

NEWS *from* FESTIVAL HILL

REGARDING REPERTOIRE

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The Festival Difference

As you are likely to have experienced, it is one thing to enjoy a singular performance of wonderful music, beautifully played, and quite another to journey through a festival of music, with the sequence of compositions chosen creating its own path of diversions, surprises and delights. In the first case, the listener experience is contained to a few hour time-frame or less. In the second, the listener has a more epic adventure as he interacts over a period of days or weeks with the artists' interpretations of a variety of music.

As preparation for writing this update from Festival Hill, your newsletter editor took a trip through Jonathan Kramer's *Listen to the Music, A Self-Guided Tour Through the Orchestral Repertoire*. A composer and educator, Kramer had much to say about many of the pieces that will be part of the six-week Round Top Music Festival in 2014.

In the observations that follow, unless quotes are otherwise attributed, they belong to Kramer.

An interesting aspect of any festival repertoire is to speculate about the backstory of why particular compositions have been chosen. In the case of Round Top Festival Institute, a center for performance and learning, the repertoire needs to be suitably inspiring to the musical advancement of the performers. The Texas Festival Symphony Orchestra numbers ninety young artists selected through competitive audition. In determining the repertoire, thought is given to the spectrum of performance opportunity for different instruments, to the music that will enrich the performers' learning and to the audience's listening experience.



At their October meeting, trustees hear about the 2014 Music Festival repertoire

In 2014, in addition to the orchestral concerts and the chamber music concerts that have been part of the festival in recent years, the festival format will be expanded to include four chamber orchestra performances. Gala Opening Day happens June 7.

Influences and Changing Perspectives

Three of the composers we'll hear—Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert—spent time in Vienna where the atmosphere among musicians during the 1790s was exhilarating. There were "some three hundred pianists in Vienna, all competing for prominence and all making a living teaching the more than six thousand keyboard students in the city."

Wolfgang Mozart died in Vienna in 1791. The next year Beethoven moved there and "immediately began a spectacularly successful career as a pianist." However, with regard to composition, at that time he was viewed only as Haydn's student. Also in Vienna about this time was Franz Schubert. While the two never met, Schubert knew and admired Beethoven's music. In apparent hopelessness, Schubert asked, "Who can still do anything after Beethoven?"

Schubert studied composition with Antonio Salieri. His

employment was assistant schoolmaster and most of the symphonies he composed waited until years after his death—at 31, at which age Beethoven had composed one symphony—for professional performance. *Symphony No. 5*, which we will hear this summer, is an exception: it was completed and performed during the fall of 1816.



Musicologist Mosco Carner felt the *Fifth Symphony* was the most successful of his early symphonies, "his conscious farewell to two masters of his youth." However, the second performance of that symphony was not until 1873 in London. Interest in Schubert was surfacing in England, although about this time Johannes Brahms declined an opportunity to conduct an

all-Schubert concert, saying "there were not enough suitable orchestral works of Schubert to fill a concert." By the twentieth century with the addition of recordings as a substantial aspect of the world of music, Schubert had become featured in the standard orchestra repertoire.

Brahms—we will hear his *Symphony No. 2*—had a major influence on another composer who is part of the summer festival repertoire, Dvorak. "The crucial event in Dvorak's rise from obscurity to international fame was meeting Johannes Brahms." Brahms helped his younger colleague in several ways, including introducing him to Fritz Simrock, who subsequently published much of Dvorak's music.

Following more lines of influence, Kramer looks at romanticism, saying this: "Glorification of the individual was a fundamental tenet of nineteenth-century German romanticism. In music this idea originated with Beethoven—both the man and his compositions. The first major composer to break away from the patronage system, he saw himself primarily as an independent artist and only secondarily as a servant of nobility. His music was expressive of individual emotions and values to an unprecedented degree." Richard Strauss, whose work features prominently in the summer festival repertoire, applied his German romantic view and his interest in philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche to his work. As part of the culmination of the summer festival, we'll hear Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which draws its title from one of Nietzsche's major works. "Today, Strauss' *Zarathustra* has a new meaning. It is a symbol no longer of Superman, but of knowledge and mystery. The source of this symbol is not a book written in 1884-85, but a Hollywood film of the late 1960s. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* used it as a recurrent leitmotif in the opening twenty measures of the tone poem." Since Kramer's "today" was 1988, another festival question is whether this symphony's meaning has further evolved.

The Paradox of Music

Mozart, as we know, lived tumultuously. Mozart and his father's employer, Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg, "did not care for either of them and they, in turn, disliked their positions." Seeking a change, Wolfgang Mozart made a tour of music capitals of Europe, with the hope of improving his living and pleasure. What he found was that rather than the experience of his earlier European tour where he had been welcomed at courts as a child prodigy, now at 21 he was

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received as just another musician. He did not secure many of the commissions he'd sought. Yet Mozart's music is heart-soaring and uplifting.

Beethoven composed *Symphony No. 2*—a happy symphony for the listener and part of this summer's repertoire—during a major time of trial as he was encountering the fading in and out of his hearing. "The human mind, particularly that of a genius like Beethoven, is complex. It is capable of operating on independent planes at once. As a result the *Second Symphony* could become a happy creation, although written at the unhappiest of times."

Tchaikovsky composed the violin concerto we'll hear as he escaped from an unhappy, very short marriage of nine weeks. His fellow Russian, Rachmaninoff, "resolved to revise the *First Concerto* during a period when he was trying to shake off a significant depression. His enormously popular second and third concertos had been written and he was 'eager to make his *First* a worthy companion of those two giants." We will have the chance to hear the *First* on July 5.

A Bit About Composition

Bela Bartok's masterpiece, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, will be performed during the festival. "In place of melody we hear fragments of scales. The music is built from these small fragments, not from tunes. Such a compositional strategy makes the music constantly exciting." Bartok draws from Hungarian folk music. Another festival-featured composer, Edvard Grieg, finds inspiration in Norwegian folk music. We're told he had a lifetime commitment to the Norwegian national music style and founded a Norwegian national theater "for which he hired an obscure young playwright Henrik Ibsen." The *Piano Concerto* which we will hear at the June 7 opening concert is his largest work and the culmination of his early period.

Please consider coming to as much of the Round Top Music Festival as you can to experience the many layers of musical thought that will be presented. Look for more about the repertoire in the Spring issue of *News from Festival Hill*.

Festival Hill Records New Christmas Theme

Festival Hill journeyed to Denton, Texas, to record a new holiday theme. The players were Dick Smith, writer producer, Don Zimmers, composer/arranger. Jordan Martin, engineer, Kay Sharpe, Bruce Wermuth, Abby Holmes, and Jeff Oxley, singers. The Christmas at Festival Hill was recorded at Redwood Studios in Denton Texas, and will be used as the radio music theme to advertise all of the upcoming holiday events to be presented at Festival Hill. The line "Festival Hill at Round



Top...a Texas Christmas Treasure" will be used throughout the holiday season.

Listen for radio spots promoting the Texas Master Chorale concert on December 7 and *The Nutcracker* Ballet on December 14. Also, watch for Dick Smith on stage performing his annual Valentine's Concert benefitting the Institute's Library Collection on February 8.

Mark Your Calendars for the Fellows Dinner

Speaking of special, those of you who are Fellows please save the date of April 26 for the annual dinner celebrating you. This year's dinner will be on the stage of the concert hall and will include a tribute performance for dinner guests by James Dick. We will be formally introducing the Festival Hill Legacy Society at the dinner. As many of you know, legacy gifts have had a major role in building Festival Hill. In the future, they will have continuing significance in building the Institute's endowment to a level that results in a sustainable creative center serving Texas and the music and arts worlds for generations to come.

If at some point you have considered becoming a Fellow, we encourage you to take that step before April 26th, so that we may include you in this celebration, which in some ways is a benchmark as we look forward to what we intend to be a

long, exciting future for Festival Hill.

The Burdine Johnson Foundation

Founder and Artistic Director James Dick, Managing Director Richard Royall and Library and Museum Curator Lamar Lentz visited William Johnson at his home, Halifax Ranch, in early October. Bill is the second generation of his family to



William Johnson, James Dick, Richard Royall, Lamar Lentz

have deep connections with Round Top Festival Institute. The Johnsons and their family foundation have been an integral part of the transformation of Festival Hill from a six-acre property lacking facilities and landscaping to a vibrant 200-acre campus with gardens, walking trails, residences for young artists and faculty, rehearsal space and a stunning concert hall.

The Institute is appreciative indeed that The Burdine Johnson Foundation will be the 44th Season Partner in 2014. It is hoped that another outstanding philanthropic entity with an interest in creative endeavor and cultural advancement will join them as the second season partner. The role of all donors—from lead donors like The Burdine Johnson Foundation, to donors of significant gifts to annual and capital projects, to Fellows who give \$1,000 or more a year, to Patrons who help generously with \$500 a year, to donors of \$50, 150 and \$200 a year—is critical to the Institute's ability to present a world-class festival every summer. We can't say it enough—Bravo to you all!

A Review of 2013

As we approach year end, we have a number of highlights, both from the Summer Festival and the August-to-April Series, for which to be grateful. Forums, holiday fare, special concerts and dance performances happen at Festival Hill throughout the year. Beyond Festival Hill, 2013 has been a year when philanthropically inclined people have in many cases seen better returns on their investments than has been the case in recent years. If you are so inclined, this is a good time to consult with your financial advisors about how you might carry forward with your charitable intentions in ways that prudently extend the value and impact of your gifts. For those who are 70 ½ and older, an IRA rollover gift may be something your advisor would recommend. If we can be of assistance, please call Lamar Lentz to help facilitate your plans.

James Dick in Performance

Founder and Artistic Director James Dick performs a special solo recital at the Festival Concert Hall on February 22. Most recently, he was the inaugural performer in the new "Texas Artists" series that debuted at The Bullock Museum on November 7. Not long back from Dubrovnik, Croatia, where he performed, this season he is sharing his special regard for Beethoven with audiences, including his compositions in all three of these concerts.

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