

The Renaissance

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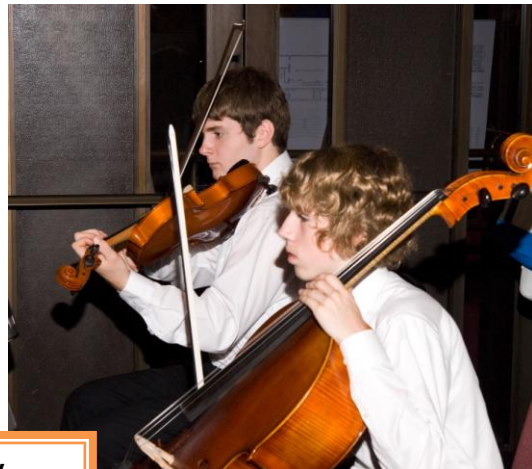
Bombastic Brahms **March 21, 2009 - 8:00 PM**

From Music Director Robert Franz:

“About eight years ago I was part of a commission project to commission composer Russell Peck to write a new timpani concerto. I love the idea of a talented percussionist sitting in the front of the orchestra with a battery of timpani performing as a soloist. I also knew the music of Russell Peck well, and the match seemed perfect to me. This work was co-commissioned by about forty orchestras, and it just so happened, by coincidence, that I gave the very first performance of this piece in Louisville, Kentucky. Now it took a few years for all of the orchestras to take their turn at performing the concerto that they had commissioned, and when it was time for the fortieth performance of this brand new work, the maestro that was scheduled to conduct became ill. I was called in and conducted that performance as well. Russell calls me the Alpha and Omega of his timpani concerto! Featured in this work will be our own talented timpanist, Matthew Bassett. Also in the program will be Brahms mighty first symphony and members of the Mansfield Youth Orchestra joining us on stage to open the concert. This opportunity to work with our young colleagues is special for our musicians. We love to share our music making, and this partnership is something that we look forward to every year.”



Members of the Mansfield Symphony Youth Orchestra



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Bombastic Brahms
***Harmonic Rhythm* (Russell Peck)**
***Symphony No. 1 in C* (Johannes Brahms)**

**Featuring: Matthew Bassett, Timpanist
& the Mansfield Symphony Youth Orchestra**



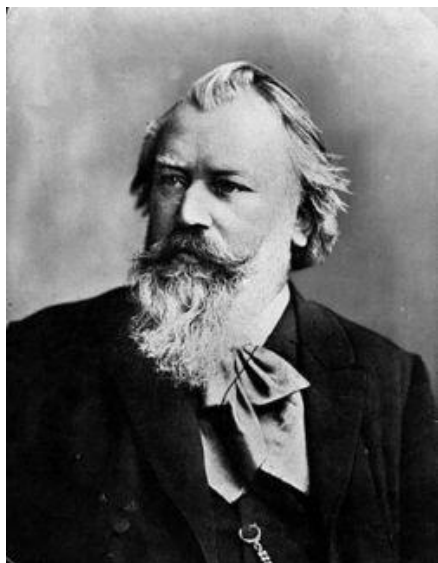
HARMONIC RHYTHM
Timpani Concerto
Russell Peck

“A timpani concerto is a challenging assignment. Having only 5 tuned drum notes with which to build a solo, compared to the piano's 88 keys, and the orchestra's thousands, it is an utterly stringent economy-of-means situation...” Russell Peck

The title of the Concerto, *Harmonic Rhythm*, refers to the rhythm of chord changes in music. Peck writes: “As a bass instrument, the timpani usually functions as a means of accenting harmonic rhythm in the orchestra. Thus, I felt the greatest challenge was to have the solo timpani be as convincing as other concerto instruments in the traditional sense of presenting major melodic material and having a coherent voice in dramatic partnership with the orchestra. The virtuoso aspect includes rapidly changing the pitch of the drums with foot pedals while playing fast and difficult striking patterns, and use of multiple mallets. Like a cello, I wanted the timpani to carry real lines of musical thought and explore nuance and phrasing, in which the timpani has special capabilities because it commands the most extended dynamic range. To avoid the orchestra from distracting with its own facile virtuosity, I tried to keep it often in a clear accompaniment role, and in general to use textural simplicity as one way for the timpani's natural economy of means to speak with greater meaning.”

SYMPHONY No. 1 IN C MINOR, Op. 68
Johannes Brahms
1833-1897

“You don't know what it is like always to hear that giant marching along behind me,” Brahms wrote to the conductor Hermann Levi, in reference to Beethoven. As a classically oriented composer who revered Beethoven, Brahms found writing a symphony a daunting proposition. It took fame, respectability, middle age and numerous false starts before he finally finished his



Johannes Brahms

First Symphony at age 43, after at least 14 years' gestation. An earlier attempt at a symphony, in 1854, ended up, after numerous transformations, as part of the d minor Piano Concerto and the *German Requiem*.

Despite Brahms's reputation and the positive anticipation of the public, the Symphony, premiered in 1876, was at first coolly received. The rigorous classical form baffled the public and critics, who expected something more romantic and innovative. Wagner, Liszt and programmatic music were all the rage and most critics considered the classical form backward looking and reactionary. But it was not long before the Symphony's riveting power was recognized, along with its own contribution to symphonic innovation.