CLASSICAL TRIUMVIRATE
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2007 – 3:00 PM
FIRST FREE METHODIST CHURCH
ORCHESTRA SEATTLE and the SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
George Shargow, conductor

PROGRAM

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf, Opus 74, No. 2
1. O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf
2. O Gott, ein’ Tauf vom Himmel gieß
3. O Erd, schlag aus
4. Hier leiden wir die größte Not
5. Da wollen wir all danken dir
   Seattle Chamber Singers

Tragic Overture, Opus 81
Orchestra Seattle

JOHANNES SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
Cantata No. 106, Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* Actus Tragicus * BWV 106
I. Soprano: Molto adagio
II. Chorus: No indication; Allegro; Adagio assai; Tenor solo: Lento; Bass solo: Vivace
   Chorus: Andante (Chorale melody: Ich hab mein’Sach Gott heimgestellt)
III. Alto solo: No indication; Bass solo with Chorale (Mit Fleiß und Freude ich fahre dahin)
   N. Chorus: No indication; Allegro
   Katherine Weld, mezzo-soprano; Stephen Wall, tenor; Brian Blax, bass
   Shari Muller-Ho & Jenna Calixto, flutes; Ronnee Fullerton & Lee Inman, gambas; Matthew Wyant, cello; Steve Messick, string bass; Robert Keckley, organ

— Intermission —

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Five Part-songs for A Cappella Chorus
1. Abendstänzchen, Opus 42, No. 1
2. Dein Herzlein mild, Opus 62, No. 4
3. All meine Herzgedanken, Opus 62, No. 5
4. Es geht ein Wehen, Opus 62, No. 6
5. Letztes Glück, Opus 104, No. 3

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 36
Adagio molto–Allegro con brio
Larghetto
Scherzo and Trio; Allegro
Allegro molto

Last Happiness, opus 104, No. 3
Leblos gleitet Blatt um Blatt
Still und traurig von den Bäumen;
Selens Hoffens nimmer satt,
Lebt das Herz in Fühlungstäumen.

Noch verweilt ein Sonnenblick
Bei den späten Hagerosen,
Wie bei einem letzten Glück,
Einem süßen, hoffnungslosen.

Leaf upon leaf floats lifelessly,
quietly and sadly from the trees;
its hopes never satisfied,
the heart dwells in dreams of spring.

Yet a sunny glance still lingers
in the late-blooming rose bush,
like one last bit of happiness —
a sweet hopelessness.

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE

Viola
Deborah Daoust
Beatrice Dolf
Audrey Don
Katherine McWilliams*
Andrew Schirmer
Ella Wallace

Flute
Jenna Calixto
Shari Muller-Ho*
Melissa Underhill

Piccolo
Melissa Underhill

Oboe
David Barnes
John Dimond

Clarinet
Alan Lawrence
Matthew Wyant*

Bassoon
Jeff Eldridge
Judith Lawrence

SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

Lila Woodruff May
Jana Music
Nancy Shasteen
Melissa Thilorway
Pat Vetterlein

Alto
Julia Ackowry-Thiel
Ann Erickson
Deanna Fryhle
Courtney Fuller
Ellen Kaise
Lorette Knowles
Laurie Medill
Christine Rickert
Anne Thompson

Tenor
Ron Carson
Ralph Cobb
Jon Lange
Timothy Lunde
Thomas Nesbitt
Jerry Sans
David Zopolisky

Bass
Andrew Danichik
Robert Keckley
Paddy McDonald
Dennis Moore
Jeff Thiloway
Richard Wyckoff

Please disconnect signal watches, pagers and cellular telephones. Thank you. Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.
3a. Arie A
In deine Hände befiehl ich meinen Geist; du hast mich erlöst, Herr, du getreuer Gott. (Psalm 31:6)

3b. Arioso und Choral B A
Heute wirst du mit mir im Paradies sein. (Lk 23:43)
Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin
In Gottes Willen,
Getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn,
Sanft und still.
Wie Gott mir verheißen hat:
Doch Tod ist mein Schlafworden. (*Mit Fried und Freud,* verse 1)

4. Chor
Glorie, Lob, Ehr und Herrlichkeit
Sei dir, Gott Vater und Sohn bereit,
Dem Heiligen Geist mit Namen!
Die göttlich Kraft
Mach uns sieghaft
Durch Jesus Christum, Amen.
(*In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr,* verse 7)

**Brahms Part Songs**
Evening Serenade, Opus 42, No. 1
Hier es klagt die flüte nieder
Und die kühlen (Brunnen!) rauschen,
Golden wehne die Töne nieder,
Stille, stille, laß uns lauschen!

Holdes Bitten, mild Verlangen,
Wie es süß zum Herzen spricht!
Durch die Nacht die mich umfangen,
Blickt zu mir der Töne Licht.

Your Tender Heart, Opus 62, No. 4
Dein Herzlein mild, du lieber Bild,
Das ist noch nicht erglommen,
Und drinnen ruht
Verträumte Glut,
Wird bald zu Tage kommen.

Es hat die Nacht
Ein' Tau gebracht
den Kreossen all im Waldie,
und Morgens
drauf da bliths' zuhauf
und duftet durch die Halde.

Die Liebe sacht
hat über Nacht
dir Tau ins Herz gegossen,
und Morgens dann,
man sieht dir's an,
und Knospel ist erschlissen.

**PROGRAM NOTES**
JOHANNES BRAHMS
Five Part Songs, Opus 42, 62, and 104
O Heiland reiß die Himmel auf, Opus 74, No. 2
Tragic Overture, Opus 81

He was logical and studious and could be reserved, withdrawn, and even morose, but he also loved coarse humor; he was known for his caustic wit, yet possessed a tenderness that he expressed through his passionate music. He was frequently faced with the choice between love and committed relationship on one hand, and freedom on the other, and while he forsook for commitment, he invariably chose freedom. We need the comfort of his sublime and emotionally powerful music especially at this troubled time in our history. He was Johannes Brahms, a contradictory character who was one of the major musical masters of the 19th century, and who is now ranked among the finest composers of all time. With their lucidity of structure and lack of dependence on extramusical images or ideas, and their rich harmonies, passion, and lyricism, Brahms' works combine the finest characteristics of both the Classical and the Romantic styles of musical composition. His four symphonies are considered some of the best ever written, and his songs are loved the world over. He could be pleasingly unassuming when it came to his own compositional prowess: asked by the daughter of Johann Strauss for his autograph, he scribbled out the opening bars of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz on her paper and wrote beneath it: "Not, alas, by Johannes Brahms." He once commented, "It is not hard to compose, but it is wonderfully hard to let the superfusious notes fall under the table."

At the age of 10, Brahms found himself playing the piano in Hamburg's rough waterfront districts and dance halls in order to augment his family's income. He had studied piano from the age of seven and composition from age thirteen, and he arranged music for his bass-playing father's light orchestra while absorbing the popular Gypsy style associated with Hungarian folk music. By the age of twenty, his reputation as a pianist enabled him to become concert-tour accompanist to a famous Hungarian violinist. Brahms' early compositions caught the eye of Joseph Joachim, the leading violin virtuoso of his time. Joachim facilitated a visit between Brahms and the composer, Robert Schumann, who praised the twenty-year-old "young eagle" in his musical journal as a genius "...called forth to give us the highest ideal expression of our time." Brahms soon numbered among his influential musical friends and advisors both Schumann and his wife, Clara, the great pianist, to whom he remained very close after Schumann's mental collapse and subsequent death in an insane asylum in 1856, and for whom he developed a deep romantic ardor which later settled into an abiding friendship.

Brahms began his professional career as musician to the Prince of Detmold. He returned to his hometown of Hamburg in 1859, hoping to obtain an official conducting post and to devote himself to composition. The directors of the Philharmonic, however, could not forget that Brahms came from the slums of the city, and he failed to receive an appointment. He therefore became a resident of Vienna and remained there for 35 years as a renowned and successful bachelor composer of music in almost every genre except opera ("he learned too late that he would have to marry" he said to write an opera. But after the first experience I should probably undertake a second!). He conducted a Viennese musical society and revived many neglected compositions by Bach, Handel, and Mozart. He was widely acquainted with other music, edited music of the Baroque and Classical eras, and collected music manuscripts. The great master of compositional craft succumbed to liver cancer at age 64, ten months after the death of Clara Schumann, the one great love of his life; he was buried not far from Beethoven and Schubert, having given the world A German Requiem, four symphonies, four concertos, and many songs, piano pieces, and chamber works.

Literally autumal thoughts dominate the poems that Brahms set as five part-songs for mixed chorus a cappella, Op. 104. These texts, expressing nostalgic melancholy and resignation, are provided with music of a dark but ravishing richness as the composer faces his own loneliness and mortality. The text of three of these songs, "Letztes Glücks," written around 1888 for six-part choir, SAAATBB, is by Max Kalbeck, one of Brahms' early biographers. Listen to the leaves falling upon one another as the song opens.

The text of "Abendstänchchen" ("Evening Serenade"), op. 42, no. 1 (1859), the first of a set of three songs for six-part unaccompanied chorus, is by the German Romantic poet, Clemens Brentano. As the song begins, the two "choruses" of women's and men's voices imitate the sound of the flute's repeated "golden tones" that float in the night air.

In the four-part "Dein Herzlein mild" (1874), the fourth of his "Seven Songs," op. 62, for unaccompanied chorus, Brahms sets a text by Paul von Heyse, a distinguished German author who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1919. Through the themes of this song, the heart blooms with love as do the blossoms in the word with perfume. The fifth song in this set, "All meine Herzensglück", for chorus SAAATBB, is a setting of another text by von Heyse from his 1850 story, "Der Jungbrunnen" ("The Fountain of Youth"), that features the echo of the upper voices of the music introduced by the lower voices. In the four-part lament of the Wind's bride, "Es geht ein Wehen," a setting of another text from "Der Jungbrunnen", the basses accompany the other three voices in slowly-moving octaves in the sections of the song in 4/4 meter that alternate with more waltz-like sections in triple meter.

The 1623 text of the four-part motet "O Heiland, reiß de Himmel auf" (1863-64), appropriate for the liturgical season of Advent, was written by the priest, poet, and opponent of witchcraft trials, Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld. It
Brahms Motet
O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf,
Herab, herauf vom Himmel lauf,
Reiß ab vom Himmel Tor und Tür,
Reiß ab, was Schloss und Riegel für.
O Gott, ein 'Tau vom Himmel gießt,
Im Tau herab o Heiland fließ,
Ihre Wolken, brecht und regnet aus,
Den König über Jakobs Haus.
O Erd, schlag aus, schlag aus o Erd.
Daß Berg und Tal grün alles werd,
O Erd, erfür die Blümlein bring,
O Heiland, aus der Erden spring.
Sie leiden wir dieselben
Vor Augen steht der bitte Tod,
Ach komm, für uns mit starker Hand,
Von Elend zu dem Vaterland.
Da wollen wir all danken dir,
Unser Erleib erfüll, und für,
Da wollen wir all loben dich,
Je alzleit immer und ewiglich.
Amen.
Bach Cantata No. 106
1. Sonatina

2a. Chor
Gottes Zzeit ist die allerbeste Zzeit.
In ihm leben, weden und sind wir, solange er will.
In ihm sterben wir zur rechten Zzeit, wenn er will.
(Acts 27:28)

2b. Arioso T
Ah, Herr, lehre uns bedenken, daß wir sterben müssen, auf daß wir klug werden.
(Psalm 50:12)

2c. Arie B
Bester ein Haus; denn du wirst sterben und nicht leiden
(Exodus 3:1)

Es ist der alle Mund: Mensch, du mußt sterben!
(Ecclesiasticus 4:17)

Ich habe mein Sach' Gott heigemöst
Er mach's mit mir wie's ihm gefällt
Soll ich all hier noch länger leben
Nicht sterben streben
(Revolution 22:20) (Instrumental Chorale)

2d. Chor und Arioso S
Sein Willu tu ich mich ganz ergeben.
Ich habe mein Sach' Gott heigemöst;" verse 1

O Saviour, tear open the heavens, flow down to us from heaven above; tear off heaven's gate and door, tear off every lock and bar.
O God, a dew from heaven pour; in the dew, O Saviour, downward flow. Break, you cloud, and bring down the king of Jacob's house.
O earth, burst forth, burst forth, O earth, so that mountain and valley all become green; O earth, bring forth this little flower; O Saviour, spring forth out of the earth. Here we suffer the greatest distress; before our eyes stands bitter death. Ah, come lead us with your powerful hand from this misery to our Father's land. Therefore we all want to thank you, our Redeemer, for ever and ever. Therefore we also want to praise you at all times, always, and forever. Amen.

1. Sonatina

2a. Chorus
God's time is the best of all times.
In Him we live, move and are, as long as He wills.
In Him we die at the appointed time, when He wills.

2b. Arioso T
Ah, Lord, teach us to consider that we must die, so that we might become wise.

2c. Aria B
Put your house in order; for you will die and not remain alive.

Yes, come, Lord Jesus! (Instrumental Chorale)
I have brought my affairs home to God, He does with me as it pleases Him, if I should live yet longer here, I shall not struggle against it; rather I do His will with total devotion.)
SOLO ARTISTS

Tenor STEPHEN WALL has appeared frequently with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers since 1985. He has been featured in leading and supporting roles with Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Tacoma Opera, and has solaced with the symphonies of Seattle, Vancouver, Spokane, Everett, Bellevue, Yakima, Pendleton, Great Falls and Sapporo (Japan). Mr. Wall appears on the OSSCS recording of Handel’s Messiah and sang the role of Joe in Seattle Opera’s heralded production of La Fanciulla del West.

One of the Pacific Northwest’s premier mezzo-sopranos, KATHRYN WELD has made a name for herself as a gifted and versatile concert singer. As an early music specialist, she has been a featured soloist with such ensembles as the Philharmonia Baroque, under the direction of Nicholas McGegan, Music at St. John’s in New York, the Magnificat Baroque Orchestra in San Francisco, and the Portland Baroque Orchestra. Ms. Weld made her Carnegie Hall debut to critical acclaim in a performance of Bach’s Mass in B minor. She has also made two solo appearances with the New York Philharmonic, with Charles Dutoit and Kurt Masur. She has appeared as a soloist with the Bayreischer Rundfunkchor, Consortium Musicum of Munich, Munich Baroque Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Northwest Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Pro Musica, as well as numerous performances with OSSCS.

A native of Washington, baritone BRIAN BOX received his Master’s degree in vocal performance from Western Washington University in 1985. Mr. Box performs frequently with various Northwest ensembles, including OSSCS, Seattle Choral Society, Seattle Pro Musica, Bellevue Chamber Chorus, and Choir of the Sound, and has performed with Rudolf Nureyev, singing Mahler’s Songs of a Wayfarer Mr. Nureyev’s dance. He has collaborated with OSSCS in such works as Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, St. John Passion, and Christmas Oratorio, the world premières of Hunterley Beyer’s St. Matthew Passion and The Messiah, and is featured on the OSSCS recording of Handel’s Messiah. The 1984 winner of San Francisco Opera’s 1988 Merola Opera Program, he made his Seattle Opera debut as the Corporal in Donizetti’s Daughter of the Regiment, for Tacoma Opera, Mr. Box created the role of Franz in Carol Sam’s The Pied Piper of Hamelin. He has also performed extensively with Seattle’s education program and Northwest Opera in the Schools.

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An endeavoring and educating, Ronnie is known for his innovative teaching style with young people. He is a music specialist for the Tacoma Public Schools and teaches for the Pacific Northwest Viols. Mr. Fullerton can be heard on Le Nuovo Musicihe’s premier CD, Dolce Desio: Upcoming recording projects include a solo viola da gamba CD. Besides Seattle, Ronn has performed in California, Indiana, Oregon, Utah, and Florida. He has appeared in concert with Margriet Tindemans, Mary Springfields, Annalisa Pappano, David Morris, Matthias Maute, Janet See, Laury Monahan and Eric Mentzel, along with his regular collaborators, Kim Pineda, Elizabeth Brown, August Denhard, and Kathy Hansen.

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A cantata is a composite form of vocal music normally consisting, in Bach’s time, of four to six or more separate movements, including solo arias and recitatives, duets, and choral numbers, most frequently accompanied by an orchestra featuring an array of woodwinds, strings, and occasionally percussion. Bach, the greatest exponent of the cantata form, composed over 300 of these works, of which only about 200 have been preserved. No general description can begin to suggest the infinite variety and the incredible wealth of Bach’s vocal music: creative, technical expertise, and passionate spirituality found in these marvelous works, which constitute the core of Bach’s vocal output.

An early work of Bach’s, Cantata 106, often called “Actus tragicus,” is scored for choir, soloists SATB, 2 recorders, 2 violas da gamba, and continuo. It was probably a funeral ode written around 1707 (when Bach was only about 22), but it is not known for what occasion it was intended (perhaps for the funeral of Bach’s uncle Tobias Lümmert, who died in 1707), or if it was ever performed during Bach’s lifetime. The libretto combines passages from both the Old and New Testament with choruses of choral or solo duets and with choral or solo passages. It is a timeless masterpiece of spiritual creativity, theologically sound, and the short, slow third section mostly homophonic. New comes a pensive tenor solo and then an urgent bass solo in triple meter which features virtuosos passages on the viola by the soloist. The final movement, a somewhat diastemate three-part fugal section for the lower voices of the chorus accompanied by a “walking” bass line; a short soprano passage asking the Lord Jesus to come (as it ends, the viola da gamba注 played by the soloist) and a return of the three lower parts to accompany, in imitation, the soprano passage. The next section is a “duet” for alto (who at first sings alone to a running string accompaniment) and bass (who also sings alone initially before being joined by the alto who presents, in long notes, Luther’s 1524 chorale, “With peace and joy I pass away.”) The alto completes the chorale alone, singing quietly as if death becomes a peaceful sleep. The final chorale section begins with an ornamented four-part setting of the melody and closing verse of the Reussner chorale, “In you I have placed my hope, Lord.” This leads into an energetic Amen fugue that ends in an instrumental sigh.

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physically, so in the spring of 1802, Beethoven left Vienna to spend several months in the nearby village of Heiligenstadt. It was a vain effort. His hearing did not improve, and despite the lovely, pastoral surroundings, the composer fell into the depths of despair. In December, the great emotions of the first movement of the letter written to his brothers, a letter never mailed, but found amongst his papers at his death: “It was not possible for me to say to men, ‘Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf!’ Also, how could I feel the joy of others, save a sense of which I ought to be more acute than in others, that is, in order to find the words, when someone standing close to me heard a distant flute and I heard nothing, or a shepherd singing and, again, I heard nothing. Such incidents almost drove me to despair.”

It was Beethoven, as he wrote, who brought the letter to his death, and so the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” Beethoven wrote that life had become so intolerable as to lead him to consider suicide, but he stayed his hand for, in his own words, “it seemed as if I could not write down my thoughts and so I continued this wretched life.” Here was a man who chose to live solely for the sake of his art, for as long as his inspiration might last and no longer. It lasted to the day of his death. However, Beethoven was not the first or the last composer to give up and have produced his greatest compositions, including piano sonatas of epic scope and monumental symphonies which defined what symphonies would become in future years. Yet of all those works, none is more truly heroic than the Ninth Symphony. Beethoven himself conducted the program, which also featured the premières of the oratorio Christ on the Mount of Olives and the Third Piano Concerto. Public reaction to the work was mixed, and even later performances found little critical consensus. A Leipzig critic went so far as to describe the finale as “a repulsive monster, a wounded tail-lashing serpent, dealing wild and furious blows as it stiffens into its death agony,” yet the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung praised the piece as “a work full of new and original ideas.”

That very novelty may have been the source of the differing opinions, for here are early hints of Beethoven’s artistic innovations. It is a composition of greater scope than symphonies by Mozart or Haydn. Its introductions are more lengthy, its concluding codas more extensive, and it anticipates the grandeur of Romantic symphonies yet to come. In addition, in this new work, for the first time, Beethoven conducted without formerly standard third the movement Minuet, which had been an elegant holdover from the Classical era. He replaces it with a Scherzo ("joke"), a vibrant movement with more verve and energy than some compositions of more recent symphonies. It is a structure quite comfortable. Here was a radical new way to write an established genre, yet for Beethoven, it was merely the beginning. Notes on Beethoven by Elizabeth Schwerner

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36

Beethoven’s Second Symphony is a testimony to extraordinary courage. It dates from the composer’s middle years, the darkest time in what continued to be an unhappy life. Though his condition was progressively worsening well, Beethoven’s hearing was failing quickly, and by 1802, he could no longer ignore the approach of deafness. Doctors suggested that a quiet, countryside vacation away from the noisy bustle of the city might be therapeutic, at least emotionally if not
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LEE INMAN trained as a cellist with Dr. Florence Reynolds of Missoula, Montana, and as a Violist da Gamba with Dr. Richard Klemm of Berlin, Germany. He performed frequently on viol and baroque cello some years ago as a part of Seattle’s nascent early music scene. With the Seattle Baroque Ensemble, Practical Musicians and Fiori Musicalli. On his move in 1985 to Minneapolis, Lee joined the Lyra Concert as principal cellist, and supported a number of the Twin Cities’ more active early-music groups as a continuo specialist, including the Salametti Rossel Ensemble, Hausmusik, and Pro Musica of St. Paul. Since his return to Seattle in 1991, Lee continues to perform publicly, but for the last few years the joy of playing with his colleagues and friends in settings more private than the concert hall. In recent years, Lee discovered the traditional music of Scotland, and claims to be Seattle’s first, and perhaps only, kilted gamba player.

A cantata is a composite form of vocal music normally consisting, in Bach’s time, of four to six or more separate movements, including solo arias and recitatives, duets, and choruses, most frequently accompanied by an orchestra. Bach’s most extraordinary composition, the greater portion of the cantata, composed over 300 of these works, of which only about 200 have been preserved. No general description can begin to suggest the infinite variety and the inestimable wealth of spiritual, intellectual, technical expertise, and passionate spirituality found in these marvelous works, which constitute the core of Bach’s vocal output.

An early work of Bach’s, Cantata 106, often called “Actus tragicus, is scored for choir, soloists SATB, 2 recorders, 2 violas da gamba, and continuo. It was probably a funeral ode written around 1707 (when Bach was only about 23), but it is not known whether it was performed during his lifetime (perhaps for the funeral of Bach’s uncle Tobias Lümmeth, who died in 1707), or if it was ever performed during Bach’s lifetime. The libretto combines passages from both the Old and New Testament with choruses by Martin Luther, and Adam and Reusner. The opening sonata attacks, for recorders singing sweetly above violas da gamba and continuo, establishes a gentle, contemplative mood. After this “prelude” come three chorus sections, the final one being the cantata section, the lively recordation section, and the short, slow third section mostly homophonic. Next comes a tenor solo then and then an urgent bass solo in triple meter which features virtuoso passages for solo viola da gamba. The final section is somewhat disappoints three-part fugal section for the lower voices of the chorus accompanied by a "walking" bass line; a short soprano passage asking the Lord Jesus to come (as it ends in a solo melody associated with Johann Leon’s text, “I have left all that concerns me up to God,” is played by the violas da gamba); and a return of the three lower parts to accompanied, in imitation, the soprano passage. The next section is a "duet" for alto (who at first sings alone to a running string accompaniment) and bass (who also sings alone initially before being joined by the alto who presents, in long notes, Luther’s 1524 chorale, “With peace and joy I pass away”). The alto completes the chorale alone, singing quietly as death becomes a peaceful sleep. The final chorale section begins with an ornamented four-part setting of the melody and closing verse of the Reusner chorale, “in you I have placed my hope, Lord.” This leads into an energetic Amen fugue that ends in an instrumental sigh.

--notes by Lorellée Knowles

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36

Beethoven’s Second Symphony is a testimony to extraordinary courage. It dates from the composer’s middle years, the darkest time in what continued to be an unhappy life. Though his creativity was growing as he progressed well, Beethoven’s hearing was failing quickly, and by 1802, he could no longer ignore the approach of deafness. Doctors suggested that a quiet, countryside vacation away from the noisy bustle of the city might be therapeutic, at least emotionally if not physically, so in the spring of 1802, Beethoven left Vienna to spend several months in the nearby village of Heiligenstadt. It was a vain effort. His hearing did not improve, and despite the lovely, pastoral surroundings, the composer fell into deep melancholy and despair. But his creative powers were not sapped, and he completed a letter written to his brothers, a letter never mailed, but found amongst his papers at his death: “It was not possible for me to say to men, ‘Speak louder, loud for I am deaf!’ How could I say that, even if I had not been of a sense in which I ought to be more acute than in others, and, above all, when someone standing close to me heard a distant flute and I heard nothing, or a shepherd singing and, again, I heard nothing. Such incidents almost drove me to despair.”

In 1802, which as the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” Beethoven wrote that life had become so intolerable as to lead him to consider suicide, but he stayed his hand for, in his own words, “it seemed as if I could not survive it any longer, and so I continued this wretched life.” Here was a man who chose to live solely for the sake of his art, for as long as his inspiration might last and no longer. It lasted to the day of his death. The Second Symphony, which contains numerous passages of personal meaning, was written in 1802, and though it is the shortest of his nine symphonies, it contains his most pressing concerns in favor of artistic goals, could have produced such a symphony at such a time. In that aspect, this charming composition is the essence of heroism. The Second Symphony premiered in Vienna April 5, 1803. Beethoven himself conducted the program, which also featured the premiers of the oratorio Christ on the Mount of Olives and the Third Piano Concerto. Public reaction to the work was mixed, and even later performances found little critical consensus. A Leipzig critic went so far as to describe the finale as “a repulsive monster, a wounded tail-lashing serpent, dealing wild and furious blows as it stiffens into its death agony,” yet the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung praised the piece as “a work full of new and original ideas.” That very novelty may have been the source of the differing opinions, for here are early hints of Beethoven’s Artistic Innovations. It is a composition of greater scope than symphonies by Mozart or Haydn. Its introductions are much longer, its concluding codas more extensive, and it anticipates the grandeur of Romantic symphonies yet to come. In addition, in this new work, for the first time, Beethoven dispensed with the formerly standard third movement Minuet, which had been an elegant holdover from the Classical era. He replaces it with a Scherzo (“joke”), a vibrant movement with more energy and some color schemes that are quite comfortable. Here was a radical new way to write an established genre, yet for Beethoven, it was merely the beginning.

Notes on Beethoven by Elizabeth Schwager Glener

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demonstrates Brahms’ contrapuntal skill, which was probably greatly enhanced by his study of Bach’s music. All five sections of the motet are based on a chorale tune, which is sung as a "cantus firmus" (a pre-existing tune forming the basis of a composition featuring two or more independent melodic voices). Following this simple tradition in his motet, it appears in the soprano part, then in the tenor, then in the bass, and finally, in a slightly decorated version, in the soprano line once more. The motet concludes with a fine, florid "Amen." —notes by Lorentze Knowles

Tragic Overture

A famous riposte to the young Mahler apart, Brahms was not well known for his sense of humor. However, his discovery that a mere thank you note was (back in 1879) considered insufficient gratitude for an honorary doctorate, conferred in absentia by Breslau University, provoked a little jest. The citation described his as a "composer of serious music", so Brahms notified Barnard Scholz (the conductor at Breslau) of his proposed work's title. Scholz, taking it at face value, thought "devilish academic and boring". It is hard to imagine (yet imagine we must!) "stuffy old" Brahms chortling with glee as he penned his now-famous medley of student songs.

Yes, I'm talking about the Academic Festival Overture (quoting my own programme note). Why? The answer is simple: it was written during the same summer vacation, at Ischl in 1880, as the Tragic Overture. Whether through a sense of irony, or simply a need for a balanced diet, Brahms seems to have felt obliged to even out the score. Having composed the joyful forms and sketches he had laying around into the sombre latter. The two overtures are like the faces of the famous therskian mask: Comedy facing one way and Tragedy the other. Brahms even commented, wryly, "One weeps, the other laughs!" Evidently, he intended only this, because he did not allude to any particular tragedy. Considering their genesis, and the composer's obvious intention that they complement one another, it's odd (and sad) that they are never programmed together in concerts. They share that uncommonly high "build quality" that seemed instinctive to Brahms: the Tragic Overture in particular would not have been out of place as the first movement of a symphony. Like its comical counterpart, its basic sonata form is expanded to include not two, but three main subjects. The first is vigorous and muscular, full of punchy dotted phrases, much of its strength coming from the active involvement of all levels of the orchestra. This gets a fair old working out before the second subject arrives, announced by a plaintive oboe, and stalking squarely in even beats on trombones. Scarcely moments later, rising horn calls preface the third subject, which flows in on violins over a busy bass line, and at whose climax the development, dominated by thevirile first subject, squeezes seamlessly in. Quite soon, there is another climax, powerful tympani drawing a false dawn; "false" because the recapitulation is still well below the din of the opening. There is much dark muting and mystery to traverse before the second subject returns to take centre stage, preceding the reprise of the first. The third, it seems, gets lost in the wash! With consummate

skil, Brahms telescopes this reprise into a turbulent coda, pensive woodwind only briefly interrupting its headlong progress. But is this, as Peter Latham says in his note for Klemperer's magisterial recording, really a "final disaster"? Admittedly it's dramatic, sombre, even grim music, but for all that I don't get any feeling of defeat. It's more like a victory in which, conquering a noble enemy, the victor can take no pleasure. That is, for me, what makes this such an extraordinary piece of music.

Notes on the Overture by Paul Serota 

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750) 

Concerto No. 166 "Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit"—actus tragici

"I had to work hard," said Johann Sebastian Bach; "Anyone who works as hard will get just as far." The hard-laboring, long-suffering, immensely talented German composer was born in a country that had produced church and town-band musicians for over 150 years. Orphaned at ten, he was raised by an older brother who was an organist, and who taught young Sebastian music. The boy was endlessly curious about every aspect of the art.

Bach began his professional career at 18, when he was appointed organist at a church in Arnstadt. At 23, he became court organist and chamber musician to the Duke of Weimar. During his nine years in this post (1708-1717), he gained fame as an organ virtuoso and composer. From 1717 to 1723, Bach served the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, producing suites, concertos, sonatas for various instruments, a great amount of keyboard music, and the six Brandenburg Concertos. Maria Barbara, Bach's wife and the mother of his seven children, died in 1720, and the composer soon married Anna Magdalena, a young singer who proved to be a loyal and understanding wife, and who provided her mate with thirteen more children.

When he was 38, Bach took the position of Cantor of St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, one of the most important musical posts in Germany. He taught at the choir school, which trained the choristers of the city's chief churches (he had to teach non-musical subjects as well); he also served as music director, church musician, and organist of St. Thomas' Church. In this post, which he held for the rest of his life, Bach produced monumental musical masterworks, including the Christmas Oratorio, the St. Matthew Passion, the Mass in B Minor, The Musical Offering, and The Art of the Fugue, though he was occupied by the cares of his large family and circle of friends, the tasks of a very busy professional life, and ongoing struggles with the officials of town, school, and church who never realized that they were dealing with perhaps the greatest musical genius ever born. Though the composer described himself as living "amidst continual vexation, envy, and persecution..." he remained in Leipzig for 27 years. At last, his eyesight failed, and he was forced to follow this by a raging fever. He died July 28, 1750, leaving only a modest material estate, but giving to us a tremendous trove of musical treasures of which his cantatas provide particularly glimpsing examples.

1. Sonatina

2. Chor

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit.
In ihm leben, werden und sind wir, solange er will.
In ihm sterben wir zur rechten Zeit, wenn er will.

(Acts 17:28)

2a. Ario T

Ah, Herr, lehe uns bedenken, daß wir sterben müssen, auf daß wir klug werden.
(Psalom 50:12)

2b. Ario T

Besterleun Haus; denn du wirst sterben und nicht lebend bleibnen!
(isak 38:1)

2c. Arie B

Bestecklein Haus; denn du wirst sterben und nicht lebend bleiben!
(Ecclesiasticus 14:17)

(Revelations 22:20) (Instrumental Chorale: Ich hab mein Sach Gott heimgestellt Er macht's mit mir wie's ihm gefällt Soll ich all hier noch länger leben Nolch ich sterben

Sein Willen tu ich mich ganz ergeben.
"Ich hab mein Sach’ Gott heimgestellt," verse 1

2d. Chorus and Ario S

Es ist der alle bund: Mensch, du mußt sterben!

(Yes, come, Lord Jesus! (Instrumental Chorale: I have brought my affairs home to God, He does with me as it pleases Him, if I should live yet longer here, I shall not struggle against it, rather I do His will with total devotion).
3a. Arie A
In deine Hände befieh ich meinen Geist; du hast mich erlöst, Herr, du getreuer Gott. (Psalm 31:6)

2b. Arliso und Chorale B A
Mit Fried und Freude ich fahr dahin
In Gottes Willen,
Getrost ist mein Herz und Sinn,
Sanft und stille.
Wie Gott mir verheißen hat:
Der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden. (*Mit Fried und Freude,* verse 1)

4. Chorus
Glory, praise, honor, and majesty
be prepared for You, God the Father and the Son,
for the Holy Spirit by name!
The divine power makes us victorious
through Jesus Christ, Amen.

(*in dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr,* verse 7)

Brahms Part Songs
Evening Serenade, Opus 42, No. 1
Höre es klagt die Flüte nieder
Und die köhnen (Brunnen!) rauschen,
Goldem wehden Töne nieder,
Stille, stille, laß uns laschen!

Holdes Bitten, mild Verlangen,
Wie es stit zum Herzen spricht!
Durch die Nacht die mich umfagen,
Blickt zu mir der Töne Licht.

Your Tender Heart, Opus 62, No. 4
Dein Herzlein mild, du liebe Bild,
das ist noch nicht erlangen,
und drinnen ruht
verträumte Glut,
wird bald zu Tage kommen.

Es hat die Nacht
ein' Tua gebracht
denn Koppen all im Walde,
und Morgens
drauf da blüh's zuhau
und duftet durch die Halde.

Die Liebe sacht
hat über Nacht
dir Tau ins Herz gesogen,
und Morgens dann,
man sieht dir's an,
sein Knöblein ist erschlossen.

PROGRAM NOTES
JOHANNES BRAHMS
Five Part Songs, Opus 42, 62, and 104
O Heiland reiß die Himmel auf, Opus 74, No. 2
Tragic Overture, Opus 81

He was logical and studious and could be reserved, withdrawn, and even morose, but he also loved coarse humor; he was known for his caustic wit, yet possessed a tenderness that he expressed through his passionate music. He was frequently faced with the choice between love and committed relationship on one hand, and freedom on the other, and while he longed for commitment, he invariably chose freedom. We need the comfort of his sublime and emotionally powerful music especially at this troubled time in our history. He was Johannes Brahms, a contradictory character who was one of the major musical masters of the 19th century, and who is now ranked among the finest composers of all time. With their lucidity of structure and lack of dependence on extra-musical images or ideas, and their rich harmonies, passion, and lyricism, Brahms' works combine the finest characteristics of both the Classical and the Romantic styles of musical composition. His four symphonies are considered some of the best ever written, and his songs are loved the world over. He could be pleasingly unassuming when it came to his own compositional prowess: asked by the daughter of Johann Strauss for his autograph, he scribbled out the opening bars of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz on her paper and wrote beneath it, "Not, alas, by Johannes Brahms." He once commented, "It is not hard to compose, but it is wonderfully hard to let the superfluous notes fall under the table."

At the age of 10, Brahms found himself playing the piano in Hamburg's rough waterfront district taverns and dance halls in order to augment his family's income. He had studied piano from the age of seven and composition from age thirteen, and he arranged music for his bass-playing father's light orchestra while absorbing the popular Gypsy style associated with Hungarian folk music. By the age of twenty, his reputation as a pianist enabled him to become concert-tour accompanist to a famous Hungarian violinist. Brahms' early compositions caught the eye of Joseph Joachim, the leading violin virtuoso of his time. Joachim facilitated a visit between Brahms and the composer, Robert Schumann, who praised the twenty-year-old "young eagle" in his musical journal as a genius "... called forth to give us the highest ideal expression of our time." Brahms soon numbered among his influential musical friends and advisors both Schumann and his wife, Clara, the great pianist, to whom he remained very close after Schumann's mental collapse and subsequent death in an insane asylum in 1856, and for whom he developed a deep romantic ardor which later settled into an abiding friendship.

Brahms began his professional career as musician to the Prince of Detmold. He returned to his hometown of Hamburg in 1859, hoping to obtain an official conducting post and to devote himself to composition. The directors of the Philharmonic, however, could not forget that Brahms came from the slums of the city, and he failed to receive an appointment. He therefore became a resident of Vienna and remained there for 35 years as a renowned and successful bachelor composer of music in almost every genre except opera ("it seemed as if for me to marry," he later wrote, "was to write an opera. But after the first experience I probably should undertake a second!). He conducted a Viennese musical society and revived many neglected compositions by Bach, Handel, and Mozart. He was widely acquainted with other musicians, edited music of the Baroque and Classical eras, and collected music manuscripts. The great master of compositional craft succumbed to liver cancer at age 64, ten months after the death of Clara Schumann, the one great love of his life; he was buried not far from Beethoven and Mozart in Schubert, having given the world A German Requiem, four symphonies, four concertos, and many songs, piano pieces, and chamber works.

Literally autumal thoughts dominate the poems that Brahms set as five part-songs for mixed chorus a capella, Op. 104. These texts, expressing narcissistic melancholy and resignation, are provided with music of a dark but ravishing richness as the composer faces his own loneliness and mortality. The text of the third of these songs, "Letztes Glück," written around 1888 for six-part choir, SAAATBB, is by Max Kalbeck, one of Brahms' early biographers. Listen to the leaves falling upon one another as the song opens.

The text of "Abendstännchen" ("Evening Serenade"), op. 42, no. 1 (1859), the first of a set of three songs for six-part unaccompanied chorus, is by the German Romantic poet Clemens Brentano. As the song begins, the two "choruses" of women's and men's voices imitate the sound of the flute's repeated "golden tones" that float in the night air.

In the four-part "Dein Herzlein mild" (1874), the fourth of his Seven Songs, Op. 62, for unaccompanied chorus, Brahms sets a text by Paul von Heyse, a distinguished German author who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1919. Through the harmonies of this song, the heart blooms with love as do the blossoms in the wood with perfume. The fifth song in this set, "All meine Herzergeben," for chorus SAAATBB, is a setting of another text by von Heyse from his 1850 story, Der Jungbrunnen ("The Fountain of Youth"). This features a scene of a flautist in the rugs of the couch by the window. The voices enter in the upper voices of the music introduced by the lower voices. In the four-part lament of the Wind's bride, "Es geht ein Wehen," a setting of another text from "Der Jungbrunnen," the voices accompany the other three parts in slow-moving octaves in the sections of the song in 4/4 meter that alternate with more Waltz-like sections in triple meter.

The 1623 text of the four-part motet "O Heiland, reiß de Himmel auf" (1863-64), appropriate for the liturgical season of Advent, was written by the priest, poet, and opponent of witchcraft trials, Friedrich Spee von Langenfeld. It
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PROGRAM

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf, Opus 74, No. 2
1. O Heiland, reß die Himmel auf
2. O Gott, ein’ Tauf vom Himmel gieß
3. O Erd, schlag aus
4. Hier leiden wir die grösste Not
5. Da wollen wir all danken dir
Seattle Chamber Singers

Tragic Overture, Opus 81
Orchestra Seattle

JOHANNES SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
Cantata No. 106, Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit “Actus Tragicus” BWV 106
I. Sustitio: Molto adagio
II. Chorus: No indication; Allegro; Adagio assai; Tenor solo; Lento; Bass solo: Vivace
Chorus: Andante (Chorale melody: Ich hab mein’ Sach’ Gott heimgestellt)
III. Alto solo: No indication; Bass solo with Chorale (Mit Flied’ und Freude ich fahr’ dahin)
IV. Chorus: No indication; Allegro
Katherine Welld, mezzo-soprano; Stephen Wall, teno; Brian Roa, bass
Shari Muller-Ho & Jenna Calixto, flutes; Ronnee Fullerton & Lee Inman, gambas;
Matthew Wyant, cello; Steve Messick, string bass; Robert Kechley, organ

-- intermission --

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Five Part-songs for A Cappella Chorus
1. Abendstündchen, Opus 42, No. 1
2. Dein Heizlein mild, Opus 62, No. 4
3. All meine Herzgedanken, Opus 62, No. 5
4. Es geht ein Wehen, Opus 62, No. 6
5. Letzes Glück, Opus 104, No. 3

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 36
Adagio molto–Allegro con brio
Leghetto
Scherzo and Trio; Allegro
Allegro molto

Leaf upon leaf floats lifelessly,
quietly and sadly from the trees;
its hopes never satisfied,
the heart dwells in dreams of spring.

Yet a sunny glance still lingers
in the late-blooming rose bush,
like one last bit of happiness
a sweet melancholy.

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