

PCD2017/02/28

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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY.

School of Music

presents

**Brahms *Schicksalslied*
(Song of Destiny, Op. 54)**

featuring

The JMU Symphony Orchestra
Professor Foster Beyers, *Director*
Dianna Fiore, *DMA Conductor*

The Madison Singers and JMU Chorale
Dr. Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy, *Director*

Faculty Soloists
Jeanette Zyko, *oboe*
Sarunas Jankauskas, *clarinet*
Ian Zook, *horn*
Sue Barber, *bassoon*

Tuesday, February 28, 2017
8 pm
Concert Hall



There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Program

Concertantes Quartette, K. 297b

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Andantino con Variazioni

Jeanette Zyko, *oboe*
Sarunas Jankauskas, *clarinet*
Ian Zook, *horn*
Sue Barber, *bassoon*

Schicksalslied, Op. 54 - Song of Destiny

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Foster Beyers, *conductor*

Hyperion's Song of Destiny Friedrich Hölderlin

Holy spirits, you walk up there in the light, on soft earth!
Shining divine breezes touch upon you gently,
as a "muses" fingers play music on holy strings.

Fateless, like the sleeping infant,
the heavenly ones breathe, chastely kept, as in a modest bud.
Eternally blooming, the flower of their spirit,
and their holy eyes look out in silent, eternal clearness.

But to us is allotted to rest at no abode.
Suffering humanity, decline and blindly fall from one hour to the next,
like water thrown from cliff to cliff, year after year,
down into the dark Unknown.

15-Minute Intermission

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso - Molto vivace
- IV. Allegro ma non troppo

Dianna Fiore, *conductor*

Program Notes

Concertantes Quartette - W.A. Mozart

The origins of this charming and tuneful work are somewhat unclear. We know that in 1778 while in Paris Mozart composed a Sinfonia Concertante for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon and Horn. It was evidently not performed there and the manuscript was left behind with the impresario who had commissioned it. Mozart wrote in a subsequent letter that he intended to write out another copy since, as he expressed in a letter to his father Leopold, the work was "still fresh in my mind, and as soon as I get home, I shall write it down again." The work re-emerged in the late 19th century when a manuscript copy, apparently created in the 1860s, was discovered and published under Mozart's name even though the instrumentation of the solo parts swapped flute for clarinet. Although the work has much of the tuneful grace we associate with Mozart, many have commented that it is unlikely Mozart would have written three movements in the same tonality of E-flat. We will never know precisely what the original work may have sounded like but we can enjoy the virtuosity and charm of this piece regardless of its authorship.

Brahms and Dvořák - A Relationship of Enduring Admiration

The close friendship between Brahms and Dvořák began in 1874 when the elder composer served on a jury that awarded an annual stipend to a deserving young composer from within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Brahms was struck by the mastery and apparent ease with which this young unknown Czech wrote everything from songs to symphonies. Although Brahms was not known to be a warm personality or a generous colleague, he embraced the young Dvořák and helped him to get a publisher for his works. Dvořák never formally studied with Brahms, but he embraced the aesthetic model of the German composer by using classical forms as a foundation over which he built tuneful, romantic works. The two saw each other rarely over the years, but Brahms remained an enthusiastic supporter of Dvořák. Following the Viennese premiere of the 8th Symphony, the conductor Hans Richter wrote to Dvořák: "Brahms dined with me after the performance, and we drank to the health of the unfortunately absent father of No.8. ... The success was warm and hearty."

Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny) - Johannes Brahms

For a composer with a remarkable affinity and gift for choral writing, Brahms' *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny) distinguishes itself by the exquisite beauty of the writing as well as its unusually direct emotional quality. The composer asks the performers to play *sehnsuchtsvoll* (longingly), a character word not found in any other work by Brahms. Based on a legend of classical antiquity, similar in style to *Nänie* (Op. 82) and *Gezange der Parzen* (Op. 89), *Schicksalslied* is based on an epic poem by Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion's *Schicksalslied*. Completed in May 1871, the premiere took place on October 13, 1871, in Karlsruhe, and was conducted by Hermann Levi.

The poem is taken from a two-volume work, in which the tales of Hyperion are recounted. At this point of the story, Hyperion is at a low moment in his life; he has lost a lover and a dear friend. The poem recounts two contrasting sentiments: the loveliness of heaven and the trouble-free life of the gods on high (stanzas 1 and 2); and the tormented existence of mortals and their descent into matter, from which there is neither rescue nor escape (stanza 3). This descent into matter, to earth, and its distance from heaven is portrayed as the "fate" of man; thus Hyperion has no choice but to suffer that "fate." The introverted and often melancholic Brahms was deeply moved when he first read this poem at the house of his dear friend Albert Dietrich; he sat down immediately that same day at the waterfront and began his opening sketches.

Program Notes (cont'd)

The form of *Schicksalslied* can be viewed as a double sonata structure, framed by an orchestral introduction and postlude or *Nachspiel*. The overarching architectural structure of this composition is nearly classical in its pure form and beauty, an aspect of Brahms's deference to and reverence for prior developments in music history and formal styles. The two main sections (A and B), intrinsically different from each other harmonically, developmentally and in terms of text delivery, are underpinned by nearly identical length. Also nearly perfectly balanced in length are the two sections of orchestral proclamations: the introduction and the concluding *Nachspiel*.

Although covering three stanzas, the binary aspect of the A and B sections concretize the internal duality of man's struggle with his both divine (in the opening section in E-flat major) and human nature (the middle section in C minor). The mellifluous sounds of floating string textures and rich chorales suddenly are replaced with the jagged textures of arpeggiating strings and declamatory vocal writing found in the middle section. The composer uses unexpected accents and unresolved dissonances in order to portray the realities of the text, "but it is our lot to find rest nowhere." The B section closes in a long hushed passage, seemingly spiraling down to oblivion as the chorus sings "*ins Ungewisse hinab*" or "down into uncertainty."

Uniquely, *Schicksalslied* is the only work of Brahms to end in a key different than the opening tonic presentation. Brahms himself had definite views about tonal unity and saw the apparent habit of ending in the same key as the composition began as symbolic of the composer being a slave to popular convention. In Brahms's estimation, tonal closure is not given *a priori*, but is rather a matter of conscious compositional choice. However, it was tonal scheme of the *Schicksalslied*, E major-C minor-C major, and its controversial orchestral *Nachspiel*, that although distinctive of Brahms as an example of progressive tonality, caused him years of concern.

It took Brahms time to reconcile the sentiments of the work, vacillating even after *Schicksalslied* was published about the validity of a composer who, through harmonic inference, chooses to stray too far away from the message of the text. Famously reticent to talk about this work, letters from this period indicate his changing thoughts about the validity of the ending. During the writing of this work, Brahms experimented with two additional choral statements, both of which have been recorded. At one time, Brahms was said to consider and even prefer a choral vocalize at the end of the work where the chorus would "simply sing 'ah' as if humming." Brahms, however, opted to publish the work without choral commentary in the last section of the work.

However, this problematic ending to this work elicited much controversy, and sometimes even to the conclusion that Brahms intended it to carry a Christian message. Is Brahms's return to C major through the reprise of Db major and the reiteration of the minor 7th melodic representation of "light" a transmission of hope that actually changes Hölderlin's message of the poem itself, or is it a tantalizing reminder of the beauty of heaven that lies forever outside of man's grasp? Is the poem's tragic statement about the ultimate nature of man's destiny a *fait de complie*, or does Brahms attempt the unthinkable, to, through the orchestral *Nachspiel*, alter the original meaning of the poem, to offer us divine intervention and the possibility to transcend beyond the inevitability of fate? Both listeners and conductors throughout the ages have been left to resolve and interpret this dilemma for themselves.

Through Brahms's inner wrestling and resolution of the paradoxes of man's ego, fate and soul destiny, as depicted in the controversial *Nachspiel*, the *Schicksalslied* gives, as perhaps as no other of Brahms's masterworks, deep insights into the intense spiritual nature of Johannes Brahms. Just at the moment when all seems lost, the work returns to a light-filled C major in a final section prominently featuring the flute ("the flutist must play very passionately" Brahms declared in a letter). Since this return of hope is not a feature of the text, we can only guess at the deeper meaning Brahms sought to transmit.

Program Notes (cont'd)

If E-flat is the tonality of all things holy (as Mozart frequently used it) and C minor is the tonality representing fate (as Beethoven told us), then perhaps the return of the opening musical material in the key of C major affords us a glimpse into Brahms' personal reframing of the poem: that we are capable of overcoming the vicissitudes of human existence after all.

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88 - Antonín Dvořák

Czech composer Antonín Dvořák took a new approach when composing his Eighth Symphony, intending for it to be "different from the other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way." It was written on the occasion of his acceptance into the Czech Academy of Franz Joseph the Emperor of Science, Literature and Arts. After approximately two-and-a-half months of work at his rural home, Dvořák completed his masterpiece on November 8, 1889. Dvořák himself conducted the premiere in Prague on February 2, 1890.

For a symphony in G major, a great deal of minor modality works its way into the music. The first movement actually begins in G *minor*, with a rich, nostalgic melody stated by the cellos, horns, bassoons and clarinets. The mood turns cheerful and optimistic when a birdcall by a solo flute propels us into the *Allegro*. At the end of the exposition, the mournful G minor melody returns, causing the listener to believe we are repeating the movement from the very beginning. Dvořák has played a trick on the listener; this "false repeat" is actually the beginning of the development. The development becomes increasingly impassioned, leading to a brilliant climax in which the trumpets sing the opening melody and strings swirl frantically in chromatic scales. The storminess resolves into the recapitulation, where the English horn reminds us of the flute's earlier birdcall. The movement comes to a jubilant close in G major.

The *Adagio* movement displays Dvořák's brilliant scoring. It begins with warm and inviting strings in E-flat major, which leads into a dialogue between the flutes and clarinets. The strings play spritely, descending scales, while a charming flute and oboe melody floats above. A sonorous climax is heightened with heavy descending string scales and a heroic trumpet fanfare. The movement concludes peacefully in C major.

The third movement is a *scherzo* in G minor, followed by a trio in G major. The melodies are flavored with Dvořák's trademark "folksiness." The flute and oboe melody in the trio is reminiscent of the countryside. A coda arrives abruptly, and it is a simple variation of the trio: accented, quicker, and in duple meter.

A trumpet fanfare heralds the finale, which unravels as a set of variations. The cellos introduce the central theme, and the variations that follow range from a virtuosic flute solo to a brassy, bombastic march. The movement begins to fade as if into nothing, but Dvořák surprises us one last time with an exuberant and joyous rush to the end.

Patrons are reminded to turn off all pagers, cell phones, personal computers, and any other electronic devices.

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JMU Symphony Orchestra

Professor Foster Beyers, *Director*

Dianna Fiore, *Symphony Manager*

Benjamin Bergey and Dianne Fiore, *Graduate Conductors*

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Michael Andree
Sam Hall
Kate Hummel
Edo Mor
Breonna Proctor
Nikki Shawn
Lindsey Showalter
Mariette Southard, ACM
Jordan Willis
Sage Wright, CM

Violin II

Chloe Campbell
Han Sol Chang
Emily Clark
Laura Maila
Kristi Monte, P
Brittany Siler
Katie Venne
Alyson Wyckoff

Viola

Benjamin Bergey
Gregory Childress, P
Nicoletta Moss
Rebecca Walker
Jordan Wright

Cello

Patrick Bellah, P
Hannah Gould
David Raposo
Andrew Schlagel
Sarah Weltman
Kyung Jin Yoon

Double Bass

Manoa Bell
Nathan Dabney
Will Landon
Danny Nguyen
Neal Perrine, P

Flute

Jordan Frazier
Davina Miaw

Oboe

David Pelikan
Laura Ruple

Clarinet

Noah Karkenny
Tony Moran
Chris Pennington

Bassoon

Joey Figliola
Anthony Fortuna
Seth Walker

Horn

Kaitlyn Brown
Bailey Furrow
Zach Nicely
Hunter Payne

Trumpet

Kyra Hulligan
Dylan Rye

Trombone

Drew Camparin
Phillip Marion
Nathan Michaels

Tuba

Andrew Foote

Timpani

Paige Durr

CM = Concertmaster

ACM = Assistant

Concertmaster

P = Principal

The Madison Singers* and JMU Chorale

Dr. Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy, *Director*

Tracey Schimmel-Reed and Ellen Atwood, *TMS Accompanists*

Dr. Tonya Menard, *Chorale Accompanist*

Lindsey Bross, Kathryn Bailey, Lindsey Bross, *Ensemble Managers*

Soprano

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Amanda Bennett
Katie Bentley
Maggie Boyd
Lindsey Bross*
Rebecca Brown
Katie Carbone*
Kayla Centaure
Darby Clinard*
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Laura Eaton
Claire Fadl
Natalie Harris
Jodi Hoffman
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Brittany Maruca*
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Chloe Richard
Journee Smith
Megan Walton

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