

PROGRAM NOTES

Bridges Across Traditions

Nineteenth-century music is the meat and potatoes of orchestral literature. Much as we love our Haydn and Mozart, we hear more Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Schubert and Tchaikovsky in the concert hall. The same goes for Debussy and Ravel, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, Copland and Gershwin. They are all wonderful composers, but can any of them challenge the iconic status of this weekend's three giants?

Of course there is room for all of them – and many others– in our musical world. Nevertheless, for this first concert of the new season, Maestro Stephen Czarkowski conducts masterpieces by three traditionalists. Paradoxically, each was also an innovator who succeeded with bold ideas.

The program opens with Dvořák's *Carnival Overture*, a joyous curtain raiser that was part of a trilogy of overtures sharing a common musical motive. The concept was daring – and original. Next, former CUSO concertmaster David Colwell and Principal Cello Adam Carter join forces for Brahms's splendid "Double Concerto" for Violin, Violoncello and Orchestra. This was the last orchestral composition Brahms wrote, and his sole concerto for two instruments. Cellists in particular count their blessings that Brahms left them a work to play with orchestra, but the Brahms Double is glorious for violin as well.

Following intermission, Maestro Czarkowski leads the orchestra in Beethoven's mighty Symphony No.3 in E-flat, the "Eroica." In 1805, when it was first performed, this was the longest symphony that had ever been written. Beethoven broke with many traditions in his Third Symphony, forging the path toward symphonic romanticism. The symphony still thrills the ear today, more than two centuries afterward.

Carnival Overture, Op.92

Antonín Dvořák

Born 8 September, 1841 in Mühlhausen, Bohemia

Died 1 May 1904 in Prague, Czechoslovakia

Overtures: a flexible genre

There are two principal types of overtures: those that originate as introductions to dramatic works -- operas, ballets, or plays (as incidental music) -- and independent concert overtures. Clearly the first type leads a double life, especially if the stage work becomes popular. For example, we enjoy the overture to Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* equally in

orchestral and opera venues. The second type of overture is a different breed, existing as a concert piece in its first iteration. Many have extramusical associations, such as Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture, after Shakespeare, and Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* Overture, inspired by Fingal's Cave in Scotland's Outer Hebrides Islands.

Both varieties have a welcome place on a concert program. Part of the beauty of the overture is its concise nature. In a single movement, the composer presents a panoply of moods and ideas. This characteristic can be present in both types of overtures, whether on a literal or a conceptual level.

Dvořák's *Carnival* is an example of the second type. Initially, he had planned a series of three concert overtures in the early 1890s, collectively entitled "Nature, Life and Love." He linked them by means of a theme that recurs in some guise in all three works. His publisher Simrock, however, issued each overture with a separate opus number: *In Nature's Realm*, Op.91, *Carnival*, Op.92, and *Othello* (after Shakespeare), Op.93. The trilogy is rarely heard in its entirety, as the composer intended. Dvořák's biographer Schönzeler calls these overtures "Dvořák's most important, most misunderstood and most underrated compositions."

Village celebrations, captured in music

Carnival has fared the best of the three. Its popularity derives from the exuberant energy of the music, a reflection of the composer's childhood memories of village celebrations. From

the opening cymbal crash, vibrant Bohemian dance rhythms burst forth at a furious pace, rarely relinquishing their grip on our ears.

The overture is in A major, a particularly bright key for strings. To enhance that brightness, Dvořák wrote for one of the largest orchestras he ever employed. Swashbuckling flair and big gestures establish the carnivalesque mood. Dvořák was, however, too good a composer to rest on the music's dazzling brilliance and clangy loud sections. His overture's quicksilver moods require consummate control from both conductor and orchestra. The pastoral middle section, marked *Andantino con moto*, features solos for English horn, flute, clarinet and the concertmaster. Dvořák also takes a coy bow to Wagner, referring frankly to the Venusberg music from *Tannhäuser*.

Carnival was dedicated to the Czech University in Prague. The composer conducted at the premiere in April 1892 as part of a farewell concert prior to his American tour. All three of Dvořák's new concert overtures figured prominently in the programs that Dvořák conducted during that historic visit, but *Carnival* established its preëminence then and has held it steadfastly.

Dvořák's score calls for woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo and English horn; four horns, trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, harp, timpani, cymbals, tambourine, triangle and strings.

Concerto for Violin, Cello & Orchestra ("Double Concerto"), Op.102

Johannes Brahms

Born 7 May, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany

Died 3 April, 1897 in Vienna, Austria

Brahms's sole concerto for more than one instrument is unique among his works. It was also a rarity in the nineteenth century. While he was certainly acquainted with Beethoven's "Triple" Concerto, Op.56 (1803-04) for piano, violin and cello, his models for the so-called Double Concerto (or, among musicians, simply the "Brahms Double") lie in the eighteenth century: in the *Sinfonie concertante* of Mozart and his contemporaries, and even earlier, among the Baroque *concerti grossi* so popular in the first half of that century.

Orchestral swan song

The concerto holds a special place as well because it was Brahms's swan song for orchestra. After this work he turned his attention exclusively to the more intimate domain of chamber music, solo piano pieces, and songs, eschewing larger ensembles and the sweeping gestures so frequently associated with such works. It is impossible to say whether Brahms knew, when he composed the Double Concerto in summer 1887, that it was to be his last major work for orchestra. Certainly he knew he faced problems integrating two solo instruments, for both his piano concerti and the Violin Concerto had been criticized for being overly symphonic, to the detriment of the soloist. Brahms was not daunted by such criticism, and saw a special challenge

in the project. The idea came to him on the heels of having completed his Second Cello Sonata, Op.99, for Robert Hausmann, the cellist in Joseph Joachim's string quartet. Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann:

I have had the amusing idea of composing a concerto for violin and cello. If it is at all successful it might give us some fun. You can well imagine the sort of pranks one can play in such a case. But do not imagine too much. I ought to have handed on the idea to someone who knows the violin better than I do (Joachim has unfortunately given up composing).

An excellent pianist himself, Brahms was keenly aware how important it was to understand the particular capabilities of each solo instrument.

Brahms extends an olive branch

He also had an ulterior motive in involving Joachim. They had been estranged for some seven years, and through the Double Concerto Brahms sought to effect a reconciliation. The great violinist, who had been one of Brahms's closest friends and most important professional collaborators, was an irrational, jealous type. He had accused his wife Amalie of adultery with the publisher Simrock and, convinced of her guilt, filed divorce proceedings in 1880.

Appalled at Joachim's behavior, Brahms took Amalie's side, writing her a letter of support that was eventually introduced as character evidence when the matter came before the court. Because Brahms was so famous and known to be Joachim's good friend, his letter proved decisive in a ruling against the violinist. Joachim was publicly embarrassed and promptly severed personal relations with the composer, remaining married in name only to Amalie, from

whom he permanently separated. It is a measure of his artistic integrity that he continued to champion Brahms's music in spite of their personal rift.

Some seven years later, the Double Concerto did patch the quarrel, and Brahms conducted Joachim and Hausmann in the premiere in Cologne on 15 October 1887. The work was coolly received, and while it must be considered standard repertoire, it has never caught the public imagination to quite the extent of the other Brahms concerti. The mostly likely reason for this oversight is practical. By definition, the concerto requires two superb virtuosi who can work together and make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Similarly, the conductor has the added challenge of following two soloists.

About the music

The music is vintage Brahms, full of passion, rich with melody and superbly crafted. After a resolute orchestral flourish to open, Brahms placed his cadenzas at the beginning, a ploy borrowed from Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto. As in the Beethovenian model, the movement proceeds in more conventional sonata form.

The slow movement is the Double Concerto's happiest inspiration, with a luxuriant and warm theme delivered in unison by the two soloists and developed with Brahmsian richness by the supporting orchestra. The woodwinds have a particularly rewarding role in the movement's

middle section. Brahms closes the concerto with a vigorous rondo that shows considerably more humor than we generally expect from Brahms, along with a dash of Hungarian paprika.

Brahms scored the Double Concerto for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, solo violin and cello, and strings.

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op. 55 ("Eroica")

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born 16 December, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died 26 March, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain keys were associated with specific ideas. Nobility of spirit -- specifically the nobility of heroism -- was a quality customarily linked with E-flat major. When Beethoven began work on his Third Symphony, Napoleon Bonaparte was First Consul of France and had embarked upon the political expansion that was to place his name among the greatest military leaders in history. Initially, Beethoven idealized Napoleon, perceiving him as the hero of revolutionary France and a champion against tyranny. He planned to dedicate his Third Symphony, an ambitious work in E-flat, to the French leader. The work's original subtitle was "Bonaparte."

Beethoven's amanuensis, Ferdinand Ries, and his patron, Count Moritz Lichnowsky, both witnessed the composer's explosive reaction to the news in May, 1804 that Napoleon had declared himself Emperor. According to Ries, Beethoven cried out:

Is he then, too, nothing more than an ordinary human being? Now he, too, will trample on all the rights of man and indulge only his ambition. He will exalt himself above all others, become a tyrant.

Beethoven then proceeded to tear the title page of his new symphony, still bearing its dedication to Bonaparte, in pieces. When he rewrote that initial page, he renamed the work "Sinfonia eroica." When published, it carried the subtitle "To celebrate the memory of a great man."

Only one year previously, early in 1803, Beethoven had been toying with the idea of permanent relocation to Paris, a remarkable fact that casts a different light on the famous story of the "Eroica" symphony's genesis. The late Beethoven scholar Maynard Solomon suggested that the proposed dedications of the Third Symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte, and of the "Kreutzer" Sonata, Op. 47, to a violinist in the entourage of Napoleon's general, Jean-Baptiste-Jules Bernadotte, may have both been intended as strategic moves to place Beethoven in a more favorable patronage position upon his arrival in the French capital. The move to France did not come to pass, in no small measure because of political developments.

Breaking new ground

While the story of the symphony's nickname (the first such in a Beethoven symphony) is justly famous, the real significance of the "Eroica" symphony lies in its music. "Eroica" means "heroic" in Italian, and the symphony is monumental in every sense: long, powerful, moving. When Beethoven completed it late in 1803, it was the lengthiest symphony ever written. The "Eroica" was pivotal in Beethoven's development not only as a symphonist but also as a

composer. With this one work, he divested himself of many eighteenth-century conventions and vaulted forward into uncharted territory.

About the music: Beethoven's revolutionary first movement

Two *fortissimo* chords announce immediately that we are to sit up and take notice; this is *not* background music. More than 200 years later, their effect is still electrifying, and sets the tone for the entire work. While the first movement is in clear sonata form, several features distinguish it from its predecessors. The development section is exceedingly long -- the longest in Beethoven, in fact -- and, directly after its climax, introduces an entirely new theme for flute and oboe, in the remote key of E-minor. Never one to let a fertile idea go unexplored, Beethoven recalls that theme in the recapitulation. But instead of bringing the movement to an expected close, he takes off running with the E-minor theme as the subject for a coda so extensive that it nearly matches the development in length.

Just prior to the recapitulation, when we expect the restatement of the main theme, *pianissimo* violin tremolos make the very air pregnant with anticipation. Perhaps the most famous "wrong notes" in all Beethoven then occur, when second horn states the opening triadic figure. Beethoven, however, has fooled us: the horn entrance is intentionally premature. Full orchestra drives home his cadence with two measures of decisive, *fortissimo* dominant seventh chords before resolving to the home tonality of E-flat. The horn's false entrance, a sort of acoustic pre-echo, is clearly marked in Beethoven's hand in the autograph. Yet many listeners assumed that it was an error. The more we hear this symphony, however, the more certain we

are that Beethoven knew precisely what he was doing. Every note of this symphony is calculated for maximum effect.

Funeral march in deep purple

The English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to the famous slow movement march as "a funeral procession in deep purple." It salutes the unnamed deceased hero of the title, and contains one of the great oboe solos in the orchestral repertoire. Beethoven also provided rich material for bassoon and flute. In the quasi-military section in major mode, we can hear intimations of the Fifth Symphony, which would follow the "Eroica" by four years. Timpani is a powerful presence in this slow movement, functioning both as bass and even occasionally as a melodic instrument, rather than mere punctuation.

A familiar tune

A whirlwind scherzo reduces three beats per measure to one, and features the entire horn section in its Trio. Beethoven then ices his cake with variations. The theme, actually a double theme consisting of bass line and melody, was familiar to Viennese audiences from Beethoven's ballet score, *The Creatures of Prometheus* (1800). Nobility of spirit, capricious humor, funeral march, fugue, poignant tenderness: all these and more find their way into Beethoven's cosmic finale, his ultimate tribute to the unnamed hero.

Beethoven worked on his third symphony between June and October, 1803. The palace of his patron Prince Lobkowitz was the venue for several private performances, probably the

following summer. The first public performance occurred at Franz Clement's benefit concert in Vienna on 7 April, 1805. The composer conducted.

The "Eroica" is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

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