THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY
George Shangraw, conductor

IN CONCERT

January 29, 1989

Kane Hall

PROGRAM

Consecration of the House Overture
Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 96 in D Major “The Miracle”
Franz Joseph Haydn

Adagio; Allegro
Andante
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Vivace assai

INTERMISSION

La Creation du Monde
Darius Milhaud

Vier Letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs)
Richard Strauss

Fruhling
September
Beim Schlafengehen

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers are artists in residence at University Unitarian Church.

Carol Sams, soprano
PROGRAM NOTES

by Gary Fladmo


In the case of Beethoven, it could be argued that the statement that genius is often the product of an age in truth. It is Beethoven who is credited with breaking free of the restrictions of Classical form and style to unleash his creativity in an almost defiant way, challenging convention with new approaches to dissonance, tonality, form and the use of instrumental colors.

In addition to the four overtures Beethoven composed for his only opera, "Fidelio", he also wrote overtures and incidental music for a number of stage productions. The Broadway Symphony has in prior seasons performed the overtures to "Egmont", "King Stephen", and "Coriolanus". The incidental music to the dramas is rarely played, but the overtures have survived as concert favorites throughout the world. They are, as Milton Cross has suggested, true dramas in miniature. The overture to "The Consecration of the House" is no exception.

In 1822 a new theater, the Josefstaud, was to be opened in Vienna. The theater director, a man named Hensel, had recommended Beethoven's overture and incidental music for a presentation in Hungary of a drama called "The Ruins of Athens". A writer named Meiss was called upon to adapt the text, changing the location of the events of the drama to Vienna instead of Pest. Beethoven was commissioned to make alterations in his scores to set the music to the new dramatic requirements.

In addition to making the adaptation of the existing music, Beethoven wrote several new pieces. In addition, he had recognized that the overtures to "The Ruins of Athens" (the shortest and possibly weakest of all his overtures) was inadequate to the new drama. Because it was to be used to open the new theater, a composition of greater significance was demanded.

Austen Schindler was present to observe the creation of the sketches for the new overture. Of that process Schindler wrote: "One day, while I was on a walk with him - the master - and his nephew in the lovely horticultural garden behind Beethoven's house, asked us to stroll on ahead, and to wait for him at a particular spot. He soon caught up with us, remarking that he had noted down two motifs for an overture. He at once said as he had planned the work, that one motif was to be treated in free style, but the other in strict, Haendelian style."

The composition which resulted, unrelated in any respect to the reworked "Ruins of Athens" music, can be viewed in its middle section as a personal tribute to Handel, for whom Beethoven's respect was well known and documented.

The first performance of the drama and its music were met with mild success. The audience of 1822 found the adaptation of the overture to be badly done. However, despite the fact that two sound conductors (one on each side of the stage) failed to keep Beethoven (who was conducting from the piano) and the orchestra together, the composer was met with wildly enthusiastic responses by the audiences. There were multiple call outs for the composer.

Beethoven's deafness undoubtedly severely hampered his conducting of the performances, and signaled the end of his conducting career. The audiences saw beyond those limitations, looking past his physical malady to cheer his accomplishment. Modern audiences continue to find his work to be unique among Beethoven's concert overtures. It has Beethoven's unmistakable stylistic stamp, yet is surprisingly fresh and different from all of his predecessors.

Franz Joseph Haydn - Symphony No. 96 in D Major ("The Miraculous")

This writer has on a prior occasion described the rivalry that developed on the London concert scene between Haydn and his gifted pupil, Playel. Playel's presence in London was the doing of the concert promoter, Salomon, who brought the composer to England in order to capitalize on his fame to win the English audience.

Haydn would refer to the rivalry with Playel as a murderousalousious war, and it spurred much debate within English society as to which of the two was the better composer. Haydn probably fared better in the comparison of the two as performers than as composers. A review in the Quarterly stated: "The nine days wonder about Haydn begins to owe. He has been exhibited at the Academy of Science and other music meetings greatly to the advantage of John Bull, who expected to hear another Cranmer or a Clementi. But the truth is, this wonderful composer is but a very poor performer; and though he may be qualified to preside at a harpsichord, he has never heard another Christina or a Clementi."

Symphony No. 96 in D Major is one of the twelve symphonies Haydn wrote for Salomon (six during each of his two visits to London). Its nickname, "The Miracle" has been erroneously ascribed to an unusual event, described by the early Haydn biographer, Dies:

"When Haydn appeared in the orchestra and sat down at the pianoforte to conduct a symphony himself, the curious audience in the parterre left their seats and crowded toward the orchestra to see the better to see the famous Haydn quite close. The seats in the middle of the floor were then empty and hardly were they empty when the great chandelier crashed down and broke into bits, throwing the numerous gathering into the greatest consternation. As soon as the first moment of fright was over and those who had pressed forward could think of the danger they had luckily escaped and found words to express it, several persons uttered the state of their feelings with loud cries of 'Miracle! Miracle!'"

The actual event happened in 1795, some four years after the 1791 performance to which it was attributed. And, it was during a performance of Symphony No. 102 and 96. How the wrong work and time of performance became associated with Symphony No. 96 remains a mystery.

The work in four movements. The first, Adagio Allegro begins with a short, slow introduction which goes way to a sonata form based entirely on the first three eight notes played by the first violin at the beginning of the Allegro section. Although conventional in form, the movement is full of surprises in the orchestration, tonality, and use of false leads in the thematic treatment.

The second movement, Andante, is a rondo couched in an almost pastoral treatment. The sense of the unexpected continues in the movement as surprising foreshadows of orchestral color, especially in the woodwinds, appear.
The third movement, Menuetto: Allegretto, has a very danceable quality, although the purist’s sense of balance and proportion will likely be upset by the lack of symmetry in the phrasing. It’s a movement written by somebody who obviously understood the peasant lifestyle.

The Finale, Vivace, is another rondo form, notable for its lack of thematic development. Haydn chooses to use the element of contrast in the digressions from the rondo theme by using very different material, only some of which can be weakly linked to some of the melodic phrases of the rondo theme.

Darius Milhaud - La Creation du Monde
(The Creation of the World)

Around 1917 Erik Satie gathered about him in Paris the most important of the young French musical artists to pursue the ideal of freeing French music from the bonds of impressionism, primitivism, or any other “ism” which appeared to stifle creativity aimed at plumbing the depths of popular tastes in music. These individuals delved into the musical realism of the dance hall and cabaret, discovering there such popular musical idioms as jazz.

Ballet became a favorite means of expression, and although many of the ballets that resulted from their efforts proved to be of little interest to their public, the ideal they espoused did exert a profound influence on the serious music coming out of France in the early years of the Twentieth Century. That ideal, called actualite, espoused a musical aesthetic which turned away from preciosity, romanticism, ornamentation for its own sake, and any attempt to obscure the musical line. Music became a slice of real life for these individuals.

Six composers rose to prominence to such a degree that they became known as “Les Six”, largely as the result of being so labeled by a French critic in reviewing an album of their piano music. Among them were Georges Auric, Luis Durey, Germaine Taillefert, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, and Darius Milhaud. Only Honegger, Poulenc, and Milhaud continue to be regarded as having any lasting significance.

Milhaud, like each of the other members of “Les Six” ultimately attempted to disavow any such association on artistic grounds, although he remained a close friend with each of the others. His ability to exploit popular idioms while injecting them with his own appealing with and the use of dissonance and polytonality made him the leading figure in French music after the death of Ravel.

Milhaud composed La Creation du monde in 1922 following a visit to New York’s Harlem. He became fascinated with the black jazz bands he heard there, and the ballet music he created following those experiences represents one of the earliest successful attempts to employ jazz elements in a serious orchestral work.

The plot of the ballet centers on the observation of the creation of the world through the eyes of an aborigine. The action is staged on a darkened set with many dancers representing birds and animals. Some are seen on stilts as representations of herons present at the creation.

The published score incorporates the following notes about each of the movements:

“I. The Chaos Before Creation. Giant deities of Creation hold council.”

“II. The Confused Mass Begins to Move. Suddenly a tree appears, and then various animals.”

“III. The Animals Join in a Dance. Two bodies emerge limb by limb from the central mass.”

“IV. The Pair Perform a Dance of Desire. The remaining mass dissolves into human beings who join in a frenetic round to the point of vertigo.”

“V. The Crowd Disappears in Little Groups. The Negro Adam and Eve, left behind, embrace in a lasting kiss. It is Springtime.”

We’re certain the charm and straightforward objectivity of Milhaud’s music, devoid of personal artistic confession, will delight you as it has audiences ever since its first performance.

Richard Strauss - Four Last Songs for Soprano and Orchestra

Richard Strauss is a somewhat unique figure in modern music. While most musical personalities who have earned a lasting reputation have reached that position over the duration of a career, Strauss composed his greatest works early in his career and seemed to undergo a creative disintegration as his career reached its end. There were occasional returns to his early brilliance, among them the Four Last Songs for Soprano and Orchestra, but for the most part, his late works never reached the profundity of the early ones.

Strauss raised orchestration to new heights, exploring the resources of the orchestra as a sonic medium like no composer before him. He gained fame as a conductor, although witnesses to his conducting technique have described him as a poker-faced, passionate maestro. Given the nature of his music, that seems a strange contradiction.

The song became one of his most expressive and personal media. Over his career he wrote nearly one hundred and fifty songs. His talent for orchestration carried over to his treatment of the human voice. He was a master of understanding the role of accompaniment, sensitively responsive to the nuances of texts, aware of the atmosphere to be conveyed through his music, and capable of capturing the dramatic essence of the text through his gift for melody.

Strauss’ wife, Pauline de Ahna, was a renowned soprano in both the opera and recital worlds. She had given recitals with her husband for many years, and there is probably no doubt that she served as the inspiration which made songs such a continuing feature of his compositional life.

Of the Four Last Songs, the fourth, Im Abendrot (At Gloaming) was composed first. Strauss seems to draw a parallel between the end of day and the arrival of death. He chose the horn, to him a symbol of the life force, to quote in the song the “Transfiguration” motive from his tone poem, Death and Transfiguration, written some sixty years earlier.

Having completed the song about 1948, Strauss was given a book of poems by Hermann Hesse while on a holiday in Switzerland. He chose four poems to set to music from the collection. Only three of them were finished. In the order of performance they are:

Frühlings (Spring). September (September), and Beim Schlaflengehen (Going to Sleep). When the three songs are combined with Im Abendrot and performed in the listed order, they seem to constitute a song cycle depicting the events of a lifetime. Sprinftime represents youth. September an aging time. Going to Sleep approaching death, and At Gloaming the realization of peace following death.

The voice soars to rich accompaniment in beautiful expression. The four works were not performed together until eight months after Strauss’ death, when Kirsten Flagstad, Strauss’ preferred vocal interpreter, performed them in London’s Royal Albert Hall on May 22, 1950. They represent not only examples of the rich contribution Strauss made to the development of the art song, but they stand as a most fitting tribute to his life and ideals as a composer.
THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY
George Shangrow, conductor

VIOLIN
Betsy Alexander
Pamela Carson
Rebecca Clemens-Keith
Susan Dunn
Jeffrey Forbes
Eduardo Guerra
Debbie Kirkland
Fritz Klein, concertmaster
Diane Lange
Jeanne Le Norman
Eileen Lusk
Sally Macklin
Avron Maletzky
Jeanne Nadreau
Leif-Ivar Pedersen, principal second
Phyllis Rowe
Sondra Schink
Erich Schweiger
Kenna Smith
Myrmie Van Kempen

OBOE
Huntley Beyer
M. Shannon Hill, principal

ENGLISH HORN
Janet Harrington

CLARINET
Kathleen Boone
Marko Velikonja, principal

BASS CLARINET
Jerome Vinikow

ALTO SAXOPHONE
Sue Dunn

BASSOON
Daniel Hershman
William Schink, principal

CONTRA BASSOON
Jeffrey Eldridge

HORN
Jennifer Crowder
Laurie Heidt
William Hunnicutt
Beverly Southwell

TRUMPET
Matt Dalton, principal
Gary Fladmoe
Daniel Harrington

TROMBONE
William Irving
Bryce Ferguson
Steven Wampler

TUBA
David Brewer

TIMPANI
Daniel Oie

PERCUSSION
Owen Bjerke

HARP
Naomi Kato

PIANO/CELESTA
Robert Schilpeteroor

PERSONNEL MANAGER
Eileen Lusk

The Broadway Symphony operates on a policy of regular rotation for orchestral seating; therefore, personnel are listed alphabetically in each section.
PROGRAM NOTES

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Austen Schindler was present to observe the creation of the sketches for the new overture. Of that process Schindler wrote: "One day, while I was on a walk with him - the master - and his nephew in the lovely helenium near Baden, Beethoven asked us to stroll on ahead, and to wait for him at a particular spot. He soon caught up with us, remarking that he had noodled down two motifs for an overture. He sat at once told us how he planned the work, that one motif was to be treated in free style, but the other to the classic, Mannheim style."

The composition which resulted, unrelated in any respect to the reworked "Ruins of Athens" music, can be viewed in its middle section as a personal tribute to Handel, for whom Beethoven's respect was well known and documented.

The first performance of the drama and its music were met with mixed success. The audiences of 1822 found the adaptation of the overture to be badly done. However, despite the fact that two sub-orchestras (one on each side of the stage) failed to keep Beethoven (who was conducting from the piano) and the orchestra together, the composer was met with widely enthusiastic responses by the audiences. There were multiple call outs for the composer.

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