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Concert: Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Jeffrey D. Grogan

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ITHACA COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA COLLEGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor

Ford Hall
Friday, April 21, 2006
8:15 p.m.

ITHACA

PROGRAM

Prelude to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, K. 384

W. A. Mozart
(1756-1790)

Divertimento for Orchestra (1980)

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

- I. *Sennets and Tuckets*
- II. *Waltz*
- III. *Mazurka*
- IV. *Samba*
- V. *Turkey Trot*
- VI. *Sphinxes*
- VII. *Blues*
- VIII. *In Memoriam; March: "The BSO Forever"*

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in f minor, Op. 36

P. I. Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

- I. *Andante sostenuto - Moderato con anima*
- II. *Andantino in modo di canzona*
- III. *Scherzo, Pizzacato ostinato - Allegro*
- IV. *Finale, Allegro con fuoco*

PROGRAM NOTES

Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio) was Mozart's first important success. The singspiel (featuring spoken dialogue rather than sung recitatives) was both a wonderful achievement in itself and a gesture to Vienna's infatuation with "Turkish" music. Premiered during the composer's first full year in Vienna (July 1782), it holds a treasure trove of superb arias and ensembles. Requiring virtuoso singing from two of its principals and sustained lyric vocalism from the rest, it is both a charming entertainment and an example of Mozart's finest and most inventive writing.

Aside from the Turkish aspects, Mozart's orchestra here offers a more subtle and sophisticated complement of instruments than found in his earlier operas. Especially noteworthy are the woodwind combinations. Mozart wrote for clarinets in C (seldom used today) and basset horns at the lower end of the tonal spectrum. Horns, too, were varied. Performing decisions must be reached in several instances as to the octave in which the instruments are to be played; Mozart did not specify them. The "Turkish" element had evolved from earlier times to something slightly more specific. The large drum ('Tambura Turca'), the cymbals, the piccolo, and the triangle had come from military bands and were employed by Mozart and Haydn to represent aggressive behavior. Earlier, these instruments had been used primarily for exotic coloration. Here, they signified overt conflict.

The libretto, by Johann Gottlieb Stephanie (who later provided him with the libretto for *Der Schauspieldirektor*), features another popular topic in later eighteenth century drama -- the rescue of an abducted heroine. In this instance, she is a lady of noble Spanish birth who has been captured by Barbary pirates and sold into the captivity of the Pasha Selim, who has fallen in love with her. In the end, she is rescued by her beloved Belmonte, with the assistance of his servant, Pedrillo.

Like Bernstein's *West Side Story* and many of his other works, *Divertimento* is made up of an exuberant array of styles, from various types of American popular music to symphonic repertoire from different historical periods. In this instance these references work as a series of reminiscences and tributes, relating to the piece's composition for the centenary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. On the eve of its premiere, Bernstein, a Boston native, the *Boston Globe* that, "It reflects my youthful experiences here where I heard my first orchestral music, I nearly fell out of my chair I was so excited."

For the most part the work is lighthearted, and the composer's sense of fun is typified by his instruction that the piccolo, and later the brass section, stand up for their solos in the finale, as if they were playing in a brass band concert. This rousing conclusion to the work, "The BSO [Boston Symphony Orchestra] Forever" is a pastiche of a march, the "Radetzky", which was played regularly at the Boston Pops concerts which Bernstein attended. It follows directly on from the more somber "In Memoriam," where the composer remembers Boston players and conductors who have passed away, with a short passage for three flutes where the instruments play the same melodies at staggered intervals of time (a canon).

Like the march, the "Samba" and "Turkey Trot" movements are in the style and mood of the Pops concerts, and the "Blues" movement draws on the popular music style which Bernstein had heard when visiting Boston nightclubs in his youth. The "Mazurka" and "Waltz," on the other hand, refer to Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, respectively; the "Mazurka" incorporates a quotation of the oboe cadenza of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, while the "Waltz"--often singled out as a particularly engaging part of this piece--is in the irregular time of 7/8, and is an homage to Tchaikovsky, particularly the 5/4 waltz of his Sixth Symphony. The opening movement, "Sennets and Tuckets," begins with celebratory fanfares, and its title is derived from a Shakespearean stage direction for that type of flourish (Bernstein had originally planned to use the first movement material as the basis for the whole work, but this scheme gave way in the face of the huge range of ideas which later occurred to him).

The melodic basis for the entire work is the two-note "germ" B-C, (representing "Boston Centenary"). The piece is shaped by the use of a range of different combinations of soloists and small groups for the separate movements, with, for example, the "Waltz" for strings alone; the "Blues" using brass and percussion; and woodwind and harp coloring the "Mazurka" movement.

Tchaikovsky wrote a letter in 1878 regarding his f minor symphony. "I should not wish for symphonic works to come from my pen which express nothing and which consist of empty playing with chords, rhythms, and modulations. Should a symphony not express those things for which there are not words but which need to be expressed?"

All of Tchaikovsky's symphonies are wrenched from deep inside him and are titanic works of love. In his writings, he speaks of many of them as if they were living things -- the children he knew he otherwise would never have. The prince of these is the extroverted and wild Fourth Symphony.

By the end of 1876, Tchaikovsky had begun to sketch out his F minor symphony. He had also decided to marry, perhaps hoping for both social redemption and psychological catharsis. In the spring of 1877, one of his students, Antonina Milyukova, revealed herself to be hopelessly in love with him, and in July he married her. The marriage failed, and Tchaikovsky spiraled into a maelstrom of self-loathing such that he abused and then abandoned his wife, and made a half-hearted attempt at suicide. Nonetheless, Tchaikovsky continued work on the Fourth Symphony, perhaps finding escape from the misery of his life in the wonder of the music. In October of the year, his wealthy patroness, the Mme. Nadezhda von Meck, formalized a regular stipend to him. He seems to have drawn inspiration and emotional sustenance from their long-distance relationship, and by January of 1878 the work was finished.

The Fourth Symphony, although it followed the third by only three years, is suddenly decades, indeed generations ahead of the first three. Gone is Tchaikovsky's youthful naïveté, and in its place is a profound view of Man's insignificant place in a monstrous Universe. The work slams up against the boundaries of defiance, hope, resignation, and triumph and is both richly melodic and thunderously bombastic. Fate -- Tchaikovsky's lifelong adversary and tormentor -- suddenly has a voice, and it is heard in the blast of trombones, horns, and trumpets opening the symphony. Loud, insistent, devoid of warmth or vibrato, all of a note, it commands total attention and returns repeatedly throughout the first movement to quell even the briefest and most innocent passing thought of happiness. Among many candidates, this movement is one of Tchaikovsky's finest in terms of musical structure and emotional impact.

Still hopeful at the age of only 38, Tchaikovsky actually includes a movement of quiet contemplation and an incredibly effective pizzicato scherzo before setting free what may best be described as a great dervish of joy and celebration, which sweeps the listener away to breathtaking ecstasy. In Tchaikovsky's mind, no doubt this was how it had to be. As relentless and impersonal as is Fate, his defiance of and triumph over it had to be even greater. Advocates of a very few other great composers might argue, but the fact is Tchaikovsky, in his Fourth Symphony, spans Man's coming to grips with his place in the Universe as well as it has ever been done in symphonic music. The work was dedicated to von Meck but cryptically inscribed "To my best friend." The work premiered in February of 1878 in Moscow.

ITHACA COLLEGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor

Violin I

Joshua Modney,
concertmaster
Jeffrey Abbott
Megan Atchley
Timothy Ball
Diane Bartholomew
Elizabeth Cary
Natasha Colkett
Danice-Claud Desir
Brenna Gillette
Maeva O'Hara
Colin Oettle
Ian Salmon
Elizabeth Stein

Violin II

Marc Bettis
Kate Goldstein
Brian Hwang
Christopher Jones*
Jeannine McGreevy
Sharon Mohar
Mary Raschella
Shawn Riley
Laura Sciavolino
Christian Simmelinck*
Sarina Woo

Viola

Lauren Buono
Jason Diaz
Bethany Niedbala
Jessica Owens
Sayer Palmer
Hannah Petersen
Sara Shepard
Annabelle Terbetski*
Nicole Wright

Cello

Samuel Boase-Miller
Jennifer Chieffalo
Alana Chown*
Peter Guarino
Laura Messina
Tim Nowak
Kelly Quinn
Matt Rotjan
Molly Sörlien

Bass

Nathan Gulla
Xander Lott
Audrey Miller
Patrick O'Connell*
Kyle Olmstead
Ben Reynolds
David Rossi
Naomi Williams
Justin Wixson

Flute

Melissa Bravo
Emily Watson*
Melissa Wertheimer
Melissa Wierzbowski

Piccolo

Melissa Bravo
Melissa Wertheimer*

Oboe

Luke Conklin
Emily Di Angelo*
Meghan Kimball
Emily Mure

English Horn

Meghan Kimball

E-flat Clarinet

Lauren Del Re

Clarinet

Wolcott Humphrey
Matt Libera*

Bass Clarinet

Kelly Bochynski

Bassoon

Andrew Chapman
Jennifer Meyers
Ryan Potvin*

Contra Bassoon

Jennifer Meyers

Horn

Michael Bellofatto*
Danny Carter
Brian Hoeflschweiger
Lori Roy
Andrea Silvestrini

Trumpet

Joseph Brown
Nick Kunkle
Nikola Tomic*

Trombone

Mark Lalumia
Phillip Machnik*

Bass Trombone

Matthew Barry

Tuba

William Plenk

Timpani

Andrew Sickmeier

Percussion

Matthew Donello*
Jason Hunt
Vincent Malafronte
Gregory Sutliff
Jason Taylor
Lee Treat

Piano

Joshua Horsch

Harp

Myra Kovary+

Graduate Assistants

Benjamin Aneff
Devin Hughes

* principal
+ Guest artist

Personnel listed in alphabetical order to emphasize each member's personal contribution.