



The Broadway Symphony
George Shangrow, *conductor*

MOZART

Symphony No. 25

BARTOK

Divertimento for Strings

BRAHMS

Symphony No. 3



THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY/ SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

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THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY
George Shangrow, conductor

PROGRAM

November 16, 1986

Kane Hall

Symphony No. 25 in g minor, K. 183

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756 - 1791)

Allegro con brio
Andante
Menuetto
Allegro

Divertimento for String Orchestra

Béla Bartók
(1881 - 1945)

Allegro non troppo
Molto adagio
Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90

Johannes Brahms
(1833 - 1897)

Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco Allegretto
Allegro



PROGRAM NOTES

by

Gary Fladmoe

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Symphony No. 25 in g minor, K. 183

At the ripe age of seventeen, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart made his first venture into the minor mode in a symphonic form. During a visit to Vienna, the young Mozart heard and was impressed by a symphony by Haydn in e minor which has been subtitled the "Funeral" or "Mourning" symphony. Music in Vienna was beginning to take on a decidedly romantic flavor, and some have suggested that Mozart's hearing of the Haydn work with its romantic flavor so moved him that it became the model for his own 25th Symphony.

Wyzewa and St. Foix, in attempting to connect the Mozart work to Haydn's have written, "It is the same tragic pain, full of nobility, to be sure; the same consuming fire...the same tendency to make the symphony nothing but a great song of feverish anguish, interrupted by the sweet repose of the Andante." They point out such musical parallels as the use of a double exposition of the opening thematic material, the alternation of unison passages with contrapuntal writing, and the use of extended codas. Whether consciously or unconsciously, it would appear that Mozart was moved and influenced by the Haydn symphony.

Outside influences aside, the symphony seems to represent Mozart's strong urge to express his feelings of the moment. The listener will readily observe that those feelings are not ones of unrestrained joy. Bagar and Biancolli conjecture that Mozart was becoming despondent over what he observed as an increasingly repressive atmosphere in the palace of the Archbishop of Salzburg where he was employed, and that despondency is apparent in the musical expression of the symphony. Mozart's letters of the time also hint at a romantic involvement that never materialized. Bagar and Biancolli reach the somewhat obvious conclusion that the young musical genius was merely experiencing the normal stresses and strains of adolescence.

Symphony No. 25 is one of a group of five symphonies of Mozart that seemed to signal a new maturity in his compositional style. These five works differ markedly from his earlier works in symphonic form. Their organization displays greater logic with a pronounced emphasis on unity throughout each work. Themes become more profound, their developments more extensive and fully realized, and the range of expression expands to reveal the youthful composer as capable of intense romanticism, passion, energy, poetry, and, as in the case of this symphony, tragedy.

This g minor symphony has often been dubbed "the little g minor" symphony to set it apart from the masterwork No. 40 which would be written some fifteen years later in 1788. Even when so set apart, however, Symphony No. 25 is unquestionably linked to the later work, and some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that it was a prototype if not even a stylistic rough draft of No. 40.

The work itself is in four movements, Allegro con brio, Andante, Menuetto, and Allegro. In addition to the new expressive qualities of the work, there are some other features which add to its unique place among Mozart's symphonic writing. He chooses to announce the principal themes of both the first and last movements in unison passages, a device which not only gives strength to the thematic material but also serves as a unifying concept for the work as a whole. A second interesting feature is the use of four horns in the scoring of the work, a rare practice in Mozart's time. His contemporary,

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Haydn, rarely scored for more than two horns, and Beethoven used four horns only once, in the Ninth Symphony. Mozart used four horns in three other symphonies, but never in his operas.

Ewen perhaps best sums up the essence of Symphony No. 25. In his description of the mature Mozart symphonies he writes, '...there is hardly one of them - beginning with No. 25 in g minor - that is not a reservoir of infectious melodies and characterized by beautiful construction, vivacity of spirit, freshness of ideas, exchanging moods, and the best possible taste.'

Béla Bartók - Divertimento for String Orchestra

The divertimento was a highly popular form in the late 18th century. It usually consisted of more than four movements and was typically a suite in a light style. Haydn and Mozart wrote many divertimenti and used the term interchangeably with serenade, thereby obscuring any distinction between the two.

Béla Bartók composed his Divertimento for String Orchestra in 1939 during the fifteen days immediately preceding the start of World War II, a most ominous time for Bartók. He had become highly disturbed by events taking place in the world and the possible threat those events posed for his native Hungary, his family, and himself. He was able, however, to shut out his fears for the short time it took for him to create a most appealing musical work.

Working on a commission from the Basel Chamber Orchestra of Switzerland, Bartók chose as his stylistic inspiration for the Divertimento the concerto grosso of the 18th century. Incorporating the concept of solo strings (the concertino) alternating phrases with the orchestral body (the ripieno), Bartók successfully endowed the 18th century structure with 20th century idioms.

Much of Bartók's music, notably the string quartets, has been termed very difficult listening material. His use of unrelenting, stark dissonance and unusual tonality can jolt the listener used to the confines of more conventional music. Bartók's reputation will probably increase as later generations look back for an aesthetic of early 20th century music. The depth of his expression in the idiom of his time should survive and help establish Bartók as one of the true giants of musical history.

Happily, the Divertimento poses no such problems for the listener. It is an open expression of simple beauty with readily identifiable themes, even rhythm, and basically undisonant harmony. Enough of Bartók's stylistic devices such as the use of syncopation, spicy dissonance, and abrupt contrasts of rhythm and tonality remain in the work to delight the listener.

The Divertimento is set in three movements, Allegro non troppo, Molto Adagio, and Allegro assai. The first movement features a theme of driving energy. The second is an emotionally contrasting song in muted violins over a busy bass line. A secondary theme in the violas recalls Bartók's fondness for using folklike melodies. The final movement is a whirling climax of happiness.

The work features some interesting aspects for the intrigued listener looking for subtleties. There is a five-part canon in the development section of the first movement. In the Molto Adagio a three-note motive is brought to a blossoming development, and the Finale centers around an extended fugal passage.

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That Bartók succeeded in an interesting stylistic experiment, there can be no doubt. We believe the listener will find the Divertimento for String Orchestra a delightful portion of today's program.

Johannes Brahms - Symphony in F Major, No. 3, Op. 90

Johannes Brahms has, perhaps inappropriately, been described as the logical musical extension of the work of Beethoven. His first symphony has been viewed at the Beethoven "Tenth," and some have gone so far as to suggest that the pulsing timpani beats at the beginning of the Brahms work represent Beethoven's footsteps. To those seeing parallels, the Brahms second symphony was dubbed "Pastoral" - the reasoning being that Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony followed his great c minor symphony and the obvious idyllic mood of Brahms' second symphony could be likened to the nature theme of Beethoven.

It was only natural then, when Brahms completed his third symphony, that people sought to find the Beethoven parallel. The dominant mood of the new Brahms symphony seemed to be heroic, and Hans Richter quickly cast it as the new "Eroica." Devotees hurriedly swore allegiance to the new name. The new symphony had the same number as Beethoven's "Eroica." Brahms could only be blamed because he failed to base his new work in E-flat Major and did not include a funeral march.

Eduard Hanslick espoused the new name, but he would only go so far as to apply the appellation to the first and last movements. He was critical of the lack of tragic elements (the funeral march), and he found certain parts of the work to be quivering with the romantic twilight of Schumann and Mendelssohn.

Others tried to ascribe still other programmatic elements to the work, but it is likely that Brahms himself had no program in mind or any clear source of inspiration to which one could point as the foundation for the symphony. It is probably best to let the music stand on its own and align oneself with Mahler's view that if a composer could say what he had to say in words, he should not bother trying to say it in music.

It is well known that there was no love lost between Brahms and Wagner (Brahms had jokingly been credited with founding the "antichromatic society" in opposition to Wagner). Thus it is somewhat surprising that some have suggested that the Brahms Third Symphony contains a tribute to Wagner in its first movement. Wagner died while Brahms was writing the symphony, and it's possible that Brahms did indeed offer some musical homage to his departed contemporary. There is a string passage in the first movement reminiscent of the Venusberg scene in Tannhäuser.

If the Wagnerites were aware of such a tribute, they never let it be known. To Wagner's fans, Brahms was the archenemy. They plotted to disrupt and ruin performances of Brahms' music, and large numbers of them appeared at the premiere of the new symphony in December of 1883 to hiss in derision at the end of the first movement and each movement thereafter. The audience loved the new work, however, and quickly drowned out the hissing with their applause. One particularly incensed Brahmsian, Arthur Faber, actually challenged a very noisy Wagnerite who was seated behind him at the concert to a duel following the performance. Fortunately for both, Faber withdrew his challenge at a party in Brahms' honor after the concert.

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The music of the symphony reveals a number of significant features. The first movement, Allegro con brio, features a 'motto' theme which recurs throughout the movement. It is this 'motto' which sets the heroic tone of the work from the very beginning. The theme is stated in three powerful ascending chords in horns, trumpets, and woodwinds. The highest voicing of the theme consists of the notes F, A-flat, and F which are said to stand for frei aber froh (free but happy) which Brahms reportedly adopted as his personal slogan (he never married).

The three note 'motto' serves to announce the regal first theme stated in the high strings. The purported tribute to Wagner provides a transition to the second theme, a pastoral-like melody first heard in the clarinet and bassoon. The 'motto' returns at various points throughout the movement to unify the structure as well as to provide the introduction of the recurrences of the principal thematic ideas.

The second movement, Andante, opens with a hymnlike theme in the clarinets and bassoons. A meditative mood prevails as the theme is freely varied throughout the movement.

Instead of the usual scherzo, the third movement, Poco allegretto, has the character of a melancholy romanza. The basis for the movement is a tender and contemplative theme first heard in the 'celli.

The final movement, Allegro, reveals a return to the heroic character of the first movement. A rustling theme in the strings creates the impression of a dreamlike state. Gloomy statements contrast with jubilant ones and the jubilant mood emerges to prevail. The 'motto' of the first movement returns as an echo of its original bold self in a fashion leading some analysts to describe it as the 'ghost' of the first movement, tying the movements together with typical Brahmsian perfection.

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THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY

George Shangrow, conductor

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