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Paul Hindemith: *Mathis der Maler*

Paul Hindemith was born in Hanau, a small town near Frankfurt, on November 16, 1895. He studied composition at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt and was its youngest graduate. He became the concertmaster of the Frankfurt Opera at the age of nineteen, and was a member of the Amar String Quartet until 1929, when he decided to pursue a career as a solo violist and composer. Forced to leave his position at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik in 1937 because of his refusal to join the Nazi Party and cease performing with Jewish musicians, Hindemith escaped to Switzerland, and eventually emigrated to the United States. He was an instructor in viola and composition at Tanglewood in its inaugural year, 1940, and was professor of music at Yale University from 1940 until 1953. In 1950-51, Hindemith was the Charles Eliot Norton Lecturer at Harvard. In 1954, he received the Sibelius Award, a prize in composition that allowed him to retire from teaching and devote his full attention to composition. He returned to Frankfurt, where he died on December 28, 1963.



Hindemith composed the *Mathis der Maler* symphony in 1934, using musical material from his opera of the same title. The opera is about the life of the sixteenth-century painter Mathias Grünewald and his involvement in the Lutheran Peasants' War of 1524 against the Church. Grünewald joins the peasants' cause at first, but then becomes disenchanted when he discovers that the cause he has joined is as corrupt as the cause he is fighting. He becomes depressed and decides to renounce painting. But as he reaches the depth of his depression, he has a series of visions which inspires him to create the Isenheim Altarpiece, now regarded as one of his finest works. It is only after completion of the altarpiece that he feels at peace with himself, and at peace with his Lutheran faith. The opera's 1934 premiere was cancelled by Hitler, who did not feel that an opera depicting a peasant uprising against authority was an appropriate work for Nazi Germany. The premiere was finally given in 1938 in Switzerland.

The *Mathis der Maler* symphony is in three movements, which correspond to panels on the Isenheim Altarpiece. The first, *Engelkonzert* ("Concert of Angels"), depicts the Nativity scene. The second movement, *Grablegung* ("Burial"), depicts the entombment of Christ. The final movement, *Versuchung des heiligen Antonius*, depicts the temptation of St. Anthony. Although Hindemith's modern style is unmistakable in the symphony, Hindemith also took the opportunity to use musical modes (most notably the Lydian) that were prevalent in the sixteenth century. The *Mathis der Maler* symphony ranks as one of Hindemith's finest orchestral works, as well as an excellent introduction to what is considered his greatest opera.

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Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra 185th Season, 1992-1993

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characteristic pizzicato accompaniment. In addition, some of his own completely original material (as in the beginning) is cleverly mixed in with monumentalism and mystery. The piece concludes with a glorious, embellished version of the classic school song *Candicans Igitur*.

Andrew Goodridge

Antonin Dvorak: Serenade for Strings

In a mere twelve days of May 1875, Dvorak composed the *Serenade for Strings*, the first of his three cyclical works for chamber ensembles, and one of his most beloved pieces. A year earlier, a panel headed by Brahms had awarded Dvorak the Austrian State Grant, establishing his musical genius. Now financially secure and in marital bliss, Dvorak began the most prolific portion of his career.

The five-movement serenade manages to combine an exquisite lyric tenderness with musical ingenuity and inventiveness. The first movement, *Moderato*, begins with a theme in the second violins destined to return later, accompanied by gentle undulations in the violas. The middle section employs a contrasting quasi-martial rhythm, and the return of the opening material features two solo cellos. While simple and filled with a childlike innocence, the movement radiates undeniable charm.

A subtly orchestrated and intricate waltz shares the second movement with a touching Trio. The melodic lines of the Trio suggest a canon, as do many passages throughout the work. The third movement, *Scherzo*, is playful and boisterous, and also has a Trio section, this time creating an effect of gentle yearning.

The principal theme of the fourth movement, *Larghetto*, is a somewhat disguised incarnation of the motif from the Trio of the second movement, both born of the same musical idea. The middle section of the movement has an almost Schubertian flavor, which complements Dvorak's canonical writing.

Like four other works Dvorak composed during the period 1875-1876, the first movement starts in a foreign key—in this case, F-sharp minor instead of E major. Unusually constructed, the movement begins with an impassioned introduction that uses the canonical form once more, but, in place of a development, Dvorak uses brief quotes from the *Larghetto*. A restatement of the very first theme of the serenade follows, again played by the second violins. The entire work ends in the original E major with an exuberant Presto, bringing the work full circle.



Brian Koh

Johannes Brahms: Academic Festival Overture

Brahms wrote his *Academic Festival Overture*, op. 80, during the summer of 1880, in Bad Ischl, a popular Austrian resort. His stay there, during which he associated with many Viennese scholars and artists, including Johann Strauss, was to be a vacation after some months of strenuous performing in Poland and on the Rhine. The tour had culminated with Brahms conducting a special concert for the unveiling of a monument to Schumann, who had died in 1856 and been a very important friend to Brahms and champion of his music. Brahms had also held strong feelings for his wife, Clara, who was still alive. During the autumn following his retreat, at one of Clara's birthday celebrations, Brahms, on the piano, informally performed the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture*, op. 81, his two main creations of that summer. The Brahms biographer Karl Geiringer tells us that "Clara pronounced both works to be 'magnificent,' and enjoyed them no less than Johannes's exceptional cheerfulness and good humor."



Indeed, the *Academic Festival Overture* is a rather lighthearted work in the context of Brahms's usual weightiness and reverence. He wrote it after receiving a Doctorate of Philosophy from Breslau University in 1879, an honor which apparently did not arouse his most profound artistic feelings. Geiringer says that "at first the composer was content with returning thanks—on a post card. When, however, his friend Bernhard Scholz, Director of Music in Breslau, drew his attention to the fact that the University expected him to express his gratitude in musical form, he wrote the *Academic Festival Overture*, which is built on a few popular student songs."

The work also has unusual, celebratory instrumentation, including a triangle and cymbals. Indeed, the *Tragic Overture* is so comparatively dark and protracted that it is hard to believe they were written almost simultaneously.

That the two works were written by the same composer, however, is decidedly more plausible. Opus 80, despite its aberrations, retains many typically "Brahmsian" techniques. The lack of an original, profound inspiration for the piece did not preclude ingenuity or passion in its construction. The popular songs, for example, are manipulated somewhat to adopt Brahms's own familiar language. The first one, *Wir hatten gehandelt ein statliches Haus* ("We had built a stately house"), which appears a little less than two minutes into the work, is presented as a brass chorale, a device which pervades virtually all of Brahms's orchestral works. In addition, the chorale does not function as a self-contained tune, but rather is a relatively slow transition, building tension toward the triumphant statement of the opening motive. Thus, as in chorales of other Brahms works, each chord possesses weight and a sense of anticipation. For the gentler, more lilting *Melodie des Landesväters* ("Emperor's Melody"), Brahms harmonizes the tune with his beloved thirds and sixths, while supplying a

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra traces its history back to the night of March 6, 1908, 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." An entry in the Sodality's record book for June 29, 1940 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 absenting 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 Cassett '34. According to *Timemagazine* (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 duties. 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 some of the most respected people 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, held in Berlin and sponsored by Herbert von Karajan. The Eighties saw tours to the Soviet Union (1984) and the Far East (1985 and 1988), the latter including a cultural exchange with universities in Shanghai and Beijing. This past summer, the HRO continued its tradition of cultural exchange and visited Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Olomouc, Hamburg and Copenhagen during its 1992 European Tour.

This season marks the HRO's 185th year of music-making, and to commemorate this event, the HRO will perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony this spring in Symphony Hall.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the David Chang Memorial Fund. This fund was established in 1991 by the Chang Family to support the rental and purchase of music.

The David Chang Memorial Fund c/o Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, Music Building, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138

Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

185th Season

James Yannatos, *Music Director*

Friday, 6 November 1992, 8 pm

Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Academic Festival Overture

Sarah Hicks, assistant conductor

Antonin Dvorak
(1841-1904)

Serenade for Strings

- Moderato
- Tempo di Valse — Trio
- Scherzo
- Larghetto
- Finale: Allegro vivace

Intermission

Malis der Maler

- Engelkonzert
- Grablegung
- Versuchung des heiligen Antonius

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JAMES YANNATOS

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.

He has been music director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra since 1964, and has appeared as guest conductor-composer at the Baltimore Symphony, the San Antonio Symphony, the Boston Pops, the Winnipeg and Edmonton Symphonies, and the Sverdlovsk and Leningrad Chamber Orchestras, as well as at the Aspen, Banff, Tanglewood, Chautauqua, and Saratoga Festivals. He is also the music director of the Hanover Chamber Orchestra and the New England Composer's Orchestra. Dr. Yannatos has received commissions for or-



chestral, vocal, and instrumental works which include *Cycles* (recorded by Collage), *An Overture for the Utrannon Man* (Phi Beta Kappa), *Sonatas of Desolation* (Joy Lucy Shelton), and the *Cocerte for Bass and Orchestra* (Alec II 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.

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

Dr. Yannatos has published four volumes of *Sil and Verious Songs*, based on the words of children. He has also written music for television including *Novi City of Coral*, and Metromedia's *Assasins Among Us*. He has received innumerable awards as a composer including the Artists Foundation Award c 1988 for his *Trinity Mass*.

Assistant Conductor

SARAH HICKS

Sarah Hicks '93 debuted in her high school senior year as Assistant Conductor of the Punahou School Symphony Orchestra, Honolulu HI. She has led the Harvard-Radcliffe Conductors Orchestra and has served two seasons as Music Director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players. She finished her sophomore year as Assistant Music Director of the Harvard Lowell House Opera's productions of Bernstein's "A Quiet Place" in 1991 and premiered "Supposing Rommily", an original opera by Jennifer Giering, in the spring of 1992. In the summer of 1991 she attended the Conductor's Institute in Columbia, SC, studying with Donald Portnoy, Harold Farberman and John Giordano. Returning that summer to Hawaii, she founded and conducted the Hawaii Summer Symphony and has continued this summer as conductor for the group in its second season. In May of '92 she



was elected Assistant Conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra by members of the group and has been invited to guest conduct the Area All-State Orchestra in Suffern, NY in November. In the spring of 1993 she will be co-Music Director of the Harvard Lowell House Opera's production of Rossini's "The Italian in Algiers" and also will present a performance of her senior thesis, an oratorio based on prose and poetry written by people with AIDS. Sarah has been keyboardist for

the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra since her freshman year as well as a member of several chamber music groups in the orchestra. An accomplished pianist she has won numerous scholarships and competitions and has soloed several times with the Honolulu Symphony. She studied piano with Ernest Chang in Honolulu, Adele Marcus at Juillard, and most recently, with Eda Schlyan at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, MA.