



Gustav Meier
Music Director
63rd Season

1st Subscription Concert
Klein Memorial Auditorium
Saturday, October 18, 2008
8:00 p.m.

Gustav Meier, Conductor
Anita Chen, Piano and Violin

BRAHMS

Symphony no. 3 in F, op.90

Allegro con brio - Un poco sostenuto

Andante

Poco Allegretto

Allegro

INTERMISSION

MOZART

Concerto for piano, K. 467

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Allegro vivace assai

Anita Chen, Piano

PAGANINI

(arr. KREISLER)

Concerto in one movement for violin, op. 6

Allegro maestoso

Anita Chen, Violin

Tonight's concert is made possible in part by generous grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism and Rotair Industries.

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Gallery of Westport

Miss Chen performs on a 1740 J.B. Guadagnini violin, made in Piacenza, Italy. It was awarded to her by 'Gradoux-Matt Rare Violins.

PROGRAM NOTES

In Mozart's time, most concert music was newly or recently written. This ratio diminished through the 19th and 20th centuries until now, in the 21st, five percent or so of performed scores are contemporary, except at specialized venues. This has made the concert hall a kind of museum and raised the question whether current scores are out of touch with audiences or audiences are not keeping up with cultural change. A groundswell of experimental works that prefigure developing styles has always existed and some of these ought to be performed more than they are. Great works which survive their era are not created in a vacuum, but they go to the heart of what it meant to be human under the prevailing conditions of their age and so are permanently relevant. All three compositions on tonight's program are such cut-to-the-core creations.

Mozart is the child prodigy of all time. What he wrote at five is still viable by any technical or expressive measure. His father, Leopold, a musician in the service of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, gained a European reputation at 37 when his "epoch-making" (Groves) manual for violin playing was published in 1756. When Wolfgang turned out to be a phenom of nature and his older sister, Nannerl, a fine keyboardist, the father took the family on an unprecedented three year trip (1766-1769) to Paris, England and all points in between. The children's performances supported the family, along with aristocratic and some government help. Subsequently, father and son took three trips to Italy from late 1769 to 1771 for performances of commissioned works and concerts. By 15, Wolfgang knew everything going on in European music and had absorbed it all, an education then attainable in no other way.

The prevailing philosophy of the time came from the philosophes of the Enlightenment (Aufklärung) who believed that "through rational analysis the world could be understood, explained and regulated" (Gutman, *Mozart*). The German philosopher, Kant, in a 1784 essay, *What*

is Enlightenment, used the motto *Sapere aude* (Dare to know) as an answer. "Free intellect and introspective sympathy went hand in hand as ministers to virtue,... the community" (they) were to be applied to "in principle embraced the whole of humanity" (Taruskin, *Oxford History*). "Let your reason furnish the answer" and "soon superstition will die" are two lines from Mozart opera librettos among dozens that could be cited along these lines. Some order was still necessary. In a famous letter to his father Mozart wrote "just as a man in a towering rage oversteps all bounds of order, so must the music forget itself...But music, even in the most terrible situations, must never offend the ear..." The American Constitution with its built-in balances of power, incidentally, is an Enlightenment document.

The 1755 earthquake in Lisbon on All Saints Day when a tsunami leveled the city in a matter of minutes spurred the acceptance of Enlightenment ideals against the domination of received wisdom and the status quo. But there was an Achilles heel in all this; not everything seemed explainable by reason or fit accepted moral imperatives. Universals were not so easy to come by. At the end of the century, Romanticism as an "attempt to transcend the sphere of cognition, to experience higher, more spiritual things, and to sense the presence of the ineffable" (E. T. A. Hoffman) came into focus. Truth was inward (innigkeit), "infinite longing" a desirable state and "shared solitude" the essence of a concert experience. The psyche was being unleashed into whatever subjective directions it wanted to go. Virtuosity turned out to be one of them and audiences, now expanded by the newly-minted bourgeoisie, responded. The Italian violinist, Paganini, was the first giant on the scene. After hearing the flashy Polish violinist, Duranowski, as a child and rediscovering the concertos of Locatelli with their unaccompanied cadenzas, he patiently developed his own skills for twenty years before setting out to conquer European capitals in 1828. His major international career lasted "a mere six years, but its long

SYMPHONY NO. 3, OP. 90

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Finished in the summer of 1883, the first performance of the *3rd Symphony* in November was one of Brahms's greatest triumphs - which made him uneasy (how do you top such a success?). Ambiguity is a Brahms trait and the heroic opening of the first movement is an especially concentrated example. Two bold chords in woodwinds and brass alternate a solid major harmony with a needs-to-resolve diminished one. In the next two measures a major/minor dichotomy is clearly implied and two rhythms appear simultaneously; 3 + 3 and 2 + 2 + 2 - the famous hemiola formula which creates a kind of weaving lilt. The theme itself seems to recall a motive of Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony. Moreover, another Brahms signature idea, the shifting third, in this instance F A (A flat) F will be prominent. After "this searing opening much of the first movement is gentle and beautiful" (Swafford), although in the development "the world has grown dark" (Steinberg). There is an expansive coda, but the ending is meditative. The second movement *Andante* is pastoral on the whole and in "clear, sunlit major, wistful sometimes, with only a few clouds of the minor mode" (Steinberg). The third movement *intermezzo* is built on a sighing, yearning, inward looking melody first heard in the cellos. The finale opens quietly in minor (unusual) with a sinuous theme that has modal overtones in strings and bassoons. A chorale-like melody follows, a development of the second theme of the second movement. The second theme proper is a surging, lyrical idea in major which "provides some lightness" (Swafford). These materials are transformed, varied and expanded, but in the end a quiet coda closes the work, not at all usual for a monumental composition. The last measures are a final cadence based on the opening theme of the first movement, as though this is what it needed to do from the beginning. 19th century art historian, Walter Pater, wrote that without words, stories or images "music is the art to which all other arts aspire." Music historian Carl Dalhaus observed, "A Brahms symphony is not directed at the bourgeois public as a whole but primarily at the individual listener... each member of a crowd is nevertheless entirely on their own."

term historical impact must far exceed any other single-handed burst of musical activity of comparable duration. With his gaunt and gangling appearance and his demonic temperament, he almost single-handedly forged the romantic mystique of virtuosity as a superhuman, even diabolical endowment" (Taruskin). His appeal was not just as a technician, however. All the great musicians alive at the time were impressed; "I have just heard an angel play," Schubert said, one who would "never come again."

By the time Brahms reached his majority (he was seven when Paganini died), the first flush of Romanticism was waning. Spontaneity alone was not going to be sufficient as the main way to carry a work to completion any longer. Music split in two directions: (1) the expansion of forces, means and line seen as the Music of the Future by Liszt and Wagner and (2) the continued use of past forms, techniques and instrumental combinations congenial to Schumann and Brahms. When Schumann was taken to an asylum for the insane a few months after they had met, Brahms returned to help his wife, Clara (first of the great women concert pianists) and family during this last illness, a contact that continued all his life.

The thinker, essayist and poet, Friedrich Schlegel, early in the 19th century had observed that Classical genres are determined by "form, content and style," but Romantic ones by "manner, tendency and tone." He hypothesized a "romantic imperative" - that "the mixture of all poetic types" had become an "historical necessity." "Fragments" were the essential components of art. This process can be followed in the Brahms *3rd Symphony*.

Fragmentation continued in the 20th century with a roar and this accounts for some of the disconnect between composers and audiences. If technology is available, it is possible to be instantly in contact with the remotest village in Africa from New York, Tokyo or anywhere else. Since it is really one world in many ways at this point, it is time there was more consensus. Perhaps art can be made whole again, although that is a tall order.

CONCERTO FOR PIANO. K 467

Wolfgang A. Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Mozart angrily left his job with the Salzburg Archbishop in 1781 and went to Vienna as a free lance musician. His first years there were successful, but he would have been better off to have saved some of his income rather than have his own horse and carriage! Piano Concertos were needed for his Academies (Concert Series) and he wrote several each year in 1783-85, - works that raised the concerto to symphonic proportions, giving full range to his imagination and performing skills. The *Concerto, K 467* belongs to 1785, a “big piece” with “festive trumpets and drums” (Steinberg) in the ceremonial key of C major, characterized also by “calm perseverance and self-assurance” (Girdlestone). It followed by one month the storm and conflict that dominated *K. 466 in D minor*.

The first movement opens with a march-like theme “in stocking feet” which is developed after a pseudo-second idea follows. The piano enters innocently, the march is repeated, still softly, the piano takes over, leading to passage work which will become more and more massive as the movement progresses. There is a brief appearance of G minor with a plaintive motive that will near the end of Mozart’s life become the main theme of the first movement of the *Symphony, K. 550*. The second theme is pleasantly sensuous. These ideas are then developed with symphonic splendor. The Andante “essays an entire movement of unrelieved, time- stopping beauty, blending chromatic pathos and measured tranquility, sustaining a line of over-arching beauty... The finale will have to provide quick relief from an overpowering experience, for it is no small feat to have rescued beauty from the ravages of time” (Solomon - no better description could be written). This is the melody that became the theme song of the movie *Elvira Madigan*. The last movement does exactly what Solomon calls for - music “of crackling brilliance, not unshadowed, but informed by a captivating sense of momentum and exuberantly inventive humor. (Steinberg).

CONCERTO IN ONE MOVEMENT

Nicolò Paganini (1782 - 1840)

arr. Fritz Kreisler (1875 - 1962)

Paganini “accomplished his life’s ambition: to extract every possible secret from the violin, which he loved more dearly than anything else” (Groves). Virtuosos wrote for their own performance: Paganini did not even write down some of the passages he played for fear others would steal them. Of course, ‘other’ violinists quickly analyzed and copied the technical aspects of his playing and it is hard now to realize the meteor-like effect he had on Europe with his first performances. The violin concertos “are well constructed, with a fine balance between technical display and musical material” (Groves). “My great rule in art is complete unity in diversity and that is very hard to achieve,” he wrote about composing. Despite the hype that surrounded him, he was a cut above most everyone on all counts of musicianship and creativeness.

Fritz Kreisler made this arrangement of the first movement of the *Violin Concerto, op. 6* in 1934 while crossing the Atlantic by ship from France to New York. The original is a substantial work: the attractive thematic variety, solid orchestral support and violinistic legerdemain are all still here in the arrangement.

- Burton Hatheway