## CONCERT PROGRAM October 9-11, 2015

Markus Stenz, conductor Heidi Melton, soprano Theodora Hanslowe, mezzo-soprano Thomas Cooley, tenor Eric Owens, bass-baritione St. Louis Symphony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director

## WAGNER Selections from Parsifal (1857-81)

(1813-1883)

Prelude to Act I— Act I Nein! Laßt ihn unenthüllt!— Transformation Music— Act III Ja, Wehe! Wehe! Weh' über mich!— Nur eine Waffe taugt

Eric Owens, bass-baritone (Amfortas) Thomas Cooley, tenor (Parsifal) St. Louis Symphony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director

#### INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125 (1822-24)

(1770-1827)

Allegro, ma non troppo, un poco maestoso Molto vivace Adagio molto e cantabile Presto; Allegro assai

Heidi Melton, soprano Theodora Hanslowe, mezzo-soprano Thomas Cooley, tenor Eric Owens, bass-baritone St. Louis Symhony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors Orchestral Series.

These concerts are presented by the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation.

Markus Stenz is the Essman Family Foundation Guest Artist.

Eric Owens is the Sanford N. and Priscilla R. McDonnell Guest Artist.

Amy Kaiser is the AT&T Foundation Chair.

The St. Louis Symphony Chorus is underwritten in part by the Edward Chase Garvey Memorial Foundation.

The concert of Friday, October 9, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Barry H. Beracha.

The concert of Saturday, October 10, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. C. Robert Farwell.

The concert of Sunday, October 11, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Ted and Robbie Beaty.

The concert of Sunday, October 11, is the Thomas Peck Memorial Concert.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by Washington University Physicians.

Large print program notes are available through the generosity of the Delmar Gardens Family and are located at the Customer Service table in the foyer.

# MONUMENT MEN

**BY RENÉ SPENCER SALLER** 

## TIMELINKS

#### 1822-24

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125 Franz Liszt debuts as pianist at age 11

#### 1857-81

WAGNER Selections from Parsifal Kaiser Wilhelm I proclaims second German Empire Besides the obvious—an abundance of singing the two parts of this program have a lot in common. *Parsifal* was Richard Wagner's final opera, and Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was the last one he finished. Both works ripened over more than 30 years. Both were inspired by seminal texts. Both enact journeys of transformation, exploring themes of struggle, salvation, community, and compassion. And both are monuments of Western culture, which is a nice way of saying that they're buried under layers of interpretive grime.

The two composers' lives overlapped, but just barely. As a teenager, Wagner was gutted by the news of Beethoven's death, and his lifelong fandom bordered on creepy at times. In early notebooks, he churned out pages of pretend-conversations with his imaginary friend. He mentioned him obsessively in essays, letters, and his self-mythologizing autobiography, Mein Leben (My Life). By creating a version of Beethoven that affirmed his own artistic principles, Wagner bypassed the anxiety of influence. It probably helped that Beethoven composed only one opera. Wagner wrote only one symphony, and it is invariably described as Beethovenian. It was the last piece he conducted, days before his death in Venice.



**Born** May 22, 1813, in Leipzig

**Died** February 13, 1883, in Venice

#### **First Performance**

July 26, 1882, *Parsifal* premiered in Bayreuth, with Hermann Levi conducting

#### **STL Symphony Premiere**

January 1, 1915, Max Zach conducting the Prelude to Act I

#### Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

January 22, 2012, David Robertson conducting the Prelude to Act I

#### Scoring

solo bass-baritone solo tenor 3 flutes 3 oboes English horn 3 clarinets bass clarinet 3 bassoons contrabassoon 4 horns 5 trumpets – 2 offstage 7 trombones – 4 offstage tuba 2 timpani 2 percussion offstage 2 harps strings

## Performance Time

approximately 43 minutes

## **RICHARD WAGNER**

Selections from Parsifal

MYSTICAL GOAL, SPIRITUAL KEYNOTE As a synthesis of words and music, the Ninth Symphony was particularly meaningful for Wagner. At 17 he transcribed it for solo piano and pitched the project to Beethoven's publisher. Years later, in his autobiography, he described how the work changed his life: "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony became the mystical goal of all my strange thoughts and desires about music," he wrote. "At the very first glance at the score,... I felt irresistibly attracted by the long-sustained pure fifths with which the first phrase opens: these chords, which... had played such a supernatural part in my childish impressions of music, seemed in this case to form the spiritual keynote of my own life. This, I thought, must surely contain the secret of all secrets, and accordingly the first thing to be done was to make the score my own by a process of laborious copying." Copying wasn't the only way that Wagner imprinted himself on the work. He also conducted it many times, even tweaking the orchestration of certain passages that he felt he might improve. In 1872 he conducted it on an especially significant occasion: the cornerstone ceremony for his Festspielhaus, the meticulously designed theater in Bayreuth that would host all his future operas.

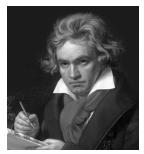
PARSIFAL'S PROGRESS When Wagner began Parsifal, he was a vigorous 32. When he finished it, he was in his late 60s, with a heart so diseased that it would give out in a year. He first started thinking about Parsifal as a potential subject in 1845, after he read a modern edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, a Middle High German chivalric poem based on an even older myth. He revisited the legend again in 1850, when he wrote Lohengrin, whose mysterious swan-wrangling protagonist turns out to be (spoiler alert!) the son of Parsifal, keeper of the Holy Grail. About seven years later, he sketched out some ideas for Lohengrin's prequel and set them aside. In 1865 he sent a detailed scenario to King Ludwig, his insane patron-disciple, before getting sidelined by his Ring cycle. In early 1877, he returned yet again to the long-deferred Parsifal project, and this time he cranked out the entire libretto in a month. Five years later, the score was complete. On July 26, 1882, he oversaw its premiere in the Festspielhaus, the venue it was meant to consecrate.

A drama of redemption focused on purification, suffering, compassion, and self-sacrifice, Wagner's *Parsifal* is often construed as a Christian passion play–an understandable but reductive interpretation. The work changed over the decades, accruing elements from pagan legends, Greek myths, Buddhist tenets (by way of Schopenhauer), and Wagner's own singularly weird imagination. Like all of his operas, *Parsifal* eventually wound up Wagnerian. For his part, Wagner insisted that his eponymous hero wasn't a Christ figure. "I didn't give the Redeemer a thought when I wrote it," he told his wife, Cosima, in 1878. In any case, religion, like everything else, was secondary to his art. "When religion becomes artificial, art has a duty to rescue it," he proclaimed.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF *PARSIFAL* Amfortas leads a monastic order of knights who guard the Holy Grail, the chalice that Christ used at the Last Supper, and the Holy Spear, which wounded him at the crucifixion. Before the action begins, Amfortas sins with the shape-shifting Kundry, who is under the control of an evil magician named Klingsor. Amfortas bears a perpetually bloody gash on his side, thanks to Klingsor, who swiped the Holy Spear and used it to shank him. Without the Spear, performing the mysterious life-giving offices of the Grail becomes ever more excruciating, and as Amfortas ails, so ails his kingdom. Despite his pleas, his knights won't put him out of his misery because, according to prophecy, an innocent made wise through compassion will heal him and redeem them all. Parsifal proves to be that Holy Fool. In the final act, which transpires on Good Friday, he absolves Kundry, heals Amfortas by touching him with the Holy Spear (reclaimed from Klingsor in Act II), assumes all Grail King duties, and purifies the temple and community.

FALLING AND RISING Aware that his tragic king might overshadow his Holy Fool, Wagner linked the two characters constantly in both the score and the poem. The opera is named for Parsifal, but it's Amfortas who inspires the compassion (*Mitleid*, or "suffering with") that leads to enlightenment. Only by feeling the sinner's pain on a visceral level can the pure hero restore the kingdom. Amfortas's two major arias occur in the first and third acts, highlighting his mounting anguish. In the first, the bleeding king pleads with his brethren to leave the Grail covered and spare him the torture of his sacred obligation. He rages and laments in elaborate paradoxes like "thrilled by the agony of ecstasy." In the second aria, from Act III, he confronts the same dreaded duty, but this time everyone understands that it will be his last attempt. Before him his father lies entombed, and Amfortas can barely lift himself up to address him.

As with the two arias, the purely orchestral selections on this program are taken from Acts I and III. With its lucid scoring, its metrical and tonal ambiguities, and its infinitely mutable yet interrelated themes, the Prelude to the first act evokes the fallen world that Amfortas created when he defiled the relics. It also contains the motivic DNA for the entire opera (another trick Wagner may have picked up while copying out Beethoven's Ninth). The "Transformation" music gives voice to Amfortas's psychic agony in a somber processional. The finale enacts the central drama of reconciliation, spiraling up to the home key in rapturous choral flights.



**Born** December 16, 1770, Bonn

**Died** March 26, 1827, Vienna

#### **First Peformance**

May 7, 1824, in Vienna, Austrian Imperial Theater Music Director Michael Umlauf conducted, with Beethoven nominally giving tempos

#### **STL Symphony Premiere**

December 21, 1928, with soprano Helen Traubel, contralto Viola Silva, tenor Laurence Wolfe, baritone Jerome Swinford, Apollo-Morning Choral Clubs, Emil Oberhoffer conducting

#### Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

May 12, 2013, with soprano Susanna Phillips, mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor, tenor Joseph Kaiser, baritone Corey McKern, St. Louis Symphony Chorus, Amy Kaiser, director, David Robertson conducting

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125

A KISS FOR ALL THE WORLD One of the many lessons that Wagner took from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 was the sense of an ending. "Always keep the whole in mind," Beethoven liked to say, a dictum that the Ninth exemplifies. Everything leads inexorably to the finale, the apotheosis of the "An die Freude" earworm. As Jan Swafford notes in his recent biography Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph, the composer was a teenager when he first declared his intention to set Friedrich Schiller's "An die Freude" to music, in the heady days of the Aufklärung (Enlightenment). In the decades that elapsed before the score was complete, Beethoven saw the ideals of the French Revolution trampled by repressive regimes. Resurrecting Schiller's Humanist anthem was a subversive act in 1824, when Austrians could be arrested for saying the word "freedom" or gathering in groups of more than a few unrelated people. Because Beethoven wanted his choral finale to seem like the inevitable outcome of the preceding three movements, he needed to keep his foundational ditty in mind from the outset. He wrote the first eight measures of the Freude tune fairly quickly, but he went through dozens of drafts before he figured out a way to finish it. Simplicity is hard.

The first movement begins with a stark open fifth and dissonant tremolos. Out of this void emerges the first faint sign of the *Freude* theme, inverted here as three descending notes. Just as the universe arose from nothingness, the theme seems to arise, in fits and starts, from a yawning abyss. The second movement, a minor-key scherzo with fugal and sonata-form elements, combines an anarchic opening (check out that hell-raising timpani!) and a pastoral central interlude, where the key changes to D major and triple meter shifts to duple. The first notes of the *Freude* theme return, but they're tricked out in a different rhythm: a subliminal preview of future pleasures.

The ravishing third movement is marked "Adagio molto e cantabile," or "very slow and singing," and the indication reminds us why the Chorus has been standing there patiently all this time, waiting to let loose with the part we'll be humming as we leave and possibly for weeks afterward. But as Beethoven taught Wagner, symphonic music is all about deferred gratification. Never mind those brief rebukes from the brass; in this paradise of hushed strings and gentle winds, melodies linger, suspended in bliss.

Even when we know what's coming—and let's face it, we all do—the first moments of the finale are a visceral jolt. Wagner called it a "terror fanfare," Swafford calls it a "brassy burst of fury," and no matter what you call it, you will flinch when it smacks you at full volume. It's supposed to hurt a little: a bracing slap to wake you up for the Big Reveal, when the theme bursts loose in a torrent of delirious variations. For listeners the ecstasy only mounts, but for singers the finale is downright scary, a brutal tessitura that demands impossibly high notes to be held for an impossibly long time.

As for the rest of it, let's just leave out the usual blather about universal love and the brotherhood of man, those high-minded phrases that we talk about too much to ever understand. Some people think that the Ninth is overprogrammed and we're numb to it now, but I disagree. If knowing every note by heart were a deal-breaker. Beatles fans wouldn't exist. It's not the music but the meanings we're sick of, all that dreary blahblah-blah. "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," Walter Pater wrote, and the formulation is famous because it seems true. So why do we expect music to do even more? We want it to tell us a story about ourselves, but music tells its own stories, in its own language. Let's shut up and listen.

Program notes © 2015 by René Spencer Saller

#### Scoring

2 flutes piccolo 2 oboes 2 clarinets 2 bassoons contrabassoon 4 horns 2 trumpets 3 trombones timpani percussion strings solo soprano, alto, tenor and bass-baritone voices chorus

#### **Performance Time**

approximately 65 minutes



Markus Stenz most recently conducted the St. Louis Symphony in October 2014.

#### MARKUS STENZ

ESSMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION GUEST ARTIST

Markus Stenz is Principal Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

His previous positions have included General Music Director of the City of Cologne and Gürzenich-Kapellmeister (posts he relinquished in the summer of 2014), Principal Guest Conductor of the Hallé Orchestra (2010-14), Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (1998-2004), Principal Conductor of London Sinfonietta (1994-98), and Artistic Director of the Montepulciano Festival (1989-95).

In 2000 he took the Melbourne Symphony on their triumphant first European tour including concerts in Munich, Cologne, Zurich, and Salzburg, and in 2008 visited China with the Gürzenich Orchestra and the same year conducted their first ever BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall. He returned to China in 2010 with Cologne Opera for two cycles of Wagner's *Ring* in Shanghai and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in Beijing.

Apart from his regular concerts with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, he is currently working with Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Helsinki Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, London Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, São Paolo Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the BBC Scottish and BBC Symphony Orchestras. He will also continue a regular relationship with the Hallé.

Stenz studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne under Volker Wangenheim and at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa,

Markus Stenz has been awarded Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Northern College of Music and the "Silberne Stimmgabel" (Silver Tuning Fork) of the state of North Rhein/Westphalia.

#### AMY KAISER

AT&T FOUNDATION CHAIR

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus since 1995, Amy Kaiser is one of the country's leading choral directors. She has conducted the St. Louis Symphony in Handel's Messiah, Schubert's Mass in E-flat, Vivaldi's Gloria, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart as well as Young People's Concerts. Kaiser has been a regular guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Sheffield, Massachusetts, Santa Fe, and at Canterbury Cathedral. She was Music Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons and has led many performances of major works at Lincoln Center. Other conducting engagements include concerts at Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival and more than fifty performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed Schubertiade. She has conducted more than twenty-five operas, including eight contemporary premieres.

Kaiser has taught master classes in choral conducting at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, served as faculty for a Chorus America conducting workshop, and as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. An active guest speaker, Kaiser presents classes in symphonic and operatic repertoire and is a regular presenter of Pre-Concert Conversations with the St. Louis Symphony.

Amy Kaiser has prepared choruses for the New York Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival, and Opera Orchestra of New York. She also served as faculty conductor and vocal coach at Manhattan School of Music and the Mannes College of Music. A former Fulbright Fellow at Oxford University and an alumna of Smith College, she was awarded the Smith College Medal for outstanding professional achievement. Last season she was honored with the St. Louis Visionary Award for Successful Working Artist and was featured in an interview in *AARP The Magazine*.



Amy Kaiser is preparing the St. Louis Symphony Chorus for *Messiah* in December.



Heidi Melton makes her St. Louis Symphony debut in these performances.

#### **HEIDI MELTON**

The young American dramatic soprano Heidi Melton has been called "the Wagnerian voice we have been waiting for since Flagstad and Nilsson" (*La Presse*), a voice that is "big, gleaming and tonally resplendent" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

In the 2015-16 season, Melton makes her Vienna Philharmonic debut singing Brünnhilde's "Immolation Scene" from Götterdämmerung under the baton of Valery Gergiev, both in Vienna at the Musikverein and in New York at Carnegie Hall. She also makes her New York Philharmonic debut with Alan Gilbert in Strauss Lieder and Act III of Die Walküre as Brünnhilde. For the Hong Kong Philharmonic with Jaap van Zweden, she will sing Sieglinde in complete concert performances of Die Walküre, which will be recorded by Naxos. She returns to the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Venus/Elisabeth in Tannhäuser with Donald Runnicles, as well as to Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe for her first performances as Isolde in a new Christopher Alden production of Tristan und Isolde conducted by Justin Brown. Melton then debuts at the English National Opera in a new production of Tristan and Isolde conducted by Edward Gardner. She also sings the Final Scene from Salome in the Austin Lyric Opera's opening gala.

Heidi Melton is the recipient of many prestigious awards and prizes: George London Foundation's George London/Kirsten Flagstad Memorial Award; José Iturbi Competition; Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation; third place in the Belvedere Competition; national semi-finalist at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; and winner of the Mario Lanza Competition.

#### THEODORA HANSLOWE

Mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe returns to the St. Louis Symphony this season, having previously appeared with the orchestra as Zerlina in Don Giovanni and as soloist in Berlioz's Les nuits d'été both at Powell and at Carnegie halls. Hanslowe has appeared as soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Britten's Spring Symphony, with André Previn), Philadelphia Orchestra (Messiah), San Francisco Symphony (Beethoven's Mass in C with Michael Tilson Thomas), Dallas Symphony (Mozart's Mass in C minor), and Bilbao Symphony (Mahler's Symphony No. 8). She has sung Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop, Stuttgart Rundfunk Orchestra and with members of the Philadelphia Orchestra at Bravo! Vail.

Highlights of operatic performances include the title role in La Cenerentola with the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Staatsoper Dresden; the title role in L'italiana in Algeri with the Metropolitan Opera (conducted by James Levine) and Los Angeles Opera; Rosina in Il barbiere di Siviglia with the Metropolitan Opera and Festival de Musique de Strasbourg; the title character in Massenet's Chérubin with Opéra de Monte-Carlo, the title role in Saariaho's Adriana Mater for Santa Fe Opera, Komponist in Ariadne auf Naxos at Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and Sister Helen Prejean in several productions of Jake Heggie's Dead Man Walking. She recently sang the role of Maddie in Heggie's Three Decembers with Atlanta Opera.

At the Metropolitan Opera she appeared in John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* under the baton of David Robertson, and created the role of the Countess in the new William Kentridge production of *The Nose*, conducted by Valery Gergiev. She is active in recital and chamber music, including performances of Berg's *Lyric Suite* with the Brentano String Quartet, Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis* with pianist Jeremy Denk, and numerous appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.



Theodora Hanslowe most recently performed with the St. Louis Symhony at Carnegie Hall in April 1997.



Thomas Cooley most recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony as Bob Boles in *Peter Grimes* at Carnegie Hall in November 2013.

## THOMAS COOLEY

Minnesota-born tenor Thomas Cooley has established a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, and beyond, as a singer of great versatility, expressiveness, and virtuosity.

Recent and upcoming appearances of note include Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the Milwaukee Symphony; Britten's War Requiem with the Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Oregon symphonies; Handel's Messiah with the Oregon, Houston, and Charlotte symphonies, as well as the Calgary Philharmonic and National Symphony Orchestra; Peter Quint in Britten's The Turn of the Screw with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; the title role in Handel's Samson with the American Classical Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall (Nicholas McGegan conducting); the world premiere of Christopher Theofanidis' Creation Oratorio with Atlanta Symphony; Tristan in Frank Martin's Le Vin herbé with Bergen National Opera; Crown Prince in Kevin Puts's Silent Night with Cincinnati Opera; Acis in a new production of Handel's Acis and Galatea and L'Allegro with the Mark Morris Dance Group; Bach's St. Matthew Passion with Seattle Symphony and the St. John Passion with Pacific Musicworks and the Pittsburgh Symphony; and performances at the Oregon and Carmel Bach Festivals.

As Artist in Residence with Chicago's Music of the Baroque, Cooley performs Monteverdi's *Vespers*, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, and a program of Bach Cantatas this season.

#### **ERIC OWENS**

SANFORD N. AND PRISCILLA R. MCDONNELL GUEST ARTIST

Bass-baritone Eric Owens has a unique reputation as an esteemed interpreter of classic works and a champion of new music.

Owens's 2015-16 season features several collaborations with the New York Philharmonic as the Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, including a tribute to legendary African American singers and their legacy titled In Their Footsteps, a concert of Strauss selections and excerpts from Act III of Wagner's Die Walküre conducted by Alan Gilbert, a performance of selections from Mahler's Des Knaben Wunderhorn conducted by John Storgårds, a festive concert celebrating the holiday season, and a chamber music concert of Poulenc's Le Bal masqué. Other orchestral engagements this season include performances with Osmo Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra, Ravel's L'Enfant et les sortilèges with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Bayerische Rundfunk, Brahms's Ein deutsches Requiem with Markus Stenz and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Dvořák's Stabat Mater with Franz Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra. He will also join Music of the Baroque as Simon in concert performances of Handel's Judas Maccabaeus conducted by Jane Glover.

Operatic highlights of Owens's season include his return to the Metropolitan Opera as Orest in a new production of Elektra by legendary director Patrice Chéreau, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, which will be broadcast on the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning Live in HD series to movie theaters around the world; he will also host the Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD broadcast of Otello. He returns to the Santa Fe Opera for a role debut as La Roche in a new production of *Capriccio* directed by Tim Albery, and to Washington National Opera as Stephen Kumalo in Kurt Weill's Lost in the Stars. At the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., he will perform an evening of jazz standards featuring the music of Billy Eckstine and Johnny Hartman.



Eric Owens most recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony in a concert for the League of American Orchestras Conference in June 2013.

## ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS 2015-2016

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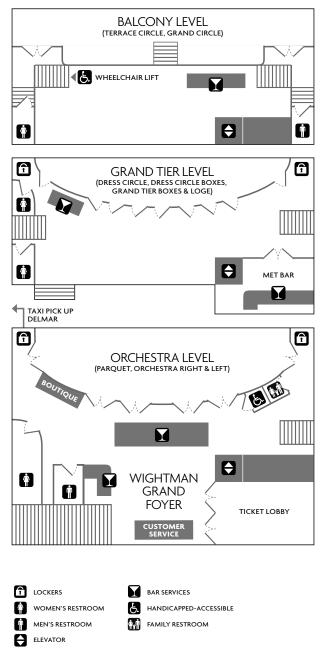
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