

PROGRAM NOTES

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

**“Music should strike fire from the heart of man,
and bring tears from the eyes of woman.” - L. van Beethoven**

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, Germany in 1770 to a family of seven children and died in Vienna in 1827. Over 20,000 Viennese attended Beethoven’s funeral; one of the torchbearers was Franz Schubert, who was buried beside him a year later in 1828.

Beethoven’s father was his first teacher and he made his first public performance at age seven in 1778 in Cologne. He later studied with Gottlob Neefe, Haydn, Albrechtsberger, Salieri, among others, and quickly gained a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. Knowing how Leopold Mozart exploited Mozart, Beethoven’s father, Johann, also attempted to do the same but without success. Beethoven was never married but there is no doubt that he had had a few romantic relationships during his life time. During the late 1790’s, Beethoven noticed that there was a problem with his hearing but was unsuccessful in finding a cure. Although no one knew for certain his actual cause of death, some of the medicine that he had taken contained so much lead that there was common belief that he died of lead-poisoning.

Notable compositions of Beethoven include nine symphonies, five piano concertos, numerous great solo sonatas for instruments such as cello, piano and violin, 17 string quartets and one opera “Fidelio”.

Beethoven’s only violin concerto was written for Franz Clement, a virtuoso violinist of the day and was dedicated to Stephan von Breuning. It was premiered on December 23, 1806 at the *Theatre an der Wien* with Clement as the soloist. Unfortunately, the concerto was not well received by the public after its first performance. It was not until 1844 that the work was revived by Felix Mendelssohn when he conducted it with 12 year old violinist Joseph Joachim as the soloist. Over 25 violinists such as Bell, Flesch, Joachim, Kreisler have written cadenza for this concerto.

This concerto has three movements: Allegro ma no troppo, Larghetto and Rondo, and is scored for flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. The first movement is in sonata-form and has the longest exposition of all major concertos. The timpani also play an interesting role here. Under the suggestion of virtuoso pianist Muzio Clementi, Beethoven has transcribed this work for the piano (Op. 61a) and added the timpani in the cadenza. The Larghetto the work movement has a totally different timbre and mood due to the mystic sound of the muted violins. Its melody is very lyrical and the music is a romantic dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra. The final Rondo has a very catchy main theme which returns four times throughout the movement. Over 25 violinists such as Bell, Flesch, Joachim, Kreisler have written cadenza for this concerto; a solo passage usually written by the composer to let the soloist showcasing his/her technical virtuosity.

Serenade No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833 and was the middle child of Johann Jakob and Henrika Christiane Nissen. Johann Jakob was a double bassist with the Hamburg Philharmonic Society; Henrika was a seamstress who was seventeen years older than her husband. Young Brahms received his early music lessons from his father and later, Otto Friedrich Cossel and Eduard Marxsen on the piano. Brahms came from a rather poor family and rumours had it that he had to supplement the family income by playing at local taverns when he was a teenager.

Being a perfectionist, Brahms has destroyed many of his early compositions and others left unpublished. Even though Brahms was considered a major figure in the Romantic period, his music is deeply rooted in the Baroque and Classical compositional styles. Brahms never got married in his

life but did have a few romantic encounters especially his relationship with Clara Schumann, wife of Robert Schumann. He led a rather frugal lifestyle and did well financially in the stock market and the returns from selling his own music. He died on April 3, 1897 of cancer and was buried in the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna.

Major compositions of Brahms include four symphonies, two piano concertos, one violin concerto, a double concerto for violin and cello, German Requiem, Academic Festival Overture and numerous German Lieder (German art songs). If you wish to hear Brahms' voice, check out this website

<https://search.yahoo.com/search?ei=utf-8&fr=ytf1-sunm&p=Brahms%20voice%20on%20phonograph&type=>

and you will find a short excerpt recorded by Thomas Edison in 1889.

Brahms' Serenade No. 1 was written in the neoclassical style, it reminds listeners of the music of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. It is also believed to be Brahms' first attempt at orchestral writing. Brahms began composing this work in 1857 while he was working in the court of Prince Friedrich Emil Leopold in Detmold, Germany. It was originally written for a woodwind nonet and strings but later, under the suggestion of Clara Schumann and Joseph Joachim (violinist), Brahms re-orchestrated it for full orchestra. The premiere took place on March 3, 1860 with Joachim conducting.

The music has six movements and is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two trumpets, trombone, timpani and strings. Even though Brahms did not call it a symphony, the structure of the work is very similar to a full scale symphony. It begins with an Allegro movement (written in sonata-form), follows by a Scherzo, then a slow and sombre Adagio, a Minuet within a Minuet (Dances), another Scherzo and an energetic Rondo brings the music to a close.

Program Notes Written By Eric D. Fahn