

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Jun Märkl, conductor
Anthony Ross, cello

Friday, January 12, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, January 13, 2024, 7PM | Orchestra Hall

Antonín Dvořák Concerto in B minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 104 CA. 40'
Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro moderato
Anthony Ross, cello

I N T E R M I S S I O N CA. 20'

Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 3 in F major, Opus 90 CA. 33'
Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco allegretto
Allegro

PRE-CONCERT

Performance by YPSCA Concerto Competition Finalists

Friday, January 12, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, January 13, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

Book signing by retired Minnesota Orchestra cellist Marcia Peck

January 12 and 13, Roberta Mann Grand Foyer

THANK YOU

The 2023–24 Classical Season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.



JUN MÄRKL, CONDUCTOR

Jun Märkl is a highly respected interpreter of core Germanic repertoire and has become known for his explorations of French Impressionists. He serves as music director of the Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra, artistic advisor of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and principal guest conductor of the Residentie Orkest The Hague and the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. His longstanding relationships with the state operas of Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Semperoper Dresden and the Metropolitan Opera have been complemented by his music directorships of the Orchestre National de Lyon, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra and Basque National Orchestra. Märkl has an extensive discography of more than 50 albums including the complete Robert Schumann symphonies with the NHK Symphony Orchestra. He is currently in the midst of a cycle of works by Camille Saint-Saëns, Richard Strauss and Toshio Hosokawa. Born in Munich, Märkl won the conducting competition of the Deutscher Musikrat in 1986 and studied at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Soon after he appeared in opera houses throughout Europe, and subsequently held his first music directorships at the Staatstheater Saarbrücken and the Nationaltheater Mannheim. More: musicvinearts.com, junmarkl.com.



ANTHONY ROSS, CELLO

Anthony Ross, the leader of the Minnesota Orchestra's cello section since 1991, has been a soloist many times with the Orchestra, performing all the standard cello concertos as well as modern works such as Michael Daugherty's *Tales of Hemingway*, James MacMillan's Cello Concerto, Paul Moravec's *Montserrat* and David Ott's Concerto for Two Cellos, which he and his wife, Minnesota Orchestra cellist Beth Rapier, have long championed. In April 2024 Ross and Rapier will be featured with cello section colleagues in Moses Hogan's *Spirituals for Five Cellos* at an Orchestra chamber music concert. Ross has also played as a concerto soloist with the Moscow State Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, South Dakota Symphony and many other Midwest regional orchestras. An avid chamber musician, he is a member of Accordo and the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota and has appeared on many festival stages. Winner of the prestigious bronze medal at the 1982 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Ross went on to gain the Stulberg Award, the G.B. Dealy Award and a prize in the Parisot International Cello Competition. He has twice been awarded a McKnight Artist Fellowship, first as a soloist and then as part of the Ross Rapier Cello Duo. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

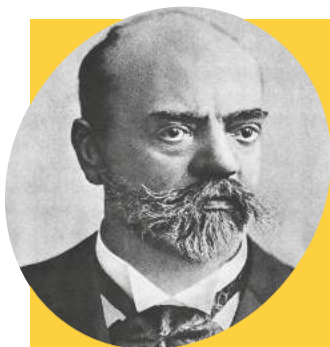
ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Dvořák: Cello Concerto

The Dvořák Cello Concerto, achingly romantic, is often considered the greatest Western classical concerto ever written for the instrument. A quiet section near the close recalls the composer's lost love, who died as the work was composed.

Brahms: Symphony No. 3

A powerful brass motto opens this symphony; hymn-like, passionate, pastoral and bittersweet melodies follow. Resolving tension, the final Allegro treats us to a serene, sunny flow—the mood so often associated with Brahms.



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

B: September 8, 1841
Nelahozeves, Bohemia
(now Czech Republic)

D: May 1, 1904
Prague, Bohemia

Concerto in B minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 104

PREMIERED: March 19, 1896

Antonín Dvořák’s Cello Concerto is considered by many to be the greatest ever written for that instrument, and so it comes as a surprise to learn that the composer had been reluctant to write a concerto for this instrument. He had reservations about what he considered the cello’s “limitations”: a somewhat indistinct sound in its lowest register and a thin sound in its highest, as well as the problem of making a low-pitched instrument cut through the weight of a full orchestra. But—encouraged by hearing Victor Herbert play his own Second Cello Concerto in New York in 1894—Dvořák wrote this masterpiece very quickly between November 8, 1894, and February 9, 1895.

BOTH GRAND AND LEAN

Dvořák’s solutions to the problems posed by a cello concerto are ingenious. Rather than scaling back the orchestra to balance it more equitably with the soloist, he instead writes for a huge orchestra, adding three trombones and tuba to the texture, as well as instruments less common for the period: piccolo and triangle. He then scores the concerto with great imagination, alternating grand gestures that use all his forces with leanly-scored passages in which only a handful of instruments accompany the soloist. When Brahms examined the score to Dvořák’s Cello Concerto, he exclaimed: “Why on earth didn’t I know one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known I would have written one long ago!”

ALLEGRO. The lengthy opening *Allegro* is in sonata form, and Dvořák follows custom by introducing both main themes before the soloist enters. The quiet opening tune, a dark, march-like figure for clarinets, soon builds up to a *Grandioso* restatement, preparing the way for the glorious second subject, a soaring melody perfectly suited to the solo horn that announces it. The solo cello makes an impressive entrance on the opening march theme, and Dvořák exploits fully the lyric and dramatic possibilities of the instrument in this movement.

ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO. The second movement is in ABA form, with woodwinds introducing the gentle opening section before the soloist takes it up. The central episode quotes from Dvořák’s own song “Leave me alone with my

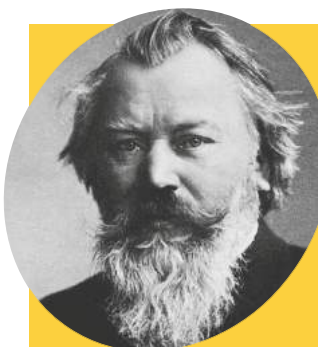
dreams.” It had been a favorite of one of Dvořák’s pupils, Josefina Čermáková Kaunitzova, with whom he had fallen in love while he was a young man. She had not responded to that love, and Dvořák later married her sister. Now, as he was writing this concerto in New York City, he learned that Josefina was seriously ill in Prague, and remembering her fondness for this song, he included its wistful melody in this movement.

FINALE: ALLEGRO MODERATO. Over a steady pulse from lower strings, horns announce the main subject of the rondo-finale, which the soloist quickly picks up. This rondo is both lively and lyrical, and its episodes are varied. Near the close comes a remarkable passage. Shortly after Dvořák returned to Prague in 1895, Josefina died. Stunned, the composer returned from her funeral and rewrote the ending of the concerto, adding a quiet 60-measure section that recalls the main theme of the first movement and the song-theme from the second movement that Josefina had loved so much.

It is a moving ending. Dvořák recalls his sister-in-law one final time as the cello sings this sad melody, its final measures trailing off over quiet timpani accompaniment, and then—with this behind him—he rushes the work toward its smashing close.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



JOHANNES BRAHMS

B: May 7, 1833
Hamburg, Germany

D: April 3, 1897
Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 3 in F major, Opus 90

PREMIERED: December 2, 1883

The shortest of Brahms’ symphonies may also be his most complex. The dense interweaving of major and minor tonalities and its florid and jarring themes broke new ground in Western classical music. The context of the music’s creation was unique as well. The year was 1883, and Brahms had just turned 50. He was enamored of a younger singer, the contralto Hermine Spies, and suddenly he’d begun writing lieder for the alto range.

The bachelor composer was beginning to grow melancholy about his prospects for finding love, and the texts of the

songs, as Jan Swafford points out in his fine 1997 biography, dwell on being “over the hill.” Thus, instead of his usual posh vacation-spas like that at Bad Ischl, he spent the summer in a country house overlooking the Rhine in Wiesbaden, where Hermine lived. It’s not clear what, if anything, went on between them, but it’s reasonable to presume that he poured much of his emotion into his main project for the summer, the Third Symphony.

The First Symphony, 15 years in the works, had taught Brahms much about forging an individual style, and about weaning himself from Beethoven. The Second came out in a flow that at least one writer has suggested was a little *too* fast.

The Third, written after a six-year hiatus and composed and scored in a few weeks, was intriguing to its first listeners partly because of the way it seemed to meld the First’s struggle with the mellifluous melodic style of the Second. (Granted, the hiatus had seen the completion of the Violin Concerto, the Second Piano Concerto and the *Academic Festival* and *Tragic* overtures.)

Already at its premiere in Vienna in 1883, with Hans Richter on the podium, the Third was proclaimed by many to be the composer’s greatest work up to that time. Ironically, this was just the sort of mutual acclaim by press and public that seemed to make Brahms uneasy. For how does one top one’s “greatest work so far”?

FAUST AND BEYOND

There is some evidence, too, that Brahms did not start from scratch when working on the Third. For the middle two movements of the Symphony, he might have drawn upon music he had sketched in 1881 as incidental music for Goethe’s *Faust*. In any case, the composer integrated these movements into a symphonic conception of almost unprecedented unity. Some have gone so far as to characterize the Third in terms of a cyclic plan like that of Franz Liszt’s piano concertos, in which an entire multi-movement work is conceived as a single continuous structure.

Indeed, the tonal plan of the Third Symphony is unusual in many respects—such as the use of C major and C minor, respectively, for the two inner movements; and the return of early thematic material at the end of the work is only one of many means by which the four movements are unified. “What a harmonious mood pervades the whole!” said Clara Schumann of the Third, immediately perceiving this sense of wholeness. “All the movements seem to be of one piece, one beat of the heart, each one a jewel.”

MAJOR AND MINOR, LOCKED IN COMBAT

ALLEGRO CON BRIO. Much has been written of the stupendous rising motto in the brass that opens the symphony’s first movement, which forms an essential building-block for the entire piece. The signature of F—A-flat—F is heard not only in the massive wind chords that begin the piece, but also in the bass line that accompanies the subsequent string theme.

The A-natural of the main theme’s outline of F—A—F casts itself in immediate relief with the A-flat of the bass, creating a major-minor tension whose spring-like coil unwinds itself throughout the symphony. Several writers have pointed out the resemblance of the first descending string theme to a subject in Schumann’s *Rhenish* Symphony, a connection that makes sense in light of Brahms’ summer home on the Rhine. If the development section seems too concise for the material presented in the exposition, Brahms makes up for this by extending the movement through a substantial coda that elaborates the essential descending motif.

ANDANTE. The second movement is uncomplicated but darkly shaded, encompassing a hymn-like first theme and a pointedly contrasted second subject, heard in the clarinets and bassoons, that—in a bit of structural slight-of-hand—is skipped in the recapitulation but instead becomes part of the final movement’s resolution.

POCO ALLEGRETTO. The third movement, neither scherzo nor minuet, reminds us somewhat of the composer’s intermezzos for piano, and features one of his most passionate melodies.

ALLEGRO. The finale, beginning squarely in F minor, serves as a genuine culmination, and its tranquil coda in F major heightens the sense of relief, indeed of the “triumph” of major over minor, and of resolution over tension.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY PAUL HORSLEY.