

THE *Texarkana* Symphony Orchestra PRESENTS

November 10, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.
Historic Perot Theatre | Texarkana, Texas

Zuill Bailey Plays DVOŘÁK

MARC-ANDRÉ BOUGIE, CONDUCTING
FEATURING **ZUILL BAILEY**, CELLO

CONCERT REPERTOIRE

Felix Mendelssohn **The Hebrides, op.26 (Fingal's Cave)** 10'
(1809-1847)

Antonín Dvořák **Concerto, Violoncello, op.104, B minor** 40'
(1841-1904)
Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro moderato

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms **Symphony No.3, op.90, F major** 33'
(1833-1897)
Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco Allegretto
Allegro

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Through the music of **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847), **Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897), and **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904), TSO invites you to begin this new season with masters who defined the Romantic style. First understood as antithetic to Classical attributes such as symmetry and balance, Romantic music slowly came to represent the unpredictable, sometimes irrational, and often emotional aspects of musical composition. Despite Mendelssohn's and Brahms' regards for the techniques and styles of the past, and Dvořák's interest in nationalism in music, there are lyrical and majestic qualities to their art that can only be described as **Romantic**.



Felix Mendelssohn

German composer **Felix Mendelssohn**, of Jewish origin but Protestant by conversion, was the grandson of renowned philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and son of banker Abraham Mendelssohn. He was born in Hamburg in a comfortable household where his financial, emotional, and intellectual needs were met from childhood. His early musical gifts were noted, as well as his prodigious facility in writing, drawing, and painting. His sister Fanny, to whom he stayed close until her death, was also equally gifted.

Mendelssohn studied composition under Carl Friedrich Zelter, a conservative musician who rejected the new music of Beethoven, Berlioz, and Schumann. He instilled in young Felix the love of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach – largely forgotten at that time. Mendelssohn resurrected Bach's *St. Matthew*

Passion in a Berlin performance in 1829 and reinstated the Baroque master as a marking figure of music history. Mendelssohn had a tremendous respect for the music of the past. His music, though Romantic in appearance, is also Classical in structure and conception.

Following his father's recommendation to see the world and to be seen, young Mendelssohn headed for England in 1829, at the age of 20. There he met with his friend Karl Klingemann and they embarked on a journey through the British Isles. They visited **Fingal's Cave** which was located on Staffa, an island in the Hebrides archipelago off the west coast of Scotland. The composer was so taken by what he saw that he sent a musical postcard to his family detailing the first measures of what was to become *The Hebrides*.

The *Overture* is known under at least two names in English: *The Hebrides* or *Fingal's Cave*. The truth is that Mendelssohn wrote the main theme of the composition before he actually saw the cave. The piece was mostly composed during his 1829 visit but officially finished in 1832 after he had, among many other ventures, visited Italy and traveled back home to Berlin.

Here, the meaning of *Overture* is different from that of an orchestral introduction to an opera or an oratorio. In this case the composer creates a one movement instrumental composition reflecting a particular story, event, location or character. In a sense, this new Romantic Overture can be seen as a prototype of the tone poem – a form of highly suggestive orchestral music, championed by Franz Liszt and others later in the era. Yet, this is not program music. Do not look for the waves of the ocean hitting against the majestic rocks of the island! The composer renders an impression of his journey and disposition rather than a minute musical depiction of the geography. For this aspect of the journey, it should be noted that Mendelssohn sketched many drawings of this area, and that the art can still be enjoyed today.

The *Overture*, in sonata-form, begins with a haunting opening theme presented in the low strings and bassoons. It leads into a lyrical second theme, one of Mendelssohn's most memorable tunes, also presented in the same register. The exposition ends with a martial closing section. The development and recapitulation expand on the given thematic materials and bring to life the composer's impression of the majestic sites.

The piece was premiered on May 14, 1832 with the London Philharmonic Society. Mendelssohn was 23. Later, Brahms and Wagner were both complimentary of this mature composition by such a young artist.

Bohemian Composer **Antonín Dvořák** was interested in local folk music and elements early on in his life. He ultimately developed into a classically trained musician but always remembered music from his youth in his later compositions. By 1885 his reputation as a great composer had grown worldwide.

In 1892 at the invitation of philanthropist and musical promoter Jeanette B. Thurber, he was hired to direct the newly formed National Conservatory of Music in New York City. The composer, interested in developing an American national music by training American musicians, spent time studying folk music of rural, Native-American, and Afro-American origins. His copyist during his two-year American sojourn was none other than Harry Burleigh, the famous arranger and performer of great negro-spirituals. Burleigh sang and performed for Dvořák on a regular basis – making a significant impact on the traveler's appreciation of local music.

During that period, Dvořák also composed a number of masterworks, one of which was the **Cello Concerto in B minor**. After listening to a performance of Victor Herbert's second Cello Concerto at a New York Philharmonic concert, Dvořák became convinced that he could write a piece for the instrument, although he never



Antonín Dvořák

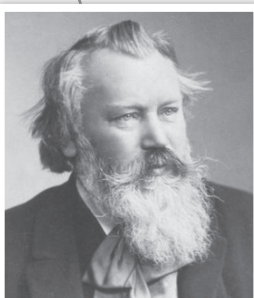
believed up to that point that the cello was meant to be featured in a concerto. He had begun a cello concerto earlier in his career but had left it unfinished.

He had also been asked by cellist and friend Hanus Wihan to compose such a piece for a long time. When Dvořák finally went ahead and showed the manuscript to Wihan, the latter suggested changes that did not meet with Dvořák's approval. Among many ideas, Wihan wanted to insert a cadenza in the last movement, to which the composer objected categorically. Cellist Leo Stern ended up premiering the piece with the London Philharmonic on March 19, 1896.

The first movement, *Allegro*, starts with a substantial introduction acting as the first section of the traditional double-exposition of the first movement of a concerto. The somber first theme is presented by the clarinets. Soon after, the same melody is reprised by the whole orchestra, *Grandioso*. The second sublime theme played by the horns is introduced before the solo cello sounds the first theme, *risoluto*. The movement ensues following the conventions of sonata-form structure, with the solo line presenting a perfect balance between displaying the technical possibilities of the instrument and its expressive powers. The movement ends triumphantly with the first theme.

The second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, could be described as an elegy. When Dvořák was writing this music, he got word from abroad that his wife's sister was dying. The composer had been in love with her before marrying his wife, and the news had a profound impact on him. He made one of his earlier songs, "Let me wonder alone with my dreams" (his sister-in-law's favorite song) the main theme of this movement.

The last movement, *Finale*, in rondo form, is assertive and more extroverted in nature. The first theme is followed by a succession of contrasting sections, conforming to the formal plan, which create a dynamic composition. Upon his return to Bohemia, and after his sister-in-law died, Dvořák decided to re-write the ending of the movement as to end with a substantial coda instead of a cadenza and bring back the principal theme of the first movement.



Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) is widely acknowledged as the most Classical of all Romantic composers. An admirer of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, Brahms drew his compositional inspiration from these great masters. Though the music of Brahms is impassioned and Romantic in the musicological sense of the word, its structure is set in the Classical mold.

It took the German master forty years to find the courage to write a symphony after Beethoven's nine masterful contributions to the canon. His four symphonies, less in number than any of his classical predecessors, are, however, majestic in conception and singularly original. The First, often nicknamed Beethoven's Tenth, is Brahms' glorious entry into the genre. The Second, more pastoral in nature, shows the tender side of Brahms' musical personality. The Third, the shortest of

the four, is perhaps the most passionate and thematically intricate. The Fourth is a cathedral of sound paving the way to Bruckner's masterful creations.

Composed in the Austrian countryside in the summer of 1882, Brahms' **Third Symphony** takes the listener by storm from the very first bars. Brahms also nicknamed it the Wiesbaden Symphony as this is where he composed most of it. The motto of the Symphony, namely the pitches F-A-F, presented in the first three bars, is a musical rendition of the first letters of Brahms' personal motto: *Frei aber froh* – or *Free but happy*. Beyond the intellectual interest of this relationship between letters and pitches, the three-note motive offers striking musical possibilities as the F chords can be major or minor, interchangeably, giving a sense of unpredictability and tension to the whole symphony. Connoisseurs of Robert Schumann's music will also recognize some similarities between Brahms' Third and Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony.

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, in sonata-form, is a tightly-constructed thematic and rhythmic marvel, including the aforementioned motto and metric permutations keeping the listener wondering about the real metric accents of the music. The second theme, introduced by the solo clarinet, more lyrical and smooth in appearance, also holds metric intricacies. The first part of the short development is an impassioned section where the strings lead the charge. It is followed by a syncopated section leading back to the first theme of the piece, loud and majestic. The first movement ends quietly.

The second movement, *Andante*, or slow movement of the traditional symphony, opens up with a first peaceful theme played by clarinets. The strings conclude this first section with active sixteenth-note figures. The second theme, featuring triplet rhythms, is a little more mysterious and a successful contrast to the first theme.

The third movement, *Poco allegretto*, is possibly the most famous movement of this symphony, if not of all of Brahms' symphonies. Based on the minuet and trio format, usually of an upbeat nature, Brahms differs from tradition by using a slow and melancholic dance melody. This lyrical first theme is aptly contrasted by a more upbeat and rhythmically active second theme. A soaring closing theme seems to unite the movement towards magnificent climaxes that only Brahms could conceive.

The last movement, *Allegro*, is in traditional sonata form and offers plenty of contrasts between the main themes and within sections themselves. The intricacies of the counterpoint and rhythmic complexity match the conception of the first movement. In the end, it also features the first theme of the first movement, the composer rounding up this tightly-constructed composition.

The premiere of the Symphony in December 1883 was perhaps Brahms' greatest professional success. So much so that he was afraid of writing anything else afterwards. His works had often been harshly criticized because of the composer's adherence to classical esthetics. But happily for us, Brahms contributed a fourth symphony to orchestral literature. Clara Schumann, to whom Brahms presented the third Symphony on her 64th birthday, was especially pleased with the new work.

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