

# Triumph

January 17, 2027

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**Yaniv Dinur**, *Conductor*

**Alexander Korsantia**, *Piano*

Guillaume CONNESSON  
(b. 1970)

*Flammenschrift*

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN  
(1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No. 5 in Eb major, Op. 73

Allegro

Adagio un poco mosso

Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

## INTERMISSION

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN  
(1770–1827)

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92

Poco sostenuto – Vivace

Allegretto

Presto

Allegro con brio

Mr. Korsantia is represented by Felsner Artists.

*Stage flowers provided by Hilly Fields Florist*



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French composer **Guillaume Connesson (b. 1970)** studied piano, conducting, music history, and theory at the Conservatoire National de Région de Boulogne-Billancourt. Influences include such disparate sources as Couperin, Ravel, Wagner, Stravinsky, and Messiaen as well as film composers Bernard Herrmann and John Williams. The title of tonight's work, **Flammenschrift**, is a term that originated with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Translated as "Flaming Writing" or "Letters of Fire," the composition reflects the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) associated with some of Beethoven's compositions. Sudden outbursts and juxtapositions of dynamics along with rhythmic energy create a captivating concert opener. Connesson explains his compositional motivation: "I wanted to compose a work with a fierceness that would draw a psychological portrait of Beethoven and, more generally, pay homage to the music of Germany. My portrait of Beethoven is that of a man of great anger, seething and impetuous, whose inner violence transpires in numerous works of music.... To pay homage to him, I use the same instrumental nomenclature as his Fifth Symphony but also make use of opposing factions (woodwinds versus strings), and above all rhythmical writing with numerous allusions to his works. But more generally, it is to German music in its entirety that I wanted to pay tribute with the veiled references to the compositions of Brahms and Richard Strauss at the end of the piece. . . Two themes of furious character are stated in the opening pages, while a third, less tense at the beginning (clarinets and bassoons) undergoes a great number of transformations. A fourth, more lyrical theme completes the material of the exposition. Then comes a long development, and the four themes are transmuted, recalling the sudden emergence of the major mode in

the finale of Beethoven's Fifth. Following the drama comes a dance of joy." *Flammenschrift* premiered in Paris in 2012.

### **Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, "Emperor"**

During a time in 1809 when Vienna was under siege and then was subsequently occupied by Napoleon's forces, Beethoven began composing what turned out to be his final piano concerto. Scholars agree that its nickname, "Emperor," did not originate with the composer. You may recall the story of Beethoven crossing out the dedication to Napoleon on his Third Symphony, *Eroica*, when the latter declared himself emperor in 1804. The premiere of the **Emperor Concerto**, written in the same key as *Eroica*, was delayed because of the political unrest but ultimately took place in Leipzig in 1811 with Friedrich Schneider as pianist. Beethoven's own pupil, Carl Czerny, played the Vienna premiere in 1812. (Yes, this is the same Czerny whose seemingly infinite technical exercise books have tortured every piano student for the last two centuries.) Single dramatic orchestral chords interspersed with pianistic ramblings across the span of the keyboard lead us into the initial majestic theme of the **Allegro**. Beethoven's gift for expanding themes is evident in the inventive ways that he plays with this primary theme, whose declamatory chords and syncopations contrast with a whimsical secondary idea that is also treated to the composer's genius for development. Near the end of the first movement, a very brief cadenza for the pianist turns into a sweet duet with the French horn, and the **Allegro** ends with a sense of optimism. The charming and peaceful **Adagio** begins with a muted orchestral theme that is later imitated by the soloist. Sluggish changes in the harmonic progression contribute to a sense of timelessness. It is hard to imagine

that such serenity was created in the midst of the upheaval that Vienna and Beethoven experienced during the summer of 1809, part of which he spent in an underground shelter—proof that there can be inner calm despite outer chaos and war. A sustained horn pitch segues directly into the **Rondo** with the soloist playing hesitant chords, as if the pianist is improvising, trying out an idea before deciding if it will work. Later the orchestra plays those same tentative chords in the background as the soloist plays an extended trill. An ebullient mood informs the finale of the "Emperor" Concerto as once again Beethoven finds joy and transcendence despite personal circumstances or the social or political climate.

### **Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92**

Sketches for Symphony No. 7 date to 1811 when the composer was still searching for cures and "taking the waters" at Teplitz, a Bohemian spa. The work was well received at its December 1813 premiere. What is it about this symphony that is so enthralling? Is it the way the first theme in the oboe, immediately imitated by the flute, emerges from a forte chord played by the whole orchestra? The contrasts in volume and timbre are striking. Then there is the energy generated by the detached scales that start in the lower register and ascend repeatedly through various instruments. Also memorable is the sweet secondary theme played by the woodwinds, undergirded by repeated notes that eventually lead to the important dotted rhythm pattern on a single pitch that distinguishes the **Vivace**, "the movement proper." Yes! This wealth in timbre, dynamics, and thematic ideas, as well as the motific germ of a repeated pitch/rhythm occurs in a three-and-a-half-minute introduction! In the exuberant *Vivace*, Beethoven continues to surprise us with dialogues between various instruments as well as his

creative use of rhythm as a thematic element. Dynamic contrasts that include extended crescendos, often punctuated by timpani, as well as *sforzando* (suddenly loud) chords, make the silences even more effective. Beethoven often reveals more in his silences than others express with their notes. The perennially popular **Allegretto** features a distinctive rhythm of long-short-short-long-long in the low strings. Although it begins in A minor and quickly introduces a solemn countermelody in the violas, the second movement is not melancholic. As the two different themes interweave, the increased levels of dynamics and instrumentation are richly satisfying. A contrasting middle section in the major mode lends an air of optimism even as the basses continue an octave repetition of the long-short-short-long motive.

Polyphony of the most delicious sort characterizes the ending of the movement. **Presto** provides the “scherzo” element of humor in this symphony with its lighthearted, staccato passages. A slightly slower trio section features the horns in a dignified theme that contrasts with the rollicking main section. Scherzo movements generally appear in A B A format, scherzo-trio-scherzo, but Beethoven extends this third movement to include an additional appearance of each section, A B A B A. In a brief coda, he further teases his listeners with a third entrance of the horn theme, but this is abruptly silenced by *fortissimo* chords, making way for the non-stop action of the fourth movement. The **Allegro con brio** lives up to its tempo marking —fast with brilliance. There are occasional passages of reduced activity where the wood-

winds seem to momentarily encourage a slower meditative state, but the rest of the orchestra rushes headlong back into the frenzy. Rapidly-tongued wind passages, flurries of strings, and syncopated timpani accompaniment propel us to the end of the symphony. One understands why Richard Wagner called this music “the apotheosis of the dance.”

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Dr. Akers has a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Florida State University

### DID YOU KNOW?

At the premiere of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in 1813, the audience demanded an encore of the second movement

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## Guest Artist



A “major artist” (*Miami Herald*) and a “quiet maverick” (*Daily Telegraph*), **Alexander Korsantia** has been praised for a “piano technique where difficulties simply do not exist” (*Calgary Sun*).

In recent and coming seasons Mr. Korsantia is performing all over the world including with the Korea National Symphony Orchestra, Busan Philharmonic Orchestra, Illinois Symphony, Israel Symphony and the Baltic Philharmonic orchestras. He also continues to serve on jury panels of major piano competitions, such as he has in the past for the Arthur Rubinstein, Cleveland International, Hilton Head, Nina Simone Festival and E-Competitions.

In recent seasons Mr. Korsantia performed with the Stuttgart Philharmonic, Boston Philharmonic, Xiamen Philharmonic, and Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. With The Far Cry Chamber Group, he played Galina Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto in Boston and Tbilisi.

Ever since winning the First Prize and Gold Medal at the Artur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition and the First Prize at the Sydney International Piano Competition, Korsantia's career has taken him to many of the world's major concert halls, collaborating with renowned conductors such as Christoph Eschenbach, Gianandrea Noseda, and Paavo Järvi, with such orchestras as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mariinsky Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI in Turin, Cincinnati Symphony, and Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Alexander Korsantia is a frequent guest in many of the world's leading concert series including in Warsaw, Boston, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Vancouver, Calgary, San Francisco, Lodz, St. Petersburg, and Blaibach, including major international festivals in Tanglewood and Verbier. A passionate chamber musician, he has collaborated with other leading soloists such as Vadim Repin, Miriam Fried, Kim Kashkashian, Sergei Nakariakov, and the Stradivari Quartet.

His award-winning recordings include works by Beethoven, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, and Copland. In 2020 his recording of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 was released to great critical acclaim (with Stuttgart Philharmonic under Dan Ettinger, at German label Hänssler). His solo piano transcription of Ravel's La Valse was published by Sikorski.

Born in Tbilisi, Alexander Korsantia began his musical education first with his mother, one of Georgia's most respected piano teachers. Later he became a pupil of Tengiz Amiredjibi, Georgia's foremost piano instructor. In 1992, he joined the famed piano studio of Alexander Toradze at Indiana University in South Bend, USA. He is the recipient of numerous accolades, including the Georgian Order of Honor, National State Prize and Shota Rustaveli Prize, and the Golden Wing Award. Korsantia resides in Boston where he is a Professor of Piano at the New England Conservatory.