

The Amherst College Department of Music presents the

AMHERST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK LANE SWANSON, Music Director & Conductor
LIAM BIRKERTS, Assistant Director

WINTER CONCERT 2023: BRAHMS & HINDEMITH

Saturday, March 4, 2023 at 8pm
Buckley Recital Hall, Arms Music Center

PROGRAM

SYMPHONY #3 in F MAJOR, OP. 90 (1883)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante
III. Poco Allegretto
IV. Allegro

*** INTERMISSION ***

SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSIS
on themes by Carl Maria von Weber (1943)

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

I. Allegro
II. Turandot: Scherzo
III. Andantino
IV. March

Three bold chords, rising in an expansive wind choir, set in motion **JOHANNES BRAHMS' SYMPHONY #3 in F MAJOR**. This powerful, attention-demanding proclamation flings open the door to a ferocious "*con brio*" first theme which seems to growl with intensity. Filled with wide, octave-exceeding leaps, it's a theme which is always in motion, restlessly searching for a way forward, and veering continuously between major and minor. Rhythmically, it sets up our expectations, and then pulls us in unexpected directions with vast, irregular phrases which continue to reach higher. Brahms frequently knocks us off balance with hemiolas and other examples of competing rhythmic "grooves." We end up floating in a sea of ambiguity where we no longer know where the downbeat lies. But listen closely, and you may hear echoes of the opening of another Third Symphony which pulls and pushes with an equal sense of rhythmic conflict—Schumann's *Rhenish Symphony*, written some thirty years earlier in 1850. In both opening themes, we get a collision between two competing levels of triple meter. Brahms' theme is actually a direct from near the end of the first movement of Schumann's *Rhenish*. Thus, amazingly, a passing musical cell in Schumann's Symphony rises to heroic prominence in Brahms'.

But let's return to those three mighty opening chords, which Leonard Bernstein called "*a Homeric invocation of the muse*." The top pitches of these chords—F, A-flat, F—form a motivic cell out of which the entire Symphony develops. As the first theme begins, listen to the bass line and you will hear these three notes. This motive is a persistent presence throughout the first movement, sometimes emerging prominently and other times slipping beneath the surface. These three pitches—F, A-flat, F—also form a musical cryptogram which outlines the motto, "*Frei aber froh*," or "*Free but happy*." This was Brahms' twist on the similar personal motto of his friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, "*Frei aber einsam*" ("*Free but Lonely*"), which inspired the collaborative *F-A-E Sonata*, written in tribute to Joachim in 1853. As you listen to the first movement (*Allegro con brio*), notice the awe-inspiring sense of motion and continuous, unfolding development. As the exposition reaches its final bars, it hits the roadblock of those opening chords, returning us to the beginning. When we reach the end of the exposition the second time, listen to the triumphant way the music "breaks through" into the ferocious development section.

The second movement (*Andante*) combines serene, sensuous beauty with an underlying sadness. The gently wandering solo clarinet and bassoon converse with an array of other instrumental voices. At one moment the melody dissolves into single, floating strands before finding itself in a sea of three beats against two. There is an incredible moment near the end of the movement in which a seemingly endless phrase seems to give us the musical equivalent of a passionate embrace. Yet the final bars fall back into quiet, autumnal beauty, and resolve in a deep, shimmering C major chord. Allow your ear to drift up and down this chord to take in all of its distinct and colorful voices.

The third movement (*Poco Allegretto*) is filled with a similar autumnal beauty and sadness. Instead of the scherzo we might expect, Brahms gives us a brief and melancholy intermezzo. Listen carefully to all of the inner voices which swirl around this achingly nostalgic melody, heard first in the cellos and later in the plaintive solo horn, oboe, and other instruments. Notice the way C minor suddenly takes an unexpected turn into sunny C major.

The final movement (*Allegro—Un poco sostenuto*) is a thrilling drama of motion and energy. It begins with a single, suspenseful musical line which gives us a visceral feeling of spinning, forward motion. Listen to the way this theme gradually picks up steam, then explodes with a sudden burst of ferocity. A triumphant second theme turns suddenly into major, giving us a sense that the Third Symphony is hurtling towards the kind of transcendent ending we get in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. There are even allusions to the four-note rhythmic motive of Beethoven's Fifth, especially throughout the heroic struggle of the development section. But then, gradually, we become aware that all of this furious motion and intensity is dissipating. The moment of earth-shattering transfiguration we expected arrives instead, in calm, increasingly serene waves. The first movement's opening theme returns as a dreamy remembrance. Like an old locomotive rolling into the station and letting out all of the steam, the final chords bring the ultimate repose—quiet string pizzicato followed by a passive wind chord. This is the same wind choir which opened the first movement, bringing to mind Clara Schumann's comment that "*All the movements seem to be of one piece, one beat of the heart...*" © 2019 Timothy Judd.

The 1940s found the German-born composer **PAUL HINDEMITH** in the United States in self-imposed exile from Hitler's Germany. Although he had defenders in high positions who thought that his style could represent the future of German music, he fell out with the regime and many of his works had been banned as "degenerate." For a time, Hindemith thought this his stature and his supporters would allow him to thrive under the National Socialists. In retrospect, he regretted his less than straightforward relationship to Hitler's regime. As he confessed to his diary in 1939: "I see myself as a mouse who recklessly danced in front of the trap and even ventured inside; quite by chance, when [the mouse] happened to be outside, the trap closed!" Before beginning a teaching position at Yale in the winter of 1940, Hindemith got his feet wet in the American musical scene as an instructor of composition at the Berkshire Music Center, the summer home of the Boston Symphony. Hindemith's exposure to the Bostonians at a time when they were playing a number of big, optimistic, and technically demanding symphonic works may well have inspired him to accentuate these aspects of his style when writing his own works for American orchestras in the 1940s.

The roots of **SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSIS** go back to a project that the choreographer Léonide Massine hoped would result in a work for his *Les Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo* (the successor company to Sergei Diaghilev's *Les Ballets Russes*). Likely inspired by Franz Liszt's orchestration of Carl Maria von Weber's piano piece *Invitation to the Dance*, which had been made into the ballet *Le Spectre de la Rose* for Diaghilev's company in 1911, Massine suggested that Hindemith write a ballet based on some other piano pieces by Weber. Initially the project appealed to Hindemith, and he worked on it for a time in early 1940. From a modernist perspective, it might at first seem strange that Massine's idea was to use pieces by Weber for piano four-hands—that is, music intended not for public performance, but for the domestic drawing room. It is entirely possible, however, that the straightforward approach to meter and phrase length in these unremarkable pieces provided precisely the right accompaniment for Massine's classical ballet. Hindemith's approach was to take the mediocrity of his source material as a particular challenge that required a creative re-working of Weber's music. The collaboration between composer and choreographer ended when Hindemith recognized that Massine wanted nothing more than straightforward orchestrations and Massine realized that Hindemith's approach was ill-suited to his project.

As the popularity of Hindemith's music in the United States began to increase in the early '40s, Hindemith sought to take advantage of the situation by composing an orchestral showpiece that would appeal to American orchestras and the American public. He developed his sketches for the unrealized ballet into a four-movement suite: **SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSIS ON THEMES OF C.M. VON WEBER**. Artur Rodzinski premiered the work with the New York Philharmonic on 20 January 1944. Olin Downes, critic for the *New York Times*, gave it a rave review—praising especially its joyful ebullience. Thanks to the success of the New York premiere, *Symphonic Metamorphosis* found its way onto concert programs throughout the country. Although played less frequently in recent decades than in the 1940s and '50s, *Symphonic Metamorphosis* is generally regarded as Hindemith's most successful orchestral work. (An arrangement of the fourth movement by Keith Wilson, a colleague of Hindemith's at Yale, has become a standard repertoire item for American symphonic bands.)

Although Hindemith labels only the fourth movement a march, all but the third movement are marches, albeit of contrasting characters. In the march of the first movement, Hindemith tends to treat the brass, woodwinds, and strings as separate units, each providing its own set of gestures to create an overall texture, which, while driven by melody (derived from Weber), is almost always rife with counterpoint. About halfway through the four-minute long movement, the texture thins in a manner associated with a *trio* (a sub-section of a march or dance in which the volume and textural complexity are reduced): the brass rest while *pizzicato* strings accompany an oboe solo. In addition to solos for the principal woodwinds, this section features a comic gesture in the bassoons (with contra-bassoon), which answer the higher woodwinds with a bouncy figure that begins in the instrument's depths. Hindemith rounds off the movement by bringing back the brass for a rousing conclusion.

The main tune of the second movement comes from the appendix of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Dictionary of Music* (1768) under the appellation *Air Chinois* (Chinese melody). Although of dubious authenticity, its use of a pentatonic scale made it stand out from most eighteenth-century European music. Weber used the melody in a "Chinese Overture" for orchestra in 1804 as well as in the incidental music to *Turandot*, an Italian play on a nominally Persian subject by Carlo Gozzi. Rousseau and Weber treat the theme as a march, and Hindemith maintains the approach—borrowing from Weber not only the tune (albeit a bit transformed), but its initial orchestration in the flute. Hindemith also seems to have been inspired by the large role for percussion Weber used to accompany the theme—an exotic "touch" in the early nineteenth century that also fit the modernist sensibilities of the mid-twentieth century.

The third movement, *Andantino*, is the only section of the work to depart from the topic of the march. Here Hindemith's plentiful wind solos and sections of clear melody with accompaniment provide contrast to the often-busy counterpoint of the other movements. The virtuosic obbligato line in the flute in the last third of the movement may be a nod to the flute solo in the scherzo of Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fourth movement returns to the topic of the march, now featuring the woodwinds, brass and percussion in a manner reminiscent of a marching band. At times ominous, the movement ends with a catchy victory march that for audiences of today may recall part of John Williams's score to the soundtrack of *Star Wars*.

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***Please also join us for CONCERTOFEST! (Saturday, April 1, 2023 at 8pm)
& Gustav Holst's THE PLANETS (Saturday May 6, 2023 at 8pm)***

***MANY THANKS ALSO to Sarah Briggs, Jacqueline DeVoe, Janice Murphy, Rebecca Eldredge, Jean Jeffries & David Sporny
for their invaluable & generous coaching in the preparation of this concert,***

VIOLINS

Cassandra Jin, concertmaster (B)
Zhihan Xu, concertmaster (H)
Alexandra Olson, prin. vln.II
Francisca Abdo Arias
Tara Alahakoon
Nii-Ayi Aryeetey
Jimmy Chen
Anya Hardy-Mittell
Meenakshi Jani
Jason Kang
Emily Kim
Hannah Kim
Grace Lee
Bella Lozier
Daniel Martin
Emmett McGrath
Olivia Munson
Nathaniel Reid
Natalie Sandor
Bianca Sass

VIOLAS

Grace Geeganage, principal
Annierose Klingbeil
Ashley Loh
Celia McDermott-Hinman
Harry Panner
Ava Suarez

CELLOS

Taz Kim, principal
Simon Burnham
Katie Chuang
Jack Dunham
Caitlin Knight
Oren Tirschwell

STRING BASSES

Zac Brennan, principal
Liam Birkerts
Adam Koretsky

FLUTES

Reid Dodson, principal (B)
Johnny Poon, principal (H)
Iris Xie
Lorena Bergstrom
Annie Chen
Emily Williams

PICCOLO

Reid Dodson

OBOES

Thomas Meyer, principal
Margaret Bailey
Patrick Grimone

ENGLISH HORN

Patrick Grimone

CLARINETS

Yvan Grinspan, principal (H)
Jinae Hong, principal (B)
Stephen Chen
Danny Jeong

BASS CLARINET

Rachel Hertz

BASSOONS

Davis Rennella, principal
DeLaynie Holton
Guillermo Yalanda

HORNS

John Joire, principal (H)
Claire Taylor, principal (B)
Jason DeGraaff
Rachel Willick

TRUMPETS

Charlie Odulio, co-principal
Gabriel Proia, co-principal

TROMBONES

Connor Barnes, principal
Sebastian Brenneis
Fletcher Clark

TUBA

Konner Hafner

PERCUSSION

Kai Glashausser
Clara Hoey
Min Winton
Sam Young

TIMPANI

Kai Glashausser (H)
Clara Hoey (B)

SET-UP CREW

Nii-Ayi Aryeetey
Connor Barnes
Jinae Hong
Jason Kang
Claire Taylor
Zhihan Xu

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**WORK KEY**

*B - Brahms*  
*H - Hindemith*