



THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC PRESENTS

HOMECOMING
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
CONCERT

Diego Piedra, *Conductor*

Saturday, October 3, 2021, 8:00 p.m.
Valparaiso University
Chapel of the Resurrection

PROGRAM

Leonore Overture No. 3, op. 72

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

El Cerro de la Muerte

Luis Diego Piedra
(b. 1980)

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

Piotr Ilytch Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

intermission

Symphony No. 3 in E Major, op. 51

- I. Andante Sostenuto
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Finale

Max Bruch
(1838-1920)

PROGRAM NOTES

Leonore Overture No. 3, op. 72

Although Beethoven succeeded in every genre of music he ventured to write in, he struggled most when writing his only opera, *Fidelio*, which the composer revised many times after its premiere in 1805. *Fidelio* was originally not named that, but *Leonore, or the Triumph of Marital Love*, and this caused confusion because around 1804-1816 there were other works made by other authors named *Leonore*. As a result, Beethoven was strongly advised by the Theater an der Wien to change the name of his opera to *Fidelio*. The name was not the only thing that Beethoven changed. The opera originally had three acts, which after two revisions was converted into two acts. The overture was redone four times in order to find the perfect companion to the opera. The subject matter of the opera resonates with Beethoven, as it describes a story of personal sacrifice, heroism and eventual triumph, qualities found in the very own life of the composer himself.

The first overture that came into existence is what we know as *Leonore* No. 2, which needed to be changed considering that the rest of the opera also needed to be shortened. Following this version, Beethoven composed what we know as *Leonore* No. 3 (1806), which may be considered to be the best of the *Fidelio* overtures, but it ended up being too much for the opera. Then, came *Leonore* No. 1 as a simplification of No. 3, which might have felt too light for the opera. Finally, Beethoven composed the last version of the *Leonore* overtures, which is named *Fidelio*, and that one is the overture that is typically performed with the opera!

The overture starts with the musical descent, as in describing Leonore, Florestan's wife, disguised as *Fidelio* (a prison guard) descending to the dungeons to see and free her husband. The music is slow in the beginning, mysterious, dark, and tentative. Then the *Allegro* begins and the main theme is heard in the cellos and violins. The trumpet plays offstage. This signifies the arrival of Don Fernando, the minister of State, at the moment where Pizarro (the governor) was about to stab Florestan. The action takes place in Spain. Florestan was sent to prison for exposing the crimes of Pizarro.

The end is very exciting and triumphant, with the violins leading a passage so difficult that it makes conductors choose any other of the *Leonore* overtures to avoid it!

El Cerro de la Muerte

El Cerro de la Muerte (The Mountain of Death) is a mountain in Costa Rica located between the Capitol San José and the pacific coast. When I was growing up, driving through it was the only way to get to the beach. San José sits in a valley surrounded by mountains, and the elevation of the mountains make driving quite an adventure. In terms of distance and time, if there was a highway that was a straight line between San José and the beach it would be possible to get there in less than an hour. However, because of the mountains and the terrain, it takes at least two hours.

The journey through el Cerro de la Muerte is quite beautiful. The mountains are lush and green, you see little towns, lots of flowers and cataracts coming out of the mountains, but the curves on the road are treacherous, and the precipices are deep so it is not a great idea to go fast... In fact it is not possible. It seems like even cars have a hard time climbing such steep mountains!

All of these situations gave me the impulse to write a piece about this mountain. The result is a mini tone poem, a sort of musicalizing the journey through the mountain with all its beauty and danger.

The piece was composed and premiered in 2011 in Costa Rica while I was working developing orchestras throughout the country. It was made especially for the students I had at the time, and it is meant to be a vehicle to showcase the students in their development as musicians. It borrows some recognizable music from major composers in an original way.

Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture

Russian culture and education demanded that art music had to be of the highest caliber, and fundamentally different from western music in terms of content and form. It needed to reflect the strength of Russia, its intellect, philosophy, politics, heritage and beauty. Tchaikovsky managed to study at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he learned in a western-oriented style. This set him apart from his Russian contemporaries, as they tended to find other ways of creating music. Be that as it may, Tchaikovsky himself recognized that he struggled with western methods of composition. He deeply admired composers like Beethoven, but he loved Mozart. For him, Mozart was “the Christ” of music. Mozart was a master of many things, one of which was formal composition and development. Tchaikovsky tried to imitate that, but it was futile. Tchaikovsky’s mind worked differently. For him, the music always came complete. He heard it in his head, then he wrote it down. This created no room for creative development of ideas, because all of Tchaikovsky’s ideas were already formed and thought of even with what instruments they would be played.

Naming movements or writing titles for pieces was something that made Tchaikovsky uncomfortable, to say the least. He hated the idea of associating extra musical thoughts to his music. He regretted pieces like *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*, *Francesca da Rimini* and *Manfred Symphony* because they had names that revealed what the music was about rather than allowing the listeners to come up with their ideas about the music. However, there is no denying that *Romeo and Juliet* is exceedingly beautiful and passionate. Right from the beginning we hear a dark theme played by the clarinets, symbolizing Friar Lawrence, and we know that what he thinks won’t end well. Tchaikovsky’s romantic nature, his extroverted personality and gift for writing melodies allowed him to write perhaps one of the most beloved and recognized melodies in music history, that of the love theme of *Romeo and Juliet*, heard first with the English Horn along with the violas.

Romeo and Juliet is a fantastic representation of Shakespeare’s drama. It includes fighting, love, tenderness, innocence, passion, death, and even beyond what’s left after that. The music concludes triumphantly sending love upward, as if saying that not even death can hinder it or finish it. Love conquers all.

What we hear today is what is known as the third version of this piece, revised in 1880, which is ten years after the first reworking of the piece.

Symphony No. 3 in E Major, op. 51

Max Bruch was born in Cologne, Germany. From a very young age he showed interest in music, and luckily for him, his parents supported his enthusiasm for music from the start and provided him with teachers who guided him all along. Bruch started composing music as a child, and soon he realized that composition was his calling.

Bruch's life and oeuvre was submerged within the romantic period. In the year he was born, Mendelssohn was beginning to conceive his violin concerto, and when he died in 1920, Debussy had put Paris under his spell with his *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* had been shocking the world for seven years, and Alban Berg had been orchestrating his opera *Wozzeck*. Those three works count as the most influential musical compositions of the 20th Century. And Bruckner, Mahler, Dvorák, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Wagner and Brahms are only some of the composers who lived at the same time.

Bruch's music was written within the Germanic tradition of western music. As music was "evolving" through the other composers' techniques and styles, Bruch decided to remain and stick to his way of conceiving music.

Bruch's most famous works today are his Concerto for Violin No. 1 and his *Scottish Fantasy* for Violin and Orchestra. Though he became well known for his other works, particularly choral pieces, none of his compositions endured the way those two did.

The third symphony was written as a commission for the Symphony Society of New York in the summer of 1882 and premiered there on December 17 that same year. It is composed in four contrasting movements. By the time this symphony was produced, Johannes Brahms had also finished his second symphony. The emergence of the figure of Brahms was too overpowering for Bruch to keep up with, and so his fortune began its decline.

Bruch's third symphony evokes "his freshest, happiest youth," while he was living in the Rheinland. The first movement begins with a slow introduction, with melodies coming from the clarinet and horn, which have prominent roles during the whole piece. Following that, the *Allegro* section of the movement features a bold, melodic theme which develops into an imposing climax. The second movement puts forth a sentiment of both nostalgia and religiousness, which has been linked to Schumann's *Rhenish* symphony. The third movement, *Scherzo*, is energetic and brilliantly orchestrated while the finale has two main themes, slow-fast.

-Diego Piedra

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Diego Piedra is the Director of Orchestras at Valparaiso University. A strongly driven performer and educator, Dr. Piedra feels at home working on the podium with student and professional orchestras. Recent professional conducting engagements have included the Music Directorship and Conducting of Spectrum Orchestra, visiting orchestral positions at Luther College and the University of Toledo, and guest conducting appearances with the Oakland Symphony Orchestra in Michigan, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, and the Municipal Orchestra of Cartago. In Costa Rica Dr. Piedra was in high demand as the orchestral conducting professor at the University of Costa Rica as well as a guest violin teacher and performer in Venezuela, Honduras and Guatemala. He founded the national youth orchestra called Manuel María Gutiérrez at SINEM (the Costa Rican version of Venezuela's El Sistema), and was its Music Director and Conductor from 2009-2011. Since 2014, Dr. Piedra has been Music Director at the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra's Summer String Camp, working as a conductor, violinist and composer. As a professional violinist he has been a member of the prestigious New World Symphony in Miami, South Bend Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Oakland Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica and Concertmaster of the Orquesta de Cámara de Costa Rica. Dr. Piedra participated as violinist and assistant conductor in the tour and recording of the University Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan (winner of four Grammy awards in 2006), which culminated at Carnegie Hall, New York.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

The Valparaiso University Symphony Orchestra is a select ensemble dedicated to professional performance standards of works from both the standard and contemporary repertoires. Students of all areas of study are welcome to participate. Recent performances have included music by Beethoven (Symphonies 5, 8, 9), Brahms (Symphonies 1, 2, 4), Mendelssohn (Symphonies 4, 5), Shostakovich (Symphony 5, Piano Concerto 2), Sibelius (Symphonies 1, 2), Tchaikovsky (Symphonies 4, 5), Mahler (Symphony 2), Britten (Sea Interludes), Elgar (Enigma Variations), Holst (The Planets), Respighi (Pines of Rome), Strauss (Death and Transfiguration), and Stravinsky (Firebird Suite). In 2018, the VUSO served as the anchor ensemble for the second annual Friendship Lasts Forever gala concert, which was held at Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, the premier outdoor performance venue in Chicago. In the spring of 2018, they toured China for the second time. For many years, the VUSO has hosted the Great Lakes Music Festival, welcoming traditional musicians from China, as well as high school students from Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan.

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

+Morgen Heissenbuettel, Ypsilanti, MI
(music performance, psychology)
Savannah Jackson, Rockford, IL
(mechanical engineering)
Simeon Klepac, Wilmore, KY (music education)
Mark Sweeney, Warrenville, IL (meteorology)
Katharina Uhde, associate professor of music,
Valparaiso University

Violin 2

^Elizabeth Deml, Bedford, NH (mechanical engineering)
Olivia Maass, Fishers, IN (exploratory)
Emily Nelson, Chicago, IL (physics)
Jeremy Freed, Three Rivers, MI (meteorology)

Viola

^Anton Pham, Goshen, IN (meteorology)
Gavin Tabor, Crown Point, IN (biology/chemistry)
Lucia Otten, Valparaiso, IN (exploratory)
Reiana Thomas, Portage, IN (music)
Steven Engel, Annapolis, MD (computer engineering)
Keelie Cantwell, Wheatfield, IN (biochemistry)

Cello

^Hallie Wolf, Kenosha, WI (chemistry)
Sarah Iselin, Greendale, WI (engineering)

Bass

^Jakob Wiegand, Saratoga Springs, NY
(civil engineering)
Kyle Morrison, Lake Zurich, IL (mechanical engineering)

Flute

^Genevieve Brown, Williamston, MI (music performance)
Julia Pastore, Munster, IN (music therapy)
Sammy Knapp, Georgetown, KY (engineering)

Oboe

Adeelyn Carney, Appleton, WI (biology/chemistry)

Clarinet

^Max Ehlers, Milwaukee, WI (biology/chemistry)
Camille Ancevicus, Homer Glen, IL (nursing)
Alex Appel, Valparaiso, IN (computer engineering)

Bassoon

^Nicholas Sanchez, Hobart, IN (music education)
Joel Stoppenhagen, Ossian, IN (music education)

Horn

Maiah Deogracias, Fort Wayne, IN
(art/communications)
Savannah Becka, Crown Point, IN (music)

Trumpet

^Jacob Keen, Knox, IN (music education)
Kurt Mertzger, Vicenza, Italy (music education)
Ryan Gee, Princeton, IL (music)

Trombone

^Matthew Yee, Auburn, CA (civil engineering, music)
Adam Lindemer, Crown Point, IN (music education)
David Lee, Schererville, IN (music education)

Tuba

Payton Wills, Valparaiso, IN (biology/chemistry)

Timpani

Ricky Paz, Schererville, IN (music education)

Percussion

Olivia Norris, Franklin, IN (civil engineering)
Genevieve Brown, Williamston, MI (music performance)
Matt Kennedy, St. Charles, IL (civil engineering)

Harp

Olivia Norris, Franklin, IN (civil engineering)

Orchestra Manager

Ricky Paz, Schererville, IN (music education)

+ Denotes concertmaster

^Denotes principal

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Monday, October 4, 2021, 7:30 p.m.
Faculty Recital: Layne Anspach, French horn
Duesenberg Recital Hall
Free and open to the public

Sunday, October 17, 2021, 4 p.m.
Michael Boo Memorial Concert and Symphony Premiere
Valparaiso University Chamber Concert Band,
Windiana
Chapel of the Resurrection
Free and open to the public

Saturday, October 23, 2021, 4 p.m.
Family Weekend Concert
Valparaiso University Chamber Concert Band
Chapel of the Resurrection
Free and open to the public

Saturday, October 23, 2021, 7:30 p.m.
Family Weekend Concert
Valparaiso University Luce Band,
Valparaiso University Community/University Concert Band
Chapel of the Resurrection
Free and open to the public

Ushers courtesy of Phi Mu Alpha Music Fraternity. Audio/video recording and flash photography are not permitted. The Valparaiso University Department of Music strictly observes the provisions in U.S. Copyright Law which exist to protect creative artists against inappropriate and unrewarded use of their work.



VALPARAISO
UNIVERSITY

Department of Music