

Diego Ceretta
conductor

Enrico Bronzi
cello

Fabio Massimo Capogrosso
Salvador, Impressioni Surrealiste (2018)

Robert Schumann
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra op. 129

Johannes Brahms
Symphony No. 1 op. 68

Robert Schumann, the mentor, and **Johannes Brahms**, the predestined. Two central figures in the history of music, protagonists of the programme conducted by **Diego Ceretta**, in his fourth concert of the season with the ORT. In 19th-century Germany, Schumann took up Beethoven's legacy, aware of the enormous difficulty of confronting the symphonic genius that had preceded him. Unable to overcome its shadow, he identified in a young composer, Johannes Brahms, the talent destined to take up this challenge. Brahms, however, felt the weight of this responsibility and, despite Schumann's insistence as early as 1853, took a full twenty-three years to complete his *First Symphony*, the finale of which explicitly recalls the Ode to Joy from *Beethoven's Ninth*, establishing an ideal link between the two works. This is why, at the time, it was nicknamed 'Beethoven's Tenth', a tribute to the genius who had dominated the symphonic scene. Ceretta presents it as a part of a programme that opens with Schumann's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* (1850), composed in just a few weeks and described by the composer as a 'serene piece'. The work, however, did not immediately find an interpreter and was only published in 1854, shortly before the dramatic episode in which Schumann attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine, marking the last act of a tormented career. To complete the concert, a piece from the contemporary era: *Surrealist Impressions (2018)* by **Fabio Massimo Capogrosso**, an Umbrian composer of fervid creativity, known for the soundtracks of the most recent films by Marco Bellocchio, *Esterno notte* and *Rapito*. A journey between past and present under the baton of Diego Ceretta, in a musical dialogue that spans the centuries.

Diego Ceretta – bio

Diego Ceretta, born in 1996, graduated in violin with top marks at the Conservatorio Verdi in Milan and graduated in Orchestra Conducting with distinction under the guidance of Daniele Agiman. In 2016, he made his debut with the Orchestra Filarmonica Italiana and later at Carnegie Hall in New York. In 2020 he was the only Italian finalist at the 'Cantelli' Conducting Competition in Novara. He worked as assistant to Daniele Gatti at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome for the world premiere of Giorgio Battistelli's opera Julius Caesar. Ceretta has conducted prestigious orchestras, including the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Filarmonica Toscanini, the Krakow Philharmonic and the Orchestra Sinfonica Rossini in Pesaro. In 2023, he was appointed Principal Conductor of the ORT. He has also made his debut at major festivals, such as the Rossini Opera Festival and the Wexford Festival Opera, conducting operas such as La Sonnambula, Il Matrimonio Segreto and L'Elisir d'amore. His future engagements include concerts with the ORT, international tours and the debut of The Barber of Seville at the Opéra de Lille and Britten's War Requiem at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

Enrico Bronzi - bio

Cellist and conductor, Enrico Bronzi was born in Parma in 1973. Founder of the Trio di Parma, he has played in the most prestigious concert halls around the world, winning important international competitions and the Abbiati Prize of Italian music critics. His solo career was established after his successes at the Rostropovich Competition in Paris and the Paulo Cello Competition in Helsinki. He regularly performs at the most important international festivals and has collaborated with renowned artists such as Martha Argerich, Gidon Kremer and Joshua Bell, as well as conducting orchestras such as Mozart, Kremerata Baltica, Camerata Salzburg and many others. Since 2007, he has been a professor at the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg and has numerous notable recordings to his credit, including the critically acclaimed complete Suites of Bach. Committed to music promotion, since 2018 he has been Artistic Director of the Perugia Musica Classica Foundation, overseeing the programming of the Amici della Musica di Perugia and the Sagra Musicale Umbra.

Fabio Massimo Capogrosso – bio

Born in Perugia in 1984, he is a composer of symphonic, chamber, theatre and film music. A graduate in composition from the 'A. Casella' Conservatory in L'Aquila, where he now teaches, he was the first composer in residence of the Filarmonica Toscanini in Parma. His works are performed at prestigious festivals and institutions, including the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro alla Scala, Teatro La Fenice, and international theatres. He has collaborated with renowned artists and won major awards, including the Discover America and Keuris Composers Contest 2018. In cinema, he composed the soundtracks for Esterno Notte and Rapito by Marco Bellocchio, receiving a nomination for the David di Donatello 2023 and the Apulia Soundtrack Award. He has written music for films by Gianluca Jodice, Paolo Zucca and Francesca Comencini, as well as a commission from Teatro La Fenice for the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo. His music is published by Edizioni Curci and CAM Sugar.

Fabio Massimo Capogrosso

/Perugia 1984

Salvador, Impressioni Surrealiste (2018)

duration: about 12 minutes

'The dream is the psychic production that takes place during sleep and is characterised by perceptions and emotions that take place in an unreal or illogical manner. Or, to put it better, they can be detached from the normal logical chain of real events, showing situations that, generally speaking, in reality are impossible to occur'. These words by Salvador Dalí seem the perfect framework to frame his artistic production and represent a point of contact with My Musical Thought, which has always been rooted in the oneiric. *Salvador, Surrealist Impressions* is a set of five miniatures inspired by the work of the genius from Figueres; five fleeting glimpses of masterpieces capable of projecting the observer into fantastic dimensions filled with elements that allude to the deepest part of the unconscious, that of sexual drives, love and death; a dimension where the transmutation from one object to another takes place in a hallucinatory and compulsive state.

Robert Schumann

/Zwickan 1810/ Endenich 1856

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra op. 129

duration: about 25 minutes

A work of crisis, Robert Schumann's *Concerto in A minor op.129*. Crisis not only of a composer who is progressively losing his mind, but of an entire era. Of a generation of artists (the Romantics) who, totally leaning towards the future, dream of epochal upheavals, cataclysms and barricades even in music. And yet who have not yet metabolised the past (read Beethoven), with which they have a conflictual relationship of psychological awe. They feel themselves to be its continuators and epigones at the same time. They accept its burdensome formal and spiritual inheritance, yet would like to get rid of it to give free rein to the longed-for 'music of the future'. The dialectic between deference to tradition and the desire for renewal lacerates the artistic consciousness of the musician of the mid 19th century, schizophrenic by ethical necessity and artistic choice. One example of this is Schumann's production, in which the yearning for the absolute and the loftiness of intentions always come to terms with the limits of the human, with which they must of necessity reach compromises that are as painful as they are inevitable. Take this *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra*, written in October 1850 in Düsseldorf, where the composer had recently moved from Dresden to take up his post as concertmaster. Motivations and circumstances that led to the writing of the score are unknown to us: all we know is that it was conceived in just a few days, shortly before the Sinfonia Renana; nothing, however, about a possible dedicatee or an immediate prospect of performance - the earliest known date is even 1860: six years after publication, four after the composer's death. Hence any discussion of op.129 cannot but focus on its internal reasons, in particular on the relationship between morphology and content, a crucial knot of Romantic aesthetics that would be the cause of much angst even for the Apollonian Mendelssohn, let alone the troubled Schumann. The fact is that writing a symphony or a concert after Haydn-Mozart-Beethoven implied a not inconsiderable constructive effort that on the one hand respected the codified structures, not to disappoint the audience's expectations, and on the other went beyond them in such a way as to achieve greater unity and compactness. So, while generally in the classical era no constraints, apart from the tonal one, bound the movements of a symphony or a concerto together, in Romanticism different possibilities of welding were experimented with. The most naive consisted simply in juxtaposing the movements, suppressing intermediate caesuras; the most meditated, in establishing a dense network of thematic references between one and the other. In Opus 129, Schumann treads both paths: that is, he develops from a very simple musical material three movements that follow one

another without a break. The entire score is synthesised in the orchestral incipit, a few chords in which one can already recognise the melodic and harmonic framework of that generous, singable, palpitating motif, drawn with a free and broad stroke, around which the Concerto takes shape, being both the main theme of the opening movement ('Sehr Lebhaft', very lively), and the glue of the two following ones. In fact, it reappears, full of tension, in the connecting episode between the second and third, resurfacing then often in the course of the latter ('Nicht zu schnell', not too fast), the only one to require from the cello the polish of a brilliant, spectacular technique. For in the rest of the score the virtuosity is there but does not emerge too much, dissimulated in a writing inclined rather to lyricism than to demonstrations of bravura. Suffice it to listen to the central soliloquy ('Langsam', slow), a Lied of almost aphoristic dimensions, intense and heartfelt on the accompanying orchestral pizzicati, which finds a way to open itself up to a polyphony of double strings reminiscent of Bach's cellular Suites. Having said this with regard to the overall architecture, it should nevertheless be noted how, on the dialectical level and in terms of the balance of power between soloist and orchestra, the Concerto is not entirely so, since it lacks, precisely, the concertante element that, given its name and considering the genre's customs, should instead be worked to perfection. On the other hand, except in the last movement, there is little opportunity for confrontation between the cello, which absolutely predominates, and the symphonic ensemble, which is constrained to a function of mere accompaniment. It is a characteristic feature of Schumann's late concert style (as can also be seen in the *Fantasia op.131 for violin* and the *Introduction and Allegro for piano op.134*), which could also be read, in the light of the biography, as a reflection of the psychological turmoil of the late Schumann. A man who is progressively cutting ties with the world around him, able to listen only to himself, to his own neuroses, manias, hallucinations.

Johannes Brahms

/Zwickau 1810/ Endenich 1856

Symphony No. 1 op. 68

duration: about 50 minutes

For Johannes Brahms, the road to the symphony (the supreme musical genre for Romanticism) was a very arduous one, fraught with second thoughts, detours, and delays imposed by the vigilance of his relentless critical sense, which the anxious expectations of friends, critics, and audiences, and the knowledge that he was bound to have to measure himself against a cumbersome past, made even more intransigent than he already was. It was 1853 when Robert Schumann glimpsed in the first piano essays of the 20-year-old, hitherto unknown Brahms such a distinct aptitude for symphonic composition ("... There arose a sound so brilliant that it transformed the piano into an orchestra of voices now moaning, now exultant. They were sonatas, or rather veiled symphonies...") that he hoped that he would soon devote himself to it body and soul ("If he will lower his magic wand where the power of music infuses its force, in the choir and the orchestra, then even more magnificent perspectives of the secrets of the realm of the spirit will be disclosed to us."). A hope, this expressed by Schumann in an article for the prestigious "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" entitled *Vie nuove*, which caused a great stir in German musical circles and which, on a psychological level, had the effect of inhibiting Brahms more than spurring him on. Indeed, he knew that he was expected not only by his contemporaries, but by history. So much so that he confided to intimates, "You can't have an idea of what it's like, sensing behind you the steps of a giant like that." He says "giant" and means Beethoven, whose symphonic path he feels compelled to continue by bypassing Mendelssohnian and Schumannian experiences. After all, already Schumann, writing to violinist Josef Joachim, a mutual friend, had directed him down that road: "And where is Johannes? Is he flying high or is he only under the flowers? Will he still make kettledrums and drums resound? He will always have to remember that one has to refer to Beethoven's symphonies; he will also have to try to produce something similar. Everything is to begin, then the rest will come."

Of course, everything was about to begin. And indeed Brahms set to work immediately, attempting to reuse materials from one of his Sonatas for two pianos; but the feat failed, and instead of a symphony took shape, after a genesis of five years, the *Piano Concerto Op. 15*. The first of the four symphonies would not come to fruition until 1876, after a twenty-year period of torturous nagging and a gradual grasping of the orchestral machinery achieved mainly through the composition of the two Serenades (1858-59), the German Requiem performed in 1868, and the Variations on a Theme of Haydn in 1873. How wearisome the symphony's gestation was for the composer is the score itself to certify, with its ambition to show itself programmatically ingenious, to develop a discourse so dense with thought and music as to be at times tiring, difficult to follow—at least more difficult than usual, since Brahms' eloquence is never straight but frays into numerous incissures, branches out into swirling sequences of subordinates. "The symphony testifies to a mighty will, a logical musical thought, a grandeur of architectural faculties and a technical mastery such as no other living composer possesses," critic Eduard Hanslick said of it in the aftermath of the Viennese premiere, which followed by a month and a half the premiere on Nov. 4, 1876, in Karlsruhe. A work of suffered, masterful craftsmanship, more forced than inspired, the first symphony seems written to settle a debt from which there is no escape. A barbed-wire fence hothouses it all around since, by will or default, many rough edges have not been smoothed over it, nor have the many uncertainties that accompanied its creation been fully resolved. Nonetheless, the coming to light of this symphony allows Brahms to free himself from the inferiority complex towards Beethoven. And its quotation, in the last movement, of the Ode to Joy theme takes on symbolic and cathartic value: having overcome the sense of inadequacy that had hitherto limited him, proud for not having betrayed the expectations of his mentor Schumann, Brahms no longer feels any awe of his fathers. So much so that the next symphony will gush from his clear and serene pen in a very few months, now uninhibited, self-satisfied. *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68* (which pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow hailed, in appreciation, as Beethoven's "Tenth") opens with an Allegro of austere tragicism, burnished in overall hue and grandiose in character, which develops into complex musical organism small melodic cells present in its 37 bars of slow introduction (Un poco sostenuto). This is a typical Brahms procedure: from a couple of notes, from the interval between them, sprouts a whole movement. The expressive mood changes decisively in the second and third movements. The one, Andante sostenuto, of almost chamber-like afflatus and yet imbued with a subdued, meditative lyricism, from which at the end rises the pure, intimately palpitating singing of a solo violin. The other, Un poco Allegretto e grazioso, evokes naturalistic scenes of pastoral quietude. After these two parentheses, the last tempo stands in perfect symmetrical relation to the first, offering the symphony another solid pillar on which to support itself. The page begins with a broad Adagio: in its DNA is already contained all that will be heard a little further on, in the Allegro non troppo, ma con brio. Before the Allegro gets underway, however, Brahms succumbs to a moment of ecstatic wonder: he lets the horn spread a broad, spacious theme, reminiscent of one of those majestic alpine panoramas so dear to him, to which a chorale of woodwinds with a Lutheran flavor then immediately clings (and here we seem suddenly to find ourselves projected into the Wagner of the Master Singers). Then the Allegro attacks with the theme from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony subtly modified and yet clearly recognizable, around which an imposing sonic and constructive edifice is raised.

Orchestra della Toscana – bio

Founded in Florence in 1980, at the initiative of the Regione Toscana, the Province and the Municipality of Florence, ORT is considered one of the best orchestras in Italy

In 1983, under the artistic direction of **Luciano Berio**, it became Istituzione Concertistica Orchestrale by recognition of the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. The average number of musicians is 44, who are also divided into agile chamber ensembles. The Orchestra is based in Florence in the historic Teatro Verdi, where it presents its season of concerts, then distributed throughout Tuscany, Italy and abroad. It is today led by the artistic direction of **Daniele Spini** and the principal conductor **Diego Ceretta**. Its artistic history is marked by the presence of and collaboration with illustrious musicians such as Salvatore Accardo, Martha Argerich, Rudolf Barshai, Yuri Bashmet, Franco Battiato, Stefano Bollani, Frans Brüggen, James Conlon, Myung-Whun Chung, Tan Dun, Richard Galliano, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Gianluigi Gelmetti, Daniel Harding, Eliahu Inbal, Yo-Yo Ma, Butch Morris, Emmanuel Pahud, Daniele Rustioni, Ryūichi Sakamoto and Uto Ughi. The ORT is distinguished by the excellence of its musicians and is a versatile interpreter of a wide repertoire, from Baroque to Classicism, from Romanticism to the historical 20th century, with a particular focus on contemporary music, which has led it to participate in important international festivals. Her concerts are broadcast by Rai Radio Tre and Rete Toscana Classica; she records for Emi, Ricordi, Agorà, VDM Records, Sony Classical, Warner Music Italia, NovAntiqua Records and Dynamic.

The “Verdi” of Florence - bio

It is the largest “Italian-style” theatre in Tuscany (at the time of its construction it was among the seven largest in Italy). Throughout the years, it has kept its main characteristics intact, namely that of being a large popular theatre in the centre of the city, open to all genres of entertainment. Founded as the Pagliano Theatre on the remains of the fourteenth-century *Carcere delle Stinche*, it was inaugurated on September 10th, 1854 with Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto* or, as it was called at the time, *Il Viscardello*. Its creation is the result of the desire of a former baritone pharmacist Girolamo Pagliano who wanted a performance space designed for the people. In 1901, after being named after Luigi Cherubini, it took the name of Teatro Verdi. Its story begins with the great season of melodrama of the late nineteenth century and its charismatic protagonists and continues with the turmoil of the futurist avant-garde movement. From the new operetta genre of the 1920s, we come to the post-war period with jazz and the revue all the way up to the new actors who inaugurated the rebirth of comedy in its many forms. In the 1970s and 1980s, *Teatro Verdi* became a prestigious stage for the most sophisticated pop and rock music and for unconventional drama. Since January 1998 it has been owned by the ORT Foundation, home to rehearsals and concerts of the Orchestra della Toscana. Since then, the *Verdi* has welcomed classical music with great conductors and world-famous musicians and has reached the present day, following a course that has never been interrupted and that links the history of the theatre to the history of Florence. Thanks to the theatrical companies Antico Teatro Pagliano, which runs the theatrical season, and PRG which organises pop and rock music events, the *Verdi* still offers an extremely varied programme in terms of quality, genres, and number of events scheduled.

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