

## INDEPENDENCE SINFONIA WINTER CONCERT - MARCH 2, 2025

### PROGRAM NOTES

WAGNER: *Siegfried Idyll*

Richard Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* is a deeply personal and intimate work, composed as a birthday gift for his second wife, Cosima Wagner, to celebrate the birth of their son, Siegfried. Unlike Wagner's grand operatic works, this piece is a lyrical and heartfelt composition, originally scored for a small chamber ensemble.

Wagner (1813-1883) composed *Siegfried Idyll* in the summer of 1870 while living in Tribschen, Switzerland. On the morning of December 25, Cosima was awakened by the sound of this tender music performed by a small group of musicians on the staircase of their home. She later wrote in her diary that it was "one of the most beautiful moments" of her life.

*Siegfried Idyll* is infused with themes from Wagner's opera *Siegfried*, particularly motifs associated with love and nature. However, it is not merely an orchestral arrangement of operatic material; rather, it is a standalone work that conveys a serene and pastoral atmosphere.

The piece begins with a gentle, rising figure in the strings and a flowing melody in the woodwinds. Wagner employs his signature harmonic richness and chromaticism, but with a tenderness that sets it apart from his more dramatic works. The music ebbs and flows, with moments of quiet introspection leading to soaring lyrical passages. Throughout, there is a sense of warmth, love, and contentment, reflecting the deep affection Wagner felt for his family. This serenade showcases his ability to write on a smaller, more personal scale, revealing a softer and more tender side of his musical personality. Whether as a private declaration of love or a public concert piece, it continues to captivate audiences with its lyrical grace and heartfelt sincerity.

*Instrumentation: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two horns, trumpet, strings*