

Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 1, 2016

East Chapel Hill High School Auditorium

“Rivers of Inspiration”

Overture to *Die Fledermaus*

Johann Strauss II

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor
Op. 37

Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro con brio

Aram Lindroth

2016 Young Artist Concerto Competition Winner

Intermission

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major

Robert Schumann

Op. 97, “*Rhenish*”

Lebhaft

Scherzo: Sehr mäßig

Nicht schnell

Feierlich

Lebhaft

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Our concert title suggests an extension of the Chapel Hill Philharmonia's December 2015 offering "The Great Outdoors," which featured the *Pastoral Symphony* (No. 6) of Ludwig van Beethoven. That work portrays five scenes comprising a day in the countryside. Tonight we present Robert Schumann's five movement *Symphony No. 3*, known as "*The Rhenish*." The name refers to the Rhine, the second-longest river in Central and Western Europe, which traverses 766 miles from its headwaters in the Swiss Alps through Germany and the Netherlands before emptying into the North Sea. Yet there is scant evidence that Schumann intended to depict the river programmatically. The connection appears rather to the civilization and culture of the land through which the Rhine flows. Likewise, the pieces we perform by Beethoven and Johann Strauss II both bear a link to the Danube, the region's longest river, if only because they were composed in Vienna, Austria, one of the great cities situated along its course as it traverses 1,780 miles eastwards from Germany to the Black Sea. With apologies to Charles Dickens, we might rename our concert "A Tale of Two Rivers."

Strauss II: Overture to *Die Fledermaus*

Johann Strauss I (1804-49) made his mark in the heart of the Austrian empire, the cultural zenith of his day, as a shrewd musical entrepreneur, the composer of hundreds of popular tunes, and the leader of a business employing more than 200 people that sent well-drilled dance orchestras on tour all over Europe. He was the self-made son of a tenant tavern keeper who died before the boy's 12th birthday. Despite his own commercial success in music, Johann was adamant that his three sons should take up professions less subject to the whims of a fickle public. For example, although the firstborn, Johann Jr. (1825-99), often referred to as "Strauss the Younger", displayed innate talent at least equal to his own, the elder Johann insisted that he prepare for a career in banking.

Nevertheless, with the secret support of his mother, Johann Jr. received excellent musical training and became an accomplished pianist, violinist and composer. The dissolution of his parents' marriage in 1844 liberated him to follow openly in his father's footsteps. Ten days before his nineteenth birthday he debuted as a conductor at Dommayer's Casino in a Vienna suburb, the site of many of the elder Strauss's triumphs. The two men became professional rivals. Their competition took a *Star Wars*-like turn during the Vienna Uprising of October 1848 when the son supported the revolutionaries while the father (think Darth Vader) remained loyal to the Empire. His famous *Radetzky March* honored the aging Field Marshall who led the imperial troops.

When Strauss I died during the next year, Johann Jr. merged his father's orchestra with his own. He grew into Vienna's preeminent dance composer, producing over 400 well-crafted polkas, quadrilles, marches and, of course, waltzes. His signature work, *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, helped cement his reputation as "The Waltz King." Among his most appreciative fans in Vienna was the eminent composer Johannes Brahms. On the back of a photograph presented to Strauss's wife Adele, Brahms once jotted the opening of the *Blue Danube* waltz as counterpoint to his own *Fourth Symphony*.

In the early 1870s Strauss shifted his focus from the ballroom (leaving the dance business in his brother Eduard's hands) to the stage. In Paris Jacques Offenbach had perfected a new style of light opera that became the rage throughout Europe. Jay Goodwin (Metropolitan Opera program annotator) attributes this "operetta frenzy" to the "combination of lighthearted scenarios, catchy melody, comedy, and irreverence....[O]peretta was fun, eminently accessible, and the perfect foil to the heavy subject matter and lavish productions that were the norm in 19th-century opera houses."

Demand grew for homegrown operettas, rather than French imports. In London from 1871 to the century's end Arthur Sullivan and W. S. Gilbert collaborated on a series of topsy-turvy comic works that remain staples in the English-speaking world. In Vienna over the same period Strauss teamed with various librettists to complete 15 operettas. Almost all



Die Fledermaus
Canadian National Opera

were first performed at the Theater an der Wien situated on a bank of the Wien (Vienna) River, a small tributary which courses through the city before feeding into the Danube. The theater opened in 1801 and was the project of Emanuel Schikaneder, an impresario who a decade earlier had collaborated with Wolfgang Amadé Mozart on *The Magic Flute*. Today the Theater an der Wien remains an active opera house, but at its site the riverbed has been covered over to house an open-air market.

Die Fledermaus ("The Bat"), the most enduring of Strauss's operettas, premiered at that theater on April 5, 1874. The libretto by Karl Haffner and Richard Genée derived from a French vaudeville, *La Réveillon*, itself adapted from an earlier German stage comedy. The setting of the *réveillon*, a feast and all-night party traditionally held on Christmas or New Year's Eve, morphed into a masked ball hosted by the Russian Prince Orlofsky (a "pants role" played by a mezzo-soprano). The story compounds mistaken identity with ubiquitous marital infidelity. The work's title comes from a nickname acquired by its bearer, Falke, when Gabriel von Eisenstein, a rather contentious character, abandoned him to be ridiculed in the town center after a wild party, drunk and costumed as a bat. Falke, with Orlofsky's collusion, now plots revenge at the upcoming ball by exposing Eisenstein in flagrante delicto with his maid. After a night of dancing, assignations, and champagne guzzling (the music inspired by a river of bubbly, as it were), all repair to the local prison where Eisenstein blames his infidelity on the alcohol but cannot wriggle out of a week in the clink for previously insulting an official.

While the story seems pure fluff, Goodwin notes that *Die Fledermaus* opened less than a year after a stock market crash in Vienna and that the days of empire and aristocratic excess were numbered. He argues that in this context the operetta "takes on more profound significance. It embodies both fond reminiscence and biting satire, reveling in past carelessness and profligacy while hinting at where it can lead—a lesson that has become no less relevant almost 150 years later."

Regardless of social import or lack thereof, the charm of Strauss's score abides. The New York Philharmonic's program annotator James M. Keller writes:

The Overture to *Die Fledermaus* provides a potpourri of several principal tunes from the operetta. The whole is dominated by a duple time dance number and an infectious waltz whose bustling melody is announced initially by the strings, playing staccato and low in their range, before it is taken up by the entire orchestra. Other tunes intercede, but these two indelible melodies return to bring this overture to its buoyant end.

Beethoven: *Piano Concerto No. 3*

Like *Die Fledermaus*, the *Third Piano Concerto* of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) received its premiere performance at the Theater an der Wien. On April 5, 1803 this edifice on the riverbank was still a new sensation, lauded as the "most comfortable and satisfactory" venue for musical performance in the whole of German-speaking lands. The ambitious program, entirely of Beethoven's own works, also included his new *Second Symphony* and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount*. The concert proved a financial success, if somewhat uneven in performance due to inadequate, pressured rehearsal. It serves as a marker between the Early Period in which Beethoven emerged as an extraordinary composer, and the transition to the Middle Period in which he entirely revolutionized music.

Touted as a potential musical heir to Mozart, Beethoven had hoped from an early age to study with that role model, his senior by thirteen years. As a teenager in 1787 Beethoven traveled to Vienna from his home in Bonn, then a cultural backwater on the Rhine, and caught Mozart's attention. However, he was forced to return home to deal with his mother's fatal illness and his father's alcoholism. By the time Beethoven could relocate permanently to Vienna in late 1792, Mozart had been dead for almost a year. Instead he studied composition, sometimes combatively, with the older and more crotchety Joseph Haydn. Nonetheless, the influence of Mozart remained palpable.

The *Third Piano Concerto* shares the key of C minor (also used in the *Fifth Symphony*) with Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 24*, K. 491, one that Beethoven admired greatly. The choice of key may be coincidental, but Chicago Symphony program annotator Philip Huscher finds that "This...is one of a handful of works in which the spirits of Mozart and Beethoven

convene...Beethoven writes music that pays tribute to this great masterpiece and, at the same time, transcends the Mozartean model. It was conceived in a complimentary, rather than a competitive spirit.”

The first movement, performed this evening by Aram Lindroth as piano soloist, begins with a long orchestral exposition, including a lyrical modulation to the relative major key E-flat. “The piano enters with three explosive C minor scales and then plays its own version, at once elegant and forceful, of the opening theme.” (Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide*) Piano and orchestra then complement each other through a development recognizable as full-fledged mature Beethoven. The cadenza is the composer’s, possibly written in 1809, “and an assertive and pianistically brilliant affair it is. Even more remarkable is Beethoven’s way of bringing the orchestra back in after the cadenza: here we sense one of his periodic stirrings to question the conventional ways of handling major points of demarcation.” (Steinberg)

Aram Lindroth, winner of the Chapel Hill Philharmonia 2016 Young Artist Concerto Competition, is fourteen years old and an eighth-grade student at Duke School, Durham, NC. He studies piano with Susan Greenberg. Aram has played in the Mallarmé Youth Chamber Orchestra chamber groups for two years and attended a MYCO summer workshop and the Point Counterpoint music camp in Vermont. His other interests include participating in Model United Nations and learning mathematics, programming, photography, and Farsi. This evening Aram performs the opening movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 3*. In his words:

Before I even started learning this concerto, I loved to listen to its third movement. I was delighted when I heard that my piano teacher wanted me play this particular concerto, and it has become one of the classical works that I like best. Apart from Beethoven, who is possibly my favorite composer, I enjoy playing and listening to Bach, particularly the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and Debussy.



Aram Lindroth
by Steven Bromberg

Schumann: *Symphony No. 3 (Rhenish)*

Considering Robert Schumann (1810-1856) as he approached his 40th birthday in 1849, a modern viewer might consider him a prime candidate for career counseling and life coaching. His health, mental and physical, was fragile. He was married to an extraordinary woman, Clara Schumann née Wieck, a world-class concert pianist, but also placed extraordinary demands and pressures on her. They had five children under the age of nine (a sixth had died in infancy), with two yet to be born. He was a productive composer but realized only a modest income from publishing his work and neither performed in concert nor held a salaried position—strict reliance on composition for a musician’s income had always been a recipe for struggle and frustration. (Fortunately, Clara’s occasional concert tours provided a considerable nest egg.) He was an astute music critic but five years earlier had sold for little profit the influential magazine *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (“New Journal of Music”) he had founded at age 24. He was living in Dresden, Germany, not a thriving cultural center and, as in much of Europe, the site of recent revolutionary upheaval that had threatened his family’s safety. He had been turned down for conducting and teaching positions in major music centers such as Vienna and Leipzig.

On the other hand he had rebounded from a virtual collapse five years earlier, just after settling in Dresden, when his physician diagnosed “acute depression, insomnia, exhaustion, auditory disturbances, bodily tremors and a wide range of phobias.” Indeed the *Grove Music Online* biographical entry authored by John Daverio and Eric Sams describes the later years in Dresden as a period of “unbounded creativity” in which Schumann innovated in forms ranging from miniatures to large dramatic works, with a concomitant increase in income from compositions.

Out of the blue Schumann received a job offer as municipal music director in Düsseldorf, a small industrial city on the Rhine River. Responsibilities included conducting a municipal orchestra and choral society, special performances on major religious feast days, and the annual production of a large-scale oratorio. The post had once been occupied by

Felix Mendelssohn and served as a stepping-stone to his highly successful tenure as conductor of the outstanding Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig.

The Schumanns moved to Düsseldorf in September 1850. The town feted them with a round of concerts and parties. Although Robert had never distinguished himself as a conductor, his first season went well. However, in subsequent years he, like Mendelssohn, became frustrated by the dilettantism of the city's orchestral musicians and choir members, whose technical ability and work ethic left much to be desired. Coupled with Schumann's dubious leadership skills, sometimes autocratic demeanor, and deteriorating health and stamina, this led his relationship with musicians and city officials to plummet.

Despite his new responsibilities, Schumann continued to compose prolifically. In November he began the *Symphony No. 3*, completing it by mid-December. He conducted the work with his new orchestra in February 1851 and it was received with enough enthusiasm to merit repeating at the next month's concert.

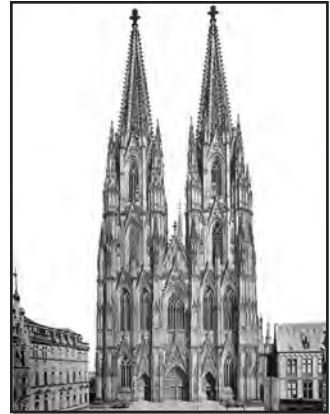
Although the Symphony bears the title "*Rhenish*", Schumann's programmatic intent remains unclear. Schumann only experienced the beauties of the Rhine valley firsthand during a vacation the next summer. Most authorities agree with the American conductor Kenneth Woods that this five-movement symphony "is a vibrant testimony to what was to be the last truly happy time in [Schumann's] life." Many ascribe the title to a 30-mile journey train journey taken by Robert and Clara to Cologne at the end of September 1850. They would have viewed the city's magnificent cathedral, the largest Gothic building in northern Europe, and may have witnessed the elevation of its Archbishop von Geissel to the rank of cardinal. Michael Steinberg describes the cathedral as "a much of a national totem as the river next to which it stands," suggesting a titular link. However, Woods insists "Schumann himself never called [the symphony] the '*Rhenish*'" and argues that there is no evidence in Schumann's own correspondence or diaries that he witnessed the Cologne ceremony.

Joseph von Wasielewski, a violinist Schumann recruited to Düsseldorf from the Gewandhaus Orchestra, published the first biography of the composer in 1858. This may be the primary source of both the persistent Cologne Cathedral story and the subtitle. Wasielewski reported that the symphony's fourth movement was originally headed "An Accompaniment to a Solemn Ceremony," but adds that Schumann decided to eliminate explicit programmatic cues and to allow the music to stand on its own. He further quotes Schumann, "I wished national elements to prevail, and think I succeeded," and he cites the presence of popular or folk elements in at least the second and fifth movements.

Woods sees the Symphony as a "trptych in which the first two and final two movements form connected pairs through thematic cross references and shared ideas." The first two movements comprise a powerful opening; both are in $\frac{3}{4}$ time and built around the harmonic interval of the perfect fourth. "The 3rd movement is a charming intermezzo...Schumann takes us to a...universe in miniature where innocence, elegance and understatement meet fantasy and profundity."

The awe-inspiring fourth movement is marked *Feierlich* (Solemnly). Woods notes that it is "written in austere contrapuntal style, and [is] unremitting in its severity," building on a powerful opening theme in the low brass. In the joyous Finale he sees "a mirror image of the *Feierlich*.. Again and again, Schumann brings back ideas from [that movement], however, completely without solemnity or anguish. What was once unbearably dark is now presented in the spirit of carefree good humor...At the climax of the symphony, the brass re-state the opening of the 4th movement, but now in major and in fully triumphant mode, fast and fortissimo, and the symphony concludes in a blaze of optimistic affirmation."

Within three years of completing his final symphony (the one labeled No. 4 was a reworking of an earlier effort), Schumann's mental health collapsed, very likely as a consequence of tertiary syphilis. Ironically, he tried to drown himself in the Rhine. Confined to an institution for the remainder of his days, he died in 1856.



Cologne Cathedral

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