

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

and



present

Dresden Philharmonic

Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Principal Conductor

Program

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759 "Unfinished" (1822) Franz Schubert

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto

Three Excerpts from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1867) Richard Wagner

Prelude to Act III
Dance of the Apprentices
Prelude to Act I

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 (1808) Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro con brio
Andante con moto
Allegro
Allegro

February 18, 2008

DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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Notes on the Program

By Aaron Grad

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759 “Unfinished” (1822)

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Born Jan. 31, 1797, in Vienna.

Died Nov. 19, 1828, in Vienna.

Unlike other famous unfinished pieces of music, like Bach's *Art of Fugue* or Mozart's *Requiem*, Schubert's “Unfinished” Symphony was not cut short by the composer's death. Given that Schubert lived another six years after completing two movements and sketching a third of his B minor Symphony, it is tempting to speculate why he would have abandoned the project. Some scholars cite musical dissatisfaction—clearly this symphony was a major leap forward for Schubert, but he may still have felt unprepared to develop the kind of lofty (i.e. Beethovenian) symphonic statement he finally achieved three years later with the “Great” Symphony in C Major. Another compelling possibility comes from recent scholarship around Schubert's personal and physical wellbeing. Historians now believe that Schubert contracted syphilis around January 1823 (mere weeks after finishing the first movements of the B minor Symphony), and that the physical and emotional toll of the illness that would claim his life precipitated a distinct break from his previously carefree pursuits.

Regardless of the circumstances regarding its creation and dismissal, we can be grateful

that Schubert gave us enough of his B minor Symphony to preserve it as one of the great orchestral statements of the early Romantic period. The first movement reveals two slightly unorthodox choices just from a first glance at the score, namely a key of B minor (neither Haydn, Mozart nor Beethoven ever wrote a symphony in this key) and a meter of three beats per measure. As might be expected from young Schubert, the melodic invention seems to borrow heavily from lieder, like in the primary theme played by woodwinds over string accompaniment, which could easily be imagined in a setting for soprano and piano. The G Major secondary area is approached and left by the briefest transitions, but the theme itself is a relaxed delight. The development creates near-operatic drama out of an introductory theme from the low strings. All these treatments demonstrate Schubert finding his voice in the symphonic format.

The second movement, an *Andante con moto* in E Major, is again in a triplet meter (another speculation is that Schubert abandoned the project when he realized that his two completed movements and sketches of the third were all in triple meters, a construction which might have been considered gauche in classical Vienna). This movement follows a simpler structure built around alternating two main themes. Clearly the ending is not one to cap a grand symphony, but instead functions quite well for the kind of concert overture this work has come to represent.

Three Excerpts from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1867)

RICHARD WAGNER

Born May 22, 1813, in Leipzig.

Died Feb. 13, 1883, in Venice.

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg is an anomaly among Richard Wagner's mature works. It is the only comedy, the only story fixed in a particular time and place (16th-century Nuremberg), and the only score in which one finds such distinct song and dance numbers. At the same time it is still Wagner: who else could deliver a five-hour aesthetic and nationalistic manifesto of such grandiose lyricism? The opera is based on the real-life tradition of guilds of "Mastersingers," amateur poets and musicians who were usually master craftsmen in their own professions. The Mastersingers prized above all else a song that was well constructed according to their own strict guidelines; for this libretto, Wagner paints them as the guardians of German art. The story centers around a song contest, for which the prize is the right to marry a lovely young maiden named Eva. Her suitor Walther vows to compete, though he is at first overwhelmed by all the rules and constraints of the Mastersingers' style. Eventually, despite his unorthodoxy, Walther does win the contest and the approval of the Mastersingers, and he is rewarded with both his betrothal and entrance to the guild.

This set of orchestral excerpts reveals the full range of the opera's comedy as well as its pathos. The Prelude to Act III is one of the most subdued passages, introducing a pre-dawn morning that follows a riot at the conclusion of Act II. The strings spin out a contrapuntal treatment of a melancholy G minor melody, followed by a chorale of brass and bassoons in a more optimistic G Major; the rest of the Prelude develops further these two thematic areas. The "Dance of the Apprentices" is a rare Wagnerian waltz, occurring in Act III,

Scene 5 as the various guilds arrive for the feast and competition. This dance music has a rustic, peasant character, which gives way to the lofty entrance music of the Mastersingers. In this concert suite, the initial instance of the Mastersingers material, the Act I Prelude, is substituted for the Act III reprise. The opening fanfare, heard here in a heroic C Major setting, is used throughout the opera as a *leitmotiv* for the Mastersingers. The fugal treatment of material in the second half of the overture could be seen as a gentle ribbing of the rigorous formalism of the Mastersingers, but the irony is that Wagner manages to be quite free and fluid in that archaic, contrapuntal style. Perhaps, like his hero Walther, Wagner wants to demonstrate that he can beat the others at their own game.

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 (1808)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 1770 in Bonn.

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna.

Forget everything you know about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Release your notions of the Morse code-inspired "V-for-Victory" label for the opening theme, or the apocryphal "fate knocking on the door" explanation for the initial rhythmic figure. Cleanse yourself of the disco monstrosities, answering machine antics, cartoon cameos and television commercials. Imagine that your slate is as clean as those lucky (if overtaxed) few who attended a four-hour concert on Dec. 22, 1808, in Vienna, featuring the world premiere performances of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Sixth Symphony, Fourth Piano Concerto (with the composer as soloist), Choral Fantasy and more. Freed from centuries of baggage, the C minor Symphony is simply a near-perfect expression of that alchemical synergy that occurred at the crossroads of Classical and Romantic styles, at the apotheosis of what we now call Beethoven's middle period.

Passions arise in discussion of nearly any measure of this symphony, especially the masterfully efficient first movement. Take, for example, this diatribe from Richard Wagner, regarding how long the fermata in the second measure should be held:

“The E-flat is habitually held no longer than the duration of an ordinary forte taken by a careless bow. Now let us suppose the voice of Beethoven to have cried from the grave to a conductor: ‘Hold thou my fermata long and terribly! I wrote no fermata for jest or from bewilderment, haply to think out my further move; but the same full tone I mean to be squeezed dry in my Adagio for utterance of sweltering emotion, I cast among the rushing figures of my passionate Allegro, if need be, a paroxysm of joy or horror. Then shall its life be drained to the last blood-drop; then do I part the waters of my ocean, and bare the depths of its abyss; or curb the flocking herd of clouds, dispel the whirling web of mist, and open up a glimpse into the pure blue firmament, the sun’s irradiate eye. For this I set fermate in my Allegros, notes entering of a sudden, and long held out. And mark thou what a definite thematic aim I had with this sustained E-flat, after a storm of three short notes, and what I meant to say by all the like held notes that follow.”

The three latter movements, often forgotten in all the excitement over the opening *Allegro con brio*, are equally important to the organic whole of the symphony. The *Andante con moto* features a double set of variations, alternating the development of two contrasting themes. The third movement, though not marked as such, is a quintessential *Scherzo*, with a principal theme reminiscent of the finale of Mozart’s 40th Symphony, a scurrying trio and final coda that connects directly to the last movement. The concluding *Allegro* completes this symphony’s journey to a triumphant C Major, featuring the novel (though not unprecedented) addition of piccolo and trombones for extra orchestral brilliance. Many listeners have cited the

recurrence in varied forms of the dot-dot-dot-dash rhythmic figure in each movement as proof of the work’s unity; beware, though, that this simplification may obscure the full richness of harmonic and structural cohesion in this masterwork.

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DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC

With its approximately 80 concerts in Dresden, the Dresden Philharmonic is the busiest symphonic orchestra in Dresden and essentially characterizes the cultural life of the city. The orchestra plays in the festival hall of the Dresden Kulturpalast am Altmarkt—right in the heart of the city. The concerts of the orchestra have emerged as an attraction for thousands of Dresdeners and for visitors to Dresden, ‘the metropolis on the Elbe,’ often called ‘Florence on the Elbe.’ The Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra is sought after on concert stages worldwide and their tours have occurred throughout Europe, China, Japan, Israel, South America and the USA.

The Dresden Philharmonic traces its formation back to the formal opening of the first concert hall in Dresden on Nov. 29, 1870. This marked a social change in the city from concerts for the aristocracy to the concerts for the general public. From 1885, the then “Gewerbehausorchester” gave full seasons of symphonic concerts in Dresden, which earned them the title, “Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra” in 1915.

Historically the great composers such as Johannes Brahms, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Antonin Dvorak and Richard Strauss have conducted and often premiered their works with the orchestra. Previous Music Directors have included Paul van Kempen, Carl Schricht, Heinz Bongartz, Kurt Masur, Guenther Herbig, Joerg-Peter Weigle and Michael Plasson, nearly all of whom have recorded with the orchestra.

From the beginning of the 2003 season until September 2004 Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos

was First Guest Conductor and at the beginning of the 2004/05 season he was appointed Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra. Kurt Masur is the Dresden Philharmonic's Laureate Conductor.

RAFAEL FRÜHBECK DE BURGOS

Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos was born in Burgos in 1933. He studied at the conservatories of Bilbao and Madrid, later at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik (State University of Music) in Munich. At the latter, the Hindemith scholar Harald Genzmer was his composition teacher. In 1950, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos received the Richard Strauss Award. After his first engagement as Head Conductor with the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos fronted the Spanish National Orchestra in Madrid from 1962 until 1978. He was Chief Musical Director of the City of Düsseldorf and Head Conductor of the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra as well as with the Orchestre Symphonique in Montreal. As the First Guest Conductor he worked with the Yomiuri Nippon Orchestra of Tokyo and with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington. He is the newly named principal conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI in Turin.

Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos so far has conducted more than 100 symphony orchestras in Europe, America, Canada, Japan and Israel as a guest conductor. Furthermore he has conducted opera performances in Madrid, Bilbao, Düsseldorf, Washington, Zurich, Genoa and other places. More than 100 recordings testify for his worldwide reputation. Some of these recordings have already become classics: Mendelssohn's "Elias" and "Paulus," Mozart's "Requiem," Orff's "Carmina burana," Bizet's "Carmen" as well as the complete works of his fellow countryman Manuel de Falla. From 1991 until 1996, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos was Head

Conductor of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, from the season 1992/93 until June 1997 Chief Musical Director of the Deutsche Oper (German Opera) in Berlin. From the season 1994/95 until October 2000 he was also Head Conductor with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra). With this orchestra, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos went on an extraordinarily successful tour to Japan and Taiwan in 1994, which was followed by further guest performances in the years 1997 and 2000. In 2001 he was the permanent conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI Torino. In the U.S., Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos made his Boston Symphony debut in 1971, returning to the Boston Symphony podium for Tanglewood appearances in 2000, 2001, 2002 and concerts to open the BSO regular season in Symphony Hall. He returned to Tanglewood the summer of 2003 for five major concerts and appeared twice in the 2003-04 season including the closing concerts of the season.

In January 1994, the University of Navarra awarded Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos with an honorary doctorate. In 1996, the Austrian Federal Minister of Science, Traffic and Art awarded to him the big "Silver Badge" for service to the Republic of Austria. Moreover, he was given the "Golden Medal of Honor" by the Gustav Mahler Association in Vienna. In November 1996, he was given the Jacinto Guerrero Award, the most important Spanish music award. The Queen of Spain presented the award to him in Madrid in February 1997. In 1998 Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos received the appointment of "Emeritus Conductor" by the Spanish National Orchestra.

From the season 2003/2004 until September 2004 Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos was First Guest Conductor and since the beginning of the season 2004/2005 he is Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra.

DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC

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Rafael Frühbeck De Burgos, Music Director and Conductor

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