

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers

George Shangrow, music director and conductor

present

Musical Feasts VI

The Broadway Symphony

Saturday, April 27, 1991 8:00p.m.

Kane Hall, University of Washington

Symphony No. 80 in D minor

Franz Joseph Haydn

Allegro spiritoso

Adagio

Menuetto and Trio

Finale: Presto

Variations on a Rococo Theme

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Daniel Lee, cello

Intermission

Symphony No. 4

Johannes Brahms

Allegro non troppo

Andante moderato

Allegro giocoso

Allegro energico e passionato

The concert is co-sponsored by Western Pianos and Classic KING-FM

Program Notes

Franz Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 80 in D Minor

It is a common assumption that those who produce art in great quantity fail to produce art of great quality. This assumption is often valid; many artists develop a routine by which they can produce their work somewhat mechanically, and the results are usually uninspiring.

What, then, can we expect from a composer who wrote more than 100 symphonies? 100 is more than 10 times as many symphonies as Beethoven, Schubert, or Mahler wrote, and 25 times as many as were written by Brahms. None of Haydn's symphonies are played as often as the least performed symphonies of Beethoven or Brahms, and only about 20 of them are in the standard orchestral repertoire. Is this because all the rest are merely routine variations on the same basic formula? Many people apparently think so; if you are one of them, this evening's performance of the 80th Symphony should change your mind.

The 80th is rarely played nowadays; tonight's performance may well be its Seattle premiere. It is hard to understand why it hasn't retained the popularity it enjoyed during Haydn's lifetime. The first movement is an eccentric mixture of dramatic passion and irreverent humor, and the contrast between the two is extreme even for Haydn. In the beautiful slow movement, Haydn keeps his mischievous impulses under control most of the time (except for some comically intrusive dotted rhythms). The deceptively simple Minuet features a quotation of Gregorian chant in the Trio, while the Finale is one of the best examples of Haydn's ability to build a musical structure out of almost nothing. This tour de force is also a fabulous joke, as the little motif on which it is based is nothing more than a late-18th Century standard accompanimental figure. Mozart is known to have conducted this symphony in 1785; I would love to have heard him laugh when he first looked at the score of the Finale.

— Notes by Zink Trifle



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Variations on a Theme Rococo, op. 33, for cello and orchestra.

These seven variations for solo violoncello with orchestra were composed in 1876, when Tchaikovsky was 36 years old, following the composition of *Francesca di Rimini* and the Third Symphony. At this time he still held a certain joy in the present and optimism for the future, just one year before his disastrous marriage to Antonina Milyukova, a young admirer, was to overshadow his life and music with depression.

During 1876 Tchaikovsky travelled to Bayreuth as a music critic for a performance of Wagner's *Ring*. Unimpressed by the sonic seas crashing about him (he recalled

that people were far more interested in the food, and that Wagner appeared to be a mere caricature of himself), he returned to Russia to continue to produce in the lush, classical style of the Rococo Variations.

The work is dedicated to Tchaikovsky's colleague, the cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who, presumably, commissioned it. He gave it its first performance in Moscow on November 30, 1877, under the baton of Nikolay Rubenstein.

The orchestra is of classical proportions — pairs of winds, two horns, and strings. The elegance of the eighteenth century is evident in the opening *moderato assai quasi Andante*, continues to the graceful cadence at the end of the first half of the Theme, and on into the first variation. The Slavic roots of the composer soon become evident in the variations to follow, however, as the cadenza at the end of Variation II leads us into a C Major "valse triste" in Variation III, more in Tchaikovsky's idiomatic style.

Variation IV, in A Major, returns to the theme with a series of flourishes and rapid scales interposed in the thematic material. Variation V has small virtuosic cadenzas for the cello inserted between statements of the theme by the solo flute, ending with an extended cadenza for the soloist. This leads into the sixth variation, a mildly Russian cantalena in D minor, where the once happy woodwind theme is stated mournfully in the minor key.

The spirited final variation, no. VII, turns the stately theme into a sprightly jig; the soloist flies about the range of the instrument like an acrobatic ballerina from the Swan Lake. The work comes to an ending amid virtuosic arpeggios from the soloist and five tonic chords in the orchestra.

While the refined craftsmanship and artful invention of this piece show us Tchaikovsky's admiration of the Baroque and Classical styles (as viewed through the rose-colored glasses of an arch Romanticist), the scheme of the variations was not entirely of his design. Evidently from the beginning he allowed Fitzenhagen great freedom in modifying the solo cello part — in the autograph score, the greater portion of the part is in Fitzenhagen's hand. The D minor variation, no. VI, for example, was originally variation III; but Fitzenhagen, realizing the ability of the movement to draw applause, had it placed later in the piece, and he omitted the eighth variation entirely.

The ending seems to have suited both Tchaikovsky and Fitzenhagen, however. At a performance of the work at the Wiesbaden Festival in 1879, Liszt commented to Fitzenhagen "You carried me away! You played splendidly", and regarding the piece he observed: "Now there, at last, is real music!"

— notes by Bill Hunnicutt

Symphony No. 4 in e minor - Johannes Brahms

The Fourth Symphony of Brahms was composed during two summers in the Styrian Alps (1884-5) and received its premiere in October of 1885 with the Meiningen Orchestra conducted by the composer but prepared by the great conductor Hans Von Bülow. Although the work was well-received, Brahms was never confident about his new works. In the case of this symphony, he first sent a score to his friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg requesting her opinion with the note, "The cherries never get quite ripe enough for eating in these parts, so don't be hesitant if you don't like the taste of the thing. I really don't want to write a bad Number 4!"

And he didn't stop here! Once he was back in Vienna he arranged a reading session of the work with two keyboards at a local piano showroom. To this event he invited a couple of critic "friends", a conductor, and three other close acquaintances. The reaction to the new symphony didn't bolster his confidence: after each movement were moments of embarrassed silence and negative remarks. Most everything was criticized except that all agreed that the Finale was a work of great strength, but they couldn't understand putting a stern passacaglia in as the last movement. Brahms was very disappointed, but he finally suggested that two pianos simply couldn't do justice to an orchestral work.

He was right, and at the first rehearsal of the new work Hans Von Bülow hailed it as "stupendous, quite original, individual and rock-like — incomparable strength from start to finish." In fact he scheduled the work as a mainstay in the Meiningen Orchestra's tour of western Germany and Holland.

The work also ended up being the Viennese public's farewell to Brahms. On May 7, 1897 (his 64th birthday) the Fourth Symphony was performed in Vienna with the composer in attendance. This was to be his last concert, as he had an advanced case of liver cancer. Following each movement, the audience applauded with great enthusiasm and with sufficient length to bring Brahms to the front of his box. After the Finale, the audience seemed unwilling to let him go. His pupil and biographer, Florence May, described it thusly, "Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there, shrunken in form, with lined countenance, strained expression, white hair hanging lank, and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that s/he was saying farewell. Another outburst of applause and yet another; one more

acknowledgement from the master; and Brahms and his Vienna had parted forever." His death came three weeks later on April 3rd.

The music of the symphony confirms the description of Brahms as a Janus-like character. Although the harmonies and orchestrations and melodies are new and forward-looking, the forms of the movements, and most particularly the last movement, look to the past for their inspiration.

The first movement is in a modified sonata-allegro form, like his predecessors Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, but Brahms does not repeat the exposition. As he heads off into the development section, the first eight bars are exactly like the exposition — until the third horn with the clarinets moves off in a new direction. The exposition itself is typical for Brahms in that it is in three sections tonally and thematically: the violins announce the first theme based on thirds in the tonic, the celli and horns the second, somewhat martial, theme in the dominant minor, and then the woodwinds bring in the third melodic idea in the dominant major. This was used by Brahms in his great g-minor piano quartet years before, but in that incarnation he did not separate the sections by tonally ambiguous insertions. These interludes also harken to the opening theme with its underlying thirds, using third-related keys to move from section-to-section and later as the fundamental idea in the development section. The coda to the movement can only be described as powerfully thrilling.

The regal opening theme of the second movement is also third-oriented. The tune first moves up a third, and then down, at first one thinks "Is this going to be boring?", but Brahms immediately takes that fear away with his sublimely beautiful harmonization of the theme as the clarinet plays. There are many gorgeous moments in this movement, among them the great interludes played only by the strings (once with the addition of bassoons) and the cascading figures tossed around by the woodwinds. One of the great harmonic finds in the entire music world happens in just the last few bars of this movement.

The third movement is unlike those found in the first three symphonies, here, instead, we have a full-blown scherzo of late Beethoven proportions. All the themes and ideas in the movement are derived from the first ten bars, but throughout the movement we are constantly being surprised by new harmonies and textures as well as complete mood shifts.

Our Soloist

The Broadway Symphony is pleased to welcome to his symphonic debut cellist **Daniel Lee**. Now eleven years old, Daniel began his cello studies at the age of six and began winning prizes at the age of eight, capturing first place honors at the Eastside Music Festival. Since then, he has been chosen as outstanding at the Seattle Young Artists Festival and was among the 1990 winners of the Northwest Chamber Orchestra Young Artist's Competition. Daniel is a student of cellist Richard Aaron. Lest you think Mr. Lee is single-talented, know that he began his studies on the piano at the age of five, and has won various awards performing on this instrument as well. Daniel's other interests are fishing, reading, taekwondo, drawing, and art. His parents are the owners of Yak's Deli, a popular Fremont district eatery.

Really, this movement is an extended romp through a grand musical playroom!

The Finale is the strongest movement in the work, and it is based on the oldest musical form: the chaconne or passacaglia. These two terms basically refer to the same musical technique: a repeating theme, usually very strong in its harmonic implications, is sounded over and over again with variations. In this movement Brahms states the theme in the treble voice at the beginning: it is eight notes long, each note being of equal length, and then he proceeds to do 32 variations on the theme divided into two groups of 16, and closing with an extended coda. The great thing about this movement is the

great variety of "characters" we experience in the many variations. This is also what the Baroque composers found so appealing about this form.

It is lastly interesting to note that Brahms' theme is identical (except for one added note) to the theme Bach used for the great finale chaconne movement in his Cantata No. 150, "Nach dir Herr, verlanget mich." This movement, so embedded in the tonic key of e minor, is nonetheless filled with harmonic and rhythmic invention as well as inspired orchestration. It was Schoenberg that remarked that Brahms the conservative was also Brahms the progressive.

- notes by George Shangrow

Spring Finale Concerts!

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers will end their season with two rousing final concerts which will round off their Music From the High Baroque Courts and Abendmusik series.

(Please note that the dates for both of these concerts are different than were originally announced last fall.)

Sunday, May 5, 2:00 pm

Music from the High Baroque Courts IV

Vivaldi Concerto in g minor

J.S. Bach Trio Sonatas from the Musical Offering

Handel Ode on St. Cecilia's Day for chorus, soloists and orchestra

Lakeside School Chapel

14050-1st NE

Sunday, May 19, 7:00 pm

Abendmusik VI

Bach Cantatas

BWV 34 O ewiges Feuer, O Ursprung der Liebe

BWV 39 Brich dem Hungrigen den Brot

BWV 131 Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir

University Unitarian Church

6556-35th NE

Call 682-5208 for tickets and information.

The Broadway Symphony

George Shangrow, Conductor

Violins

Susan Abrams
Betsy Alexander
Sheila Bristow
Susan Dunn
Danielle Eidenberg
Kristin Fossum
Jenny Hermonson
Deb Kirkland
Fritz Klein, Concertmaster
Pam Kummert
Jean E. Le Norman
Eileen Lusk
Sally Macklin
Avron Maletzky
Leif Ivar-Pedersen, Principal Second
Sondra N. Schink
Erich Schweiger
Janet Showalter
Kenna Smith
Stephanie Zaza

Viola

Anna Bezzo-Clark
Anders McCarthy
Katherine McWilliams, Principal
Timothy Prior
Stephanie Read
Robert Shangrow
Nancy Winder

Cello

Evelyn Albrecht
Gary Anderson
Valerie Ross
Joan Selvig
Maryann Tapiro, Principal
Julie Reed Wheeler
Matthew Wyant
Margaret Wright

Bass

Allan Goldman, Principal
Josephine Hansen
Jay Wilson

Flute

Kate Alverson
Janeen Shigley, Principal

Oboe

Huntley Beyer
M.Shannon Hill, Principal

Clarinet

Kathleen Boone
Gary Oules, Principal

Bassoon

Chris Harschman
William Schink, Principal

Contrabassoon

Michel Jolivet

Horn

Jennifer Crowder
Laurie Heidt
William Hunnicutt
Susan Perry

Trumpet

Matthew Dalton, Principal
Drew Fletcher

Trombone

Cuauhtemoc Escobedo, Principal
James Hattori

Bass Trombone

David Brewer

Timpani

Daniel Oie

Percussion

Emily Niven

The Broadway Symphony
operates on a basis of rotational
seating, therefore personnel are
listed alphabetically in each
section.

☎ For tickets and information about all Broadway Symphony/
Seattle Chamber Singers events, call 682-5208.

The Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers

George Shangrow, Founder, Musical Director

Daniel Petersen, Managing Director

Ron Haight, Assistant Conductor, Production Manager

Betsy McCall, Development Associate

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(206) 682-5208

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