A Brahms triptych

Music@Menlo festival focuses on the composer’s music, works that inspired him, and those he inspired

By Rebecca Wallace

From his beginnings as an impressive, burgeoning composer dubbed “The Young Eagle” to the contemplative works of his final years, Johannes Brahms left an indelible stamp on classical music.

While Brahms (1833-1897) venerated the greats who came before him — Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Hayden and especially Bach — he in turn became an inspiration for composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. The German composer was known for his virtuosic piano compositions, intimate vocal works, and three string quartets, which pianist Wu Han and cellist David Finckel call a perfect marriage of “passion and technique.”

This summer, Midpeninsula audiences will hear a Brahms triptych of sorts: the composer’s music, together with works that inspired him and those he inspired. Ms. Wu and Mr. Finckel, artistic directors of Music@Menlo, are dedicating the summer chamber-music festival to him.

Music@Menlo runs July 22 through Aug. 13, with concerts, lectures, master classes and a chamber-music institute for young musicians. Performances are at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church at 600 Colorado Ave. in Palo Alto; The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton; and Menlo School at 50 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton.

The festival attracts many respected names in classical music. Returning favorites include pianists Alessio Bax and Menahem Pressler, violinist Jorja Fleezanis and mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke. Besides performing in groups, Mr. Bax and Mr. Pressler will also give individual recitals.

Music@Menlo’s major concerts begin with “The Young Eagle,” named after the moniker that composers Robert and Clara Schumann gave to Brahms. Performed on July 23 and 24, the program features earlier works, including Brahms’
ARTSCENE

Cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han are artistic directors of Music@Menlo.

Participants in Music@Menlo’s Chamber Music Institute International Program at Menlo School.

Mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and pianist Ion Barnatan at a Music@Menlo performance in 2010.

Sasha Cooke performs in Stent Hall at Menlo School.

Piano Trio in B Major, op. 8, which the composer wrote at 21. His influences are reflected in such works as Mozart’s Violin Sonata in E Minor, K. 304. Musicians include Ms. Wu and fellow pianist Juho Pohjonen, and clarinetist Carey Bell.


Brahms was fascinated with the Gypsy folk music that came to Germany in the 1840s, courtesy of immigrating Hungarians. The Aug. 5–6 concert programs focus on compositions both lively and melancholic inspired by Hungarian folk music, written by Brahms, Haydn, Dvorak and others. Violinist Elmar Oliveira joins Ms. Wu and Mr. Finckel, pianist Jon Kimura Parker and violinist Paul Neubauer on the stage.

The concert lineup also includes “Brahms: The Quartet in Context,” two programs featuring Brahms’ three string quartets and other quartets by Leon Kirchner, Beethoven and Anton Webern. Mr. Kirchner (1919–2009) was a student of Arnold Schoenberg, who greatly admired Brahms. The Orion String Quartet will perform three of these works on Aug. 4 and three on Aug. 7.

To help put Brahms in the context of his world and times, Music@Menlo also hosts a quartet of lectures. This summer, they include a July 22 talk by festival artistic administrator Patrick Castillo on lifelong bachelor Brahms’ “loneliness and legacy.” On Aug. 11, Ara Guzelimian, provost and dean of the Juilliard School, will speak on the wisdom and poignancy of Brahms’ last compositions.

Performances by the Chamber Music Institute’s young musicians are free. Ticket prices vary for other events. For details and a full schedule, go to musicatmenlo.org or call 650-331-0202.

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR TOWN COUNCIL

The Town of Portola Valley is seeking candidates for two Town Council seats, which are up for election. Both are 4-year terms which will expire in November 2015. The Town Council meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m.

The candidate filing period is July 18 – August 12, 2011, unless an incumbent does not file for re-election, in which case the deadline will automatically be extended until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 17, 2011. Interested residents may request information and nomination papers Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at Town Hall, 765 Portola Road. There is no fee for filing.

Sharon Hanlon
Town Clerk

NOTICE OF ELECTION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a General Municipal Election will be held in the Town of Woodside on Tuesday, November 8, 2011, for the following Officers:

A member of the Town Council to fill the office now held by Ron Romines, from District 1, for a full term of four years;

A member of the Town Council to fill the office now held by Susan Boynton, from District 3, for a full term of four years;

A member of the Town Council to fill the office now held by David Burrow, from District 5, for a full term of four years;

A member of the Town Council to fill the office now held by Peter Mason, from District 7, for a full term of four years.

If no one or only one person is nominated for an elective office, appointment to the elective office may be made as prescribed by Section 10229, Elections Code of the State of California.

The polls will be open between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Janet G. Koelsch, CMC
Clerk of the Town of Woodside

July 8, 2011

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