time to help us continue to bring high-quality musical and educational experiences to the community.

**ABOUT MASTER SINFONIA MUSICIANS**

Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra musicians come from all walks of life. By day, they are attorneys, a dietician, a physician, teachers, a hospital medical technologist, consultants, business executives, a physicist, software, civil, and aerospace engineers, among others. At concert time, they are incredible musicians.

Although an amateur group, the musicians maintain professional standards under the musical direction of Maestro Ramadanoff. Because of its reputation as one of the finest musical ensembles on the San Francisco Peninsula, Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra has been able to attract and retain highly accomplished musicians. Several members have been with the orchestra since its first years. Such dedication shows itself in the quality of its performances. The sense of camaraderie and joy in music making is strongly evident.



**HÉLÈNE WICKETT, PIANO**

Hélène Wickett has appeared as piano soloist with major orchestras and in solo recital throughout Europe and the Americas. She has played solo programs in virtually every western musical capital, including acclaimed recitals at London's Wigmore Hall, Paris' Opéra Comique, Salle Gaveau and Salle Cortot, Rome's Villa Medici and Washington's Kennedy Center, New York's Carnegie Hall as well as solo and concerto recordings for BBC Radio in England and radio and television work in Scandinavia, Holland and France. Her orchestral appearances include some seventy different concertos with the Cleveland, San Francisco, Boston, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, Dallas, New Jersey, Florida, Alabama, New Mexico and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestras among many others in the United States, as well as with orchestras in England, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, Norway, France, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria. Ms. Wickett studied with Alfred Brendel, Nadia Boulanger, Robert Casadesus, Geneviève Joy, Elena Guirola Hitchcock, and Benjamin Kaplan and attended Stanford University. Winner of the Pro Musicis Foundation Award, works by Darius Milhaud, Andrew Imbrie, Robert Rodriguez and Hsueh-Yung Shen have been dedicated to her. A frequent competition adjudicator, she spent a month in China judging the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival in 2009 and 2016. Ms. Wickett is a Steinway artist. She freelances as an orchestral violinist/violist and teaches.



Portrait of Carl Maria von Weber by Caroline Bardua (1821)

**CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786 - 1826)**

Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst, Freiherr von Weber was born in 1786 into a musical and theatrical family. He was the eldest of the three children of Franz Anton von Weber, a military officer and later a musical director, and his second wife, Genovefa Brenner, an actress. Weber's cousin Constanze was the wife of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Weber's father, Franz Anton, formed a small travelling theatre company in which Weber's mother was a singer and his uncles, aunts, and brothers participated in some degree in music and the stage. Carl Maria received his musical education from various teachers as his family travelled from town to town. One of these included Michael Haydn, brother of Franz Joseph Haydn.

Weber's early works include several pieces of theater music. At age 17 he was appointed as music director to the German city of Breslau. His attempts to transform the opera there were met with hostility – Weber was poisoned with a glass of engraving acid made to look like wine! While recuperating, Weber's changes were dismantled and Weber ended up resigning in protest.

Over the next decade Weber held a number of posts and established a reputation as a concert pianist. After his appointment as music director in Dresden in 1817, Weber composed his opera *Der Freischütz* in 1821, which was a major success. He followed this with the opera *Euryanthe*.

Weber's musical works, especially for musical theater, greatly influenced the development of the Romantic opera in German music and influenced the early work of Richard Wagner. An innovative composer for woodwinds, especially clarinet, for which he wrote many works, Weber's body of Catholic religious music was highly popular in nineteenth century Germany. Weber also wrote music journalism and was interested in folksong, and learned lithography to engrave his own works.

Carl Maria von Weber's reformation of German operatic style centered in the production aspects of the stage presentation as well as giving more attention to the orchestra rather than the singers and chorus. His tendency to compose for colorful and emotional orchestral segments would tell the theatrical story by the orchestra, which complemented what was happening on stage. He discovered a true musical partnership between the singers and the orchestra, demonstrating that no one existed in isolation from one another but co-existed in mutually fulfilling situations.



The bust of von Weber in Eutin.

**Overture to Oberon, J. 306**

Overture to Oberon

Carl Maria Von Weber

Born 19 November, 1786 in Eutin, near Lübeck, Germany

Died 5 June, 1826 in London

The **Overture to Oberon** opens with a magical horn call from deep within the forest. Like Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, in which Tamino is given a magic flute by the Queen of the Night, in *Oberon* the king of the forest is given a magic horn. You will hear the horn alone, with its mythic and mystical sound, open the overture. While the clarinet was Weber's favorite instrument, the magical horn was part of an epic poem written by Christian Martin Wieland in 1780 on which the libretto for *Oberon*, by James Robinson Planché, was written.

The overture is beautifully and creatively orchestrated. Weber, known for his deft use of the woodwinds, does not disappoint. He uses the brass - trumpets, trombones and horns to add richness and drama to the work and puts the strings to the test with a quick, zesty allegro. Full of tunes, this lively overture has remained a favorite from its first performance to present day.

Weber's work on *Oberon* began when Covent Garden, in London, commissioned Weber to write an opera. Weber took much of his inspiration from Shakespeare plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The work has been compared in style to Mendelssohn's incidental music to ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***.

Because the work was commissioned by Covent garden, the libretto was written in English. Before putting pen to paper, Weber took about 150 English lessons in Dresden before starting to write the music. He believed he needed to be proficient in English before developing the score.

Weber traveled to London to finish the overture and conduct the work. His motivation in taking the commission was to earn enough money to provide for his family who had stayed in Germany. Amazingly, Weber wrote the overture in three days the week before the premier of the opera. He conducted the premiere on April 12, 1826, as well as eleven additional performances. Audiences loved the overture and the opera.

At the time, he was barely thirty-eight years old. He had contracted tuberculosis and his health was failing. He was quite weak when he wrote and performed *Oberon*. He hoped to finish the performances then get back to his family in Germany as quickly as possible.

While the opera got positive reviews, Weber was growing weaker and sicker. Shortly before he was set to return to Germany he was found dead in his room.

While Weber's story ends sadly, he lived a rich and full life. He had a family he loved and who loved him and commissions to sustain him and help him build a

successful musical career as well as providing for his family. Many music historians today feel Weber never got the full appreciation he deserved as a master composer, orchestrator and writer of memorable tunes. Just see if you don't find yourself whistling some of his tunes on your way home today!

Program notes by Anne Wharton adapted from:

Gorlinski, Virginia and the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Carl Maria von Weber, German composer and musician', *Britannica*, *New World Encyclopedia contributors*, 'Carl Maria von Weber', *New World Encyclopedia*, 11 January 2017, 16:42 UTC



Portrait of Beethoven by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1820

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 – 1827)**

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770 in Bonn, in the Electorate of Cologne, a principality of the Holy Roman Empire. He was the son of Johann van Beethoven and Maria Magdalena (Keverich) Beethoven. Beethoven's father was a court singer who taught piano and violin to supplement his income. Beethoven's grandfather and namesake, Kapellmeister Ludwig van Beethoven, was Bonn's most prosperous and esteemed musician, and a strong influence in his grandson's life. Beethoven was the second born of seven children, and the eldest of three children, all boys, who survived infancy.

Beethoven began his music studies with his father, but also had instruction from other musicians

known through his father and grandfather. Around 1779, Beethoven began studying composition from Christian Gottlob Neefe, the Court's Organist and later worked with Neefe as assistant organist of the court chapel, while continuing to compose his early works. In March 1787 Beethoven traveled to Vienna, apparently in the hope of studying with Mozart. His travels were cut short abruptly when he learned his mother was ill and he returned about two weeks after his arrival. His mother died shortly after his return, and his father lapsed deeply into alcoholism. As a result, Beethoven became responsible for the care of his two younger brothers, and spent the next five years in Bonn.

During this time, he was introduced to Joseph Haydn, and in 1792 made arrangements to study with Haydn in Vienna. Over the next few years he concentrated on his studies, electing to remain in Vienna after Haydn left for

England in 1794. Beethoven's initial public performance in Vienna was in March 1795, where he first performed one of his piano concertos, shortly after which he arranged for the publication of the first of his compositions to which he assigned an opus number, the three piano trios, Opus 1. These were a financial success and were able to sustain Beethoven's expenses for the next year.

Beethoven became a pivotal figure in the transition from 18th century classicism to 19th century romanticism in Western music. He remains today one of the most famous and influential of all composers.

Beethoven's works span several musical genres and a variety of instrument combinations. His works for orchestral works include nine symphonies and about a dozen pieces of "occasional" music. He wrote seven concerti for one or more soloists and orchestra, as well as four shorter works that include soloists accompanied by orchestra. His only opera is *Fidelio*; other vocal works with orchestral accompaniment include two masses and a number of shorter works. His large body of compositions for piano includes 32 piano sonatas and numerous

shorter pieces, including arrangements of some of his other works. Works with piano accompaniment include 10 violin sonatas, 5 cello sonatas, and a sonata for French horn, as well as numerous lieder. Beethoven also wrote a significant quantity of chamber music. In addition to 16 string quartets, he wrote five works for string quintet, seven for piano trio, five for string trio, and more than a dozen works for various combinations of wind instruments.

Beethoven's compositional career can be divided into Early, Middle, and Late periods. His Early period lasted until about 1802, the Middle period from about 1803 to about 1814, and the Late period from about 1815.



Portrait of Beethoven by Christian Hornemann, 1803

In his Early period, Beethoven's work was strongly influenced by his predecessors Haydn and Mozart. He also explored new directions and gradually expanded the scope and ambition of his work. Some important pieces from the Early period are his *Symphony No. 1* and *Symphony No. 2*, the set of six string quartets Opus 18, the first two piano concertos, and the first dozen or so piano sonatas, including the famous *Pathétique Sonata*, Op. 13.

Around 1796, by the age of 26, Beethoven began to lose his hearing, suffering from a severe form of tinnitus, a "ringing" in his ears that made it hard for him to hear music; he also avoided conversation. The cause of Beethoven's deafness is unknown, but it has variously been attributed to typhus, auto-immune disorders (such as systemic lupus

erythematosus), and even his habit of immersing his head in cold water to stay awake. The explanation from Beethoven's autopsy was that he had a "distended inner ear," which developed lesions over time.

His Middle (Heroic) period began shortly after Beethoven's personal crisis brought on by his recognition of encroaching deafness. It includes large-scale works that express heroism and struggle. Middle-period works include six symphonies (Nos. 3 through 8), the last three piano concertos, the *Triple Concerto* and *Violin Concerto*, five string quartets (Nos. 7 through 11), several piano sonatas (including the *Moonlight*, *Waldstein*, and *Appassionata* sonatas), the *Kreutzer Violin Sonata* and Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*.

Beethoven's Late period began around 1815. Works from this period are characterized by their intellectual depth, their formal innovations, and their intense, highly personal expression. *The String Quartet*, Op. 131 has seven linked movements, and the *Ninth Symphony* adds choral forces to the orchestra in the last movement. Other compositions from this period include the *Missa Solemnis*, the last five string quartets (including the massive *Große Fuge*) and the last five piano sonatas.

Program notes by Anne Wharton adapted from:

- Lane, William (2006), Beethoven: The Immortal, <http://lucare.com/immortal>
- Ludwig van Beethoven Biography, Biography, <http://www.biography.com/people/ludwig-van-beethoven-9204862>,
- Ludwig van Beethoven, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_van\\_Beethoven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_van_Beethoven)
- Coriolan Overture, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolan\\_Overture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolan_Overture)



Portrait of Brahms

### JOHANNES BRAHMS, (1833 – 1897)

German composer and virtuoso pianist, Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) grew up in Hamburg, the second child of an alcoholic father, Johann Jakob Brahms who eked out a meager living as a double bass player in the Hamburg Stadttheater and the Hamburg Philharmonic Society and a mother, Johanna, who was a seamstress and had been his father's landlady.

Already as a 10-year-old, Johannes played the piano in public. But it is probably incorrect, as the story has circulated, that he was sent by his father to entertain in Hamburg's waterfront bordellos. His primary piano teacher, the well-known pianist, Eduard Marxsen, introduced him to the keyboard music of Bach and the piano sonatas of Beethoven, two composers who became lifelong models for Brahms. In fact, the pianist and conductor, Hans von Bülow, talked about the three most important composers of the 18th and 19th centuries as "the three B's", Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. Von Bülow also called Brahms' first symphony "The Tenth" (after Beethoven's nine).

In 1850 Brahms met the Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi and gave several recitals with him. On a tour with Reményi in 1853 Brahms met the most famous violinist of his time, Joseph Joachim, who introduced him to composer, Robert Schumann in Düsseldorf. Impressed with Brahms' compositions, Schumann insisted that Brahms move into his house, and Brahms became a close friend, both of Schumann and of his wife, Clara, who was one of the finest pianist in Europe at the time and a composer in her own right.

Schumann, who was then editor of the music journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Music Journal), was so taken with the compositions Brahms had showed him that he wrote a long article, "Neue Bahnen" (New Paths) introducing the young Brahms to his readers as "a young eagle" and as "the chosen one" who would be Beethoven's heir. This praise was a heavy burden for Brahms, who for many years felt that he could not live up to Schumann's expectations. Extremely self-critical, Brahms destroyed a number of his compositions and refused publication of others when he was not completely satisfied with them, or when Clara expressed any criticism.

When Schumann died in 1856, Brahms was at Clara's side and fell deeply in love with her. The love was probably not reciprocated - Clara was 14 years older than Brahms and had eight children, but the two were close friends the rest of their lives. For Brahms, the age difference was perhaps not a hindrance. After all, his mother was 17 years older than his father. When Clara died in 1896 (one year before Brahms), he composed his *Vier ernste Gesänge* (Four Serious Songs) as a beautiful and moving memorial to her.

### *Symphony No. 1 in C minor*

In 1851 the 26-year-old Brahms heard Beethoven's ninth symphony in d minor

for the first time. Soon after he decided to write a symphony of his own in the same key (d minor). But dissatisfied, he recast it as a sonata for two pianos. Still unhappy with the result, the first two movements finally became movements in his symphonic first piano concerto (1859), while the last movement of the concerto later found its way into his German Requiem (1868).

No other work by Brahms took him so long to write as his first symphony. He wrote to his friend Hermann Levi in 1870, "You don't know what it feels like to be dogged by that giant (Beethoven)." Already in 1862 he sent the first movement (without the slow introduction) to Clara Schumann, and in 1868 he sent her as a birthday present the famous horn call from the fourth movement.

After laboring over the symphony for 14 years, from 1862 to 1876, it was finally given its first performance November 4, 1876 in Karlsruhe, with Otto Dessoff as conductor. But Brahms had not yet sent it to his publisher, so that he could still make changes.

Just before the music was copied for the first rehearsal, Brahms shortened the two middle movements. Clara Schumann loved the first and second movements but thought the third movement was too short, and thought that the Presto of the fourth movement felt tacked on and not growing naturally out of the whole. After Brahms had overcome his fear of writing a symphony, the other three followed in quick order # 2 in 1877, #3 in 1883, and # 4 in 1885.

Symphony no.1 recalls Beethoven's 5th in many ways. Not only is the key of c minor the same, but the famous rhythm of short-short-short-long is prominent in both the first and last movements.

In the first movement of the symphony, the 37 measures of slow introduction, with its chromatic lines and insistent timpani beats was actually the last part composed by Brahms, even though the chromaticism already introduced the recapitulation. Charles O'Connell has a wonderful description of this slow introduction: "The introduction is like the drawing of a huge and magnificent curtain.....sweeping slowly apart to reveal behind it the fierce swift movements of drama."

The slow second movement in the surprising key of E major provides a gentle, contemplative contrast with the drama of the first movement. It features lovely solos by woodwinds and, near the end, the violin.

The robust playfulness of the third movement suggests a serenade perhaps more than a symphony. The duple meter bears little resemblance to the menuet of the Classic period or even the scherzo of Beethoven's works, which is often in a fairly fast triple meter.

The fourth movement, like the first movement, begins with a slow introduction in c minor; then it proceeds to the Allegro non troppo in the parallel major key, C major, as did Beethoven's fifth. The change to C major is announced by the famous horn call, which Brahms sent to Clara as a birthday present. Shortly thereafter the brass

and bassoons stand out with a short phrase of a Lutheran chorale. Many people have pointed to the extraordinary similarity of the main C-major theme of the Allegro non troppo to the "Ode to Joy" theme of Beethoven's ninth. Brahms had a cutting reply when this similarity was pointed out to him: "Yes, and still more extraordinary that any fool can hear it."

Program notes by Birgitte Moyer-Vinding



MASTER SINFONIA  
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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David Ramadanoff – Music Director & Conductor

**2024 Season  
Upcoming Concerts**

**PROGRAM 3: March 9, 7:30 p.m., and March 10, 2:30 p.m.**

**Schubert** *“Unfinished” Symphony*

**Britten** *Simple Symphony*, with Pamela Martin, guest conductor

**Haydn** *Symphony No. 102*

March 9, 7:30 p.m. Palo Alto HS Performing Arts Center

March 10, 2:30 p.m. Los Altos United Methodist Church

**Purchase Tickets**

**PROGRAM 4: May 4, 7:30 p.m., and May 5, 2:30 p.m.**

**Beethoven** *Leonore Overture No. 3*

**Shostakovich** *Cello Concerto No. 1*, with Michael Li, cello

**Beethoven** *Symphony No. 5*

May 4, 7:30 p.m. Palo Alto HS Performing Arts Center

May 5, 2:30 p.m. Los Altos United Methodist Church

**Purchase Tickets**

TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR ADVANCE PURCHASE ONLINE



MasterSinfonia.org

Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra Association is a 501(c)(3) California Nonprofit Charitable Organization

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**Publicity:** June Bower, Cathy Castillo  
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David Ramadanoff – Music Director & Conductor

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<u>Cello</u> Stéphane Graham-Lengrand * Amy Brooks Michael Li Sara Insuasty		<u>Recording Engineer</u> Vini Carter – West Coast Sound  * principal ** co-principal
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