Carter Simmons, Music Director
presents

“LEGENDS AND MASTERS”

May 13, 2018  3:00 PM
The Pabst Theater
144 E Wells St

PROGRAM

Overture to “Der Freischütz”.................................................................Carl Maria von Weber

“Black Swan” Intermezzo in A major, op. 118, no. 2 ........Johannes Brahms, trans. Bright Sheng

Prelude to “Hänsel und Gretel”.................................................................Engelbert Humperdinck

Intermission

Symphony No. 7 in C major, op. 105.................................................................Jean Sibelius
SUPER READERS  Children who have earned free tickets for themselves and their families by participating in Milwaukee Public Library’s SUPER READERS program.

CIVIC MUSIC ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION PARTICIPANTS  High school students participating in this competition are invited, along with their families, to be the guests of FCS at one of its “Symphony Sundays” concerts.

PAJAMA JAMBOREE FANS  Families who attend our children’s “pops” concerts and earn an opportunity to sample one of our “Symphony Sundays” programs.

Festival City Symphony is a member organization of Association of Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras, the Creative Alliance, VISIT Milwaukee, an affiliate member of UPAF, and a program partner at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center. FCS made the Business Journal’s “Book of Lists” 2002 – 2007, 2010, and 2012.

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Carl Maria von Weber  
b. November 18, 1786; Eutin  
d. June 5, 1826; London  

**Overture to “Der Freischütz”**  

Derived from German legend, Weber’s opera, Der Freischütz, is filled with Teutonic superstition and diabolical elements. Pacts with the devil, magic bullets, eerie forests and mystical incantations were all part of this expression of romantic German fascination with the supernatural. The title of the opera translates simply as “Freeshooter” or “Sharpshooter,” but the term Freischütz also carries the connotation of one who shoots with magic bullets.

Composed in 1820, Der Freischütz solidified von Weber’s reputation and, in a larger framework, was an important link in the establishment of German opera as a distinct art form. Both the subject matter and the music were strongly appealing to the early 19th-century public. Following its highly successful premiere in Berlin (June 18, 1821), the production was taken to London, where it was performed simultaneously in three different theaters.

The opera’s central character is Max, a hunter who must win a shooting contest in order to gain the hand of his beloved. Having made a poor showing in the first day’s contest, he makes a pact with a man who is in league with the devil. Through him, he gains seven magic bullets which never miss their mark. Normally, this sort of arrangement leads to eternal damnation, but Max is eventually saved from the consequence of his action through the intercession of his pure love Agatha, and a saintly hermit.

For all of its success in the last century, Der Freischütz is rarely performed in its entirety today; the overture, however, has remained popular. Significant because it is the first overture by an operatic composer to encapsulate the melodies and dramatic thrust of the main work, the overture conveys a sense of the atmosphere of this tale of conflict between good and evil.

A sense of sylvan twilight is established by the opening passages for French horn quartet. In the early 19th-century, this use of the French horn would have immediately evoked the character of Max the hunter, for the instrument was a recent descendent of the hunter’s waldhorn (“forest-horn”). The tempo suddenly moves faster with a restive quality that suggests the presence of evil; themes are voiced by clarinet and then flute. Over tremolo strings, the clarinet reveals a theme that is later utilized during the casting of the magic bullets. The sinister atmosphere is dissipated as the first violins and clarinet play a melody associated with the heroine. An ensuing struggle between the themes is resolved as the heroine’s theme finally wins out and is jubilantly proclaimed by the violins.
Intermezzo in A major, Opus 118, No. 2 (Black Swan)

In 1892, Brahms wrote six piano pieces which he grouped together as Opus 118; this, his penultimate set of piano pieces, was first performed in London during January of 1894. Brahms generally applied the title Intermezzo to works of a smaller size and more neutral character. A notable exception to this is the second work of the group, the A-major Intermezzo, a more sizable composition with an unusually extensive amount of contrapuntal writing for a character piece. As always, Brahms disregards Lisztian virtuosity for its own sake, preferring instead to focus on poetic expressions.

In 2006, the Chinese-American composer, conductor and pianist Bright Sheng was commissioned to contribute a work for the Seattle Symphony's project “Hearmusic—the Sound of Starbucks.” He responded with an engaging orchestration of this Brahms Intermezzo, which Sheng entitled Black Swan. Born in Shanghai in 1955, Sheng has been living in the United States since 1982 and is a faculty member at the University of Michigan. In celebration of Gerard Schwarz's twenty-six years as Music Director of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra in 2010, Sheng added an orchestration of Opus 118, No. 1, to make a two-part work which he entitled Prelude and Black Swan.

Engelbert Humperdinck
b. September 1, 1854; Siegburg
d. September 27, 1921; Neustrelitz

Prelude from the Opera, Hansel und Gretel

Remembered chiefly for the lilting sound of his name and the enduring charms of his best-known opera, Engelbert Humperdinck was an unassuming composer of remarkable achievement. (The real name of the contemporary popular singer who adopted Humperdinck’s name is Arnold George Dorsey.) Following his parents’ wishes, the original Humperdinck began studying architecture, but, with the encouragement of the famed teacher-composer Ferdinand Hiller, entered the Cologne Conservatory in 1872. Four years later, he won the Mozart Prize of Frankfurt am Main and subsequently continued his studies at the Royal Music School in Munich. Winning the Mendelssohn Prize of Berlin in 1879, Humperdinck traveled to Italy, where he met his idol, Richard Wagner (1813-1883), in Naples on March 9, 1880. Humperdinck had the opportunity to work with Wagner as a chief assistant during the preparations for Parsifal’s premiere at Bayreuth. Although Wagnerian passages abound in Hansel und Gretel, Humperdinck handles his materials so deftly that the listener is completely enthralled by the apparent simplicity of the story telling.

The simple charm of Humperdinck’s Hansel und Gretel has won it a lasting place among the young of all ages throughout the world. With a text adapted from Ludwig Grimm’s familiar fairy tale by the composer’s sister, Adelheid Wette, the opera scored a sensational success when it was premiered in Weimar two days before the Christmas of 1893.

A microcosm of the opera’s story line, the Prelude begins with horns and bassoons intoning the music of the Prayer. A trumpet call introduces the music associated with the witch and the spell she casts on the children. The trombones’ recollection of the Prayer and horn calls lead to the joyful music after the witch has been crisped and the children released from her evil power. Growing in intensity, this dance music culminates in a return of the Prayer music and then subsides to a tranquil conclusion.
Jean Sibelius  
b. December 8, 1865; Tavastehus  
d. September 20, 1957; Jarvenpaa

**Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105**

Toward the end of his life, Sibelius approached his art much more carefully. He took a great deal more time to compose a work; like Brahms, he discarded any work that did not meet his personal standard. He was quoted as saying, “The thing that pleased me most is that I have been able to reject.” Considering his statement, he continued, “The greatest labor I have expended, perhaps, was on works that have never been completed.”

This sort of feeling is not unusual; not all inspirations can lead to a final product. Many works of art, whether they are literary, graphic or musical, will not withstand a great amount of erasure. The most beautiful artistic expressions seem to bloom from a moment of genius, springing like Minerva, fully grown from the brow of Jupiter. Only the artist knows the tremendous amount of effort that was poured into any creation; yet, if the final product reveals the scars of its birth, it is often set aside.

It seems natural to assume that Sibelius become more discerning about the quality of his later compositions. Certainly, there is an element of this; yet there is another aspect to be considered. Brahms was noted as being his own worst critic; he waited until he was forty to bring forth his first symphony; he scrupulously destroyed all early sketches and abandoned projects. The reasons for these actions were complex, but certainly one element was the enormous pressure that he felt from Robert Schumann’s well-intentioned pronouncement that young Brahms was the inheritor of the German musical tradition.

Sibelius was in a similar position during the latter portion of his life. He had become a national institution; he was practically canonized as Finland’s musical giant. His growing sense of self-consciousness became apparent around World War I, when he revised his Fifth Symphony several times. Attempting to transcend the romantic grandiloquence of his earlier works, he approached the composition of his Sixth and Seventh Symphonies with classical restraint.

Although there were frequent rumors of a later symphony, the Symphony No. 7 was Sibelius’ last published work in that form. Completed in March of 1924, the work is cast in a single movement. Generally speaking, the work has a slow-fast-slow-fast format; however, the smoothness of the transitions tends to obscure the perception of boundary between one section and another. Elements of cyclic development are felt as one theme transforms itself into the next. An important motivic element in the symphony is the immediately presented interval of a tritone (an augmented fourth or diminished fifth).

Seven years before the completion of this final symphony, Sibelius wrote: “The VII Symphony. Joy of life and vitality, with appassionato passages. In three movements—the last an Hellenic rondo.” Then adding, “All this with due reservation.” Still later, he refers to it as a fantasia sinfonica, a term that implies, among other things, its single movement form. Cecil Gray summed up the work in glowing terms as he wrote: “If the Fourth Symphony represents the highest point to which he attains in the direction of economy of material and conciseness of form, the Seventh shows him at the summit of his powers in respect to fecundity of invention and subtlety and intricacy of design. It is not merely a consummate masterpiece of formal construction, however, but also a work of great expressive beauty, of lofty grandeur and dignity, a truly Olympian serenity and repose which are unique to modern music and, for that matter, in modern art of any kind. It seems, indeed, to belong to a different age altogether, a different order of civilization, a different world almost—the world of classical antiquity.”
“KIDS PLAY FOR KIDS”

Pajama Jamboree
Monte Perkins, Conductor
Jayne Perkins, Host

Wednesday, May 16, 2018  7:00 PM
Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, in the Bradley Pavilion
*Use 929 N. Water Street entrance*
FREE ADMISSION

Festival City Symphony will conclude its “Pajama Jamboree” season with “Kids Play for Kids,” a free spring concert on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at 7pm in the Bradley Pavilion of the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts (use the main entrance on 929 N. Water Street). In addition to music by FCS, the concert will feature solo and ensemble pieces performed by local students. The concert will close with the popular Festival City Symphony tradition of young audience members conducting the orchestra’s finale.

Pajama Jamboree classical pops concerts for children are hosted by Jayne Perkins who narrates the program and guides audience participation. Dress is casual with pajamas welcome for the very young. Attendees are invited to sit on the floor, up close, to “meet” the orchestra. Conventional seating is also available. *Most suitable for children grades K4 through 5.*
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Get your tickets at Footlights.com

Hosted by John McGivern

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