



WARREN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

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PROGRAM NOTES

November 9, 2024

Songs and Dances

Overture to Die Fledermaus (The Bat)

Johann Strauss

Note by *Geoffrey Decker*

Nothing screams “Vienna!” like Johann Strauss, Jr.’s, operetta Die Fledermaus. Memorable tunes, one following another, have made it an audience favorite since its première in Vienna on April 5, 1874. Today the work is popular around New Year’s Eve when waves of champagne make their way into glasses all over the world. There is a basis for the seasonal popularity of the operetta, though. One of its sources is the French play Le Réveillon, the plot of which involves the traditional dinner and festivities celebrated in French-speaking countries on both Christmas and New Year’s Eve. The play, by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, the librettists of Bizet’s opera Carmen(!), was translated to German and eventually ended up in Strauss’ hands where he molded it into the sparkling stage work it is.

Strauss’ music successfully transports the comedy from Paris to Vienna, a belief enthusiastically endorsed by the Earl of Harewood. As editor of The New Kobbé’s Opera Book, he writes, “The work as a whole – plot as well as score – is a masterpiece, the finest product of the Viennese operetta school, and a cornucopia of fresh, witty, pointed, memorable melody.” The operetta’s overture – performed tonight – has become a part of the standard orchestral repertoire. In his essay about the entire operetta, the Earl of Harewood writes, “The overture, a potpourri, is one of the most popular ever written.” Indeed, it is both a potpourri, or collection, of melodies from the operetta itself and very popular. If you have never seen



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Die Fledermaus, do so. It is guaranteed that you will love it. You will find it very difficult not to either jump up from your seat and start dancing or hum or whistle a melody, or perhaps even do both!

Pavane

Gabriel Fauré

Note by *Orrin Howard*

Much of Fauré's music is characterized by limpid melodies that float on a sea of harmonic elegance, their sails often billowed by a modality which conjures an antique impressionistic ambiance. Antiquity is a proper aura for work titled Pavane, for the word applies to a stately 16th-century dance that originated in Italy. Fauré's 19th-century incarnation of this slow, processional type of dance mirrors the prototype in being temperamentally austere and rhythmically precise (the accompaniment is often in regularly paced pizzicatos in the strings). The main theme is at once languid and remote. Its first sentence, taken, in turn, by a flute, then oboe and clarinet, is the chief substance of the piece, although a new idea is introduced midway which provides some little intensity - everything is relative.

Danzón No. 2

Arturo Márquez

From Márquez's Program notes from the 1994 Premiere

The idea of writing the Danzón No. 2 originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom are experts in salon dances with a special passion for the danzón, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salon in Mexico City.

From these experiences onward, I started to learn the danzón's rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina



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and his Danzonera Orchestra. I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the danzón is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which bold Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the State of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.

The Danzón No. 2 is a tribute to the environment that nourishes the genre. It endeavors to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, and although it violates its intimacy, its form and its harmonic language. It is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards truly popular music. Danzón No. 2 was written on a commission by the Department of Musical Activities at Mexico's National Autonomous University and is dedicated to my daughter Lily.

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Opus 88

Antonín Dvořák

Note by *Dennis Bade*

Despite occasional dramatic outbursts, the predominant tone of the Eighth Symphony is one of bucolic euphoria, the sheer joy of being alive in a world of natural wonders. The composer's biographer Otakar Šourek explains that Dvořák had "[h]is own garden in Vysoká [the state-sponsored retreat in southern Bohemia], which he loved 'like the divine art itself', and the fields and woods through which he wandered.... [These were] a welcome refuge, bringing him not only peace and fresh vigor of mind, but happy inspiration for new creative work. In communion with Nature, in the harmony of its voices and the pulsating rhythms of its life, in the beauty of its changing moods and aspects, his thoughts came more freely.... Here he absorbed poetical impressions and moods, here he rejoiced in life and



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grieved in its inevitable decay, here he indulged in philosophical reflections on the substance and meaning of the interrelation between Nature and life.”

Dvořák, it could be said, was reflecting a worldview in which “intelligent design” is the source of both wonderment and woe. The opening of the Eighth Symphony’s first movement, a serious and rather somber chorale for low strings, gives way quickly to an audacious flute solo. Without ever subduing the dramatic element, Dvořák gives free reign to the poetic side of his nature through the ensuing movements of this beloved score, from the often melancholy rhetoric of the Adagio to the folk-flavored, waltz-like Allegretto grazioso and the invigorating theme and variations of the rousing finale.

Over the course of his career, Dvořák composed in many genres, although it was as an opera composer that he most wished for success. Having earlier turned from his overtly Wagnerian sympathies to a more “absolute” formal path, Dvořák had, by the time he was about to produce his G-major Symphony, entered another new phase. In this work, he relied less on structural rigor and more on the immediate appeal of more “pictorial” elements, making eloquent use of the regular juxtaposition of contrasting sections in major and minor keys. This new approach to musical form would lead eventually to those symphonic poems that capped his orchestral catalog in 1896.