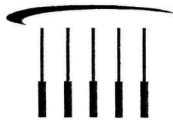


Comp 01'06'06



UNCG
School of Music

University Symphony Orchestra

Kevin M. Gerald
Conductor

Jong-hun Bae
Guest Conductor

Friday, December 5, 2008
7:30 p.m.
Aycock Auditorium



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

PROGRAM

Overture to *Oberon*, J. 306

Johannes Brahms

Jong-hun Bae, conductor

Samurai

Michael Schelle

intermission

Symphony No. 2 in D

Jean Sibelius

Allegretto

Tempo Andante, ma rubato

Vivacissimo - Lento e suave - Tempo primo - Lento e suave - Largamente

Allegro Moderato

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to Oberon, J. 306

Carl Maria von Weber

Weber was in declining health when he took on the commission for his final opera, *Oberon*, or *The Elf King's Oath*. When he left Dresden to begin rehearsals in London, he expressed a presentiment that he would die in England, and indeed he succumbed to tuberculosis there less than two months after conducting the work's premiere. It has been suggested that he might have lived to return home if his English opera had not been such a dismal failure.

The blame for that is usually ascribed to James Robinson Planché's inept libretto, based on a masque by William Sotheby which in turn combined elements from Villeneuve's story *Huon de Bordeaux* and Wieland's poem *Oberon*. It was dismissed by Sir Donald Francis Tovey in one of his "essays in musical analysis" some seventy years ago as "not even a bad drama . . . but the merest twaddle for regulating the operations of scene-shifters." Weber himself definitely found it burdensome. In addition to the challenge of setting an English text for the first time, he regarded the English notion of opera as being "very foreign to all my ideas and maxims," and expressed the fear that the intermixing of so many principal actors who do not sing and the omission of music in the most important numbers will deprive *Oberon* of the title of an opera, and will make him unfit for all other theaters in Europe.

Since Weber's time a dozen different revisions of the German-language version of the text have been made, and several of the original English one, but the work has never been able to hold the stage. Berlioz, who admired Weber profoundly, deplored this neglect, but conceded that perhaps "such a work can please only an audience of poets, with kings of intellect in the stalls." Tovey's compatriot Percy Scholes left a decidedly enthusiastic evaluation of *Oberon* as a work delightfully fresh and original throughout, and entirely different from all the rest of Weber's compositions. The keynote of the whole is its picture of the mysteries of elfland and the life of the spirits of the air, earth and water. True, this note is struck in *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, but in *Oberon* it is struck with full force and vibrates with an almost intoxicating sweetness.

The Overture, which has met with a far happier fate than the opera itself, is characterized from beginning to end by that "intoxicating sweetness." In it Weber makes use not only of material from the opera, but also of motifs from the incidental music he wrote in 1818 for Eduard Gehe's tragedy *Heinrich IV*. The same Tovey who dismissed the libretto as "the merest twaddle" cherished the Overture as "a gorgeous masterpiece of operatic orchestration," and many musicians have declared this last of Weber's compositions for orchestra to be also his finest.

Samurai

Michael Schelle

Michael Schelle is Composer in Residence, Distinguished Professor of Music, and founder / director of the notorious JCFA Composers Orchestra (new music ensemble) at the School of Music, Butler University, Indianapolis, IN, USA. Schelle's works have

Program Notes, continued

been commissioned and/or performed by many major orchestras and professional chamber ensembles including the Chicago Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Milwaukee Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Louisville Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony, Dayton Philharmonic, Albany Symphony, the Kansas City Symphony, the principal orchestras of Baltimore, Birmingham, Springfield (MA), Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, South Shore Chamber Orchestra, New World Chamber Orchestra, and Indiana Opera Theatre.

Schelle has received significant composition grants, awards and commissions from dozens of national / international organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation (NYC), American Symphony Orchestra League (NYC), Welsh Arts Council (Cardiff, Wales, UK), Organization of American States (OAS), International Percussive Arts Society and the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition. Schelle was named Distinguished Composer of the Year by the Music Teachers National Association during the 1990 MTNA national conference (Wichita, KS: First Prize (nationally) for his three movement chamber ensemble work *Musica Magnetizarte* (originally commissioned by Indiana University) and, on 31 December 2001, the Indianapolis Star newspaper selected the Indiana Historical Society performance of Schelle's 3 movement violin concerto, *Play Us Chastity on Your Violin* (featuring Rumanian superstar silver-medal violinist Livru Prunaru, Schelle conducting) as the No. 1 Classical Music Event of 2001 in the City of Indianapolis.

Commissioned by the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, with additional funding from the Holcomb Research Foundation and the Arts Council of Indianapolis, *Samurai* is Michael Schelle's emotional reaction to the debilitating stroke of his father, and the passing of Japan's most famous film director, Akira Kurosawa. In three interrelated connecting sections (slow, fast, and 'prayer with thunder') *Samurai* is not a portrait of these men, but is 'inspired' by the 'eternal warrior' dimension of the composer's father, and by Kurosawa's filmmaking techniques and aesthetic. The piece intentionally avoids hackneyed and predictable musical resources, ethnic and cultural inferences and specific Kurosawa film references...i.e., the work does not "sound" Japanese...but rather fuses individualized musical gestures to generate a more universal - yet personal - feeling of loss tempered with optimism, spirit and courage.

Schelle's interest and research in Japanese film and music does not stop with Kurosawa, but the director's death was probably the 'final blow' for the composer. Within a year, the world witnessed the passing of the two great Japanese composers Toshiro Mayuzumi and Toru Takemitsu, and the greatest of all Kurosawa actors, Toshiro Mifune...not to mention the death of Tanaka (Japan's Toho Studios original Godzilla creator), and the passing of the Godzilla torch to American filmmakers (which most critics agree was the real death of Godzilla!).

Samurai was premiered by the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra in February, 1999, Neal Gittlemann conducting.

Symphony No. 2 in D

Jean Sibelius

As the 20th century was born, Finland found herself in a desperate battle for survival. Throughout the 19th century, she had been an autonomous grand duchy of Russia, with the Russian rulers generally respecting her independence. But under the last of the tsars, Nicholas II, the weight of Russian suzerainty pressed heavily on the Finns, crushing their rights. In response, a new spirit of Finnish nationalism blazed up. Finns, many of whom—including **Jean Sibelius** himself—spoke Swedish rather than Finnish, rediscovered their native language and their mighty Norse sagas of the Kalevala. And, as Sibelius scholar Erik Tawaststjerna wrote, “Finland found a focus for her identity in the arts” and especially in her greatest composer, who appeared just when his nation needed him most.

Although he was born to a family of Swedish extraction, Sibelius was a passionate Finn patriot, and his music introduced a new voice to Europe, as stern, majestic, and uncompromising as the Finnish landscape itself. In 1900, he gave his people a virtual national anthem with *Finlandia*, but even his more abstract works and his personality became a rallying point for his countrymen, much as Verdi had been for the Italian Risorgimento 50 years earlier. In recognition, in 1897 the Finnish senate voted him an annual stipend, which continued throughout his long lifetime even when he was no longer composing.

But the *Second Symphony* is tempered by southern winds: it was born during the composer’s sojourn in Verdi’s home country in 1901. The composer’s friend Axel Carpelan, an odd combination of musical amateur and artistic conscience, had decided that Sibelius needed a new source of inspiration beyond his homeland. “You have sat at home long enough, Herr Sibelius,” he wrote. “It is high time for you to be on your travels. You can spend ... the winter in Italy. Everything there is lovely—even the ugly. You remember the important role that Italy played in Tchaikovsky’s development and [Richard] Strauss’.” Supported by money Carpelan had raised for the purpose, Sibelius spent the winter and spring of 1901 in the Italian sun. “Now I am living completely in the world of the imagination — nothing disturbs me,” he gratefully wrote Carpelan. “I would gladly introduce you, as an understanding friend, to my work but refrain from doing so on principle. In my view, compositions are like butterflies, touch them once and their magic is gone.”

Perhaps because of its Italian birth, this most popular of Sibelius’ symphonies wears, with the exception of its slow movement, a happier, brighter garb than his *First*. Many listeners, especially among the Finns, insisted that the work was a graphic portrayal of the Finnish struggle against Russia, a program Sibelius vehemently denied. But perhaps, steeped as he was in Finland’s travails, there is more of that struggle than the composer realized in this highly dramatic symphony that achieves a resounding victory through a fierce display of musical energy and determination.

About his symphonic method Sibelius famously wrote: “It is as though the Almighty had thrown the pieces of a mosaic down from the floor of heaven and told me to put them together.” The opening movement demonstrates this method, as Sibelius first presents small, seemingly unrelated chunks of melodic ideas—fragments of his mosaic. Only

Program Notes, continued

as they are gradually assembled do we begin to see a picture. Even the strings' hesitant opening chords are an important piece of the puzzle: their three notes rising stepwise establish a pattern for many of the themes to come. The woodwinds respond with a mirror image: a pert, folkish dance tune built from three descending notes. A moment later, the theme that will contribute so much to the movement's drama is introduced loudly by the woodwinds: an expression of vehement resolve with a memorable fist-shaking gesture. The solo oboe sings a plaintive version of this theme to open the development section, in which Sibelius reveals the close relationship between his terse themes as he juxtaposes and combines them. This grows to an imposing climax of brass chords that, in a Sibelian trademark, swell, fade, then swell again.

Movement two moves away from the D-major home key to darker D minor. Remarkably, Sibelius sustains a mood of weight and sorrow over a long movement without losing a sense of forward momentum. At first the music is imprisoned in the orchestral cellar: over a drum roll and a spooky pizzicato tune for basses and cellos, the bassoons croon a mournful theme. This is followed by the blackest of brass fanfares, with the voice of death in the horns' harsh, baleful cry. The strings gently offer a tender, grief-laden theme; Sibelius labeled this "Christus" in his early sketches. "Christus" attempts to offer consolation without succeeding in lightening the tragic mood.

Movement three is a fast, fierce scherzo. Juxtaposed against the frenzy of the strings is a slower trio section featuring a bittersweet repeated-note melody for oboe. Both scherzo and trio return, but the trio's second appearance is artfully transformed into a bridge to the finale, preparing us for the expansive melody — using the three-note ascending pattern that opened the symphony — that is this work's most famous.

Sibelius may have detested the Russian government, but there was one Russian he adored: Tchaikovsky. "There is a lot of that man in me," he admitted. The three-note ascending pattern expands into a luscious, soaring melody of which the Russian would have been proud. The finale's other important theme is a sad, minor-mode woodwind march above agitated strings, which Sibelius' wife revealed as her husband's musical response to her sister's suicide. These two themes, along with several subsidiary ones, carry the symphony to a heart-pounding musical apotheosis. Here is no Scandinavian reticence but an expression of unbounded faith—perhaps a vision of Finland, free at last.

Note by Janet E. Bedell

*Please silence all cell phones, pagers and alarm watches.
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THE CONDUCTOR

DR. KEVIN M. GERALDI is Associate Director of Bands and Interim Director of Orchestras at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In this capacity, he conducts the UNCG Symphony Orchestra, Symphonic Band, and Casella Sinfonietta, and is associate conductor of the UNCG Wind Ensemble. In addition, he teaches graduate and undergraduate conducting, directs the Wind Ensemble chamber music program, and coordinates the Carolina Band Festival and Conductors Conference. He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees in instrumental conducting from the University of Michigan where he studied with Michael Haithcock and H. Robert Reynolds. Prior to beginning his doctoral studies, he served as Director of Bands at Lander University in Greenwood, SC.

Dr. Geraldini received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from Illinois Wesleyan University, where he studied conducting with Steven Eggleston. From 1996-1998, he was director of bands for the Westchester Public Schools in Westchester, IL, where his ensembles received top honors. Dr. Geraldini served as assistant conductor of the Central Illinois and Michigan Youth Symphonies. He appears regularly as a guest conductor and he maintains an active schedule as a clinician throughout the country. As a member of the Franklin Park Brass Quintet, Dr. Geraldini has toured the Midwest, New England, and South Carolina, performing recitals and conducting brass and chamber music masterclasses. An avid proponent of contemporary music and chamber music, he has premiered numerous compositions and published articles in the Music Educators Journal, the Journal of Band Research, and the Journal of the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles.

Dr. Geraldini has studied conducting privately and in seminars with teachers including Gustav Meier, Kenneth Kiesler, Pierre Boulez, and Frederick Fennell. He was recently a participant in the Conductor's Institute of South Carolina's opera conducting workshop at the Spoleto Festival, USA. Dr. Geraldini is a recipient of the Thelma A. Robinson Award, an award given biennially by the Conductors Guild and the National Federation of Music Clubs. He is a member of the Conductors Guild, the College Band Directors National Association, Music Educators National Conference, Pi Kappa Lambda, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the International Trombone Association, and a National Arts Associate of Sigma Alpha Iota.

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Please turn off cellular phones, pagers, and alarm watches. As a courtesy to other audience members and to the performers, please wait for a break in the performance to enter or exit the hall.

The Conductors, continued

JONG-HUN BAE is a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where he studies with Robert Gutter. Before he came to UNCG, he received his Graduate Performance Diploma in Orchestral Conducting at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, where he was Associate Conductor of the Peabody Chamber Opera and Assistant Conductor of the Peabody Symphony Orchestra and Peabody Concert Orchestra. He has worked with several conductors as Assistant Conductor, such as Hans Graf (with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra), Marin Alsop (with Peabody Symphony Orchestra), Christian Badea and Oliver von Dohananyi (with Baltimore Opera Company).

Jong-hun made his European debut with the Utah Philharmonia Chamber Orchestra in March 2006, as part of concerts celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of Mozart in such cities as Salzburg, Graz, and Vienna in Austria. He also has conducted the Simfonica a Filarmonicii "Mihail Jora," in Bacau, Romania in June 2006.

He has recently been invited by L'Ensemble in Vermont as a judge for their student musician competition. Engagements this year include Assistant Conductor at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (with Hans Graf) "Concerto Concert" in Boston, MA, the world premiere of "A Collection in Concert" in Glens Falls, NY, and the world premiere of the opera "The Yellow Wallpaper" in Baltimore, MD. His previous engagements include Assistant Conductor at the Baltimore Opera Company, Utah Philharmonia, and Utah Lyric Opera Ensemble Orchestra.

In his native Korea, Jong-hun has been Artistic and Music Director of the Ensemble "Ka-rang" and Assistant Conductor of the Pusan National University Orchestra, before coming to the US in 2004.

He holds a BM in composition from the Pusan National University, Korea and a MM in orchestral conducting from the University of Utah. His conducting teachers include Gustav Meier, Marin Alsop, Robert Gutter, Markand Thakar, Hal Weller, and Robert Baldwin.



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COMING EVENTS

Sunday, December 7, UNCG University Band, Andrea Brown, conductor,
1:30 p.m. Aycock Auditorium

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO



The UNCG School of Music has been recognized for years as one of the elite music institutions in the United States. Fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music since 1938, the School offers the only comprehensive music program from undergraduate through doctoral study in both performance and music education in North Carolina. From a total population of approximately 17,000 university students, the UNCG School of Music serves over 600 music majors with a full-time faculty and staff of sixty. As such, the UNCG School of Music ranks among the largest Schools of Music in the South.

The UNCG School of Music occupies a 26 million dollar music building which is among the finest music facilities in the nation. In fact, the music building is on of the largest academic buildings on the UNCG Campus. A large music library with state-of-the-art playback, study and research facilities houses all music reference materials. Greatly expanded classroom, studio, practice room, and rehearsal hall spaces are key components of the new structure. Two recital halls, a large computer lab, a psycho-acoustics lab, electronic music labs, and recording studio space are additional features of the nearly new facility. In addition, an enclosed multi-level parking deck adjoins the new music building to serve students, faculty and concert patrons.

Living in the artistically thriving Greensboro—Winston-Salem—High Point “Triad” area, students enjoy regular opportunities to attend and perform in concerts sponsored by such organizations as the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra, the Greensboro Opera Company, and the Eastern Music Festival. In addition, UNCG students interact first-hand with some of the world’s major artists who frequently schedule informal discussions, open rehearsals, and master classes at UNCG.

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For further information regarding music as a major or minor field of study, please write:

Dr. John J. Deal, Dean
UNCG School of Music
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