



STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR
KIRILL KARABITS, GENERAL MUSIC DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR
VALERIY SOKOLOV, VIOLIN

Saturday, March 10, 2018, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR

Kirill Karabits, general music director and principal conductor

Valeriy Sokolov, violin

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace—Poco più presto

Valeriy Sokolov, violin

20-minute intermission

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68

Un poco sostenuto—Allegro—Meno allegro

Andante sostenuto

Un poco allegretto e grazioso

Adagio—Più andante—Allegro non troppo, ma con brio—Più allegro

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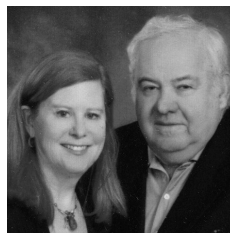
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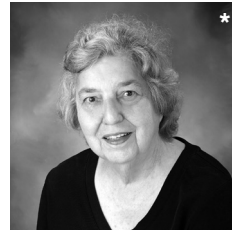


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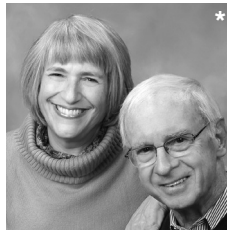
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PROGRAM NOTES

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

The *Academic Festival Overture* was composed as a tribute to university life, and specifically to the University of Breslau. In 1879, the University conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy on Brahms, citing the composer as *princeps musicae severioris*. Not being impressed by such academic formality, Brahms responded with this Overture fraught with good humor. The work, regarded by Brahms' contemporaries as a "very jolly potpourri of students' song à la Suppé," a view which the composer did nothing to rebut, contains several themes from the "studentenkneipen" (students' drinking parties) with which Brahms once familiarized himself during a visit to Göttingen. The Overture received its first performance on January 4, 1881, with Brahms conducting, before an assemblage of the students and faculty of the University, as well as citizens of Breslau.

The music opens with a solemn original theme in C minor, which serves as an introduction to the stately folksong, "Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus" (We Had Built a Stately House), that is followed by a lively student ditty entitled, "Der Landesvater" (The Father of His Country). The bassoons and oboes next present, "Was kommt dort von der Höhe" (What Comes There From on High), and the finale unfolds with the entire orchestra proclaiming the ever famous refrain associated with college life, "Gaudeamus Igitur."

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Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77

In 1853, Brahms embarked on a concert tour with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Hoffmann (a.k.a. Reményi). It was during their stop at Göttingen, near Hanover, that Brahms came to meet Joseph Joachim, the virtuoso violinist—also a composer—with whom he established an immediate rapport, flourishing into their long friendship. Joachim proved to be enormously influential in Brahms' career, as well as in the younger man's development as a composer. The two shared an identity of artistic outlook, and a great admiration for each other's works; together they stood firmly against the "New German School" as exemplified by Liszt and later Wagner. It was at Joachim's suggestion that Brahms met Robert Schumann and his wife Clara, both of whom were to become so important in his life as well as in his further development as a composer.

Equally important, as a conductor Joachim introduced several of Brahms' orchestral works, thus garnering recognition for the younger composer and establishing his reputation, especially in England where the virtuoso/conductor was regarded with high esteem. Early on, Brahms benefited immensely from Joachim's advice regarding orchestration, and from hearing Joachim's Hanover Quartet perform some of his chamber works. It was not surprising then, that when Brahms wrote his masterful Violin Concerto in 1878, he would ask his friend for technical advice regarding the solo part: "I will be satisfied if you will let me have a few words, and perhaps even write some in the score: difficult, uncomfortable, impossible, etc." Joachim—for whom the work was composed and to whom it is dedicated—assured Brahms that "most of the material is playable, but I wouldn't care to

say whether it can be comfortably played in an overheated concert hall until I have played it through to myself without stopping.” Indeed, the violinist provided some invaluable guidance in the form of fingerings and bowings, but ultimately, Brahms adhered to his original ideas. Joachim did also write the cadenza for the first movement, although, many other violinists have provided their own cadenzas since then.

Joachim introduced Brahms’ Violin Concerto on New Year’s Day, 1879, at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, with the composer at the podium. The premiere of the work was not entirely well received, and the infamous critic Hans von Bülow called it “clumsy and devoid of flexibility,” further describing the work as being “written not *for* but *against* the violin.” However, through the dedicated advocacy of Joachim, the concerto soon gained its deserved recognition and a very secure place in the repertoire. A later advocate of the work, Bronislaw Huberman, would answer Bülow’s criticism with the words: “Brahms’ concerto is neither *against* the violin nor *for* violin *with* orchestra but . . . *for* violin *against* orchestra—and the violin wins.”

The main theme of the first movement (*Allegro non troppo*) is announced by violas, cellos, bassoons, and horns. This subject, and three contrasting song-like themes, together with an energetic dotted figure, *marcato*, furnish the thematic material of the movement. The solo violin is introduced, after almost 100 measures for the orchestra alone, in an extended section, chiefly of passagework, as a preamble to the exposition of the chief theme. With great skill, Brahms unleashes his two essentially unequal forces: the tender, lyric violin and the robust

orchestra. In the expansive and emotional development, the caressing and delicate weaving of the solo instrument about the melodic outlines of the song themes in the orchestra is most unforgettable. A particular high point is provided when the long solo cadenza merges with the serene return of the main theme in the coda that concludes the movement.

This feature is even more pronounced in the second movement (*Adagio*), where a dreamy oboe introduces the main theme against the background provided by the rest of the woodwinds. The solo violin, makes its compliments to the main theme, and announces an ornamental second theme. Adding the warmth of its tone, the soloist proceeds to embroider its arabesques and filigrees upon the thematic material with captivating and tender beauty.

The finale (*Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace*) is a virtuoso’s *tour de force*, built upon a compact rondo structure, containing three distinct themes. The jovial main theme, in thirds, is stated at once by the solo violin. The thematic material and its eventual elaboration provide many hazards for the soloist: precarious passagework, double-stopping, and arpeggiated figurations. But the music, inhabiting the carefree world of Hungarian gypsies, is quite spirited and fascinating—music of incisive rhythmic charm and great zest, which in turn pays tribute to the composer’s friend and colleague, Joachim. After the proceedings accelerate to a quick march tempo based on the main theme, the brilliant coda finally slows down to bring the concerto to its elegant conclusion.

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Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68

There must suddenly appear one who should utter the highest ideal expression of his time . . . and he has come, this chosen youth over whose cradle the Graces and Heroes seem to have kept watch. His name is Johannes Brahms.

Robert Schumann—1853

Brahms has often been called the last of the great classical composers. A fervent admirer of Beethoven, he was moved by a desire to be linked to the tradition of the symphony as set by the master. However, Brahms cannot so easily be regarded as a mere neo-classicist (as he was called in life and even after his death); it is only the most superficial listener who could deny that his music possesses qualities of the most intense romanticism. The richness and abundance of his musical genius poured forth in his symphonies, as it did in his chamber works, choral pieces, and his long list of songs and works for the piano.

Like Beethoven before him, he provided a strong voice, dramatic content, and perfection of structure to the symphony; this, however, he complemented with the introduction of the German lied to the essence of symphonic form. Beethoven had not made use of this lyric, uncomplicated and somewhat rustic vein in his symphonies as it was later to be found in Brahms', but the practice was perpetuated into the turn of this century by Mahler, and to some small degree by Bruckner.

Having garnered a substantial reputation with his small-scale works (particularly his chamber music), and with Schumann's pronouncement naming the then 20-year-old composer as Beethoven's successor in the realm of the symphony, Brahms felt tremendous pressure and weight of responsibility in presenting his first symphonic essay to the world. "Writing a symphony is no laughing matter," he once remarked, "you have no idea how it feels to hear behind you the tramp

of a giant like Beethoven." Although he had a number of successful, large-scale orchestral works to his credit, including the two Serenades (Op. 11 and 16), the First Piano Concerto (which was almost a symphony), and the *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, the compositional process for the First Symphony took Brahms 15 years between initial conception and the production of the completed score, when he was already 43 years old. This achievement came comparatively late in his life for a composer of his stature; already at that age, Beethoven had written eight of his nine symphonies, and Mozart, who died at age 35, had written a total of 40.

The difficult road to Brahms' First Symphony was one of toil, plagued by self-doubts, and marked by trial and error. Brahms began his *Symphony No. 1 in C minor* in 1862 when he produced a sketch of the first movement. Of this initial sketch only the exposition made it to the completed work. In the years that intervened between this first sketch and the completion of the work, each of the symphony's four movements went through multiple revisions. Volumes of numerous drafts and sketches were continually discarded and destroyed as the composer's self-criticism induced him to spare no effort that seemed to promise even the slightest improvement. Simultaneously, Brahms attempted several other symphonic works, but none of them pleased him enough, and thus were abandoned before their completion. Finally in 1876, Brahms met his standards and set to paper the last notes of the score of his First Symphony.

Still beset by his lack of confidence in his work, rather than choosing one of the European musical capitals to present his work to the world, Brahms opted for the small city of Karlsruhe, where the premiere took place on November 4, 1876, conducted by Otto Dessoff. The First Symphony turned out to be a magisterial work, and having overcome his fears regarding his abilities to

compose in the grandest form of instrumental music, Brahms felt confident enough to write three more masterly symphonies.

Brahms' *Symphony No. 1* begins with a somber and tense yet imposing introduction, marked *Un poco sostenuto*. After the initial tonic octave Cs in all instruments of the orchestra, rises the primary motif of the entire first movement: a majestic, chromatically ascending sweep of strings against an organ-like descending counter figure for the woodwinds, as the basses, contrabassoon, and timpani reiterate a persistent C. The following *Allegro* marks the actual exposition of this vast sonata form. The main theme consists of two elements: the chromatic motif from the introduction and a wide melodic phrase presented by the violins. A number of other lines and phrases provide the rest of the thematic material. The development section introduces dramatic and tempestuous passages that alternate with brief moments of peacefulness, marked by contrapuntal complexities. The recapitulation displays some variety in its instrumentation and with a change to C major, the movement ends in a more hopeful mood.

The second movement, *Andante sostenuto*, is steeped in profound lyricism. It begins with a tender melody for the first violins, continued by a solo oboe. Also introduced by the first violins, the second theme is marked by wide skips and florid figurations. The central section is introduced by the solo oboe, whose theme is taken by a solo clarinet. When the themes of the first part return their beauty is enhanced by the participation of a solo violin, doubled at times by a solo horn. The solo violin soars above the peaceful chords of the orchestra at its close.

Instead of the traditional Scherzo, the third movement is an *Allegretto* of simple sweetness and grace, intended to continue the contrasting lyricism from the previous movement. The clarinet introduces the main theme, with a

subsidiary descending motif in parallel chords and dotted rhythm heard in the flutes, clarinets, and bassoons. A brief contrasting middle section takes the place of the trio; here the woodwinds and horns are prominent. A substantially modified and ornamented version of the first section then returns, with a short coda based on the rhythmic figure of the middle section.

The monumental finale begins with a slow (*Adagio*) introduction that recalls the intensity and the somber mood of the initial pages of the first movement—a mood that had been dispelled by the inner movements. It all begins with a descending figure in the bass against which a short phrase in the violins anticipates the main theme of the *Allegro* that ensues. After some agitated passage work and the roll of the timpani, the mood brightens slightly with an “alphorn call” motif in the horn; the flute soon takes this motif. After the brief interruption from a quiet and solemn chorale for bassoons and trombones, two horns resume the “alphorn call,” bringing us to the main body of the movement. Marked *Allegro non troppo, ma con brio*, the strings intone the majestic and hymn-like main theme, which is in turn taken over by flutes and oboes. In an *animato* section, this theme is then elaborated upon, along with a number of subsidiary motifs and melodic phrases. Following a short *dolce* melody for the oboe and a short, but agitated transitional passage, the secondary theme (a pattern of dotted quarters and eighth notes played as a sequence) is heard in the violins. After the oboe takes it up, this theme receives some elaboration before the triumphant return of the main theme in the violins. After another extended development section, the horn and oboe intone the “alphorn call” again, followed by a short recapitulation of the themes. Featuring the chorale, which is now heard *fortissimo* in all the brass and string instruments, a splendid coda brings Brahms' First Symphony to its triumphant conclusion.

PROFILES

KIRILL KARABITS is chief conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He is also the general music director and principal conductor of the Deutsches Nationaltheater and Staatskapelle Weimar.

His relationship with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has been celebrated worldwide and together they have made many critically acclaimed recordings, most notably a Prokofiev symphony cycle. They opened their 2015-16 season with hugely successful concert performances of *Salome* and together they have made numerous appearances at the BBC Proms and returned in summer 2017 for a performance of William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*.

In September 2016, Karabits assumed the position of general music director and principal conductor of the Deutsches Nationaltheater and Staatskapelle Weimar. His first season included productions of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* and his own transcription of *St. John Passion*. The 2017-18 season will see productions of *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Tannhaeuser*, plus an extensive tour of the United States with the Staatskapelle Weimar.

Karabits has worked with many of the leading ensembles of Europe, Asia, and North America. This included the Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Chicago Symphony orchestras, Philharmonia Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro La Fenice, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra—including a concertante version of *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Barbican

Centre. The 2016-17 season saw his acclaimed debut with the Munich Philharmonic and in spring 2016, he conducted the Russian National Orchestra on their tour of the United States and returned to the RNO in August 2016 to conduct two concerts at the Edinburgh International Festival. Both performances were with Mikhail Pletnev as a soloist. The 2017-18 season will include his debut with the Dresden Philharmonic at the Kulturpalast and further concerts in Moscow with the Russian National Orchestra.

A prolific opera conductor, the 2016-17 season saw his debuts at the Deutsche Oper (*Boris Godunov*) and Oper Stuttgart (*Death in Venice*). He has also conducted at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*La bohème* and *Eugene Onegin*), Staatsoper Hamburg (*Madama Butterfly*), English National Opera (*Don Giovanni*), Bolshoi Theatre, and he conducted a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Wagner Geneva Festival in celebration of the composer's anniversary.

Working with the next generation of bright musicians is of great importance to Karabits and as artistic director of I, CULTURE Orchestra he conducted them on their European tour in August 2015 with Lisa Batiashvili as soloist. In 2012 and 2014 he conducted the televised finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Award (working with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra).

He was named Conductor of the Year at the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards.

The Ukrainian violinist, **VALERIY SOKOLOV**, is one of the most outstanding young artists of his generation. Working regularly with the world's leading orchestras, he has enjoyed collaborations with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Cleveland Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, Rotterdam Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, NAC Ottawa, Orchestre National de France, and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. He works frequently with conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Zinman, Susanna Malkki, Andris Nelsons, Peter Oundjian, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Vasily Petrenko, Herbert Soudant, and Juraj Valcuha.

He has appeared in many major European festivals including Verbier and Lockenhaus. He regularly performs in the major concert halls around the world with highlights including regular Sunday Morning series appearances in Théâtre du Châtelet as well as at the Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center, Mariinsky Theatre, Prinzregenten Theatre in Munich, and Musikverein in Vienna.

Valeriy regularly performs with Evgeny Izotov in recital as well as with his own piano trio alongside the Ukrainian cellist Alexei Shadrin.

Valeriy has developed a strong and varied catalogue of recordings with Erato Records (formerly EMI Classics), releasing Enescu's *Sonata No. 3* in 2009. His first concerto DVD was of the Sibelius Violin Concerto under Vladimir Ashkenazy and with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and Bruno Monsaingeon's film *un violon dans l'âme / Natural Born Fiddler*. A record of Valeriy's recital in Toulouse in 2004, received much praise from the critics and continues to be frequently broadcast on ARTE TV. In 2010 Valeriy recorded violin concertos of Bartok and Tchaikovsky under the direction of David Zinman and Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich.

Valeriy has recently given performances with the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Orchestre de Paris, Philharmonia Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, and the Bournemouth Symphony, amongst others. He also completed a successful tour of a chamber music project with Lisa Batiashvili and Gautier Capuçon throughout Europe including venues in Paris, Vienna, Cologne, Amsterdam, and London, as well as returning to Paris with the Orquestre Philharmonique de Radio France.

Highlights of the 2017-18 season include debuts at the Lucerne Festival and with the MDR-Sinfonieorchester, as well as Valeriy's subscription debut with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. This season also sees Valeriy return to the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, as well as the Concertgebouw with the Noord Nederlands Orkest. Valeriy will begin his role as artist-in-residence with the Weimar Staatskapelle, in which he will embark on an extensive US tour with the orchestra and its music director, Kirill Karabits.

Born in 1986 in Kharkov, Ukraine, Valeriy is one of the leading violinists to come out of Ukraine in the past 20 years. Valeriy left his native country at age 13 to study with Natalia Boyarskaya at the Yehudi Menuhin School in England. He continued his studies with Felix Andrievsky, Mark Lubotsky, Ana Chumachenko, Gidon Kremer, and Boris Kushnir. He was the First Prize winner of the 2005 George Enescu International Violin Competition in Bucharest, Romania.

He has recently commissioned a violin concerto from Ukraine's most significant composer Yevhen Stankovich and has become artistic director of a newly set-up chamber music festival on the Lake of Konstanz in Germany.

STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR

The **STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR**, founded in 1491, is the oldest orchestra in Germany and among the most illustrious in the world. Its history is closely associated to some of the world's best known musicians such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Franz Liszt, and Richard Strauss. Under the aegis of Duchess Anna Amalia, the Weimar court orchestra became the premier musical institution of "Classical Weimar" and part of the newly founded Hoftheater Weimar in 1791. During the 19th century, the orchestra continued to attract attention due to the achievements of Liszt and Strauss who improved its quality and reputation. The Hofkapelle Weimar was the first to perform numerous contemporary orchestral works such as Liszt's *Faust-Symphony*, his symphonic poems including *Les Préludes*, and Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, as well as operas such as Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*.

The positive progress of the orchestra, renamed the "Weimarische Staatskapelle" in 1919, came to an abrupt end when the National Socialists seized power in 1933. Following the calamitous events of World War II, the conductor, Hermann Abendroth, re-established the Staatskapelle Weimar to its former grandeur and quality, making it one of Germany's leading orchestras. Since the 1980s, the conductors Peter Gülke, Oleg Caetani, and Hans-Peter Frank, as well as the present honorary conductor, George Alexander Albrecht—who headed the orchestra from 1996 to 2002—have left a lasting mark. As general music director and principal conductor of the Deutsches Nationaltheater and Staatskapelle Weimar, Albrecht was succeeded by Jac van Steen (2002 to 2005), Carl St. Clair (2005 to 2009),

and Stefan Solyom (2009 to 2016). In September 2016, the Ukrainian conductor, Kirill Karabits, took the reins of the only A-level orchestra in the state of Thuringia.

Both in its extensive concert activities and opera productions at the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, the Staatskapelle has worked to cultivate its great tradition in combination with innovative aspects. A wide range of CD recordings reflect its impressively diverse repertoire with works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, Richard Strauss, Wilhelm Furtwängler, and several contemporary composers. World-class soloists and conductors perform regularly with the Staatskapelle Weimar which is nationally and internationally renowned as a first-class concert orchestra. In past years, it has guest performed in Japan, Israel, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland, and Austria, at famous festivals and numerous major concert halls in Germany.



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KIRILL KARABITS, CONDUCTOR

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Ralph Schmidtsdorf
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Maria Kersten
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Hans-Holger Simon
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Susanne Rost
Katharina Kleinjung
Raphael Hevicke
Benita Förster-Salge
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Neasa Ni Bhriain
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Cornelia Möbius
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Astrid Pfister

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Sachiko Uehara
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Junko Kada
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Marco Thinius
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Thoralf Knüpfer

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Gillian Williams
Jens Pribbernow
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Zsolt Nagy-Major
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Karsten Meyer
Michael Schröter-
Hölbing

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