



Masur Takes the Reins

Welcome, Music Director Ken-David Masur! For his inaugural concerts, the Maestro has chosen an all-German program. Music from two much-loved operas opens and closes the concert. In between, there's Schumann's lyrical piano concerto and a Brahms-inspired piece by Masur's friend Detlev Glanert.

RICHARD WAGNER

Born 22 May 1813; Leipzig, Germany
Died 13 February 1883; Venice, Italy

Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

- Composed:** 1862 (prelude); 1863-67 (opera)
- First performance:** 1 November 1862; Leipzig, Germany (prelude)
21 June 1868; Munich, Germany (complete opera)
- Last MSO performance:** November 2018; Johannes Debus, conductor
- Instrumentation:** 2 flutes; piccolo; 2 oboes; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani; percussion (cymbals, triangle); harp; strings
- Approximate duration:** 10 minutes

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg ("The Mastersingers of Nuremberg"), the 12th of Richard Wagner's 13 music dramas, is one of only two comic works in his compositional oeuvre. (The other one, *Das Liebesverbot* (1834), is rarely – if ever – heard nowadays.) *Meistersinger* is a parable on the art of music, with a simple human love story at its center.

The popular prelude – Wagner preferred the term "Vorspiel" rather than "overture, just as he preferred the term "music drama" over "opera" – written and premiered far ahead of the larger work, boasts a multi-hued palette of orchestral color and melodic variety. In it, Wagner sets forth the various leitmotifs that will saturate the entire opus, music that ranges from the pompous to the humorous to the affectingly lyrical. It's little wonder that the Vorspiel for Wagner's stage work has served in the same capacity for many an orchestral concert.

Recommended recording: Sir George Solti, Chicago Symphony Orchestra (London) 🎧

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born 8 June 1810; Zwickau, Germany

Died 29 July 1856; Endenich (near Bonn), Germany

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 54

Composed: 1841+1845

First performance: 1 January 1846; Leipzig, Germany

Last MSO performance: April 2015; Edo de Waart, conductor;
Inon Barnatan, piano

Instrumentation: 2 flutes; 2 oboes; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; 2 horns; 2 trumpets; timpani; strings

Approximate duration: 31 minutes

For Robert Schumann, 1839 was a restless, litigious year, as he and his fiancé Clara Wieck (1819-1896), the daughter of his piano teacher Friedrich Wieck, battled her father in court for the right to be married. Their legal struggles were ultimately successful and they were married on 12 September 1840. This union resulted in a tremendous musical productivity, for anticipating his marriage to Clara had unquestionably put Robert into a lyrical frame of mind. In 1840 – his so-called “year of song” – he gave voice to his pent-up emotions, penning over 125 lieder.

The following year, in a celebratory disposition, he set his sights on the orchestra, producing two symphonies and the *Overture, Scherzo, and Finale*, Op. 52. Additionally, in just over a week’s time in May 1841, he set down a *Fantasie in A minor* for piano and orchestra. Clara – herself a composer and one of the greatest pianists of the 19th century – read through the piece at a rehearsal of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in August. Two weeks later, the first of the Schumann’s eight children was born. In the summer of 1845, Robert composed the other two movements to create a full-blown piano concerto. Clara played its premiere several months later, with Ferdinand Hiller on the podium.

The concerto opens with a cascade of chords from the soloist, after which the oboe intones the lieder-influenced main theme. The piano answers and, in true chamber-music fashion, a friendly conversation between soloist and orchestra ensues. At the beginning of the development section, there’s an especially stunning passage, as a hush falls over the proceedings: the strings provide a cushiony background, the soloist plays gentle arpeggios, and the clarinet sings above it all. A flash of bravado from the piano halts this daydream, then the recapitulation leads to the marvelous cadenza. Here, Schumann wrote out every note the soloist is to play, arrestingly probing his material with solo piano. The Allegro affettuoso concludes with a refashioning of the principal theme – in a bouncy accelerated style – sounded by oboes, clarinets, and bassoons.

The F major Intermezzo, set in ternary form, continues the dialogue idea. Its gentle personality reminds us of any number of Schumann’s character pieces for solo piano, and the four-note ascending motif is not unlike a portion of the opening movement’s main melody. The cellos introduce its gently lilting second theme, and the piano answers with tender ripples of 16th notes. As the movement concludes, the sound begins to die away and the winds remind us of the first movement’s main theme.

The ebullient A major Rondo springs from the general contour of that same motif. Schumann has a trick up his sleeve for the second theme, however. Though the music is set in 3/4 time, he creates a march-like feel by displacing the accented beats of the bar. Throughout this high-spirited finale, there’s a felicitous interlacing of melodies. The ever-quotable Sir Donald Francis Tovey was right on the money when he called the work “irresistible.” He further noted that “the whole concerto, like all Schumann’s deepest music, is recklessly pretty.” Indeed!

Recommended recording: Murray Perahia; Sir Colin Davis, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (Sony) 

DETLEV GLANERT

Born 6 September 1960; Hamburg, Germany

Brahms-Fantasie, Heliogravure für Orchester

Composed: 2011-12

First performance: 22 March 2012; Glasgow, Scotland

Last MSO performance: MSO premiere

Instrumentation: 2 flutes; 2 oboes; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; contrabassoon; 4 horns; 2 trumpets; 3 trombones; timpani; strings

Approximate duration: 12 minutes

Like Brahms, Detlev Glanert was born in Hamburg. From an early age, he was drawn to opera, later studying with the renowned German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926-2012), himself an expert in that genre. To date, Glanert has written over a dozen operas. The most recent, *Oceane*, was premiered in Berlin in April 2019. His new trumpet concerto had its first performance at Tanglewood in July.

Brahms-Fantasie is one of four works the BBC commissioned from Glanert, to be paired with a performance of a specific Brahms symphony – in this case, Brahms's Symphony No. 1. The subtitle, "Heliogravure for Orchestra," refers to a 19th-century technique in which photographs are painted over, causing the original image to appear as something entirely new. Though the original can be said to remain, it has been transformed through the intervention of an artist. Glanert thought this the perfect subtitle for this piece, one that is unique in his whole catalogue. The process makes for an engaging amalgamation of musical material: We hear Brahms, yet we don't really hear him; we hear Glanert's music, but it is not entirely his.

Donald Runnicles conducted the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in the first performance of *Brahms-Fantasie* in 2012. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra introduced the work to this country in 2015, led by Semyon Bychkov.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Born 11 June 1864; Munich, Germany

Died 8 September 1949; Garmisch-Partenkirche, Germany

Suite from Der Rosenkavalier

Composed: 1909-10 (opera); 1944 (suite)

First performance: 26 January 1911; Dresden, Germany (opera)
4 October 1944; New York, New York (suite)

Last MSO performance: May 2013; Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo); 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn); 3 clarinets (3rd doubling E-flat clarinet); bass clarinet; 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon); 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani; percussion (bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, snare drum, tambourine, triangle); 2 harps, celeste, strings

Approximate duration: 22 minutes

From his earliest years as a composer, Richard Strauss's music was held in high regard. The orchestral tone poems he penned in his 20s and 30s – *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Quixote*, et al. – immediately entered the international repertoire, and remain there to this day. After the turn of the century, opera occupied his interest, with *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909) seemingly in the forefront of "modern" music; indeed, the latter gained a certain notoriety for its cacophony.

His next opera, *Der Rosenkavalier*, with a libretto by his frequent collaborator Hugo von Hofmannsthal, was a retreat from that sort of modernity. It quickly became his most popular opera; special *Rosenkavalier* trains ran from Berlin to Dresden, and several other opera houses produced the work just a few days after its Dresden premiere. Set in 18th-century Vienna, it tells the story of the Marshallin; her 17-year-old lover, Count Octavian; the bump-

tious, licentious Baron Ochs, her country cousin; and Sophie von Faninal, Ochs's prospective fiancée, a nubile young woman whose father is part of the *nouveau riche*.

Following the Marshallin's counsel, Octavian serves as Ochs's "cavalier of the rose" by presenting a ceremonial silver rose to Sophie – a "custom" entirely of Hofmannstahl's devising. The two young people fall in love at first sight. With help from the Marshallin, they devise a comic scheme to free Sophie from her betrothal, after which the Marshallin relinquishes Octavian to Sophie.

The orchestral suite begins with the opera's pre-curtain music, which depicts the erotic escapades of the Marshallin and Octavian. The music that follows finds them talking in bed. In the ardent Presentation of the Rose scene we are first introduced to Sophie. The opera's most famous waltz ensues, as the boorish Baron assures the Marshallin's chambermaid (actually, Octavian in disguise) that "with me, no night is too long." (The inclusion of waltzes in the opera – a glorious but anachronistic touch, since the dance dates from the 19th century, not the 18th – was Hofmannstahl's idea, not Strauss's.)

Then follows one of the most glorious moments in the operatic canon, the splendid trio for Octavian, the Marshallin, and Sophie. It's actually three simultaneous monologues, as each gives voice to their innermost feelings. The final duet of Octavian and Sophie comes next, and they go off together. The suite, unlike the opera, ends with one more waltz. The suite was assembled by the Polish conductor Artur Rodzinski (1892-1958), during his tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic. He led its first performance, in 1944.

Recommended recording: Eugene Ormandy, Philadelphia Orchestra (Sony) 

Program notes by J. Mark Baker.