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2022-23 Season



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Symphony Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor

Reuben Kebede, violin

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 22, 2022

Macky Auditorium

Program

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Concerto in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 80

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

I. Allegro Maestoso- Vivace

II. Andante Semplice- Andantino

III. Allegro Molto- Moderato

Reuben Kebede, violin

— Intermission —

Symphony No. 5 in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

I. Moderato

II. Allegretto

III. Largo

IV. Finale (Allegro non Troppo)

Program notes

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink and can be clicked or tapped for more information.

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms never went to college. When he was 20, however, he had the opportunity to indulge in the perks of student life for several weeks, without having to do a stitch of academic work. This serendipitous state of affairs resulted after he got “laid off” while on tour with the flamboyant 25-year-old Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi. Early in July of 1853, Reményi and Brahms were guests at the home of Franz Liszt during an extended stopover in Weimar. Reményi worshipped at the shrine of Liszt, but Brahms wanted nothing to do with their host’s artistic goals and the “New German School.” Incensed that his reticent accompanist wasn’t according the great master proper respect, Reményi sent Brahms on his way.

A few weeks earlier at the end of May, Reményi had introduced Brahms to violinist-composer Joseph Joachim during a concert stop in Hanover. Foreseeing a personality clash between the ill-matched duo, Joachim had invited Brahms—if the opportunity arose—to join him at Göttingen where he would be taking some summer courses in philosophy and history at the local university. For two glorious months that summer Brahms hung out with Joachim and his circle, enjoying reading, debates, pleasant walks, beer-drinking sessions and song fests at the local beer-halls, and general student camaraderie. By doing a recital with Joachim he raised enough money to finance a long-held dream to take a walking tour of the Rhineland. Thus, the young composer packed his knapsack and bid peripheral university life adieu.

Brahms’ next brush with academe occurred 23 years later, in 1876. Cambridge University offered him an honorary doctorate in music, which required his presence at the ceremony—but Brahms had a paralyzing distaste for sea travel. Then, he learned that Londoners were hatching lavish plans to celebrate his sojourn in England. Harboring an innate horror of fuss and lionization,

and unwilling to face the Channel crossing, the composer stayed home and relinquished the honor.

It was in 1879 that the University of Breslau conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Brahms was flattered and sent a postcard of thanks to the faculty. However, a subsequent letter from his friend Bernhard Scholz, director of music in Breslau, made it clear that the university expected him to express his gratitude in musical form. While vacationing at Bad Ischl during the summer of 1880, Brahms penned his musical “thank you” – the *Academic Festival Overture*.

With a masterful balance of serious and light-hearted elements, the emphasis is on the “festival” rather than the “academic” in an overture that brims with an irrepressible sense of fun. The work also sports the most extravagant orchestral forces the composer ever employed. Brahms himself described the piece as “a very boisterous potpourri of student songs.” Indeed, excerpts from four student beer-hall tunes play a significant role in the orchestral texture in what is, perhaps, a fond backward look to the carefree summer days of 1853.

A hushed, but urgent statement launches the *Overture*, followed by a dramatic succession of contrasting ideas and dynamics. The principal idea here is an adaptation of the *Rakóczy March*, a favorite tune with the composer since his youth. Following a soft drumroll, three trumpets then present the first of the traditional students’ songs: “Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus” (We have built a stately house). Its roots lie in a Thuringian folk song, which had been transformed into a defiant protest song in the East German town of Jena when the students’ association there was disbanded in 1819. After Brahms develops and mixes this song with the earlier *Rakóczy* adaptation, the melody of *Der Landesvater* (“The father of our country”) appears in a sweeping, lyrical rendition introduced by violins and violas.

The tempo shifts to *animato* for the freshman’s song known as *The Fox-Ride* (“Was komm dort von der Höh’ ” – What comes from afar). Bassoons, accompanied by off-the-beat violas and cellos, add a touch of humor that must have raised a faculty eyebrow or two at the premiere. Not forgetting to stir in his original material, Brahms then plays the three student songs off one another

in a light-handed development. For the grand finale, a rambunctious version of the imposing *Gaudeamus igitur* (“Therefore, let us be merry”) makes a joyful noise and provides a rousing conclusion with its blazing brass and full orchestral forces. The *Overture* has been one of Brahms’ most often played works ever since the composer himself conducted the premiere in Breslau on Jan. 4, 1881.
—*Program note by Kathy Henkel, Los Angeles Philharmonic*

Concerto in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 80

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s Violin Concerto was his last major work, written for Maud Powell, who was the soloist at the first performance at the Norfolk Connecticut Music Festival on June 4, 1912, but not published until later the same year, after his death. On the same day a local performance was given in Croydon by WJ Read—not Elgar’s “Billy” Reed—for the purpose of establishing copyright in the United Kingdom. The formal British premiere was given at the “Proms” at Queen’s Hall, on Oct. 8, 1912. The soloist was Arthur Catterall and the conductor Sir Henry Wood. It was five weeks after the composer’s death, and if for no other reason it made a great impression. It was heard in the United States, Maud Powell having five dates with it in the following season, including New York and Chicago; but in Europe, where the composer himself had been booked to conduct it in Berlin and Dresden, it seems to have been quietly forgotten, apart from a performance in Bournemouth in 1913 with a local violinist. The work was not revived until a concert to mark the centenary of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 1980, when it was played by Sergiu Schwartz.

Coleridge-Taylor originally set out to write a concerto based on spirituals but was unhappy with his first attempts, and eventually wrote the present concerto using original thematic material. Yet there are melodic and harmonic resonances of Dvorák’s American works about it, not least in the first movement.

The remarkably large-scale opening movement, *Allegro maestoso*, is a classical sonata movement, although the composer’s fondness for constantly exploring passing episodes and interpolating decoration for his soloist gives it something of a rhapsodic feel. The opening theme is immediately taken up by the soloist, each phrase of the theme decorated by Coleridge-Taylor’s inserted falling and

rising arpeggios of increasing complexity, much in the manner of his popular violin encores. This is contrasted with the charming dotted second subject, *Vivace*, which is used extensively. Eventually the music reaches the cadenza, which the violin plays over a sustained timpani roll on D, the soloist mainly toying with the dotted rhythm. A mellifluous 2/4 *Allegro molto* leads to the end, the soloist now playing the first subject with the fullest tone.

The charming nocturnal slow movement (*Andante semplice*) in 6/8 is almost completely lyrical. The opening muted strings immediately set the mood, as the violin presents the first theme, the decorated violin line weaving an enchanted reverie with the orchestra. The second section (*Andantino*) is heralded by an orchestral tutti which grandly introduces a new theme before the violin takes it up. The finale might be called a free rondo since the outlines of a rondo are present, but Coleridge-Taylor is constantly happy to explore little contrasted vignettes within the music, or follow his rhapsodic inclination where it takes him. Here much of the orchestration is very lightly applied, not least at the beginning. At one point there is a passing moment of drama as the *maestoso* first theme of the first movement briefly thunders out, and there is a passing reference to the slow movement. The work ends with the opening theme of the first movement now rhythmically altered, and at the end the opening rhythm is heard once more.

—Program note by Lewis Foreman, 2005

Symphony No. 5 in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

THE BACKSTORY: Dmitri Shostakovich was 19 years old when his professional life got off to a brilliant start with an amazing First Symphony, a work that soon spread his name abroad. But in 1936, his career ran aground. Stalin decided to see the composer's much talked-about opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Stalin was scandalized, and in an article titled "Chaos Instead of Music" Pravda launched a fierce attack on Shostakovich. "Now everyone knew for sure that I would be destroyed," Shostakovich recalled later. "And the anticipation of that noteworthy event—at least for me—has never left me." He completed his Fourth Symphony, musically his most adventurous score to date, but withdrew it at the last minute. It was 1961 before he dared allow it to be played.

On April 18, 1937, Shostakovich began a new symphony, his Fifth. He completed it in July and presented it to the public in November. An unidentified reviewer called it “a Soviet artist’s reply to just criticism,” a formulation subsequently accepted by Shostakovich and indeed often attributed to him. We in the West read such a phrase with a certain embarrassment, and the story of an artist pushed into withdrawing a boldly forward-looking work and recanting with a more conservative one—for that the Fifth undoubtedly is—fits only too readily our perceptions of life in the Soviet Union. Nor do we comfortably accept the idea that “just criticism” couched in the largely meaningless spume of Pravda prose may actually have set the composer on a more productive path, and that “the road not taken”—the road of *Lady Macbeth* and the Fourth Symphony—was one well abandoned.

What was that road? The most striking features of the big works immediately preceding the Fifth Symphony are dissonance, dissociation and an exuberant orchestral style. Though the chamber music of Shostakovich’s last years is based on more radical compositional means, the controversial opera and the Fourth Symphony still come across as the most “modern” of his works. We can imagine how, without Pravda’s “just criticism,” he might have traveled further along that road.

In any event, the completion of the Fifth Symphony and the jubilant embracing of it by the public constituted the most significant turning point in Shostakovich’s artistic life. The political rehabilitation was the least of it; just ten years later, at the hands of Andrei Zhdanov and the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Shostakovich was subjected to attacks far more vicious and brutish than those of 1936. (A second rehabilitation followed in 1958.) But Shostakovich found a language in which, over the next three decades, he could write music whose strongest pages reveal his voice as one of the most eloquent of his time—in, for example, the Leningrad, Eighth, Tenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth symphonies; the Third, Seventh, Eighth, Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth string quartets; the Violin Sonata; and the *Michelangelo Songs*.

THE MUSIC: Shostakovich begins his Fifth Symphony with a gesture at once forceful and questioning, one whose sharply dotted rhythm stays on to accompany the broadly lyric melody that the first violins introduce almost at

once. Still later, spun across a pulsation as static as Shostakovich can make it, the violins give out a spacious, serene melody, comfortingly symmetrical (at least when it begins), and with that we have all the material of the first movement. Yet it is an enormously varied movement. Across its great span we encounter transformations that totally detach thematic shapes from their original sonorities, speeds and worlds of expression. The climax is harsh; the close, with the gentle friction of minor (the strings) and major (the scales in the celesta), is wistfully inconclusive. So convincing is the design that one can hear the movement many times without stopping to think how original it is (a quality it shares with the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*). Shostakovich has discovered that "conservative" does not mean "conventional."

The *scherzo* is brief, and it functions as an oasis between the intensely serious first and third movements. Its vein of grotesque humor owes something to Prokofiev and very much more to Mahler.

With the *Largo*'s first measures we meet a new warmth of sound. To achieve it, Shostakovich has divided the violins into three sections rather than the usual two, while violas and cellos are also split into two sections each. (One of the novelties of the Fifth Symphony is the economy of its orchestral style. In the Fourth Symphony, Shostakovich stints himself nothing; here, like those brilliant orchestral masters Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, he uses a complement by no means extravagant to unpack rich and forceful sonorities.) As in the first movement, Shostakovich proceeds by remarkable transformations and juxtapositions.

The *Largo* uses no brass at all, but brass is the sound that dominates the finale. This movement picks up the march music—the manner, not the specific material—that formed the climax of the first movement. But the purpose now is to express not threat and tension but triumph. "The theme of my symphony," the composer declared in 1937, "is the making of a man. I saw man with all his experiences as the center of the composition ... In the finale the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements are resolved in optimism and the joy of living." Just before the *coda*, there is a moment of lyric repose, and Shostakovich's biographer D. Rabinovich notes that the accompaniment, first in the violins, then in the harp, for the cello-and-bass recollection of the first

movement is a quotation from a Shostakovich song of 1936. It is a setting of Pushkin's *Rebirth*, and the crucial text reads: "And the waverings pass away/
From my tormented soul/ As a new and brighter day/ Brings visions of pure gold." From that moment of reflection the music rises to its assertive final (and Mahlerian) climax.

It works just as it was intended to work, though many a listener may find that the impact and the memory of the questions behind this music are stronger than those of the answer. Solomon Volkov's *Testimony*, the controversial "Shostakovich memoirs" published in 1979, includes a passage that seems to embody a truth about the closing moments of the Fifth Symphony. Volkov attributes these words to the composer: "Awaiting execution is a theme that has tormented me all my life. Many pages of my music are devoted to it.

Sometimes I wanted to explain that fact to the performers, I thought that they would have a greater understanding of the work's meaning. But then I thought better of it. You can't explain anything to a bad performer and a talented person should sense it himself ... I think it is clear to everyone what happens in the Fifth. The rejoicing is forced, created under threat, as in Boris Godunov. It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, 'Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing,' and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering, 'our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing.' What kind of apotheosis is that? You have to be a complete oaf not to hear that."
—*Program note by Michael Steinberg, San Francisco Symphony*

Personnel

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink and can be clicked or tapped for more information.

Gary Lewis, conductor

Reuben Kebede, violin

Violinist Reuben Kebede has been heard in recital across the United States, Europe and China. As first violinist of the Ivalas Quartet, he is currently a Lisa Arnhold Fellow at The Juilliard School. He received an Artist Diploma in string quartet performance from CU Boulder under the tutelage of Edward Dusing and the members of the Takács Quartet. Previously, he studied with Danielle Belen at the University of Michigan, where he served as concertmaster of both university orchestras, and with Sarah Plum at Drake University. In his free time Kebede loves reading, as well as watching and discussing soccer and films.

CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra

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Dmitri Ascarrunz
Victor Avila-
Luvsangenden
Laena Batchelder
Maggie Brady
Principal
Ben Goldstein
Concertmaster
Jordan Grantonic
Larina Gray
Veda Hingert-
McDonald
Hailey Jang
Sam Jarvis
Alisa Johnson
MarieFaith Lane
Charles Latimer
Zhiqi Liu
Anna Lugbill
Lucy Rissman
Bebe Seidenberg
Inga Well-Off-Man
George Willis
Jonathon Winter
Joy Yamaguchi

Viola

Hannah Bradshaw
Finn Cruit
Avedis Escandon
Aaron Lockhart
Daniel Moore
Emma Reynolds

Ashley Santore
Yuri Santos
Principal
Andy Sprinkle
Allyson Stibbards
Preston Yamasaki

Cello

Chas Barnard
Principal
Alex Engelhardt
Peyton Magalhaes
Vincent Ramirez-
Boyce
Louis Saxton
Sophie Stubbs
Eric Vasquez
Joshua Vierra
Matthew Wiest

Double Bass

Victoria Bakewell
Micah Celedon
Isaiah Holt
Kurt Melandy
Principal
Jake Thurston

Flute

Shelby Anderson
Courtney Badura
Lauren Flaten
Erika Gossett
Andrea Kloehn
Ally Kreider
Grace Law

Oboe

Sophie Maeda
Taysia Petersen
Lisa Read

Clarinet

Mark Bernard
Yi Dong
Randel Leung
Nikhila Narayana
Gleyton Pinto

Bassoon

J.T. Holdbrooks
Sam Macken
Madison Triplett
Sheridan Sturm

Horn

Max Braun
Stacey DeGarmo
Abbie French
Kira Goya
Maria Long
Natalie Miller
Phillip Palmore
Derrick Rassinier

Trumpet

Chris Boulais
Rebecca Ortiz
Isaac Ponce
Michael Winkler

Trombone

Sebastian Alvarez
Riley Bahin
Eric Brennan
Daniel Cosio

Tuba

Evan Allenson

Percussion

Christian De La
Torre
Gavin Kitchen
Connor LePage
Cameron Olsen
Elan Rochell-
Share

Harp

Shelby Roberts
Emily West

Keyboard

Christine Teng

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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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