Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Hill Hall — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 1, 2011

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Henri Tomasi **(1901-1971)**

Fanfares Liturgiques for brass ensemble

Procession du Vendredi Saint

Johannes Brahms **(1833-1897)**

Academic Festival Overture

Cecil Forsyth **(1870-1941)**

Viola Concerto in G-minor

Mvmt 1: Appassionato - Moderato - Con moto, Agitato - Allegro con spirito - Allegro - Allegro con spirito

Aria Cherogosha, viola

2011 Young Artist Concerto Competition Winner

Intermission

Alexander Borodin **(1833-1887)**

Symphony No. 2 in B minor

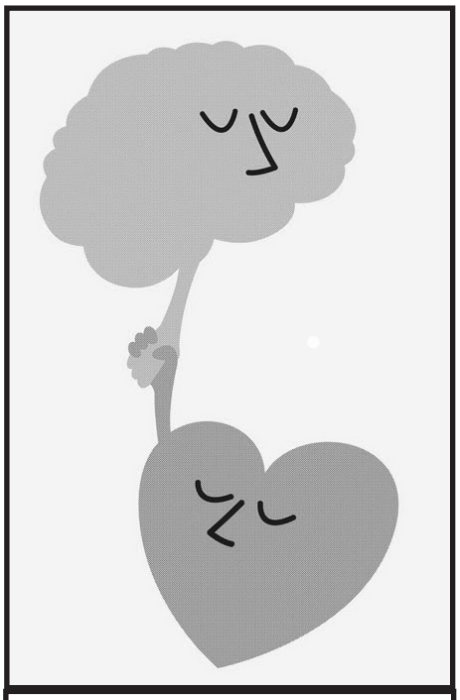
Allegro

Scherzo. Prestissimo - Allegretto

Andante

Finale. Allegro

Music from the Heart and Mind



Mind, meet heart
Christopher David Ryan

Why do we need music? How does it communicate what is in our hearts and minds? For centuries philosophers, poets, psychologists, aestheticians, musicologists, and, yes, even musicians have pondered these questions. Their efforts to describe the creation of and response to music are often pithy:

> "Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent." ~ Victor Hugo
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> "Music is the art of thinking with sounds." ~ Jules Combarieu
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> "Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends." ~ Alphonse de Lamartine
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> "Music is the shorthand of emotion." ~ Leo Tolstoy
>
> "Music is an outburst of the soul." ~ Frederick Delius
>
> "Music is love in search of a word." ~ Sidney Lanier

But do these eloquent aphorisms explain how and why humans make music? Marvin Minsky, a famed Artificial Intelligence expert from MIT, in the essay "Music, Mind, and Meaning" (Computer Music Journal, 1981) argues that the answer lies beyond our current language and understanding: "The old distinctions among emotion, reason, and aesthetics are like the earth, air, and fire of an ancient alchemy. We will need much better concepts than these for a working psychic chemistry." Tonight's Chapel Hill Philharmonia (CHP) program examines the interplay of heart and mind, feelings and intellect, that comprise elements of music's psychic periodic table.

Henri Tomasi, *Fanfares Liturgiques*

Miguel Mañara statue, near Hospital de la Caridad, Seville

The brass fanfare by French composer Henri Tomasi explores the dark side of the human heart and its redemption through faith. Tomasi rose from humble roots. Born in Marseille to Corsican parents (his father a postal worker) at the beginning of the 20th century, he emerged as a prodigy in his city's *Conservatoire de Musique*. He continued his studies in Paris while eking out a living improvising on piano in chic restaurants and hotels, in movie houses for silent films, and (like the young Johannes Brahms) in brothels. Tomasi's career developed along parallel paths as a conductor and composer. He pioneered conducting for radio, led the French *Orchestre National*, and in 1946 was appointed Directing Conductor of the *Opéra de Monte-Carlo*. Physical ailments forced him to set down the baton in 1957, but he continued to compose until his death in 1971. In 1932 he cofounded the 'Triton Group of Contemporary Music' with Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Serge Prokofiev. Tomasi's music was "intensely direct in feeling, occasionally dissonant and highly colored; he absorbed influences from his French contemporaries while retaining an individual voice." (Grove Encyclopedia of Music) His compositions included concertos for a wide range of instruments, that for trumpet gaining the most popularity, and numerous vocal and symphonic works.

Fanfares Liturgiques (Liturgical Fanfares) for brass ensemble, begun during World War II and first performed in 1947, showcases musical and psychic themes from Tomasi's opera *Don Juan de Mañara*. Staged versions of the Don Juan legend date back at least to 1630, when Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina published *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*. The most compelling adaptation of the story may be the opera *Don Giovanni*, 1787, the last of Wolfgang Mozart's collaborations with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. Tomasi's opera on the Don Juan theme, based on a text by poet O.V. de L. Milosz, derives from the true story of a 17th century Spanish nobleman, Don Miguel Mañara Vincentelo de Leca. Inspired by de Molina's play, the teenaged Miguel vows to outdo Don Juan in womanizing and spends almost two decades living up to this dubious goal. Like his mythical model, Miguel 'loves them and leaves them' and frequently fights the men whose loved ones he has seduced. All changes when Miguel falls in love with Girolama, a spiritual young woman. He marries her and renounces his debauched ways. Girolama dies suddenly and the devastated widower, now age 35, retreats to a monastery, the Brotherhood of the Holy Charity of Seville. Miguel becomes Superior of the order, and his piety and support for the poor prove even more remarkable than his former licentiousness. Whereas the Mozart/Da Ponte antihero dies unrepentant, surrounded by hellfire and a chorus of demons ("The Rake Punished" in the opera's full title), Tomasi's Miguel achieves atonement. *Fanfares Liturgiques* resonates with a message of repentance and salvation. The work's brief four movements, mirroring sections of the opera, are named *Annunciation*, *Gospel*, *Apocalypse*, and *Procession du Vendredi Saint*. This evening the Chapel Hill Philharmonia's brass section plays the final movement.

Johannes Brahms, Academic Festival Overture

The award of an honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree by the University of Breslau in 1879 may have challenged Johannes Brahms to contemplate the intellectual basis of his art. An academic hood and gown were strange apparel for a man who had never attended university. Brahms's education had been more the school of hard knocks around the slums and docks of Hamburg, Germany. There, as a teenager, he augmented the family income by playing a barroom piano in rough *Animierlokale* (translated by biographer Jan Swafford as "stimulation pubs"). Brahms's closest brush with college life came in 1853, at age 20. He visited his new friend Josef Joachim, already a celebrated violin virtuoso, who was taking summer courses at Göttingen. Gemütlich evenings devoted to philosophizing, drinking and singing in Sachsen, student clubs, must have contrasted sharply with the long nights Brahms had spent providing dance music for and (according to Swafford) fending off the advances of scantily clad St. Pauli girls and their drunken sailor companions.

'*Gaudeamus igitur*' post card with symbols of traditional German student life, 1898

Brahms seems to have had misgivings about accepting the honorary doctorate – he had previously refused one from Cambridge University, ostensibly because he hated sea travel and did not wish to cross the English Channel. Initially Brahms sent a mere postcard of thanks to the faculty at Breslau who had declared him, in flowery Latin, "the greatest living German master of the strict [academic] musical style." These flattering words were communicated by a friend of many years, Bernhard Scholz, the University's Director of Music. As such, Brahms could turn down neither the award nor the command to prepare a suitable musical work for the occasion: "Compose a fine symphony for us!" Scholz instructed. "But well orchestrated, old boy, not too uniformly thick!" Yet Brahms resisted being elevated to musical 'aristocracy'. The label of the next great 'B' after

Bach and Beethoven, pinned on him by Robert Schumann, became a psychological burden. So, too, did the role of protagonist for the 'strict' line of Romanticism against the more flamboyant New Music of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. Writing to Clara Schumann in 1858, Brahms declared: "Art is a republic…Do not confer a higher rank upon any artist…His ability will make him a beloved and respected citizen…but no consul or emperor."

Brahms not so subtly expressed his republican credo in the *Academic Festival Overture*, the work he presented in accepting the University of Breslau's degree in January, 1881. While carefully crafted ("built like a tank" says one program note writer) for a larger orchestra than Brahms used in any other piece, the Overture draws entirely on popular and even revolutionary sources. The opening derives from the *Rákóczy March*, the unofficial anthem of Hungarian nationalism and in Brahms's lifetime a symbol of resistance to domination by the Austrian Empire. A quiet drumroll on the timpani then leads to a series of episodes based on traditional student songs that Brahms undoubtedly heard in the Göttingen beer-halls. The first, introduced by three trumpets, is the *Burschenschaftslied*, beginning *Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus* (We have built a stately house). Taken from folk roots by August von Binzer, this song protested the banning of nationalist fraternities (*Burschenschaften*), removal of liberal professors, and expansion of censorship by the Carlsbad Decrees enforced in the states of the German Confederation in 1819. The strings then sweep into *Lan"desvater* ("Father of the people"), traditionally sung at student ceremonies of brotherhood. Brahms next takes a comic turn, having the bassoons lead the *Fuchslied* ("Fox-song"), *Was kommt dort von der Höh* ("What's coming from on high"), a freshman hazing song to a tune not unlike "Farmer in the Dell". For a completely over-the-top ending, Brahms invokes the archetypal student anthem *Gaudeamus igitur* ("Let us rejoice therefore / While we are young"), intoned triple *forte* by full brass and wind choir over a wildly cascading string accompaniment. Even if they had not received a "fine symphony", how could Scholz and his colleagues complain as this grand conclusion brought their convocation to its feet? Tears came to their eyes as the Overture's title brought to mind a verse of *Gaudeamus igitur* celebrating their role as faculty: "Long live the academy! Long live the teachers!" Of course, the acerbic Brahms may have had a quiet chuckle, reveling in the irony of the anthem's final words: "Let whoever is against our school / Who laughs at it, perish!"

Cecil Forsyth, Viola Concerto

For many listeners the sound of the viola has a special appeal to heart and mind. With its timbre frequently described as rich, warm, brooding, or 'chocolaty', the viola covers a range close to that of the human voice. It may be historically the first member of the string choir, and its special alto clef centers on middle C. Yet in the solo and concerto literature, the viola is stepchild to the more facile and brilliant violin. Cecil Forsyth, a British musicologist, composer, and violist in the Queen's Hall Orchestra, described his favored instrument with tongue in cheek in *Orchestration* (1914): "The viola has suffered the ups and downs of musical treatment more than any other stringed instrument. In the late 16th and early 17th century it held much the same position in the orchestra that the 1st and 2nd violins occupy today. We now feel that the viola is often merely a source of anxiety to the composer. We feel that [s]he regards its existence as something in the nature of an unexpected prehistoric survival: the hoary instrument was [still] there and had to be written for…The viola, therefore, either does nothing, or does something which … is made [by the composer] to appear as much like nothing as possible."

In Forsyth's *Viola Concerto in G minor*, premiered by its dedicatee Émile Férir in 1903 at one of Henry Wood's popular London Promenade Concerts, the solo instrument certainly does far more than nothing. The first movement (marked *Appassionato - Moderato*), performed this evening by Aria Cheregosha, opens with a striking recitative for the viola. This gives way to a heroic dark theme and the soloist trades lyrical melodies with the orchestra. David Bynog of Rice University notes, "Since Forsyth was both a violist and a competent orchestrator, the balance is consistently right with brawny tuttis but a light orchestral texture while the viola is playing. The melodic and harmonic content of the concerto displays a decidedly British palette." Others have likened Forsyth's compositional style to that of mainstream Romantics Felix Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Antonin Dvořák. While his Viola Concerto broke new ground for the instrument, and was well

received at the Proms concerts, it fell into obscurity. Another Queen's Hall Orchestra violist, Lionel Tertis, became professor of his instrument at London's Royal Academy of Music and catalyzed a rebirth of interest in the 'middle fiddle.' Arnold Bax, William Walton, and Ralph Vaughn Williams dedicated works to Tertis that are played regularly today. For no obvious reason Tertis ignored both Forsyth's concerto and another large-scale work for viola and orchestra, Chanson Celtique (1905). Forsyth also composed two operas, Westward Ho! and Cinderella and various other vocal, symphonic, and chamber works. None of these remains in the active repertoire.

Forsyth made his subsequent mark mainly as a musicologist. In addition to his well-respected manual on symphonic orchestration, he wrote a companion volume on *Choral Orchestration*, a study of English Opera titled *Music and Nationalism*, a book on violin (and viola) playing, and, co-authored with Charles Stanford, a *History of Music*. In 1914 after the outbreak of World War I, he moved to New York and worked for the music publishers H.W. Gray until his death, coincidentally on the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

Forsyth had a mordant wit and contributed occasional comic essays to music journals. In "The Vanity of Human Knowledge" (*The Musical Quarterly*, 1924), he time-travels 13,000 years into the future to witness an oral examination in Musicology. In the responses of an obviously excellent student to questions from the faculty interlocutors, Palestrina receives credit as the composer of (Arthur Sullivan's) "The Lost Chord", J.S. Bach is confounded with Offenbach (Lemony Snicket makes the same joke in a recent children's musical murder mystery), Richard Wagner is transformed into a Jewish tuba player in the band of Guillaume Dufay (a 15th century Franco-Flemish composer), and "Home Sweet Home" is identified as an ancient nuptial-song for the wedding of a bride and groom named Concertina and Piano. A violist's joke…

Aria Cheregosha

Aria Cheregosha, age 15, is the First Prize Winner of the CHP's 2011 Young Artist Concerto Competition. A 10th grader, she began playing viola at age seven and now studies with Shelley Livingston at Duke University String School (DUSS). Aria is the principal violist of the DUSS Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Triangle Youth Philharmonic, and the North Carolina Symphony's "Young All Stars" Chamber Orchestra, and has been a member of the Durham Symphony Orchestra for four years. Doubling on violin, Aria has served as concertmaster for the Durham School of the Arts' Orchestra and the Durham Public Schools' Honors Orchestra. She has received viola performance awards from the Durham Music Teachers Association and the National Federation of Music Clubs. The Talla Trio, which Aria formed in 2007 with violinist Melody Lin and pianist Michael Gao, has twice performed at Carnegie Hall as winners of the American Fine Arts Festival competition. The Talla Trio also won the 2010 Alexander and Buono International Competition and has performed a full concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. A multitalented musician, Aria also studies piano and composition with Pamela St. John of Chapel Hill.

Aria has received the loan an unusually small (14.5 inch body length, whereas most violas are in the range of 15.5 to 17.5 inches) but beautifully crafted instrument, courtesy of Eric Chapman of Lincolnshire, IL. Although the luthier is not known, Eric believed the viola was made in Füssen, Germany in the late 19th century. This town on the River Lech, ideally situated to obtain fine wood from the forests of the North Tyrol, became Europe's first center for lute and violin making and, in 1562, the home of the first lute-makers guild.

A maker and dealer of stringed instruments who especially loved the viola, Eric befriended many musicians in our community through his participation in the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop. As a co-founder of the Violin Society of America and a specialist with great expertise and integrity who shared his knowledge freely, Eric was highly respected around the world. He passed away on April 7, 2011. Arranging for the Füssen viola to be set up and provided for Aria's use was one of his final acts.

Alexander Borodin, Symphony No. 2 in B minor

While Brahms and Forsyth enjoyed gently spoofing academia, the composer Alexander Borodin devoted much of his mental energy to the duties of his university professorship – not in music, but chemistry. Born from the liaison of a Russian prince with the wife of an army doctor, Borodin was registered as a serf under the name of his father's valet. His mother, widowed shortly thereafter, raised the lad, provided him with an excellent education, and arranged his formal elevation from serfdom, all the while maintaining the fiction that she was his 'Auntie'. Borodin's dual talents soon emerged. He composed his first piano piece at age nine, learned flute from a soldier in a regimental band, and taught himself to play cello to enjoy chamber music with a violinist friend. At the same time the teenaged Borodin became a passionate experimenter and, as a friend observed, filled 'Auntie's' apartment with "jars, retorts, and all sorts of chemicals. Tubes with various crystalline solutions were on windows everywhere." At seventeen he entered the St. Petersburg Medico-Surgical Academy and became the protégé of Nikolai Zinin, a pioneer in the new field of organic chemistry.

In 1858 Borodin completed a dissertation on his chemical research and received a medical degree, although he confined his future work to the laboratory and did not treat patients. After postdoctoral training in Heidelberg, Germany and other academic centers in Western Europe, in 1862 he returned to his *alma mater* in St. Petersburg and two years later succeeded his mentor as Professor of Chemistry. He held this position and actually lived at the Medico-Surgical Academy for the rest of his life. With his wife Ekaterina Protopopova, a pianist he met in Heidelberg, Borodin occupied a narrow apartment immediately adjacent to the chemistry lab. Childless and of a generous and amiable personality, he devoted great attention to his students, who felt free to call on him at any time. When the tsar's government first allowed women to receive advanced medical training in 1872, Borodin volunteered to teach them chemistry and worked broadly to advance their education. His participation in academic and charitable committees, along with care of his wife, a chronic asthmatic, demanded further chunks of time. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov described his friend's "whole home life [as] one unending disorder."

Alexander Borodin: ***Scientist, educator, composer***

Despite his professional and social responsibilities, as a 'Sunday composer' (his own description) Borodin still produced astonishingly original, beautiful music. Within a close-knit circle of five self-trained composers known as "The Mighty Handful," he helped to advance a distinctly Russian style of art music. He drew from indigenous folk sources and his own melodic gift to create "operatic arias and symphonic themes that were marked by a highly

individual mixture of Russian and Oriental character and unfailing lyricism. He had a flair for creating vivid and colorful scenes…" (G. Kauffman & K. Bumpass, Leonardo, 1988).

Borodin completed relatively few works. Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov finished his most ambitious effort, the opera *Prince Igor*, after his sudden death at age 53 from a heart attack suffered while dancing in native costume at a student ball. *The Symphony No. 2 in B minor* stands as the greatest composition entirely in Borodin's hand. Written from 1871 to 1876 in parallel with *Prince Igor*, it shares both musical character and programmatic elements with the opera. Thus, the brusque, powerful opening of the first movement evokes the assembly of 12th century Russian princes preparing to defend their land against Polovtsian tribal invaders. Robert Wright and George Forrest used this theme in *Kismet*, their Broadway musical drawn from Borodin themes, for the title song (in translation) "Fate".

The second movement, a rhythmically innovative *Scherzo*, brings to mind Mendelssohn's elves (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), or perhaps Edvard Grieg's Nordic trolls. Sinuous oboe solos give it an Oriental flavor.

The slow third movement (marked *Andante*) begins with a lovely duet between harp and clarinet. It gives way to the main melody played by French horns, recalling ancient Slavonic troubadours. The clarinet solo returns and bridges directly to the *Finale*, with energetic themes resembling the *Polovtsian Dances* from *Prince Igor*. As in the opera, Borodin depicts a banquet of Russian heroes, entertained by exotic dancing to the strains of flutes and the *gusla*, a type of Balkan round-backed folk-fiddle with a single horsehair string.

The Second Symphony exemplifies inspiration from both mind and heart. Its strength and originality beg the question why Borodin devoted his professional life to the literal periodic table of chemistry (first codified, incidentally, by his close colleague Dmitri Mendeleev), rather than (per Minsky) the "psychic chemistry" of music, which he relegated to a hobby. The British writer Aldous Huxley, coming from a family distinguished in both science and the arts, would have sided with Borodin: "If I could be born again and choose what I should be in my next existence, I should desire to be a man of science. Even if I could be Shakespeare, I think I should still choose to be [chemist, physicist and philosopher Michael] Faraday…We are all subdued to what we work in; and I personally would rather be subdued to intellectual contemplation than to emotion, would rather use my soul professionally for knowing than for feeling." On the other hand, given Borodin's multifaceted genius, the Nobel laureate Max Delbrück, a father of molecular biology, likely would have chosen music: "You don't have the inspiration or the talent to be an artist; then what else do you want to do in life besides be a scientist?"

— Mark E. Furth, Ph.D.