

June 14, 2015, at 3pm

Season Finale

Danail Rachev, conductor

Joshua Roman, cello

ARVO PÄRT (b. 1935)

Fratres for Strings and Percussion (1977/1991)

SIR EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op.85 (1919)

- I. Adagio – Moderato
- II. Lento – Allegro molto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro – Moderato – Allegro, ma non troppo – Poco più lento – Adagio

Mr. Roman

Intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op.73 (1877)

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Adagio non troppo
- III. Allegretto grazioso
- IV. Allegro con spirito

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Fratres for Strings and Percussion (1977/1991)

ARVO PÄRT

Born 11 September 1935 in Paide, Estonia

Estonian-born Arvo Pärt has an unusual story of musical survival. Born into the former Soviet Union, Mr. Pärt graduated from Tallinn Conservatory in 1963. Although he had already earned first prize in a Soviet young composer competition in 1962, his career was hampered because of the spiritual component that underlies much of his music. His aesthetic and religious conflicts with official Communist Party policy led to many of his works being banned.

Mr. Pärt left the Soviet Union in 1980. He lived for two years in Vienna, taking Austrian citizenship, then settled in Berlin. Since then, his music has become better known, revealing a fascinating composer who bridges Eastern and Western European cultures. He is a colorist, which means that he takes advantage of the different qualities of timbre available in an orchestra. He reveals his palette slowly, allowing time for each timbral change to be thoroughly perceived.

His mesmerizing music derives from various sources: mysticism, Renaissance harmony, chant-like melodies, and the works of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, which made a strong imprint upon him during his youth. He refers to his style as *tintinnabuli*. That term comes from the complex overtone series that arise when bells peal. Mr. Pärt uses it in a more philosophical way, as a search for unity and simplicity deriving from simple triads.

Fratres exists in several versions. He initially composed it in 1977 for three voices and seven instruments plus percussion. In

1980, the Salzburg Festival commissioned variations on the original for violin and piano. A third version followed for twelve cello; other versions followed. In each iteration, Mr. Pärt alters *Fratres* beyond changing the instrumentation, sometimes with variations, elsewhere adding a prelude or interpolating new music.

The version we hear today, for strings and percussion, unfolds as a series of chords – triads – linked by a recurrent motive from the claves. The strings' role is largely chorale-like. They sustain a pedal point beneath a sequence of blocked chords. The harmonies shift between modal and tonal, but center firmly on the note A. Mr. Pärt's hypnotic music gives us a sense of peaceful, purposeful movement; at the same time, we feel stasis, as if the music were hovering, weightless in mid-air.

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op.85

SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Born 2 June 1857 in Broadheath, near Worcester, England
Died 23 February 1934 in Worcester

From our vantage point in 2015, the event of greatest overriding significance during the past century was World War II. To Europeans in 1918, it was the First, or Great War, that changed their lives and the course of history. For the composer Edward Elgar, the war had devastating consequences. Before it erupted, he had close ties and many friends in Germany. Afterward, his career and his health faltered and he had trouble making ends meet. Cumulatively, it was a poignant blow.

In this embittered state, Mr. Elgar commenced work on his Cello Concerto, working closely with the English cellist

Felix Salmond. As a youth, Mr. Elgar had considered a career as a violinist before deciding in favor of composition. He understood string playing, and was responsive to Salmond's many suggestions to fine-tune the work. Mr. Elgar conducted Salmond at the premiere. The concerto rapidly achieved its place in the repertoire, and is now acclaimed as being on a par with Dvorák's magnificent Cello Concerto. It is the masterpiece of Mr. Elgar's maturity.

The concerto is unusual in form. Its first two and last two movements are paired, with formal breaks occurring only between the second (a symphonic scherzo) and third (*Adagio*) movements. From the opening measures, it is clear that this is no virtuosic showpiece, but rather a profound and thought-provoking musical statement. The soloist opens with a bold quasi-chordal recitative that returns as a bridge to the second movement (thinly disguised as *pizzicato*), then again in the finale. Mr. Elgar awards the main theme, a lilting, questioning melody in 9/8 time, to the violas.

His mercurial scherzo places extreme technical demands on the soloist. A perpetual motion movement, it is just a little lopsided, with emphasis slightly off the beat. Mr. Elgar often sends the cellist scurrying about quite high in its tessitura. Next comes the *Adagio*, which is emotionally central to the Concerto. Songful, melancholy and intimate, this is the most private expression of the composer's thoughts and feelings.

Larger in scale, the jaunty finale takes as much time in performance as the three previous movements combined. Mr. Elgar's lighthearted gambol melds curiously with heartfelt reminders of the *Adagio*, and a final reprise of the opening recitative. These two quotations are a powerful statement, undoing

the happy-go-lucky atmosphere established earlier on. The final message is wistful, nostalgic, and sad.

The score calls for woodwinds in pairs plus optional piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones (optional tuba doubling bass trombone), timpani, solo cello and strings.

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op.73

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born 7 May, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany

Died 3 April, 1897 in Vienna, Austria

During the summer of 1877, Brahms wrote glowingly to his friends of the beautiful mountain countryside surrounding the village of Pörschach am Wörthersee in the Austrian province of Carinthia. The pastoral alpine atmosphere was conducive to work. He immersed himself in the composition of a Second Symphony. In a letter to Eduard Hanslick, the Viennese music critic, he wrote, "So many melodies fly about that you must be careful not to tread on any."

Brahms had labored over his First Symphony for two decades. By contrast, the Second Symphony unfolded naturally and rapidly, ready for its premiere barely more than a year on the heels of its predecessor. It is as if the floodgates had been opened; the next symphony poured out of him with fluid grace. Once Brahms had cleared the hurdle of that first major orchestral work, ideas streamed forth from him, and such ideas! "It is all rippling streams, blue sky, sunshine and cool green shadows. How beautiful it must be at Pörschach!" exclaimed the composer's friend Theodor Billroth, upon hearing the new symphony played through at the piano.

The Second Symphony appeals because of

its combination of gentleness and underlying strength. Often called Brahms's "Pastoral," Op.73 overflows with the dappled sunlight and exquisite natural beauty of the Austrian Alps. It is practically devoid of the tension and tragic struggle that permeate the First Symphony. The critic Hanslick spoke of its "untroubled charm."

Yet the symphony is not without urban sophistication. Michael Musgrave has written: "The Second Symphony opens in the world of the symphonic waltz, as made familiar in Vienna by Johann Strauss, Jr." Confounding us further, Brahms expands his orchestra to include trombones and bass tuba in three of the four movements. Their brassy presence is belied by the tenderness and intimacy of his music.

The first movement is in gentle, swaying triple time. While not unprecedented in a symphonic first movement (Mozart's Symphony No. 39 in E-flat, K.543 and Beethoven's "Eroica" are the most famous examples), triple time was still unusual in Brahms's day. Far from apologizing for it, he emphasized it with a frankly waltz-like second subject, closely related to his beloved Lullaby. Though it has dramatic moments, notably a fugal development section, the first movement firmly establishes an aura of benign geniality that prevails for most of the symphony. The coda includes a dreamy horn solo, one of those delicious scoring details that reward careful listening.

The rich key of B major provides the backdrop for the only hint of clouds in this predominantly sunny work. Brahms's slow movement, *Adagio non troppo*, begins with a luscious, expressive cello melody. Though the celli relinquish the melody at its second statement, they reclaim it several times, and retain a high profile throughout the

movement. Surprisingly, Brahms emphasizes the darker sound of the lower instruments by retaining timpani, trombones and bass tuba in his scoring; frequently they remain silent in slow movements. A transitional passage switches meter from 4/4 to 12/8, ushering in a contrasting middle section in B minor. Clouds temporarily obliterate the sunshine before a poignant oboe solo reintroduces the cello melody of the beginning.

Timpani and low brass disappear in the *Allegretto grazioso*. More an intermezzo than a scherzo, this gentle movement rocks gracefully between major and minor modes, recalling similar ambivalence in Schubert. Its two intervening trio sections (one in 2/4, the other in 3/8), have a sprightlier character, but still draw their melodic motives from the *Allegretto*. Both trios include some fine woodwind passages.

Brahms the contrapuntalist is in rare form in the finale, applying virtually every technique in the imitative book. After a bright start for strings alone, he takes maximum advantage of the episodes in this sonata-rondo for ingenious contrapuntal feats. Canon and inversion, augmentation and diminution, fugato: All are incorporated with consummate skill. The sunshine of the first movement is definitively restored, with a healthy dash of Haydn-esque exuberance thrown in for good measure.

Brahms's Second Symphony is scored for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, bass tuba, timpani and strings. 🎧

Expanded program notes are available on our website at westchesterphil.org.

*Program Notes by Laurie Shulman © 2014
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Danail Rachev, conductor

W eralded by critics as “a musician of real depth, sensitivity, and authority,” Danail Rachev is entering his sixth season as Music Director of the Eugene Symphony, a position that has previously been held by Marin Alsop, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, and Giancarlo Guerrero. Highlights of Mr. Rachev’s 2014-15 season include performances with the Florida Orchestra and Las Vegas Symphony, as well as an appearance at the Brevard Music Center Festival. He recently conducted the Alabama and Dallas symphonies, and led a 10-concert tour with the New Zealand Symphony.

In North America, Mr. Rachev has conducted the Baltimore Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, Fort Wayne

Philharmonic, Grand Rapids Symphony, Nashville Symphony, Richmond Symphony, Spokane Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Tucson Symphony, among others. He has collaborated with such celebrated soloists as Emanuel Ax, Sarah Chang, Angela Hewitt, Midori, Garrick Ohlsson, Itzhak Perlman, and André Watts. His worldwide engagements include the Auckland Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony, Het Gelders Orkest, Philharmonia Orchestra/London, London Philharmonic, Orquestra Nacional do Porto, Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Russe State Opera of Bulgaria, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, SWR Stuttgart Radio Symphony, Turkey’s Presidential Symphony, and the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Japan.

As Assistant Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra (2008- 2010) and the Dallas Symphony (2005-2008), Mr. Rachev led numerous public concerts and educational programs. Of his Dallas Symphony subscription series debut, the *Dallas Morning News* wrote: “One of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra’s best concerts of the past year... from start to finish, assistant conductor Danail Rachev got the music unfailingly right, and made it viscerally compelling.”

Previously, Mr. Rachev served as conductor of the Juilliard Pre-College Symphony, where he mentored young musicians who continued on to top level conservatories throughout the world. He has also served on the faculties of the Russian Opera Workshop in Philadelphia and the Varna Music

Academy in his native Bulgaria.

Mr. Rachev trained at the State Musical Academy in Sofia, receiving degrees in orchestral and choral conducting. Granted a full scholarship, he moved to the United States to continue his studies at the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Mr. Rachev was a conducting fellow at the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen and a participant in the League of American Orchestra’s National Conducting Institute, which led to his debut with the National Symphony in Washington, D.C. The first ever conducting fellow of the New World Symphony, he studied with Michael Tilson Thomas and worked alongside him on many occasions. Other teachers have included Gustav Meier, Vassil Kazandjiev, David Zinman, and Leonard Slatkin. 🎻

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Joshua Roman, cello

“A cellist of extraordinary technical and musical gifts” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Joshua Roman has earned national renown as a cellist for performing a wide range of repertoire with an absolute commitment to communicating the essence of the music at its most organic level. He is also recognized as an accomplished curator and programmer, particularly in his work as Artistic Director of Seattle Town Hall’s TownMusic series, with a vision to engage and expand the classical music audience. For his ongoing creative initiatives on behalf

of classical music, Mr. Roman was named a 2011 TED Fellow.

In the 2013-14 season, Mr. Roman gave the San Francisco premiere of *Dreamsongs*, a new cello concerto written for him by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis, with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. In January 2014, the cellist revisited “On Grace,” a work for actor and cello he co-created and performed with Anna Deavere Smith, when the two artists were in residence at the University of Chicago. Through this season’s TownMusic series, Artistic Director Roman showcases his eclectic musical influences and inspirations,

presenting concerts by Roomful of Teeth, Enso String Quartet, violinist Karen Gomyo, Latin jazz pianist Pablo Ziegler, and soprano Mary Mackenzie, and commissioning the world premiere of works by Raymond Lustig, Amir Shpilman, Wang Jie, and Mr. Roman himself.

Before embarking on a solo career, Mr. Roman spent two seasons as principal cellist of the Seattle Symphony, a position he won in 2006 at the age of 22. Since that time, he has appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the BBC Scottish Symphony, and the Mariinsky Orchestra, among many others. An active chamber music performer, Mr. Roman has collaborated with Cho-

Liang Lin, the Assad Brothers, Christian Zacharias, the JACK Quartet, and members of So Percussion. He recently completed an ongoing video series called “The Popper Project,” where Mr. Roman performed, recorded and uploaded the complete David Popper’s *High School of Cello Playing* to his dedicated YouTube channel (youtube.com/joshuaromacello). His newest YouTube project, “Everyday Bach,” features Mr. Roman performing Bach’s cello suites from beautiful settings around the world. Mr. Roman was the only guest artist invited to play an unaccompanied solo during the YouTube Symphony Orchestra’s 2009 debut concert at Carnegie Hall. He is grateful for the loan of an 1899 cello by Giulio Degani of Venice. 🎻

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