

THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY

George Shangrow, conductor

IN CONCERT

January 29, 1989

Kane Hall

PROGRAM

Consecration of the House Overture

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 96 in D Major "The Miracle"

Franz Joseph Haydn

Adagio; Allegro

Andante

Menuetto: Allegretto

Finale: Vivace assai

INTERMISSION

La Creation du Monde

Darius Milhaud

Vier Letzte Lieder (Four Last Songs)

Richard Strauss

Fruhling

September

Beim Schlafengehen

Im Abendrot

Carol Sams, soprano

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers are artists in residence at University Unitarian Church.

PROGRAM NOTES

by Gary Fladmoe

Ludwig van Beethoven - Overture "The Consecration of the House", Op. 124

In the case of Beethoven, it could be argued that the statement that genius is often the product of an age is true. It is Beethoven who is credited with breaking free of the restrictions of Classical form and style to unleash his creativity in an almost defiant way, challenging convention with new approaches to dissonance, tonality, form and the use of instrumental resources.

In addition to the four overtures Beethoven composed for his only opera, "Fidelio", he also wrote overtures and incidental music for a number of stage presentations. The Broadway Symphony has in prior seasons performed the overtures to "Egmont", "King Stephen", and "Coriolanus". The incidental music to the dramas is rarely played, but the overtures have survived as concert favorites throughout the world. They are, as Milton Cross has suggested, true dramas in miniature. The overture to "The Consecration of the House" is no exception.

In 1822 a new theater, the Josephstadt, was to be opened in Vienna. The theater director, a man named Hensler, had remembered Beethoven's overture and incidental music for a presentation in Hungary of a drama called "The Ruins of Athens". A writer named Meisl was called upon to adapt the text, changing the location of the events of the drama to Vienna instead of Pest. Beethoven was commissioned to make alterations in his scores to set the music to the new dramatic requirements.

In addition to making the adaptation of the existing music, Beethoven wrote several new pieces. In addition, he had recognized that the overture to "The Ruins of Athens" (the shortest and possibly weakest of all his overtures) was inadequate to the new drama. Because it was to be used to open the new theater, a composition of greater significance was demanded.

Anton Schindler was present to observe the creation of the sketches for the new overture. Of that process Schindler wrote: "One day, while I was on a walk with him - the master - and his nephew in the lovely helenenthal near Baden, Beethoven asked us to stroll on ahead, and to wait for him at a particular spot. He soon caught up with us, remarking that he had noted down two motifs for an overture. He at once told us how he planned the work, that one motif was to be treated in free style, but the other in strict, Handelian style."

The composition which resulted, unrelated in any respect to the reworked "Ruins of Athens" music, can be viewed in its middle section as a personal tribute to Handel, for whom Beethoven's respect was well known and documented.

The first performances of the drama and its music were met with mild success. The audiences of 1822 found the adaptation of the prior drama to be badly done. However, despite the fact that two sub-conductors (one on each side of the stage) failed to keep Beethoven (who was conducting from the piano) and the orchestra together, the composer was met with wildly enthusiastic responses from the audiences. There were multiple curtain calls for the composer.

Beethoven's deafness undoubtedly severely hampered his conducting of the performances, and signaled the end of his conducting career. The audiences saw beyond those limitations, looking past his physical malady to cheer his accomplishment.

Modern audiences continue to find this work to be unique among Beethoven's concert overtures. It has Beethoven's unmis-

takable stylist stamp, but is surprisingly fresh and different from all its predecessors.

Franz Joseph Haydn - Symphony No. 96 in D Major "The Miracle"

This writer has on a prior occasion described the rivalry that developed on the London concert scene between Haydn and his gifted pupil, Pleyel. Haydn's presence in London was the doing of the concert promoter, Salomon, who brought the composer to England in order to capitalize on his fame to win the English audiences.

Haydn would refer to the rivalry with Pleyel as a murderous harmonious war, and it spurred much debate within English society as to which of the two was the better composer. Haydn probably fared better in the comparison of the two as composers than as performers. A review in the Gazetteer stated:

"The nine days wonder about Haydn begins to abate. He has been exhibited at the Anacreontic Society and other music meetings greatly to the amazement of John Bull, who expected to hear another Cramer or a Clementi. But the truth is, this wonderful composer is but a very poor performer; and though he may be qualified to preside at a harpsichord, we have never heard him celebrated as a leader of a Concert. His pupil Pleyel, with perhaps less science, is a more popular composer - from his more frequent introduction of air into his harmonies, and the general smoothness and elegance of his melodies."

Symphony No. 96 in D Major is one of the twelve symphonies Haydn wrote for Salomon (six during each of his two visits to London). Its nickname, "The Miracle" has been erroneously attributed to an unusual event, described by the early Haydn biographer, Dies:

"When Haydn appeared in the orchestra and sat down at the pianoforte to conduct a symphony himself, the curious audience in the parterre left their seats and crowded toward the orchestra the better to see the famous Haydn quite close. The seats in the middle of the floor were thus empty, and hardly were they empty when the great chandelier crashed down and broke into bits, throwing the numerous gathering into the greatest consternation. As soon as the first moment of fright was over and those who had pressed forward could think of the danger they had luckily escaped and find words to express it, several persons uttered the state of their feelings with loud cries of 'Miracle! Miracle!'"

The actual event happened in 1795, some four years after the 1791 performance to which it was attributed. And, it was during a performance of Symphony No. 102 and not 96. How the wrong work and time of performance became associated with Symphony No. 96 remains a mystery.

The work is in four movements. The first, Adagio - Allegro begins with a short, slow introduction which gives way to a sonata form based entirely on the first three eighth notes played by the first violin at the beginning of the Allegro section. Although conventional in form, the movement is full of surprises in the orchestration, tonality, and use of false leads in the thematic treatment.

The second movement, Andante, is a rondo couched in an almost pastoral treatment. The sense of the unexpected continues in this movement as surprising flashes of orchestral color, especially in the woodwinds, appear.

The third movement, Menuetto: Allegretto, has a very danceable quality, although the purist's sense of balance and proportion will likely be upset by the lack of symmetry in the phrasing. It's a movement written by somebody who obviously understood the peasant lifestyle.

The Finale, Vivace, is another rondo form, notable for its lack of thematic development. Haydn chooses to use the element of contrast in the digressions from the rondo theme by using very different material, only some of which can be weakly linked to some of the melodic phrases of the rondo theme.

Darius Milhaud - La Creation du Monde (The Creation of the World)

Around 1917 Erik Satie gathered about him in Paris the most important of the young French musical artists to pursue the ideal of freeing French music from the bounds of impressionism, primitivism, or any other "ism" which appeared to stifle creativity aimed at plumbing the depths of popular tastes in music. These individuals delved into the musical realism of the dance hall and cabaret, discovering there such popular musical idioms as jazz.

Ballet became a favorite means of expression, and although many of the ballets that resulted from their efforts proved to be of little interest to their public, the ideal they espoused did exert a profound influence on the serious music coming out of France in the early years of the Twentieth Century. That ideal, called *actualite*, espoused a musical aesthetic which turned away from precocity, romanticism, ornamentation for its own sake, and any attempt to obscure the musical line. Music became a slice of real life for these individuals.

Six composers rose to prominence to such a degree that they became known as "Les Six", largely as the result of being so labeled by a French critic in reviewing an album of their piano music. Among them were Georges Auric, Luis Durey, Germaine Tailleferre, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, and Darius Milhaud. Only Honegger, Poulenc, and Milhaud continue to be regarded as having any lasting significance.

Milhaud, like each of the other members of "Les Six" ultimately attempted to disavow any such association on artistic grounds, although he remained a close friend with each of the others. His ability to exploit popular idioms while injecting them with his own appealing with and the use of dissonance and polytonality made him the leading figure in French music after the death of Ravel.

Milhaud composed *La Creation du monde* in 1922 following a visit to New York's Harlem. He became fascinated with the black jazz bands he heard there, and the ballet music he created following those experiences represents one of the earliest successful attempts to employ jazz elements in a serious orchestral work.

The plot of the ballet centers on the observation of the creation of the world through the eyes of an aborigine. The action is staged on a darkened set with many dancers representing birds and animals. Some are seen on stilts as representations of herons present at the creation.

The published score incorporates the following notes about each of the movements:

"I. The Chaos Before Creation. Giant deities of Creation hold council."

"II. The Confused Mass Begins to Move. Suddenly a tree appears, and then various animals."

"III. The Animals Join in a Dance. Two bodies emerge limb by limb from the central mass."

"IV. The Pair Perform a Dance of Desire. The remaining mass dissolves into human beings who join in a frenetic round to the point of vertigo."

"V. The Crowd Disappears in Little Groups. The Negro Adam and Eve, left behind, embrace in a lasting kiss. It is Springtime."

We're certain the charm and straightforward objectivity of Milhaud's music, devoid of personal artistic confession, will delight you as it has audiences ever since its first performance.

Richard Strauss - Four Last Songs for Soprano and Orchestra

Richard Strauss is a somewhat unique figure in modern music. While most musical personalities who have earned a lasting reputation have reached that position over the duration of a career, Strauss composed his greatest works early in his career and seemed to undergo a creative disintegration as his career reached its end. There were occasional returns to his early brilliance, among them the Four Last Songs for Soprano and Orchestra, but for the most part, his late works never reached the profundity of the early ones.

Strauss raised orchestration to new heights, exploring the resources of the orchestra as a sonic medium like no composer before him. He gained fame as a conductor, although witnesses to his conducting technique have described him as a poker-faced, passionless maestro. Given the nature of his music, that seems a strange contradiction.

The song became one of his most expressive and personal media. Over his career he wrote nearly one hundred and fifty songs. His talent for orchestration carried over to his treatment of the human voice. He was a master of understanding the role of accompaniment, sensitively responsive to the nuances of texts, aware of the atmosphere to be conveyed through his music, and capable of capturing the dramatic essence of the text through his gift for melody.

Strauss' wife, Pauline de Ahna, was a renowned soprano in both the opera and recital worlds. She had given recitals with her husband for many years, and there is probably no doubt that she served as the inspiration which made songs such a continuing feature of his compositional life.

Of the Four Last Songs, the fourth, *Im Abendrot* (At Gloaming) was composed first. Strauss seems to draw a parallel between the end of day and the arrival of death. He chose the horn, to him a symbol of the life force, to quote in the song the "Transfiguration" motive from his tone poem, *Death and Transfiguration*, written some sixty years earlier.

Having completed the song about 1948, Strauss was given a book of poems by Hermann Hesse while on a holiday in Switzerland. He chose four poems to set to music from the collection. Only three of them were finished. In the order of performance they are:

Fruhling (Spring), *September* (September), and *Beim Schlafengehen* (Going to Sleep). When the three songs are combined with *Im Abendrot* and performed in the listed order, they seem to constitute a song cycle depicting the events of a lifetime. Springtime represents youth, September an aging time, Going to Sleep approaching death, and At Gloaming the realization of peace following death.

The voice soars to rich accompaniment in beautiful expression. The four works were not performed together until eight months after Strauss' death, when Kirsten Flagstad, Strauss' preferred vocal interpreter, performed them in London's Royal Albert Hall on May 22, 1950. They represent not only examples of the rich contribution Strauss made to the development of the art song, but they stand as a most fitting tribute to his life and ideals as a composer.

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The Broadway Symphony operates on a policy of regular rotation for orchestral seating; therefore, personnel are listed alphabetically in each section.

FOUR LAST SONGS (Vier letzte Lieder)

Frühling (Spring) (Hesse)

In dämmrigen Grüften
träumte ich lang
von deinen Bäumen und blauen Lüften,
von deinem Duft und Vogelgesang.

Nun liegst du erschlossen
in Gleiss un Zier
von Licht übergossen
wie ein Wunder vor mir.

Du kennst mich wieder,
du lockest mich zart,
es zittert durch all meine Glieder
deine selige Gegenwart.

In darkling caverns
I dreamed long
of your trees and azure breezes,
of your scents and birdsong.

Now you lie revealed
in glitter and array,
bathed in light
like a miracle before me.

You know me again;
you invited me tenderly.
There quivers through all my limbs
your blessed presence.

September (September) (Hesse)

Der Garten trauert,
kühl sinkt in die Blumen der Regen.
Der Sommer Schauert
still seinem Ende entgegen.

Golden Tropft Blatt um Blatt
nieder vom hohen Akazienbaum.
Sommer lächelt erstaunt und matt
in den sterbenden Gartentraum.

Lange noch bei den Rosen
bleibt er stehen, sehnt sich nach Ruh.
Langsam tut er die (grossen),
müde gewordenen Augen zu.

The garden is in mourning;
the rain sinks coolly on the flowers,
summertime shudders
quietly to its close.

Leaf upon golden leaf is dropping
down from the tall acacia tree.
Summer smiles amazed and exhausted,
on the dying dream that was this garden.

Long by the roses
it tarries, yearns for rest,
slowly closes its (great)
weary eyes.

Beim Schlafengehen (Going to sleep) (Hesse)

Nun der Tag mich müd gemacht,
soll mein sehnliches Verlangen
freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.

Hände lasst von allem Tun,
Stirn vergiss du alles Denken,
alle meine Sinne nun
wollen sich in Schlummer senken.

Und die Seele unbewacht
will in freien Flügen schweben,
um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
tief und tausendfach zu leben.

Now the day has wearied me.
And my ardent longing shall
the stormy night in friendship
enfold like a tired child.

Hands, leave all work;
brow, forget all thought.
Now all my senses
long to sink themselves in slumber.

And the spirit unguarded
longs to soar on free wings,
so that, in the magic circle of night,
it may live deeply, and a thousandfold.

Im Abendrot (At gloaming) (Eichendorff)

Wir sind durch Not und Freude
gegangen Hand in Hand,
vom Wandern ruhen wir (beide)
nun überm stillen Land.

Rings sich die Täler neigen,
es dunkelt schon die Luft,
zwei Lerchen nur noch steigen
nachträumend in den Duft.

Tritt her und lass sie schwirren,
bald ist es Schlafenszeit,
dass wir uns nicht verirren
in dieser Einsamkeit.

O weiter, stiller Friede!
so tief im Abendrot.
Wie sind wir wandermüde —
ist dies etwa der Tod?

Through want and joy we have
walked hand in hand;
we are resting from our travels
now, in the quiet countryside.

Around us the valleys fold up,
already the air grows dark,
only two larks still soar
wistfully into the balmy sky.

Come here, and let them fly about;
soon it is time for sleep.
We must not go astray
in this solitude.

O spacious, tranquil peace,
so profound in the gloaming.
How tired we are of travelling —
is this perchance death?

(Words in brackets are not
set by Strauss)



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