2-12-1975

Ensemble Concerts: Symphony Orchestra, February 12, 1975

Arthur Corra Conductor

Martha Barker Violin

Taik Ju Lee Violin

Bruce Kaiser Narrator

Recommended Citation

Illinois State University
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ARTHUR CORRA, Conductor

MARTHA BARKER and TAIK JU LEE, Violinists
BRUCE KAISER, Narrator

Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins, BWV 1043   J.S. Bach
    Vivace
    Largo ma non tanto
    Allegro

*A Lincoln Portrait   Aaron Copland

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5   Gustav Mahler
    Funeral March
    Impetuous motion, with great vehemence
    Scherzo: Vigorous, but not too fast
    Adagietto: Very slow
    Rondo-Finale: Allegro

University Auditorium
Wednesday Evening
February 12, 1975
8:00 p.m.

*As part of the celebration of our country's bicentennial the Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra will include at least one work by an American composer on each concert of the 1974-75, 1975-76, and 1976-77 seasons.

Johann Sebastian Bach the violinist is somewhat overshadowed by Bach the organist. We have come to associate Bach primarily with works for keyboard instruments and particularly with the organ. We know that he was one of the greatest organists of his time, in great demand especially for "testing" new organs. In our imagination we visualize him sitting at the organ of the St. Thomas church in Leipzig surrounded by awe-struck sons and pupils. Yet this unique master of the keyboard was at the same time a fine violinist, who also loved to play the viola. The first salaried position he held was that of violinist in the orchestra of Johann Ernst, brother of the reigning Duke of Weimar (1703). Bach did not represent the glamorous virtuoso, but he was a very proficient player. A contrapuntal thinker, he explored counterpoint also in his compositions for violin, as the sonatas and suites for violin alone. In this respect he was the antipode to Antonio Vivaldi and other great Italian violinists who excelled in virtuosity.

Curiously enough, Bach evinced no interest in the harpsichord concerto as such. The seven harpsichord concerti that have come to us are arrangements (recastings) of earlier violin concerti which Bach made when he directed the Collegium Musicum founded by Telemann in Leipzig. (Even the concerti for two and three harpsichords are recastings of earlier violin concerti; the concerto for four harpsichords is a recasting of a concerto for four violins by Vivaldi.) Not all of the originals of these transcriptions are known; yet only three of Bach's violin concerti (two for a solo violin and the one included in tonight's concert for two solo violins) are extant, the others survive only in their harpsichord transcriptions. This Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1043 is the original version of the Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C Minor, BWV 1062. Schweitzer put the blame for the loss of several violin concerti on Wilhelm Friedemann Bach who shared his father's musical estate with his younger brother, Carl Philipp Emanuel.

Bach was not a trail blazer in matters of form in his concerti; he followed Vivaldi whose concreti exercised great influence on his contemporaries as well as on Bach. The fruits of Bach's study of Vivaldi's works are his violin concerti. There is no precise information as to when they were composed, but all available evidence points to 1719-1720, when Bach was Kappelmeister and director of musical establishment for Prince Leopold of Anhalt at Cöthen, about thirty miles northwest of Leipzig.

In 1942, on a commission from the conductor Andre Kostelanetz, Aaron Copland chose Abraham Lincoln as the subject for a musical portrait. Realizing that "no composer could possibly hope to match in musical terms the stature of so eminent a figure as that of Lincoln", Copland called on the Great Emancipator himself for assistance, using a narrator to read selections, chosen by Copland, from some of Lincoln's speeches and letters.

The work is in three sections. The first suggests something of the mystery and sense of fatality that surrounds Lincoln's personality as well as his gentleness and simplicity of spirit. The middle section sketches briefly the lively times in which Lincoln lived. In the last section, Copland says that he attempted to draw "a simple but impressive frame about the words of Lincoln himself."

It seems particularly appropriate to perform this work on Lincoln's birthday, in the state where he lived and worked and came to national prominence, for this is also the eve of America's bicentennial and the 75th anniversary of Copland's birth.

Mahler's whole life-work as a symphonist can be described as a search for an identity, which is an important reason why his music makes such a strong appeal to us today, and especially to the younger generation. Symphonic music before Mahler was written by composers who felt themselves part of a stable environment, men able to take for granted the basic assumptions of their society, if only to rebel against them. Even Mozart, who had to struggle so desperately against the musical conditions of 18th century Austria, did at least have this immovable wall to beat his head against in vain. But in Mahler we find the first symphonist who represents that typical modern figure, the man who is uprooted and out of his element. As an Austrian Jew born in Bohemia, he was technically a member of the German civilization, but he often used to say: "I am three times homeless, as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian amongst Germans, and as a Jew throughout all the world: everywhere an intruder, never welcomed."

In consequence, there was nothing stable for him in any of his environments, and his work

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Violin I
Taik Ju Lee
Gregg Oakley
Terryl Jares
Elizabeth Westerlund
Hwei Ming Twu
Pamela Combs
Martha Barker

Violin II
Frank Schwarzwalder
Debra Pederson
Cecelia Roth
Marilee Appleby
Deborah Koehn
Carol Waldvogel
Wanita Smith
Huu Pham
Lu Ann Holstine
Jennifer Gridley

Viola
Helen Zamie
John McDonald
Chris Reichert
Forest Crocker
Linda Langellier
David Hawkins
Larry Spence

Cello
Janice Gedney
Tom Wang
Lyssa Myhre
Daniel Bunce
Sharon Kahn
Susan Allen

Bass
Peter Guy
Debra Buchanan
Steven Hayes
Philip Murphy
Carol Jansen
Thomas Fatten
Craig Jones
George Gillham
Ken Haebich

Flute
*Judith Ross
*Carol Neuleib
Kathleen Townsend
Nancy Widmer
Rebecca Meyer

Piccolo
Nancy Widmer
Rebecca Meyer

Oboe
*Jan Lohs
*Marvin Carlton
Beth Christensen
Patricia Seino

English Horn
Patricia Seino

Clarinet
*Barry Kolman
*Wayne Montag
Ricardo Mariani
Kathleen Hoerner

E-Flat Clarinet
Kathleen Hoerner

Bass Clarinet
Kathleen Hoerner

Bassoon
*Mary Dalziel
*Joyce Hitchcock
Patricia Bills
Suzanne Howe

Contrabassoon
Suzanne Howe
Mary Dalziel

Horn
*Rodger Burnett
*Tim Swenson
Mary Riley
Richard Weyrich
Peter Holm
James Williams
Michelle Oberwise

Trumpet
*David Golden
*James Cassens
George Marion
Rob Fund
James DeFranco

Trombone
*David Kotowski
*Michael Haynes
James Bermann

Tuba
Edward Firth

Timpani
Philip Henry

Percussion
Tom Hensold
Jose Alecia
Ron Engel
Darryl One

Harp
Steven Hartman

Harpsichord
Arthur Corra

Librarians
Philip Murphy
Hwei Ming Twu

Stage Managers
David Kotowski
Frank Schwarzwalder

*Co-principals

became an unremitting quest to discover some stable attitude with which to identify himself. This involved a good deal of chopping and changing. It is this which explains that strange and often-criticized element of theatricality in Mahler's music. Frequently, when he expresses a certain state of mind, it is not out of permanent conviction, but out of an unconscious need to identify himself with that state of mind, to believe in it passionately for the moment, in the hope that it may prove a valuable one to cling to, and remain an abiding acquisition; yet there is always his acute intellect, unable not to look on from outside, and weigh the situation, and consider whether the state of mind is in fact as valuable and fruitful as it seems. He struggled with this situation for long: only from *The Song of the Earth* onwards, when he was faced with certain premature death, did he begin to find his way out of it, in resigned reconciliation with the inescapable transience of human life. Before that work, each spiritual world that he built up over a period, and embodied in a symphony, afterwards vanished, as if it had never been: each new symphony until then was a fresh start, a start from scratch. As Bruno Walter said: "No spiritual experience, however hardly won, was ever his secure possession."

Aaron Copland, an admirer of Mahler's music, has taken a more critical view. "The difference between Beethoven and Mahler," he says, "is the difference between watching a great man walk down the street and watching a great actor act the part of a great man walking down the street." Copland is driving at the manifest element of impersonation in much of Mahler's music. However, there is nothing superficial or insincere about Mahler, but only an underlying psychological instability. The real difference between Beethoven and him is that between watching a great man walk down a street in which he feels himself secure, and is therefore perfectly at ease with his greatness, and watching a great man walk down a street in which he feels himself totally insecure, and is therefore obliged to act out his greatness, self-consciously and defiantly—because he is scarcely able to credit it in his heart of hearts, uncertain whether the street will not suddenly cease to be a reassuring background and become hostile territory in which he will be an outcast.

Mahler had to walk down so many streets, and felt at home in none of them: and this is the fundamental origin of the almost disruptive contrasts in his music. With each new symphony, and sometimes with each new movement in a symphony, we are taken into a different world. In each case there is a passionate, even desperate identification with a certain attitude, but only, in the last resort, for what it is worth; suddenly the scene changes, and another attitude is being identified with, but again only for what it is worth. In the first four symphonies we find Mahler striving to identify himself with four different kinds of idealism: the power of the will against fate in the first, the Christian belief in resurrection in the second, a dionysiac pantheism based on Nietzsche in the third, the indestructibility of innocence in the fourth. Into all these symphonies the youthful lyricism of Mahler's early songs enters, either in instrumental arrangements or else actually sung by voices—the voices of children, or of adults possessed of a childlike, trusting faith.

None of these idealistic worlds proved a haven to rest in, and the *Fifth Symphony*, completed in 1902, at the age of 42, brought a more than usually determined wiping of the slate. It marks the beginning of Mahler's full maturity, being the first of a trilogy of "realistic", purely instrumental symphonies which occupied him during his middle period. Gone are the programs, the voices, the songs, and the movements based on songs; and the delicate or warm harmonic sonorities which formerly brought relief from pain have been largely replaced by a new type of naked contrapuntal texture given a hard edge by the starkest possible use of the woodwind and brass.

In the *Fifth Symphony*, although it has no actual program, there are two manifest and utterly opposed attitudes which are set side by side with so little reconciliation between them as to threaten the work with disunity. The Symphony might almost be described as schizophrenic, in that the most tragic and the most joyful worlds of feeling are separated from one another, and only bound together by Mahler's unmistakable musical personality, and his extraordinary command of large-scale symphonic structure and unification.

The first of the work's three parts consists of the two opening movements: linked emotionally and thematically, they explore to the full the tragic view of life, and give only a late and fleeting glimpse of the opposite view—that of triumphant life-affirmation. The first movement is a funeral march, in C-sharp minor, beginning with a hollow trumpet fanfare in the minor mode, which is to strike in at various focal points as a kind of iron refrain. Curiously enough, this beginning stems from a passage in the *Fourth Symphony*, as though Mahler wanted to preserve at least a thread of continuity between his new "realistic" world and the world of naive innocence he had just left behind.

This opening movement of the Fifth alternates its main slow funeral-march music with ferocious out-
burts of grievous protest in a faster tempo; and the first of these starts with a three-note motive which
is to be the chief means of unifying the two opening movements. The motive becomes pervasive, and
towards the end of the movement it appears in a new accompanying form, and in the new key of A
minor, which is to be that of the second movement.

This form of the phrase also pervades the opening material of the second movement, eventually
acting as the starting point of its main theme. This movement is frenetic, reversing the situation of
the first: the ferocious mood of protest is basic, and there are slower sections which are related to the
funeral-march music of the first movement—not only in mood, but in some of the actual thematic
material. It is, however, the three-note motive which is the chief unifying factor, and at four separate
points it turns to the major mode which is to dominate the remaining three movements of the
Symphony. The first time it introduces one of the reminiscences of the first movement, bringing back
the consoling secondary idea of the funeral-march music; a little later it introduces a cheerful
popular-type march-tune of deliberate, sarcastic triviality; a little later still it flashes through the
prevailing darkness a vivid blaze of light which is immediately eclipsed; and finally, a good deal later,
it brings the climax of the movement—a noble chorale-like passage in the key of D major. (This
"chorale" recurs as the final climax of the last movement.) Following this climax, the second move-
ment dies away in A minor, the despairing last word being its main theme, based on the basic three-
note motive from the first movement.

So ends the tragic first part of the Symphony. The second part consists of the third movement
only,the big Scherzo, and the moment it begins, the schizophrenic character of the work emerges. It
completely contradicts the nihilistic mood and minor tonality of practically everything that has gone
before, by switching to the brilliant key of D major, and to an exploration of the joyfully affirmative
view of life, both of which are to occupy the rest of the Symphony. Thus the dark world of Part I is not
gradually dispelled by a process of spiritual development: it is abruptly rejected in favor of a complete-
ly different attitude. The tragic view of life is one way of looking at things, the Symphony seems to
say, and this is another: the two different attitudes are always there, and either or both may be right,
but it is impossible to reconcile them.

Nevertheless, since they are being presented in a work of art, a symphony, they are provided with
the necessary musical unification: not only through the eventual reappearance of the chorale-like
theme near the end of the finale, but also at the very outset of this third movement. Part I of the
Symphony ended with a despairing reference to the main theme of the second movement, based on
the chief unifying motive; that theme is also the basis of the joyous opening horn theme of the third
movement. This Scherzo is a symphonic *Ländler*, with an ebullient obbligato part for the first horn.
Admittedly, the waltz-like Trio brings a mood of nostalgia: and there is an awesome climax with horns
echoing each other which leads to haunting music full of sadness and loneliness. But these passages
have nothing emotionally in common with the despairing laments of the first part of the work; and in
any case, they are subsidiary to the excited *Ländier* music, which returns frequently and eventually
brings the movement to a jubilant ending. The Scherzo is really a dance of life, evoking all the bustle
of a vital existence, as opposed to the concentration on the inevitability of death in the funeral
marches and ferocious protests of Part I.

The third and final part of the Symphony consists of the last two movements. First comes the
Adagietto for strings and harp, which is a quiet haven of peace in F major between the strenuous ac-
tivity of the D major Scherzo and the equally strenuous activity of the D major Finale. Pervaded with
the familiar romantic mood of withdrawal, from the strain and tension of life, into the quietude of the
inner self, the *Adagietto* has much in common with Mahler's great song "I am lost to the world,"
which ends with the words "I live alone, in my own heaven, in my love, in my singing". And this
movement too is related symphonically to all that has gone before, by its use of the chief unifying
motive. Its main theme is based on the figure, but more striking is the threefold quotation of it at the
crucial point when the movement switches suddenly to the new and ecstatic key of G flat major.

Out of this movement's quiet retreat, the Finale emerges immediately—and magically. A single
horn note, like a call to awake, is answered by a drowsy echo on the violins, which is in fact a repeti-
tion of their last, long-drawn peaceful note in the *Adagietto:* the Symphony is unwilling to turn from
meditation to action. Various fragments of cheerful folk-like melody are given out by unaccompanied
woodwind instruments and horn, providing much of the thematic material of the movement. The first

quick one on the bassoon was taken by Mahler from his satirical *Wunderhorn* song about the singing contest in which the cuckoo beat the nightingale because the donkey acted as the judge; but the second and third, on clarinet and bassoon respectively, may sound even more familiar in the present contest. They are in fact speeded-up versions of the two spearate segments of the big chorale theme of the second movement, as becomes clearer when, after the horn has introduced another idea, the clarinet plays both segments in juxtaposition.

The last four notes of this theme immediately become the starting point of the Finale's main rondo tune, given out by horns and strings: the mood is again joyful and exuberant, but this Finale, like that of Beethoven's *Eroica*, brings the symphony to a vital culmination which is concerned, not so much with the expression of particular life-attitudes, as with the composer's artistic joy in symphonic creation, of building up a large musical structure. It thus follows naturally on the *Adagietto*, the haven of recuperation from life's turmoil; and this is further emphasized by the use of an actual theme from the *Adagietto*, at quicker tempo, as the Finale's second subject. Mahler's structure is a huge one, combining sonata and rondo, and including, as part of the opening group of themes, a fugal exposition on a bustling subject. The final climax, before the Symphony races away to its conclusion, is a full restatement of the big brass chorale introduced so fleetingly towards the end of the second movement. Utlimately, and notwithstanding the subtle unifying power of the basic motive, it is this explicit cross-reference between the most anguished movement in Part I and the most joyous movement of Part 3 which is the main crossbeam holding together the dangerously disparate elements of total darkness and total light at either end of the Symphony. (notes on Mahler adapted from material by Deryck Cooke)