

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, conductor

CURT THOMPSON, violin

Friday, February 6, 1998

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

**Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
in D Major, Op. 77**

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

Curt Thompson, soloist

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Johannes Brahms

Un poco sostenuto. Allegro

Andante sostenuto

Un poco Allegretto e grazioso

Adagio. Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

In consideration of the performers and members of the audience, please check audible paging devices with the ushers and silence audible timepieces. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin I

William Fedkenheuer,
concertmaster
Caroline Pliszka
Jana Vander Schaaf
Colleen Jennings
Angie Smart
Yi Ching Fong
Michael Arlt
Samuel Thompson
Marie-André Chevette
Larisa Struble
Abigail Karr
Emma Philips
Azure Abuirmeileh
Sasha Callahan
Rajul Shah

Violin II

Caroline Semanchik,
principal
Rita Lammers
Mary Katrina Pierson
Matthew Fuller
Brinna Brinkerhoff
Matthew Szemela
Ari Maron
Jessica Gagne
Alessandra Jennings
Alda Schwonke
Malgorzata Leska
Philip Estrera
Jeffrey Issokson
Miranda Sielaff

Viola

Misha Galaganov,
principal
Yuko Watanabe
Mai Motobuchi
Carol Gimbel
Kimberly Buschek
Wilma Hos
David Filner
Emily Rome
Matthew Dane
Christine Grossman
Jonathan Brown

Cello

Alison Bazala,
principal
Heath Marlow
Lisa McCormick
Jeness Johnson
Jeffrey Zeigler
Elizabeth Glennon
Emma Sponaugle
Elizabeth Lee
Sandra Halleran
Karen Maddox
Martha Baldwin
Alastair Townsend

Double Bass

Gilbert Deshaies,
principal
Christopher Simison
Donald Howey
Maxime Bibeau
David Molina
Dacy Gillespie
Erin Bewsher
Holly Butenhoff
Hunter Capoccioni
Lander McLees

Flute

Julia Grenfell
Lisa Jelle
Wendy Lin
Caen Thomason-Redus

Oboe

Omri Raveh
Jason Sudduth
Rosemary Yiameos

Clarinet

Leesa Nimitz
Sharon Koh

Bassoon

Shasa Dobrow
Glenn Einschlag
Jennifer Gunter

Contrabassoon

Amy Yang

Horn

Kristina Crago
Jeffrey Garza
Austin Hitchcock
Elizabeth Matchett
Shane Smith
Martina Snell

Trumpet

Brian Brown
Jeffrey Castle
Kenneth Easton
Matthew Harding

Trombone

Sean Reed
Steven Wills

Bass Trombone

Michael Palmer

Timpani

Karen Slotter
Douglas Smith

Orchestra Manager

Martin Merritt

Library Assistants

Erin Bewsher
Holly Butenhoff
Gilbert Deshaies
David Filner
Wilma Hos
Donald Howey
Rita Lammers
Mary Katrina Pierson
Angie Smart
Yuko Watanabe
Amy Yang

Stage Assistants

Jeffrey Castle
Austin Hitchcock
Karen Marston
Scott Pollard
Lucas Scanlon
Caen Thomason-Redus
Steven Wills

WINDS, BRASS, AND PERCUSSION LISTED ALPHABETICALLY.

STRING SEATING CHANGES WITH EACH CONCERT.

PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra Johannes Brahms in D Major, Op. 77

Like many concerti, Brahms' **Violin Concerto, Op. 77**, was the fruit of the composer's extended friendship with a performer, the violinist Joseph Joachim. Joachim, although better known as a violinist, also composed, and the two friends worked very closely concerning technical and musical details of the work, collaborating virtually until the moment of publication. The concerto was premiered in January 1879 by Joachim, to whom the work is dedicated.

In terms of conception, the **Violin Concerto** is the product of a broad array of influences. Beethoven's **Violin Concerto, Op. 61**, may be seen as the model for the form and proportions of the first movement, which following tradition is the most complex of the three movements. The soloist enters after a full orchestral exposition with two themes, a lengthy prelude constructed in the mold of Beethoven. Although the soloist carries a great deal of virtuosic figuration, the part relies heavily on full, expansive lines that are more symphonic in nature. Likewise, the development is not episodic, but closer to the counterpoint of Brahms' symphonies. The **Finale** uses as its model Joachim's Concerto "in the Hungarian Manner" and Schumann's **Violin Concerto**. Brahms' concerto ends with a fast movement 'alla zingarese,' and is only one of several works that he would write in the popular gypsy style, such as the **Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103**. Unlike the finale of Joachim's concerto, however, the movement is not a straight rondo. Its form is closer to the finale of Schumann's **Violin Concerto**, which is a sonata-rondo that includes a development in the central section.

If the outer two movements rely on outside influences in terms of form, the second movement belongs to Brahms alone. The soloist responds freely to a long, pastoral melody introduced by the oboe; this melody is derived from one of Brahms' **Lieder**, the **Sapphische Ode, Op. 94 No. 4**. (Brahms also used song sources as the foundation of two of the three violin sonatas: the **Violin Sonata No. 1 in G** ["**Regenlied**," **Op. 59 No. 3**] and the **Violin Sonata No. 2 in A** ["**Wie melodien zieht es mir**," **Op. 105 No. 1**].) The text of the **Sapphische Ode** is imbued with a hushed profundity; it is a gentle lament over the transience of nature and of love. The inclusion of this **Lied** in the concerto lends the work a certain sweet poignancy that has also been found in the **Symphony No. 2, Op. 73**, written at the same time. Like the symphony, Brahms' **Violin Concerto** bears a warm lyricism conscious of the irreclaimable and softened by the lateness of its idyl.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 Johannes Brahms

Despite having completed the first movement of a C minor symphony nine years previously, Brahms portentously remarked in 1871, "I will never compose a symphony! You have no idea how it feels to one of us when he continually hears behind him such a giant." Indeed, the spectre of Beethoven loomed obtrusively on the symphonic horizon for many Romantic composers, and the general decline in the number of new symphonies may be attributed to this post-Beethoven crisis of succession. The symphony as inherited by composers of Brahms' time brought with it weighty associations: it was viewed as an important agent of the sublime, requiring an almost operatic expanse while maintaining Romantic originality. These elements combined to form a sufficiently daunting backdrop to occlude any composer's symphonic flow; as for Brahms, his hesitancy sprang from an additional source.

In 1853, Robert Schumann wrote an article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* which forever altered the course of Brahms' career. Couched in the language of prophecy, Schumann appointed Brahms as the new messiah of music, the primogenitor of Beethoven. Perhaps intended as nothing more than a pointed jab at the rival aesthetic of Wagner, Liszt, and Franz Brendel (who had succeeded Schumann as editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift*), Schumann's article exposed the twenty-year-old Brahms to world attention and effectively denied him the comfortable anonymity of a young, experimenting composer. From 1854 to 1876, Brahms' efforts may be seen as an intermittent struggle to overcome his monumental inheritance and to produce the great symphony clearly expected of him. Brahms reworked earlier plans of a symphony in his **Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 15**, and **German Requiem, Op. 45**; he composed two orchestral **Serenades, Opp. 11 and 16**, and the **Haydn Variations, Op. 56a**. Concerning the symphony itself, although he had completed the greater part of the first movement by 1862, he did not finish the last until the summer of 1876 and the middle movements shortly thereafter. After a twenty-two year germination, the First Symphony was premiered on November 4, 1876, in the relative obscurity (as Brahms preferred) of Karlsruhe, conducted by Otto Desshoff.

Early reviewers of the First Symphony found the work to be tragic and powerful; less diplomatic critics accused Brahms of relying too heavily on the serious, the complex, and the logical as a substitute for melodic ease. The composer himself called the symphony "not exactly charming." Brahms establishes this fateful tone from the beginning of the slow introduction, which opens with a rising melody in the strings and a falling chromatic accompaniment largely held by the woodwinds, both presented against a throbbing tonic pedal in the timpani, double basses, and contrabassoon. The subsequent Allegro erupts in an unflagging momentum that is sustained throughout the entire movement. The density one senses in this movement grows from intense motivic counterpoint and thematic consistency. The chromatic motto heard in the first measure of the symphony is almost always present in the movement, as is the "fate" rhythm (short-short-short-long) as iconified in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (also in C minor). One scholar has found similarities between the development's second theme and a scene from Schumann's opera *Manfred*, whose protagonist struggles with guilt over his love for a forbidden woman. If Brahms included this reference as an admission of his similarly forbidden love for Clara Schumann (a subject of much speculation), this movement offers him no respite from his torments. The recapitulation and coda drive forward in chromatic turmoil to a closing that is at once resigned and foreboding, as the timpani slowly intones the fate rhythm.

The middle movements provide a welcome contrast to the drama of the outer movements, with pastoral and playful elements. However, the slow C minor introduction to the finale immediately recalls the pathos of the first movement, with similarities of orchestration, instrumentation, and chromaticism. As a blustery, driving passage in the strings withers to an ominous timpani rumbling, the movement's darkness seems insurmountable. To the accompaniment of tremolando strings and quiet trombones, the horn emerges at this point with the C major "alphorn theme" in one of the symphony's transcendent moments. The following melody at the Allegro, forever allied with Beethoven's "Freudenthema" of the Ninth Symphony, introduces the primary theme of the movement, which Brahms varies freely in the remainder of the symphony. In character Brahms' theme is quite similar to that of Beethoven: both are broad, strophic, folk-inspired melodies used as the rhetorical climax of the symphonic drama. However, Brahms' theme differs in application. Unlike its predecessor, Brahms' theme contains none of the utopian aspirations to universal freedom

more common to Beethoven's age. Rather, one can perceive a latent gravity and yearning melancholy even in this movement. If the finale is sometimes exalting, it is more a result of the requirements and expectations of the symphonic genre than a personal triumph of the spirit. By November 1876 Brahms had sufficiently allayed his compositional anxiety to complete the C minor symphony, but the work preserves his quiet mark of dolor, the hidden visage of Brahms.

— Notes by Angela Marroy

BIOGRAPHY

CURT THOMPSON, a native of Conway, Arkansas, began studying violin at the age of five. He holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in violin and was awarded the Performer's Certificate from the Indiana University School of Music where he studied with Nelli Shkolnikova from 1988-94. For the last four years, he has pursued the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Shepherd School of Music where he was the teaching assistant of Sergiu Luca. A prize winner in international competitions, Mr. Thompson has enjoyed engagements as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the U.S. and Spain and has worked closely with many prominent musicians including the American String Quartet, the Muir String Quartet, Rostislav Dubinsky of the Borodin Quartet, and pianist Robert McDonald.

Mr. Thompson was recently appointed to the faculty of Texas Christian University (TCU) where he is Assistant Professor of Violin and Director of Chamber Music. In addition to teaching and recruiting, he performs in the TCU Piano Trio. He is Co-Director of the TCU Summer Chamber Music Symposium and a founding member of the Mimir Chamber Players which will serve as faculty for this seminar. Recent activities include a recording project of chamber music by Charles Ives and performances with the Fort Worth Chamber Music Society. Upcoming engagements include solo, chamber music, and master class appearances in Fort Worth and Denton, Texas, Shreveport, Louisiana, and San José, Costa Rica.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA EVENTS

Sunday, February 8, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor; Scott O'Neil, guest conductor
PROGRAM: Beethoven - **Overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus"**; Respighi - **Gli Uccelli (The Birds)**; and Beethoven - **Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60**.
Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

Friday, March 20, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor; Alastair Willis and Scott O'Neil, guest conductors
PROGRAM: John Cornelius - **Ezekiel's Wheel** (1995) (Premiere); Kodály - **"Háry János" Suite**; Rachmaninoff - **Isle of the Dead**; and Ravel - **"Daphnis and Chloé" Suite No. 2**.
Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

March 27, 29, 31, and April 2, 7:30 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA
and the SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA present **Albert Herring**
by Benjamin Britten (Debra Dickinson, director; Thomas Jaber, conductor).
Wortham Opera Theatre at Alice Pratt Brown Hall.
Admission (general seating): \$10/\$8. For advance tickets, call 713-527-4933.