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### Yannatos

*Symphony No. 5 Boston premiere*

### Ravel

*Piano Concerto in G Major Sally Pinkas, Piano*

### Brahms

*Symphony No. 2 Pre-concert lecture by Prof. Reinhold Brinkmann*



# THE HARVARD- RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

*James Yannatos, Music Director*

Friday, 3 November 1995

188th Season  
1995 - 1996

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quarter notes, insistently pressing a different idea. The rest of the orchestra goes back to try again, but the revolutionary nature of the work has already been exposed. The rest of the movement is devoted to filling the gap between the momentous first two bars and the singing theme that succeeds them; eventually, the theme itself captures that same bombast. And one only need wait for the second part of the exposition to hear the true statement, in the winds, of the theme so abruptly suggested by the violins.

The second movement, a funeral march, conveys the gravity and tragedy that was brought to Europe. Devastatingly imminent, the march captures a kind of terror rarely inspired by religious music in the same vein. By the time the brass enter with an overpowering citation of the standard funeral dirge, a gigantic tide of emotion has been created by completely solemn, stolid and almost faceless music.

In contrast, the third movement glides along in a scherzo, seeming to travel up hills and down valleys—as thousands of troops were then doing—with unceasing momentum. Perhaps the most celebrated part of this movement is the trio section, in which the horns call the whole orchestra to attention by way of an enthusiastic and majestic fanfare; the orchestra answers affirmatively each time and then adopts the horns' 3-1 rhythm for itself.

By its length, the finale of the "Eroica" flouted another symphonic custom. At roughly two-thirds (or more, depending on tempo) the length of the opening allegro and twice the average length of previously written symphonic finales, the last movement created the symphony as an integrally powerful form. Beethoven uses the same technique here as he does in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony: breaking down the main theme until only a few underlying notes are left. By setting the main theme in different tempi and orchestrations, Beethoven also explores the full emotional range of the idea. But at the very end, the ebullient character and expansive melodies of the movement cannot be contained; the symphony ends with a final exhortation befitting its name.

DAN ALTMAN

## BÉLA BARTÓK: Concerto for Orchestra

In 1943, Béla Bartók, a Hungarian living in New York, could not have been in the best frame of mind. Embittered by the fierce struggle that was tearing apart his native continent, the composer was convinced the world was on the verge of a dreadful abyss: "The most terrible thing of all is that the future looks absolutely black, even if [the allies] win." Furthermore, Bartók, never in good health, was suffering from leukemia—a fact made quite clear to him after collapsing during a lecture at Harvard. And, to top it all off, he was virtually starving. He had lost his professorship at Columbia and found it impossible to find other employment. However, it was during this period of suffering that Bartók composed what is perhaps his finest and most well-loved work, the Concerto for Orchestra.

Bartók wrote the Concerto for Orchestra during a seven-week time span from mid-August to late October, 1943. The musician, little more than a year removed from death, was in Saranac Lake, North Carolina, trying to regain his health. The conductor Serge Koussevitzky came to visit the ailing composer and commissioned a work in honor of his deceased wife. Bartók worked night and day on this commission, and, when he returned to his adopted home city of New York, he had finished the entire score. The piece was premiered in Boston on December 1, 1944; from this performance one dates Bartók's popularity in the United States, as the music was received with tremendous acclaim. It propelled him to the position of the third-most frequently played 20th-century composer, after Strauss and Prokofiev.

The Concerto for Orchestra is a concerto only in that it treats several sections of the orchestra in a soloistic manner. Consisting of five movements rather than the usual three, the Concerto sounds at times like a cross between a symphony and a tone poem. The first movement, the Introduction, has strains of Hungarian folk melodies running through it. It begins a slow and mysterious buildup in the strings, with a few blunts by the woodwinds interrupting the uneasy tranquility of the sound. A repeated figure crescendos into an abrupt grand pause, followed by an allegro vivace section. The movement climaxes in a bright, almost Bach-like fugue for brass. Bartók juxtaposes the stern beginning with the joyous "Quicoo delle cuppie" (game of patis). The snare drum enters first, followed by a pair of bassoons, a pair of oboes, a pair of clarinets, a pair of flutes, and finally a pair of muted trumpets, all playing dance-like themes. The third movement, an Elegy, reflects the Hungarian peasant music presence that permeated many of Bartók's works. Similarly, the fourth movement has its origins in folk music, only this time coming from Bulgarian tradition. The "Intermezzo intertoto" (interrupted intermezzo) is in the song form A-B-A- (interruption)-B-A. Listen for the harsh trills in the trumpets and woodwinds (immediately preceding these trills is a parody of a passage from Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, one Bartók found so ludicrous that he thought it good material to mock. The final movement begins with a call played by the entire horn section in unison. It moves swiftly, almost frenetically, to a brilliant climax. This high point is a fugue played by the brass that transcends the folk themes from which the rest of the movement is derived and elevates the composition to an inspiring, powerful level. At this point, Bartók's life and music intersect; the composer, at the end of his life, writes a definitive passage that occurs at the end of the composition.

The meaning and importance of the Concerto for Orchestra, one of only a few major orchestral works Bartók wrote after the 1920s, can best be understood if it is compared to Mozart's Requiem. Both pieces were written as memoriams, both were written from the composer's death bed, and both represent a climax of composing and artistic powers. The Concerto for Orchestra placed a triumphant exclamation point on Bartók's composing career as well as his life.

DAVID MARCUS



# NOTES ON THE MUSIC

## JOHANNES BRAHMS: Variations on a Theme by Haydn

Johannes Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a, marks his arrival as a mature composer of orchestral music; it is an exquisite synthesis of his originality with the inexhaustible resources of the symphony orchestra. The premiere of the work on 2 November 1873 in Vienna came exactly three years before the appearance of his first symphony.

The theme for the eight variations and Finale was first introduced to Brahms by his friend and Haydn scholar, Carl Friedrich Pohl, in late 1870. It appeared as a movement, inscribed as Chorale St. Antoni, of a set of Feldpartita for wind instruments attributed to Joseph Haydn. (Subsequent musical scholarship, however, has revealed the work to be not of Haydn, but perhaps of one of his students.)

The variations originally appeared on paper as a work for two pianos (Op. 56b), a favorite medium for Brahms and Clara Schumann. The orchestral version of the piece opens with a complete statement of the theme in the winds. The theme abounds in features for development: the dotted rhythms, the scalar melodic outline, the recognizable bass line and harmony, the asymmetrical phrase structure, and the pedal tones in the outer voices of the theme's last seven measures to name only the most basic.

In the first variation, the winds immediately seize upon the repeated octave Bb's with which the theme ended while the strings weave the theme's melodic and harmonic structure into streams of arpeggios and scales throughout the entire first variation. Variation II changes mode to the parallel (Bb) minor and brings the dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythm to life in the winds. Interspersed throughout are pizzicato and octave gestures. In Variation III the wonderful combined sonorities of the clarinet and bassoon and later the horn shape a flowing, legato melody. This is set off by a wonderful dialogue of sixteenth note passages in the strings. The fourth variation returns to the parallel minor as the melody introduced by the oboe and horn finds its way into all registers in counterpoint with scales of sixteenth notes. Variation V is given a scherzo quality by the constant reiteration of repeated eighth notes outlining an inversion of the theme's first phrase and the rhythmic vitality of the hemiola rhythms. In Variation VI repeated rhythmic patterns again take center stage as the winds and strings both grow from the initial soft dynamic marking to a grand climax that will not be approached again until the Finale. The exquisite delicate texture of Variation VII features the sonorities of the flute and violas and gentle dance-like rhythms.

The last variation, in minor, never reaches a dynamic level louder than *p* as a flowing melodic line and whispered Bb repetitions, both reminiscent of earlier variations, calm the entire mood before the Finale. The Finale very ingeniously ends the work with its own set of variations; it is a passacaglia making seventeen statements of a ground bass extracted from the theme's opening. The Finale progresses imitating and intensifying the ostinato until the theme reappears in a grandiose context of unison scales in both winds and strings that drives the piece to its final cadence.

RUTH OCHS

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"

The "Eroica" ("Heroic") Symphony, written in 1803, stands as a landmark in the history of music written for orchestra. With its composition in 1805, Beethoven recreated the symphonic paradigm in motivation, conception and form. While his first two symphonies were truly classical, the "Eroica" introduced some of the Romantic notions that set the stage for western music in the rest of the 19th century.

Napoleon's successes as a general and republican leader (he had not yet crowned himself emperor) provided the inspiration for the symphony. Beethoven wrote the work without a patron or sponsor—a huge abandonment of the composing paradigm in itself—and intended the music for all classes of people, not just for wealthy aristocrats. His self-transformation into the first populist composer gave his style freedom from the constraints of dainty *kammermusik*. As a welcome result, we have the strokes of boldness and simple dignity that grace much of Beethoven's orchestral music.

The very beginning of the symphony immediately signals the original and powerful ideas that will follow. The two forte chords played by the entire orchestra reveal nothing more than the home key of Eb. Now that he has his classical audience's attention, Beethoven introduces a flowing 3/4 allegro, piano, in the cellos and basses. But all is not yet well: the first phrase of the main theme has hardly ended when the violins drift in with syncopated



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# HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

## 188th Season, 1995-1996

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# DR. JAMES YANNATOS

## conductor



James Yannatos was born and educated in New York City. After attending the High School of Music and Art and the Manhattan School of Music, he pursued composition studies with Nadia Boulanger, Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud, and Paul Hindemith, as well as conducting studies with William Steinberg and Leonard Bernstein which took Yannatos to Yale University (B.M., M.M.), the University of Iowa (Ph. D.), Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals, and Paris.



international festivals in Leningrad. His Symphony no. 3 (Prisms) for strings was premiered in the USSR by the Lithuanian State Orchestra in 1989.

In March-April 1991, Dr. Yannatos conducted the Leningrad Chamber Orchestra in his Symphony no. 5 (Son et Lumière) and the Sverdlovsk Chamber Orchestra in his Symphony no. 3, which was also produced on Soviet television.

Dr. Yannatos has published four volumes of Silly and Serious Songs, based on the words of children. He has also written music for television including Nova's City of Coral, and Metromedia's Assassins Among Us.

He has received innumerable awards as a composer including the Artists Foundation Award of 1988 for his Trinity Mass.

He has been music director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra since 1964, and has led that group on tours to Europe, the Soviet Union, and Asia. He has appeared as guest conductor-composer at the Aspen, Banff, Tanglewood, Chautauqua, and Saratoga Festivals, and with the Boston Pops, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Baltimore, and San Antonio Symphonies and the Sverdlovsk and Leningrad Chamber Orchestras. He is also the music director of the Hanover Chamber Orchestra and the New England Composer's Orchestra.

Dr. Yannatos has received commissions for orchestral, vocal, and instrumental works which include Cycles (recorded by Collage), An Overture for the Uncommon Man (Phi Beta Kappa), Sounds of Desolation and Joy (Lucy Shelton), and the Concerto for Bass and Orchestra (Alea III and Edward Barker, principal bassist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra). His most ambitious work, Trinity Mass (for soloists, choir, and orchestra), was premiered in Boston and New York in 1986 (Jason Robards, narrator), and was aired on National Public Radio.

He has been the consultant and conductor for major orchestras in Bangkok, Thailand and a guest composer and conductor in

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# HISTORY OF THE HRO

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra traces its history back to the night of March 6, 1808, when six Harvard men first formed the Pierian Sodality, an organization dedicated to the consumption of brandy and cigars as well as the serenading of young ladies. Its midnight expeditions "were not confined to Cambridge, but extended to Watertown, Brookline, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Boston, etc....wherever, in short, dwelt celebrated belles." The June 29, 1840 entry in the Sodality's record book reads:

*It came to pass in the reign of Simon the King, that the Pierians did meet in the tabernacle. And lo! a voice was heard saying, Let us go serenading—and they lifted up their voice as one man and they said, Let us go. And behold we went to the city of the Philistines, and did serenade their daughters, and came home about the third hour. And the fame of the Pierians did wax exceedingly great, and did reach all the places round about Cambridge.*

The early Pierians had so much spirit that in the 1830s the Faculty of Harvard College publicly admonished the Sodality "for absencing themselves from Cambridge for a whole night, serenading." Administration censure was so great, in fact, that in 1832 the Pierian Sodality was reduced to one man: Henry Gassett '34. According to *Time* magazine (March 29, 1943), "He held meetings with himself in his chair, paid himself dues regularly, played his flute in solitude...and finally persuaded another flautist to join in duets. Gradually they elected other members. The Sodality played on."

The Sodality not only played on, but profoundly influenced the development of music in Cambridge and Boston over the next fifty years. The Harvard Glee Club and the Boston Symphony, for instance, both owe their

existence to the early Pierians. By the turn of the century, the Pierian Sodality could at last justly refer to itself as the Harvard University Orchestra. It had grown into a more serious musical organization and had become the largest college orchestra in America. Soon it deemed itself ready for its first out-of-state tour, the Centennial Tour of 1908, which took the orchestra through New York state, and which was so successful that other tours quickly followed. The orchestra gradually built an international reputation and played for many distinguished audiences in this country.

It was not until November of 1936 that members of the Pierian Sodality finally condescended to assist the Radcliffe Orchestra in some of its larger concerts. Joint concerts became more frequent in the late Thirties and in 1942 the Pierian suggested that the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra be formed. Since during the war years the Sodality's membership was depleted, and since the Radcliffe Orchestra lacked certain instruments, both groups benefited from the merger.

It is said that around 1950 the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra stopped making history and started making music with a degree of seriousness never before seen at the University. The orchestra continued to improve in quality and reputation as it took tours to Mexico (1962), Washington, D.C. (1966), and Canada (1972). In 1978, the HRO placed third in the Fifth Annual International Festival of Student Orchestras. The '80s saw tours of the Soviet Union (1984) and Asia (1985 and 1988). In 1992, the HRO continued its tradition of cultural exchange on its European Tour.

This year, the HRO is planning a tour of Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

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# Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

## 188th Season, 1995-1996

JAMES YANNATOS, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Friday, 3 November 1995, 8:00 p.m.  
Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a  
Variation I. Poco più animato  
Variation II. Più vivace  
Variation III. Con moto  
Variation IV. Andante con moto  
Variation V. Vivace  
Variation VI. Vivace  
Variation VII. Grazioso  
Variation VIII. Presto non troppo  
Finale

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Symphony No. 3, Op. 55 "Eroica"  
I. Allegro con brio  
II. *Marcia funebre* Adagio assai  
III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace  
IV. Finale: Allegro molto; poco andante

—Intermission—

Béla Bartók  
(1881-1945)

Concerto for Orchestra (1943)  
I. Introduzione  
II. Giuoco delle coppie  
III. Elegia  
IV. Intermezzo interrotto  
V. Finale

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