

October 22, 2022

7:30 pm

"A Festive Homecoming"

Academic Festival Overture

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

Max Bruch (1838 - 1920)

- I. Prelude: Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio
- III. Finale: Allegro energico

Igor Pikayzen, violin

INTERMISSION

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

The Three-Cornered Hat (Complete)

Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946)

Act I

1. *Introducción* (Introduction)
2. *La Tarde* (Afternoon)
3. *Danza de la molinera (Fandango)* (Dance of the Miller's Wife)
4. *Las uvas* (The Grapes)

Act II

1. *Danza de los vecinos (Seguidillas)* (Dance of the Neighbors)
2. *Danza del molinero (Farruca)* (Dance of the Miller)
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4. *Danza final (Jota)* (Final Dance)

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Johannes Brahms (b. Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833; d. Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897)

The work calls for three flutes with piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, three bassoons with contra bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, triangle), and strings. The performance time is 10 minutes.

“Brahms was visiting his close friend, professor and violinist Josef Joachim, who continued to deliver his own university lectures.” Both musicians learned about “the student clubs whose songs Brahms would draw on decades later for his *Academic Festival Overture*,” writes Jan Swafford in *Johannes Brahms, A Biography*. “This was the closest he ever came to student life in the streets and taverns.”

In fact, “Brahms allowed himself to be unburdened in orchestral music composition in the 1880 *Academic Festival Overture*,” continues Swafford. “Otherwise, the tone in his later orchestral music would be largely sober and monumental, as he believed symphonic music ought to be.”

The *Academic Festival Overture* was to be Brahms’ thanks to Breslau University for his honorary doctorate; he would premiere the work there in January 1881. Brahms produced the lightly scored and lighthearted overture that he described as “a very jolly potpourri of student songs.”

Jan Swafford writes, “The most thoroughly unbuttoned of Brahms’ works, the *Academic Festival Overture* concerns itself with the life of students rather than the dignity of the institution. After the overture was completed, Joachim did trial readings with his student orchestra.”

Yet, Johannes Brahms was a serious German composer, pianist, and conductor of the Romantic period. Born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833, he spent much of his professional life in Vienna. Composers who were active during the same time period included Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt, Anton Bruckner, Gustav Mahler, and Max Bruch (whose violin concerto we will hear at this concert).

Brahms composed for symphony orchestra, chamber ensembles, piano, organ, voice, and chorus. A virtuoso pianist (and fine conductor), he premiered many of his own compositions. “He worked with leading performers and composers of his time including his close friends: the pianist Clara Schumann and the above-mentioned violinist Josef Joachim. Many of Brahms’ works have become staples of the modern concert repertoire, including the *Academic Festival Overture*” which we will hear tonight. And, by the way, it is enjoyable for the musicians to perform this work as well because there are so many good parts for each instrument!

Johannes Brahms died in Vienna on April 3, 1897. “The city gave him one of the grandest funerals ever seen,” continues Swafford. “Brahms was very much honored in his adopted country of Austria; when he died the flags in the harbor of his native Hamburg, Germany flew at half-mast.” It was an uncommon

tribute: North German Hamburg, and Vienna, Austria were the two cities that marked the poles of his life and his career.

Swafford concludes, “Brahms’ work enriched composers of the next century as diverse as Sibelius, Elgar, Ives, and Schoenberg. More than any of his contemporaries, Brahms had the kind of technique that can teach something to every composer of every stripe: what musical logic amounts to.”



Johannes Brahms

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26

Max Bruch (b. Cologne, Germany, January 6, 1838; d. Berlin, Germany, October 2, 1920)

- I. Prelude: Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio
- III. Finale: Allegro energico

Igor Pikayzen, violin

The work calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. The performance lasts about 24 minutes.

Bruch’s *G minor Violin Concerto, No. 1* was completed in 1866 and first performed later that year on April 24, by Otto von Königslöw, with the composer conducting.

Max Bruch was a friend of Johannes Brahms (whose work we heard earlier this evening); in fact, both composers consulted with their mutual friend, violinist Josef Joachim, on the violin intricacies and technique while composing their violin concertos. Interestingly, Bruch dedicated his *First Symphony* to Brahms, who accepted with pleasure. Author Jan Swafford writes, “Brahms at his last concert as director of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (an Austrian music organization) on April 18, 1875, conducted a most successful performance of Bruch’s oratorio, *Odysseus*.” The composer approved!

Bruch’s father was a government employee, and his mother came from a well-known and gifted musical family. A highly talented singer, she carefully monitored the early development of her son’s musical

talents. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Fifth Edition, continues, "He received his theoretical instruction in Bonn, and then gained a scholarship to the Mozart Foundation at Frankfurt for four years. He continued his studies at the Cologne Conservatory under Carl Reinecke, a professor and composer who had studied under composers Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt."

After more years of study and composition, presenting his performances, and accepting other music assignments, he became the director of the Orchestral Society at Breslau. Later he received honorary degrees from the Universities of Cambridge, Breslau, and Berlin.

Many people relate to Bruch solely because of this *Violin Concerto in G minor*. For instance, violin virtuoso Fritz Kreisler frequently performed Bruch's concertos and at time played with the composer. "Max Bruch, then an old man, sat at the piano to play yet another work for solo violin (leading with the orchestra transcription for piano) with Kreisler, the virtuoso, on the violin," writes Louis P. Lochner in this violinist's biography, *Fritz Kreisler*. "At seventy-four Bruch was still a magnificent pianist. His fire and vigor inspired Kreisler." Interestingly, Kreisler writes that he also met Johannes Brahms while performing/touring throughout Europe.

As mentioned earlier, Bruch's *G minor Violin Concerto* was first performed on April 24, 1866, by Otto von Königslöw, with the Maestro, Bruch, himself conducting. "However, Bruch substantially revised the concerto with the help of his friend and violinist Josef Joachim, who reintroduced it in its present form on January 5, 1868, Karl Martin Rheinthal conducting," writes Michael Steinberg in *The Concerto*.

Steinberg continues, "Among the four most famous German violin concertos – the Beethoven, the Mendelssohn, the Bruch G minor, and the Brahms – Josef Joachim, who was intimately connected with all four, called Bruch's 'the richest, most seductive of the four' referencing immediate sensuous impressions."

What to Listen For

"It is in the Adagio that the soul of this perennially fresh and touching *Violin Concerto* resides, lyric rapture being heightened by Bruch's artfully cultivated way with form, proportion, and sequence," writes Steinberg. "The Finale is 'crackling, Gypsy-tinged' and really exciting!"



Max Bruch

INTERMISSION

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Claude Debussy (b. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, August 22, 1862; d. Paris, France, March 25, 1918)

The work calls for three flutes, three oboes with English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, antique cymbals, two harps, and strings. The performance time is 10 minutes.

This is a symphonic tone poem for orchestra. A symphonic poem or tone poem is defined as a “piece of orchestral music, usually in a single continuous movement, which illustrates or evokes the content of a poem, short story, novel or other (non-musical) source.”

Notes to the original *Eulenburg* Debussy score read that “the music of this work is a very free illustration to a beautiful poem: the composition was inspired by the poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* by Stéphane Mallarmé. The music describes the wishes and dreams of the faun wandering in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired, he abandons himself to the delightful sleep of visions finally realized, and of full possession amid universal nature.”

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun is a work in which “Debussy announced an entirely new musical personality for the flute: dreamy, sensitive, and subtle,” writes Ardal Powell in his book *The Flute*.

The work was composed in 1894 and first performed in Paris on December 22, 1894. During the creation phase of the composition and first performance, a great deal of cooperation existed between composer, orchestra musicians, solo flutist, and conductor. The organization held numerous rehearsals since Debussy was constantly modifying the sound of the piece and trying minute variations until he felt it was right.

The flute solo was played by 18-year-old Georges Barrère who exemplified the slender, lithe quality and style of flute tone often thought of as belonging to the French school of flute playing.

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun is one of Debussy's most famous works and may be considered a turning point in the history of Western art music. French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez considered the score to be the beginning of modern music, observing that “the flute of the faun brought new breath to the art of music.”



Claude Debussy

The Three-Cornered Hat (Complete)

Manuel de Falla (b. Cádiz, Spain, November 23, 1876; d. Alta Gracia, Argentina, November 14, 1946)

Act I

1. *Introducción* (Introduction)
2. *La Tarde* (Afternoon)
3. *Danza de la molinera (Fandango)* (Dance of the Miller's Wife)
4. *Las uvas* (The Grapes)

Act II

1. *Danza de los vecinos (Seguidillas)* (Dance of the Neighbors)
2. *Danza del molinero (Farruca)* (Dance of the Miller)
3. *Danza del corregidor* (Dance of the Magistrate)
4. *Danza final (Jota)* (Final Dance)

The work calls for three flutes with piccolo, three oboes with English Horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbal, suspended cymbal, snare drum, triangle, tam-tam, glockenspiel, xylophone, castanets), harp, piano, celeste, and strings. The performance time is 40 minutes.



A three-cornered hat

The three-cornered hat, called a 'tricorne' or 'tricorn,' is a style of hat that was popular during the 18th century. At the peak of its popularity, the tricorne varied greatly in style and size, and was worn not only by the aristocracy, but also as common civilian dress, and as part of military and naval uniforms. The hat's most distinguishing characteristic was that three sides of the brim were turned up (cocked) and either pinned, laced, or buttoned in place to form a triangle around the crown. The style allowed stylish gentlemen to show off the most current fashions of their wigs, and thus their social status.

The tricorne appeared as a result of the evolution of the broad brim round hat used by Spanish soldiers in Flanders during the 17th century. The tricorne quickly declined in use at the end of the 18th century.

El sombrero de tres picos (The Three-Cornered Hat or Le Tricorne) is a ballet choreographed by Léonide Massine to music by Manuel de Falla. It was commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev and premiered on July 22, 1919, with the Ballet Russe. It is not only a ballet with Spanish setting but one that also employs the techniques of Spanish dance (adapted and somewhat simplified) instead of classical ballet.

In preparation for the first performance of the ballet, Diaghilev (referring to the choreographer, Léonide Massine) writes in a letter to Falla, “Massine asks me if you can bring him 30 pairs of castanets: 15 first class ones and 15 ordinary ones! Tell me how much they cost you.” Spanish dance, indeed!

The editors of *Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works* continue, “There is going to be a beautiful curtain designed, by the artist Picasso, which will be seen before the ballet commences. It would be a good idea to play a short overture so it may be viewed for a time. Also, Picasso agrees it would be very typical to add voices to some of the dance numbers; he thinks it is very Spanish.”

As seen in *Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works*, Diaghilev again writes to Falla, “Massine is choreographing the ballet and Picasso is making wonderful set designs. You will like it a lot.”

THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

Ballet by G. Martinez Sierra

After a story by P. A. de Alarcón

Music by Manuel de Falla

Choreography by Léonide Massine

Direction: Ernest Ansermet

Drop curtain, décor, and costumes by Pablo Picasso

“This ballet is in the repertory of all the ballet companies of the world,” writes Suzanne Demarquez in her biography, *Manuel de Falla*. “The complete ballet, the two suites for orchestra extracted from the score, the dances of the miller and of his wife, as well as the seguidilla (transcribed for different instruments), appear on the programs of many symphony concerts and recitals.” Demarquez continues, “The scores – orchestra and piano and voice – were published in 1921 by Chester in London.” Throughout the ballet, Falla uses traditional Andalusian folk music.

What to Listen For

The full ballet, *The Three-Cornered Hat*, with two acts, has a duration of 40 minutes and is performed by orchestra, and dancers. The ‘Dance of the Miller’s Wife,’ (Act 1) is an alluring ‘fandango’. A ‘fandango’ is a lively couple’s dance originating from Portugal and Spain, traditionally accompanied by guitars, castanets, or handclapping.

Act II begins with ‘The Neighbors’ Dance,’ a seguidilla. The seguidilla is an old Castilian folksong and dance form in quick triple time for two people. This is highlighted by Spanish guitar music, flamenco dancing, and bullfighting.

The intensity only builds through the ‘Miller’s Dance,’ in which the miller portrays both bull and bullfighter in a fury of athleticism, and into a Flamenco farruca, an almost ferociously intense dance in 4/4 time.

In the final dance, a traditional Spanish jota, the triumphant mood of the music leaves no doubt as to the ballet’s celebratory outcome. We can hear the fierce pride of the miller and his wife in the notes, and it’s all we can do to keep from stamping our feet along with them.

While Falla captures the feeling of Spain in his music, some of his work can be attributed to the influence of Ravel, Debussy, and Dukas – composers whom he admired and knew during his time in Paris. In fact, “Falla followed Dukas’ guidance and plunged deeply into a study of the technique of orchestral instrumentation,” writes Demarquez. “And following Debussy’s advice, he tried to preserve a commendable restraint in his orchestration.” Yet, just think of the bright colors and brilliant sun!

Below are quotes from Manuel de Falla as found in *Manuel de Falla* by Demarquez and *Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works* edited by Gonzalo Armero and Jore de Persia.

“I am completely devoted to music. It is something that one has to experience and have inside oneself, because the shaping of a musical work is a bit like the creation of a living creature. It needs time. One watches it take shape in so natural a manner. Music is so mysterious!” Manuel de Falla



Manuel de Falla