~ The Apollo Ensemble Presents~

The Music of Mozart, Faure, and Brahms

The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Elias Miller, Cofounder & Conductor

Michael Tabak, Cofounder

Saturday, 7 March 2020 at 8:00PM

First Church Cambridge – Cambridge, MA

The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Elias Miller, Conductor

Violin I
- Nathan Bieber (Concertmaster)
- Thomas Collum
- Cindy Lin
- Richard Luo
- Jennifer Wang
- Elizabeth Cai
- Anita Lee
- Grace Chu
- Regina Cheung

Violin II
- Dorisiya Yosifova (Principal)
- Deborah Palmer
- Christopher Goessling
- Ruta Nikitska
- Toshi Motoyama
- Yoko Nakatani
- Amanda Grohowski
- Miseon Oh
- Philip Collier
- Meghan Titzer

Viola
- Arjun Mudan (Principal)
- Stephen Jue
- Joyce Huang
- Yen-Chi Chen
- Nickolette Cartales
- Ashley Caval
- Noah Li
- Mary Hecht
- Jeff Bigler

Cello
- Soren Nyhus (Principal)
- Hahn Lheem
- Mia Tsai
- Matthew Henegan
- Iverson Eliopoulos
- Amy Nolan
- Bryan Cassella
- Sam Marder

Bass
- Yizhen Wang (Principal)
- Nathan Haggett
- Liz Horwitz
- Amy Belhumeur
- Alejandro Cimadoro
- Gregory Martin

Harp
- Li Shan Tan

The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

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Flute
Michael Tabak$^{\omega\psi\delta}$
Jasmine Falk

Piccolo
Jasmine Falk

Oboe
Joel Bard$^{\omega}$
Lilli Samman$^{\psi\delta}$

Clarinet
Yhasmin Valenzuela$^{\omega}$
Yi-Ting Hsieh$^{\psi\delta}$

Bassoon
Shu Satoh$^{\omega}$
Mike Meehan$^{\delta}$
George Muller$^{\psi}$

Contrabassoon
Mike Meehan

Horn
William Prince$^{\omega}$
Keith Durand$^{\psi}$
HsinYu Lin$^{\delta}$
David Meichle

Trumpet
Andrew Heath$^{\omega}$
Alex Pinto$^{\psi\delta}$
Patrick Sanguineti

Trombone
Byul Yoo$^{\omega\delta}$
Roger Hecht
Sam Gossner

Timpani
Christopher Hazel

Triangle
Meghan Titzer

ω – First in Brahms: Symphony No. 4

ψ – First in Fauré: Pelléas et Mélisande Suite

δ – First in Mozart: Magic Flute Overture

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~ Program ~

Overture to the Magic Flute — W.A. Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Pelléas et Mélisande Suite — Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924)

I. – Prélude
II. – Fileuse
III. – Sicilienne
IV. – Mort de Mélisande

~Intermission~

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98 — Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

I. Allegro non troppo
II. Andante moderato
III. Allegro giocoso
IV. Allegro energico e passionato

~ Notes ~

Mozart:

The last few years of Mozart's life must not have been his happiest. The majority of his final works failed to generate much excitement in Vienna, he remained unsuccessful in his attempts to land a major court appointment, and the combination of his gambling habit and desire to continue living a life of luxury drove him to borrow increasingly massive sums of money from friends to pay off his crippling debts.

In the spring of 1791, Emanuel Schikaneder, a singer and impresario and one of Mozart's masonic brothers, approached Mozart with a project. He asked the composer to write a new *singspiel* – a kind of opera punctuated by spoken text and explicitly written for the general public (not just aristocrats) – with a German libretto he himself had written. Mozart premiered *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute)* at the Theater auf der Wien on September 30, 1791. As Mozart lay on his deathbed a mere three months later, the new opera had already proved itself his most successful work.

Filled with masonic references, *The Magic Flute* explores the fantastical tale of the prince Tamino and his reluctant sidekick, the birdwatcher Papageno, who must use magical instruments (a flute and a set of bells respectively) to rescue the princess Pamina, stave off the wicked Queen of the Night and undergo a series of trials to join Sarastro's priestly order. As helpful spirits and wicked demons alike prance and scurry across the stage, Mozart's music tells a story replete with power struggles, deceit, romance, comedy, and farce in perhaps the greatest of all of his theatrical works.

The opera's overture opens with three somber chords set in the key of E-flat major, a key with three flats, evoking Sarastro, the high priest of the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris. (The number three has deep symbolic

significance for freemasons.) These same chords reappear in the middle of the overture and then again in the opera's second act. After a slow introduction, the music continues in a standard sonata form, but with each following section of the sonata (the exposition, development, and recapitulation) comprised of an exhilarating fugue.

- Elias Miller

Fauré:

In June of 1898, Mrs. Patrick Campbell called on Claude Debussy to compose incidental music for a production of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist play *Pelléas et Mélisande* in London. Debussy declined the offer. As it turned out, he was hard at work on his own *Pelléas et Mélisande*: a full-scale opera. Debussy was hardly the only composer interested in Maeterlinck's play – during the next ten years, Arnold Schoenberg and Jean Sibelius would also both complete *Pelléas et Mélisande*-inspired works. In this case, however, Mrs. Campbell turned to Gabriel Fauré for help, meeting him in late March, only three months before the show was set to open.

Fauré accepted the commission and got to work immediately. Under pressure to finish quickly, Fauré indulged in his habit of recycling material he had previously composed, including a full sicilienne he had written years earlier. He also enlisted one of his students to assist him with orchestration. Concluding his work just in time, Fauré conducted the music's premiere in London on opening night, June 21, 1898.

It was not until after play's run that Fauré reorganized his incidental music into a suite. Excerpting four of the work's most successful movements, he re-orchestrated them for a larger woodwind section and built out several of their more dramatic moments. Each of the four movements is a vignette that captures the essence of the drama

as it unfolds on stage. The prelude introduces us to the shy Mélisande as Golaud discovers her in the forest. The second movement, *La fileuse* features whirring sixteenth notes in the strings that depict Mélisande working at her spinning wheel. The *Sicilienne* third movement features a duet for the harp and the flute and perhaps depicts the lovers Pelléas (Golaud's brother) and Mélisande together. The suite's funereal final movement expresses their doomed love and depicts Mélisande's death.

- Nathan Bieber

Brahms:

Brahms's legendary Fourth Symphony has attained an imposing and immovable place in the standard repertoire. Although it is nearly universally hailed today for its absolute mastery of thematic development, harmony, and form, Brahms and his inner circle initially worried that the work would not be successful. When Brahms and a friend performed the symphony on piano, the critic Eduard Hanslick, a great supporter of the composer, allegedly responded to the first movement by saying "I feel as if I've been beaten up by two terribly intelligent people." Another friend, writer Max Kalbeck, reportedly told Brahms that he ought to scrap the symphony's third movement, make the finale a stand-alone work, and compose two entirely new movements in their places. Despite his self-doubt, Brahms premiered the symphony in Meiningen in 1885, where it was well received.

In the history of the symphony, no single composer looms larger than Beethoven. Intimidated by Beethoven's monumental accomplishments, Brahms famously spent more than two decades working on his own first symphony before finally completing it in 1876. During the next nine years, Brahms would complete three more symphonies, each a unique attempt to reach the same artistic depth Beethoven had achieved in his inimitable nine symphonies. While Beethoven's influence may be observed throughout Brahms' fourth and final symphony (particularly in

regard to Brahms' use of counterpoint and motivic development), rather than compose a grand ending, as Beethoven had in his two minor-key symphonies (the fifth and ninth), Brahms chose to end his fourth tragically in the minor mode. As the *Guardian*'s Tom Service has written: "This is a symphony that ought to leave you intellectually battered and emotionally bruised rather than superficially consoled."

Starting on an upbeat, rather than on the usual downbeat, the symphony opens with sighing melancholy figure in the key of E minor. A melody outlining descending thirds serves as the first movement's primary motivic material (and Brahms cleverly employs this same descending gesture in the melodies and harmonies of the subsequent movements as well). This melody reaches its climax when a lone oboe cries out on a dissonant C-natural, foreshadowing much of the harmonic substance of the piece. Brahms inventively transforms this simple tune into a restless series of variations, increasing in agitation and energy throughout the movement. The movement culminates in an overwhelming orchestral bellow. With a forceful timpani stroke, Brahms re-emphasizes the tragic nature of this symphony. It was this movement that led the famous post-tonal composer Arnold Schoenberg to write that the allegedly conservative Brahms was actually a "progressive" in a famous 1947 essay.

An austere horn melody another minor third opens the *Andante con moto*. Brahms sets this tune in the unusual Phrygian mode before transforming it into E major, brightening the overall color and providing the listener respite from the overwhelming sense of tragedy. Here a warm, singing cello melody ensues, constituting some of the most beautiful music Brahms ever composed. Brahms concludes the movement by repeating the horn melody, this time with full orchestral accompaniment. Surprisingly, the bass moves from the harmonically stable E-natural down a third to a low C-natural, reestablishing the importance of this note in the work.

Beginning in C major, the *Allegro giocoso* is a light-hearted scherzo, arriving as something of a shock after the seriousness of the preceding

two movements. Brahms colors this cheery movement with piccolo and triangle, the only time he ever used these instruments in a symphony. Though the movement is stylistically reminiscent of the classical era, this scherzo is in duple meter, as opposed to the typical triple meter of Beethoven's and Haydn's scherzi. At its premiere, the audience demanded an instant encore of the scherzo, but Brahms respectfully declined, knowing that the colossal finale was enough to conclude the evening.

The finale of Brahms's symphonic output is one of the most monumental compositions in the symphonic repertoire. Taking inspiration from the baroque, he composed a passacaglia, a form that consists of variations over a repeated harmonic progression. Many consider this set of more than thirty variations to represent the greatest achievement by any Romantic composer in the symphonic genre.

As the movement begins with a massive, homophonous statement of the passacaglia's harmonic progression, Brahms adds three trombones to the brass section. Unlike the triumphant trombones in the finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, however, Brahms employs their solemn timbre to reinforce the sense of tragedy. Variations begin, increasing in rhythmic intensity before relaxing into a wandering flute solo. The tranquil middle section shifts to the major mode, before the brass rudely interrupt and lead us into the dramatic final section. Waves of contrasting dynamics usher in the last variations, in which Brahms finally extends the harmony beyond the passacaglia's eight-bar harmonic progression. The tempo quickens as Brahms introduces a frenzy of complex rhythms with increasing intensity. The symphony concludes in forceful tragedy, with a *forte* E minor chord delivering the final blow.

- Tal Benatar

~ Biographical Notes ~

Conductor:

Music director of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston since 2018, **Elias Miller** has established a reputation as one of Boston's leading young conductors and orchestra builders. The past year has seen Miller work with a diverse range of ensembles including the University of Michigan's University Philharmonia, University Symphony, Campus Symphony, and Campus Philharmonia orchestras, the Ann Arbor Camerata, the Weston Wind Quintet & Friends, and the Harvard Early Music Society (HEMS).

An active conductor of opera and oratorio, Miller conducted several important premieres of works with HEMS between 2016 and 2019. These productions included the Boston premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Alcide al Bivio* in collaboration with the Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, the North American premiere of Telemann's 1745 *Johannespassion*, a production that featured famed countertenor Charles Humphries and earned Miller an enthusiastic preview in the Boston Globe, and the North American premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Sanctus Petrus et Sancta Maria Magdalena*. In other independent productions, Miller has also conducted performances of operas by Gluck, Stravinsky, and William Grant Still. Other ensembles he has conducted in the past include the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra Chamber Players, the Chromos Collaborative Orchestra, the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players, and Harvard College Opera. Miller has also served as the assistant conductor of the Boston Chamber Symphony. Miller will serve as the assistant conductor for productions of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Lembit Beecher's *Sky on Swings* at Opera Saratoga this summer before he returns to Boston to lead three concert cycles with the Apollo Ensemble.

A distinguished pianist and cellist, Miller graduated from Harvard University summa cum laude in 2016 after transferring there from the New England Conservatory/Tufts University Dual Degree Program. He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in orchestral conducting at the

University of Michigan where he studies with Kenneth Kiesler. Miller's past conducting teachers include his father, David Alan Miller, conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra, and Federico Cortese, conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. Miller is excited to begin a postgraduate diploma with Mark Stringer in Vienna next year at the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien.

Cofounder:

Michael Tabak studied flute, theory, and ensemble at the Juilliard School of Music Preparatory Division where he was rated "Exceptional" by the woodwind faculty jury and was principal flute and soloist multiple times with the orchestra. He has been principal flute of orchestras including the National High School Symphony at Interlochen, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Fine Arts Symphony, the Boston Chamber Symphony, the Apollo Ensemble of Boston, and others. An avid chamber musician, he is a founding member of the Weston Wind Quintet, the Atrium Winds, and the Aujourd'hui Ensemble. He has displayed a talent for assembling orchestras and chamber music groups from scratch. While in high school, he organized and was flutist of the Long Island Wind Quintet, whose oboist became principal oboe of the Munich Philharmonic and whose clarinetist became principal clarinet of the Atlanta Symphony. He recruited the members of the Boston Chamber Symphony from its inception in 2012 through 2016, and has recruited the members of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston since its inception in 2018. He often expands his chamber music groups to play pieces for larger ensembles. Live recordings of many of those concerts are available, free of charge at https://soundcloud.com/wwq/sets.

A Note of Thanks~

Kirsten Manville and First Church Cambridge for the use of their sanctuary as a rehearsal space and concert venue.

Rev. Herb Taylor, Ryan Harrison, and the Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church for the use of their vestry as a rehearsal space.

Dustin Bell and St. John's Episcopal Church for the use of their sanctuary as a rehearsal space.

Ian Garvie, Janice Zazinsky, and the First Church in Belmont, Unitarian Universalist for their continued support.

Vickey Ngo and Dorisiya Yosifova for their administrative help.

APOLLO ENSEMBLE

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