

FACULTY RECITAL

MICHAEL WEBSTER, clarinet

LYNN HARRELL, cello

ROBERT MOELING, piano

Thursday, October 23, 2008

8:00 p.m.

Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

**Trio in D Minor for Clarinet,
Cello, and Piano, Op. 3 (1895-96)**

Alexander Zemlinsky
(1871-1942)

Allegro ma non troppo
Andante
Allegro

**Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major
for Solo Cello, BWV 1010**

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Bourrée I
Bourrée II
Gigue

INTERMISSION

**Trio in A Minor for Clarinet,
Cello, and Piano, Op. 114 (1891)**

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro
Adagio
Andantino grazioso
Allegro

The reverberative acoustics of Duncan Recital Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

"Heroes: Bach, Brahms, Zemlinsky"

by Michael Webster

In his influential 1969 book, *The Continuity of Music*, Irving Kolodin looks at the history of music between 1685 and 1963 in regard to continuity, which he defines as "Identity with respect to a series of changes," quoting Webster's *New International Dictionary*. He states: "... between 1685 – the year in which J. S. Bach, Domenico Scarlatti, and George Frideric Handel were born – and 1963 – the year in which both Paul Hindemith and Francis Poulenc died – there emerges a strong sense of interaction and cross-influence among the works of the greatest composers."

There are so many overt references to J. S. Bach among the letters of many of those greatest composers that a strong case can be made for his having been the most influential of all composers. It is well known that much of Bach's music was unavailable during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until Mendelssohn's famous revivals in the 1830s. But Bach was far from unknown! Beethoven, for example, knew enough of Bach to call him "this ancestral father of harmony."

Bach's mastery of harmony allowed him to write a fairly long piece for a single voice made up almost entirely of broken arpeggios starting in E-flat major, visiting A-flat major, C minor, F minor, back to E-flat major, then a strong cadence in G minor featuring one of Beethoven's favorite chords, a dominant seventh with an added minor ninth; then more F minor, E-flat minor, again with dominant ninth, a Neapolitan chord (built on the lowered second scale step) for spice, and a return to E-flat major.

This is a description of the Prelude of Bach's *Suite No. 4* for solo cello, an amazing journey of unaccompanied splendor. With the exception of the very short Gavotte II, which serves as a trio with da capo to Gavotte I, all of the subsequent movements follow a standard pattern: two repeated sections, the first modulating from tonic (E-flat major) to dominant (B-flat major), the second returning to tonic. Boring? Not! In each section, Bach visits a variety of closely related but unpredictable keys amidst a dramatic variety of tempo, rhythm, and expression.

After Mendelssohn, the best-known admirer of J. S. Bach was Johannes Brahms, whose love of counterpoint and modulation emulated his avowed hero. The most overt expression of that esteem was his arrangement for piano, left hand, of Bach's famous *Chaconne* for solo violin. Elsewhere in Brahms' work there is more evidence of the "neo-Baroque," most famously in the finale of his *Symphony No. 4*, a chaconne to end all chaconnes.

More subtle examples abound in the *Clarinet Trio*. In his Ph.D. dissertation *Brahms, Schenker, and the Rules of Composition: Compositional and Theoretical Problems in the Clarinet Works*, Peter Foster has pointed out that the very opening resembles a fugue subject in the cello and a tonal answer in the clarinet. Plagal relationships (IV-I, subdominant-tonic) supplant the usual dominant (V-I), giving the tonality a distinctly archaic feel. Nowhere is this more dramatic than at the end of the exposition, where the home key of A minor transmutes into the subdominant of E minor, closing on a plagal cadence in that unexpected key. A detailed discussion of this "plagalism" can be found in Margaret Notley's fascinating book, *Lateness and Brahms*.

Another tip of the hat to Bach is a more frequent use of canon, augmentation, and inversion than is usual in the Romantic era, even for Brahms, the most intellectual of the Romantic composers. A careful listening to the second themes of the first and last movements will uncover sophisticated inverted canons of which Bach would have been proud.

Alexander Zemlinsky, as well-known a teacher as he was a composer, surely knew and revered Bach. But Brahms, nearly two generations older than he, was his hero, and his early *Clarinet Trio, Op. 3* caught the attention of the old master, who recommended it to his publisher Simrock, just as he had the *Slavonic Dances* of Dvořák, paving the way for Dvořák's international success.

Zemlinsky's procedures are nothing if not Brahmsian. Although his later style evolved into something similar to early Schoenberg (who was first his student, although only three years younger, and later his brother-in-law), this early work from 1895 or 1896 is only the smallest step away from Brahms in terms of chromaticism, modulation, and dissonance.

The first movement gives us an immediate example; a theme built from the simplest possible three-note motive, which reappears in measure nine as an diminution (four times as fast) in the bass of the piano, then two bars later, inverted in the right hand. Modulations in the exposition are a little farther afield than what we might expect of Brahms: D minor, E-flat major, E-flat minor, G-flat major, and A major, but the harmonies are rarely more exotic than Brahms. Like Brahms, he also adheres to a strict sonata-allegro form, although it is a little harder to tell where the second theme begins. Is it G-flat major or A major? An argument could be made either way.

The development section plays with all of the little motives contained in the first theme group, including a triplet theme that was first heard early on in the clarinet. The recap follows the scheme of the exposition quite closely, but with very few exceptions is totally reorchestrated, adding a sense of continual variation, which was another hallmark of late Brahms and early Schoenberg. The coda begins in F minor with the right and left hands of the piano playing the theme and its inversion simultaneously. No wonder Brahms liked this piece!

The slow movement in D major is fascinating. The tender yearning theme for piano solo starts with the same four-note motive as the Brahms E-flat clarinet sonata and continues with small motives taken from both themes of the first movement. Clarinet and cello answer with a canon that lasts for four full bars before evolving into a unified love duet. The second section, marked *poco mosso con fantasia*, features a dramatic upward arpeggio passed among all three instruments. The notes are not reminiscent of the slow movement of Brahms' **Clarinet Quintet**, but the mood is. Before a gradual return to the first theme, a startling moment occurs, in which all three instruments sound the first theme of Dvořák's **Cello Concerto**! Perhaps Brahms was not Zemlinsky's only hero.

Dvořák wrote the concerto in 1895 and it was first performed in 1896. Of my four sources for the Zemlinsky, two say it was written in 1895 and two say 1896. Further research would be necessary to find out whether Zemlinsky may have heard the cello concerto before writing the trio. According to Irving Kolodin, it hardly matters: "There is a common heritage from which local types have developed, that there in turn exerted an influence – like the return flow of air around a storm center – on the sources from which they emanated."

Years ago I heard a lecture by a Native American flutist in which he said, "Music is in the air. If you want to write a new piece you had better grab it before someone else does!" In 1895-96, that theme was making circles in the air, and both Dvořák and Zemlinsky grabbed it. The current reached as far as England, where the young Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, at the behest of his teacher, Charles Stanford, wrote an excellent clarinet quintet after hearing Brahms' **Clarinet Quintet** in London in 1895. It sounds like Brahms, even more like Dvořák, and, now that I think of it, like Zemlinsky as well.

The finale is a rondo (A, B, A, C, A, B, A) – no surprise, but with a few special touches. The three-note motive from the first movement appears as a counter-melody to the main theme in the ninth measure. The clarinet sings a long, lyrical second theme, answered by augmentation of the first theme in the piano. After a pair of dramatic fermatas, the augmentation reappears, ushering in the final appearance of the A theme. I won't give away the surprise ending.

Why is Zemlinsky's music not often performed in spite of its admirable qualities? He lived until 1942, but his heart remained in the nineteenth century, so his music was considered to be *passé* for most of his life. He argued with his brother-in-law Schoenberg about use of the twelve-tone method, refusing to "modernize" himself. But the winds have shifted again, and the twenty-first century has brought a renewed interest in lesser figures of all musical eras. Now it is okay not to be modern, and Zemlinsky is undergoing something of a renaissance: witness the performance and recording last season of his magnum opus, **Lytic Symphony** (1923) by the Houston Symphony.

BIOGRAPHIES

A multi-faceted musician, MICHAEL WEBSTER is Professor of Clarinet at Rice University and Artistic Director of the Houston Youth Symphony. Formerly principal clarinetist with the Rochester Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony, he has appeared as soloist with many orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Boston Pops. He has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, Da Camera of Houston, CONTEXT, the Tokyo, Cleveland, Muir, and Ying Quartets and the festivals of Marlboro, Santa Fe, Chamber Music West and Northwest, Norfolk, Angel Fire, and Sitka, among others. Webster has directed chamber music societies in Rochester and Ann Arbor and taught at the New England Conservatory, Boston University, and the Eastman School, from which he holds three degrees. He has also served as Music Director of the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra and Adjunct Professor of conducting at the University of Michigan. As a composer and arranger, he has been published by Schott, G. Schirmer, and International, and recorded by C.R.I., Crystal, and Nami (Japan). Highly regarded as a pedagogue, he is a member of the editorial staff of *The Clarinet* magazine, contributing a regular column entitled "Teaching Clarinet."

A consummate soloist, chamber musician, recitalist, conductor, and teacher, LYNN HARRELL's work in America, Europe, and Asia has placed him in the highest echelon of today's performing artists. A frequent guest of many of the leading orchestras, in recent seasons Dr. Harrell has performed with the Boston and Chicago symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony (which he guest conducted), the St. Louis Symphony at Royal Festival Hall, the London Philharmonic with Kurt Masur conducting, and the Israel Philharmonic with Franz Welser-Möst conducting. Additional highlights include a two-week tour to Japan with Vladimir Ashkenazy and Pinchas Zukerman, a three-week "Lynn Harrell Cello Festival" with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and a return tour to Australia.

A special part of Dr. Harrell's life is the Aspen Music Festival, where he has spent his summers performing and teaching for nearly fifty years. Dr. Harrell is also a regular participant at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. On April 7, 1994, he appeared at the Vatican with the Royal Philharmonic conducted by Gilbert Levine in a concert dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The audience for this historic event, which was the Vatican's first official commemoration of the Holocaust, included Pope John Paul II and the Chief Rabbi of Rome. Dr. Harrell also appeared live on the internationally-televised 1994 Grammy Awards Show with Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman performing an excerpt from their Grammy-nominated complete Beethoven String Trios recording (Angel/EMI). The trio was the only classical nominee to perform on the show.

Highlights from an extensive discography of over thirty recordings include the complete Bach *Cello Suites* (London/Decca), two recordings of the Dvořák *Cello Concerto* (RCA and London/Decca), the world premiere recording of Victor Herbert's *Cello Concerto No. 1* with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields led by Sir Neville Marriner (London/Decca), the Walton *Concerto* with Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (EMI), and the Donald Erb *Concerto* with Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Symphony (New World). Together with Perlman and Ashkenazy,

Harrell was awarded two Grammy Awards – in 1981 for the Tchaikovsky **Piano Trio** and in 1987 for the complete Beethoven **Piano Trios** (Angel/EMI). He collaborated with Stephen Kovacevich in recording the two Brahms cello sonatas and with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg on *Bella Italia: "Chamber Music from Aspen"* (EMI), which includes a performance of Tchaikovsky's **Souvenir de Florence**. A recording of the Schubert Trios with Ashkenazy and Zukerman (London/Decca) was released in 1998. His recording of the Rózsa **Concerto** with the Atlanta Symphony (Telarc) was released in February 2000. His recording with Kennedy, "Duos for Violin and Cello," was released to great critical acclaim (EMI, May 2000).

Dr. Harrell's experience as an educator is wide and varied. From 1985-1993 he held the International Chair for Cello Studies at the Royal Academy in London. Concurrently from 1988-1992 he was the Artistic Director of the orchestra, chamber music, and conductor training program at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute. In 1993 he became head of the Royal Academy in London, a post which he held through 1995. Additionally, Dr. Harrell has taught at the Juilliard School, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and UCLA, as well as USC, where he held the Piatigorsky Chair from 1987-1993. Dr. Harrell has also given master classes at the Verbier and Aspen Festivals, and in major metropolitan areas throughout the world as part of his annual touring.

Dr. Harrell is Professor of Violoncello at The Shepherd School of Music. Born in New York to musician parents, he began his musical studies in Dallas and proceeded to The Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute. Dr. Harrell is the recipient of numerous awards including the first Avery Fisher Award. He plays a 1673 Stradivarius and a 1720 Montagnana.

A native of The Netherlands, pianist ROBERT MOELING has gained international acclaim as a soloist, chamber musician, and pedagogue. After coming to the United States as a Fulbright scholar, he subsequently held teaching posts at Bethany College, Concordia University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Conservatory. He is currently a preparatory piano instructor at Rice University and visiting professor of chamber music at Codarts, the University for the Performing Arts in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Mr. Moeling is a frequent guest with such organizations as the Amsterdam Chamber Music Society, Sitka Festival, Anchorage Winter Classics, Groningen Festival, Piatagorsky Foundation, and Park City International Festival, where his collaboration with Michael Webster and Leone Buyse first began. Mr. Moeling's latest recordings include sonatas of Liszt and Brahms, and a Webster Trio recording including works of Brahms, Debussy, Dvořák, and Louis Moreau Gottschalk.

