Brahms, Berg, and Bernstein

Rutgers Symphony Orchestra
Kynan Johns, Conductor

Yoon Kwon, Violin
Sonya Headlam, Soprano

Saturday, September 12, 2015 | 7:30 p.m.
Nicholas Music Center
Mason Gross Performing Arts Center
Douglass Campus

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Program

“Jeremiah” Symphony No. 1
for Orchestra and Mezzo Soprano
Leonard Bernstein
(1918–1990)

I. Prophecy
II. Profanation
III. Lamentation

Sonya Headlam, Soprano

Violin Concerto
“To the memory of an angel”
Alban Berg
(1885–1935)

I. Andante – Allegro
II. Allegro – Adagio

Yoon Kwon, Violin

Intermission

Symphony No. 3 in F major, op. 90
Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante
III. Poco allegretto
IV. Allegro – Un poco sostenuto
How doth the city sit solitary,
That was full of people!
How is she become as a widow?
She that was great among the nations.
And princess among the provinces.
How is she become tributary!

She weepeth sore in the night,
And her tears are on her cheeks;
She hath none to comfort her
Among all her lovers;
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
They are become her enemies.

Judah is gone into exile because of affliction.
And because of great servitude;
She dwelleth among the nations,
She findeth no rest.
All her pursuers overtook her
Within the narrow passes.

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned …
How doth the city sit solitary
… a widow.
4:14–15

They wander as blind men in the streets,
They are polluted with blood,
So that men cannot
Touch their garments.

Depart, ye unclean! they cried unto them,
Depart, depart! Touch us not …

5:20–21

Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever,
And forsake us so long time? …

Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord …
Leonard Bernstein completed “Jeremiah” Symphony No. 1 for orchestra and mezzo-soprano on New Year’s Eve 1942. He began this three-movement work in 1939 as a sketch entitled “Lamentation” for soprano and orchestra. The young Bernstein ended up setting aside the handwritten sketch (based on Hebrew text from the book of Lamentations), as he was easily diverted by various projects he was pursuing and struggling to make ends meet. It may be hard to imagine, but the Bernstein of the early 1940s was living a bohemian lifestyle, desperately trying to gain a foothold in the vast musical landscape of New York.

The true motivation to revisit this work later and turn it into a full-scale symphonic composition came in response to a competition organized by the New England Conservatory and presided over by one of Bernstein’s mentors, Serge Koussevitzky. The deadline for the competition was a mere few weeks away as Bernstein worked at a maddening pace to complete the symphony. Shirley Bernstein described the scene she observed when she walked into her brother’s tiny apartment that tumultuous December while on a holiday visit to see him:

I came to New York on vacation and found Lenny up to his knees in manuscript, red eyed from lack of sleep … He was still deep in composing the last of the three movements, the scoring was only half way done and there remained the tedious time consuming job of copying the whole work neatly and clearly. Only three days remained to accomplish all of this by the deadline.

Bernstein did not win the competition, but 1943 would turn out to be a breakthrough year for the young musician. His last-minute conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic in November of that year immediately vaulted him onto the world stage. Offers were soon coming in requesting Bernstein to guest-conduct across the globe. Past mentors were suddenly competing to claim him as their protégé. One
of them was Fritz Reiner, who invited Bernstein to guest-conduct the Pittsburgh Symphony during the winter of 1944. Bernstein accepted, provided that he could conduct the premiere of his new symphony. Finally, nearly five years after he had made its first sketches, “Jeremiah” Symphony was performed January 28, 1944, in Pittsburgh.

Fully orchestrated in just 10 days, the work does reveal some bare seams that interrupt the overall flow of the symphony. This is perhaps because two of its three movements were composed three years removed from each other and then basically fused together. In 1977 Bernstein affectionately referred to “Jeremiah” as “my poor little symphony.” However, the work was actually received in a positive light, winning the 1944 New York Music Critics Circle Award for best work premiered in New York that year.

The symphony’s opening movement (Prophecy) begins economically, with a faint ostinato in the strings accompanied by a somber horn solo. Quickly gaining thematic traction, the piece arrives at a billowing climax: the horn solo is scored out in thirds in the strings and woodwinds, while the brass pounds out the opening ostinato demonstratively. Throughout the remainder of the movement, Bernstein builds up to an earth-shattering climax, then concludes with a desolate 20-bar resolution.

The middle scherzo movement (Profanation) uses what we now recognize as the familiar Bernstein kinetic energy, foreshadowing the rhythmic juxtapositions displayed in future compositions such as West Side Story and On the Waterfront. The melodic line of this movement, while not authentic, is a slightly distorted version of a liturgical chant conjured up from the composer’s Jewish upbringing.

Movement three (Lamentation) features a mezzo-soprano performing the liturgical text set to represent the cry of Jeremiah as Jerusalem is dishonored and destroyed. The finale is by far the most intense of the three movements. While not programmatic, the entire symphony
offers several highly cerebral messages for the listener to contemplate well beyond the actual performance.

After Bernstein passed away—exactly a quarter century ago—Michael Tilson Thomas said the composer would be remembered much more for the depth of his compositional oeuvre than for his career as a conductor.

—Lawrence Markiewicz, DMA conducting candidate

**Alban Berg**’s intensely beautiful *Violin Concerto*, the only solo concerto he composed, came from a profound place in his life, as we see from the inscription on the score, “To the memory of an angel.” The angel was Manon Gropius, the daughter of his friend Alma Mahler, widow of Gustav Mahler and wife of the famous architect Walter Gropius.

In 1935, violinist Louis Krasner asked Berg to compose a violin concerto. Krasner was still young and at the beginning of a career that would lead him to premiere much important music, including concertos by Schoenberg and Roger Sessions. The violinist offered Berg not only the generous sum of $1,500 but motivation, for 12-tone music needed an audience-friendly concerto—expressive and emotional in character—to become popular.

Berg, in the middle of composing his opera *Lulu*, did not accept Krasner’s offer initially, but the idea stayed with him, and sometime later he began work on the concerto. Shortly thereafter he heard about the passing of Manon Gropius from polio. From a letter to Alma Mahler we see how Berg turned his sadness into inspiration:

> Before this terrible year has passed, you and Franz [Franz Werfel, Alma’s husband at the time] will be able to hear, in the form of a score which I shall dedicate “to the memory of an angel,” that which I feel and today cannot express.
Berg moved to a summer cottage in Wörthersee, in the southern Austrian province of Kärnten (Carinthia), where Brahms had written much of his own violin concerto many years earlier. Leaving off the last act of *Lulu*, which would remain incomplete, Berg focused all his energy on the concerto. He completed it in less than four months, an unusually short time for the composer, who would usually spend about two years on a major work.

Berg composed *Violin Concerto* using 12-tone principles, a technique he learned directly from Arnold Schoenberg. The concerto is in two parts, each with two continuous movements. The first part—movements 1 and 2—portrays the beautiful young girl; the second part—movements 3 and 4—is much darker. In the final movement we hear Bach’s chorale “Es ist genug! Herr, wenn es dir gefällt.” Berg had discovered that the final four notes of his tone row were exactly the same as the opening of this chorale melody. Perhaps the text also resonated with Berg’s feelings of loss:

It is enough;
Lord, if it be thy will,
Then let me rest in peace!
My Jesus comes;
To thee, O world, good night!
I fare to heaven’s house,
I fare in peace henceforth securely,
My great distress shall bide behind me.
It is enough.

—Translation from bach-cantatas.com

*Violin Concerto* would be the last piece Berg composed; he died suddenly before its premiere. Thus the work became an elegy not only for his beloved friend but for himself.

—Saya Callner, DMA conducting candidate
Johannes Brahms claimed he had worked on his first symphony for 21 years. By comparison, his third symphony took him much less time: the summer of 1883. Symphony No. 3 in F major is both the shortest of the composer’s four symphonies and the least often performed.

In a popular quirk of the 19th century, many people adopted personal statements or mantras to express their philosophical outlook on life. Joseph Joachim, the famed violinist and friend of Brahms, espoused frei aber einsam (free but lonely) because his world-traveling schedule strained his personal relationships. Brahms’s frei aber froh (free but joyful) was the composer’s rosier response. Transformed into a musical cipher, F–A-flat–F, this motto defines the symphony’s first movement and reoccurs in the fourth-movement finale.

The opening movement—Allegro con brio, in 6/4 meter—appears at times dejected before exhibiting demonstrative outbursts of optimism. Impassioned statements are counterpointed by playfully naïve passages. Brahms underscores these ideas with his trademark use of hemiola (the feeling of shifting between triple and duple meter due to rhythmic alteration) and syncopation. The playful second theme, first heard in the clarinet, shifts to 9/4, emphasizing groups of three beats. As if exhausted, the movement distills itself to piano before a last burst of courage pushes it back to forte for a final statement of frei aber froh.

The pastoral second movement begins with a bucolic theme for clarinet with bassoon accompaniment. Yet the idyllic atmosphere is not sustained, receding into darker hues and minor key areas. Not content to be held down, the principal clarinet theme makes several attempts to rise again before the wind section carries the movement back into the sunlight, culminating in a lush, romantic theme in the violins.

The third movement is a slightly atypical minuet and trio. Its swirling, dramatic character gives the impression that we have entered somewhere in the middle of the conversation. It is not long before the
C minor opening moves to C major. The recapitulation of the minuet affords Brahms the opportunity for a new orchestration, this time much more sparse and direct, with a solo for horn.

The British critic Donald Tovey has described the fourth movement as “dramatic and terse.” This movement is at times a dirge and at others charmingly cheerful, and it is frequently incisive in its syncopation and articulation. The movement is defined by its powerful escalations, yet it contains ample reminders of where the work began, as the symphony comes to a sweeping and then reconciliatory conclusion.

—Thomas Cunningham, DMA conducting candidate
Rutgers Symphony Orchestra

**Conductor:** Kynan Johns  
**Assistant Conductors:** Thomas Cunningham, Saya Callner, Lawrence Markiewicz

**First Violin**  
Tao Zhang, *Concertmaster*  
Julie Castor, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
Ga Young Cho, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
Go Woon Choi  
Yu Jin Oh  
Junghee Lee  
Yu-Wei Hsiao  
Yin Bin Qian  
Daniel Jiang  
James Keene  
Melissa Lisboa-Underwood  
Emily Gaab

**Cello**  
Patrick Hopkins, *Principal*  
Diana Golden, *Assistant Principal*  
Matthias Iff  
Jaime Compton  
Veronica Parrales  
Alexander Nelson  
Kevin Maas  
Jamie Reyes  
Brianna Tagliaferro

**Horn**  
Giovanni Garcia, *Principal*  
Jon Anderson, *Co-principal*  
Jessie Mersinger  
Elizabeth Benson  
Kevin Ayres

**Second Violin**  
Xinou Wei, *Principal*  
Suji Ahn, *Assistant Principal*  
Hyun Joon Shin  
Weilong Wang  
William Oh  
Sarah Curtit  
Mark Perfect  
Grace Lee  
Ian Kerke  
Emily Ho  
Hyun Jin Eo  
Thomas Purcell

**Flute and Piccolo**  
Hilary Jones, *Principal*  
Christine Jungeun Chen, *Co-principal*  
Sarah Shin  
Patricia Anselmo  
Molly Shambo

**Oboe and Cor Anglais**  
Lillian Copeland, *Principal*  
Ling Chun Yeh  
Fabian Schultz

**Clarinet**  
Soojin Huh, *Principal*  
Dena Orkin  
Anthony Ciccone  
Catherine Heiba  
Zachary Sidqi  
John Antisz

**Bassoon**  
Wen Hsieh, *Principal*  
Inkyung Irene Lang, *Co-principal*  
Dai Yu-Cheng  
Austin Durham

**Viola**  
On You Kim, *Co-principal*  
Jen-Hsuan Liao, *Co-principal*  
Ji-Youn Choi  
Jaewon Chung  
Shuli Tang  
Jinyoung Kim  
Seth Van Embden  
Jacob Shur

**Bass Trombone**  
Jeffrey Smith, *Principal*

**Timpani**  
Erik Martin  
Dan Vaughan

**Tuba**  
Matthew Sakasitz, *Principal*

**Percussion**  
Greg Riss, *Principal*  
Erik Martin  
Brant Roberts  
Jake Schlaerth  
Allegra Pin

**Harp**  
Fran Duffy
About the Artists

Soprano Sonya Headlam is a versatile performer of operatic, concert, and recital repertoire. Her career highlights include a Carnegie Hall debut with Distinguished Concerts International New York and a regional opera house debut with the Fargo-Moorhead Opera, singing the role of Musetta in La Bohème. Headlam has twice performed as part of the Trinity Wall Street Church recital series in Lower Manhattan, joining a rich history of well-known and emerging professional musicians. Of Jamaican parentage, she has been active in the Caribbean, including touring Guadeloupe as a recitalist and soloist with members of the Cuban Philharmonic. Headlam earned two performance degrees from Miami University of Ohio and received additional training at Mannes College The New School for Music. She is pursuing a DMA degree in voice performance at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, under the tutelage of Nancy Gustafson.

Born in Seoul, violinist Yoon Kwon moved to the United States with her family at age 5, beginning piano at age 3 and violin at 6. When she was 8, she entered The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division under the tutelage of Dorothy DeLay. At 13, Kwon became the youngest winner of the New Jersey Symphony Young Artists Audition. She then began concertizing extensively, performing with major orchestras including the Cologne Philharmonic and the Warsaw Philharmonic, and the California, Cincinnati, Colorado, El Paso, Honolulu, Houston, New Jersey, New Mexico, St. Louis, Wichita, and Vancouver symphonies. Kwon’s debut album has been released in Korea on the RCA label. Along with her older sister, pianist Min Kwon, she has given recitals in more than 100 United States cities. Yoon Kwon made her New York debut at age 17 at Avery Fisher Hall, playing the Stravinsky Violin Concerto. Since 2005, she has been first violin of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.
Kwon earned an Artist Diploma, a bachelor’s degree, and a master’s degree at The Juilliard School. She played chamber music at the Marlboro Festival for three years. Kwon performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center II from 2006 to 2009. In addition, she is part of a jazz group that has played at various New York clubs. Kwon made her Carnegie Hall recital debut in 2008. She has performed at music festivals that include Verbier, Kuhmo (Finland), Aspen, Ravinia, Santa Fe, Spoleto, and La Jolla, as well as aboard Crystal Cruises. She has played electric violin on cruises, and in 2009 formed the crossover band Vintage Fire. The band has played at New York venues including Le Poisson Rouge, Sullivan Hall, and Webster Hall. Kwon is now touring with drummer Stewart Copeland in the band Off the Score. She is a faculty member at Mason Gross.

**Kynan Johns** is conductor and director of orchestras at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. A protégé of Maestro Lorin Maazel, he has served as resident conductor at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, in Valencia, Spain, to both Maazel and Zubin Mehta. A native of Australia, Johns has conducted the Israel Philharmonic, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Filarmonica della Scala, the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. In opera, he has worked at London’s Covent Garden and at Italy’s La Scala; conducted *Don Giovanni, Madama Butterfly, Don Carlos, Luisa Miller*, and Maazel’s 1984 in Valencia; *Don Giovanni* for the Oper Magdeburg; Britten’s *Turn of the Screw* in Rouen; and *La Bohème* for the State Opera of South Australia. Cover conductor for the opera sensation *Anna Nicole* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, Johns also worked with New York City Opera on Adès’s *Powder Her Face*, Chin’s *Alice in Wonderland*, and Offenbach’s *La Périchole*. In addition, he conducted Kurt Weill’s *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* for Manhattan School of Music. Johns debuted with the Dortmund Philharmonic, the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra, and the Israel Symphony Orchestra, returning to the Limburg Symphony, the Netherlands; Orquesta Clásica Santa Cecilia, Madrid; and the Asturias
Symphony Orchestra. He has been awarded the inaugural Centenary Medal by the Australian government for his service to music. Johns is represented by Columbia Artists Management Inc. (CAMI). For more information, visit kynanjohns.net and youtube.com/kynanjohns on the web.

**Rutgers Symphony Orchestra (RSO)** is composed of musicians enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate music programs at the Mason Gross School of the Arts. Its annual concert season includes six symphonic programs, one main-stage opera, and two popular programs. RSO aims to prepare students for professional careers as orchestral musicians by tackling major symphonic repertoire. In recent seasons, that has included the Mahler, Strauss, Beethoven, and Brahms symphonic cycles. The orchestra hosts student composition readings and recordings every season. In addition, its annual concerto competition provides winners solo performance opportunities the following season.

The flagship ensemble of the Mason Gross instrumental program, RSO has played with Maestros James Judd, Andrea Quinn, and Rossen Milanov; soloists Lara St. John, Philippe Quint, Barbara Dever, Thomas Studebaker, Nancy Gustafson, Susan Starr, Ruth Laredo, and Alexander Ivashkin; Latin jazz musician Paquito D’Rivera; and pop artists Ray Charles and Jay-Z. The orchestra has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, New York’s Symphony Space, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). RSO has recorded on the Naxos label. Its concerts are broadcast nationally on WWFM, 89.1.
About the Music Department

The Music Department at the Mason Gross School has a faculty of 33 full-time and approximately 78 part-time members. There are approximately 469 students enrolled in its seven degree programs: bachelor of music, bachelor of arts, master of music, master of arts, artist diploma, doctor of philosophy, and doctor of musical arts. The mission of all music degree programs is to develop well-educated professional musicians who have a deep historical and theoretical understanding of all aspects of music. The program provides students traditional, well-grounded conservatory training while preparing them for the changing world of the arts in the 21st century.

Proceeds from the sale of tickets for this concert support scholarship funds for music students.

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- The Lost and Found is located at the Mason Gross School of the Arts ticket office, next to the Philip J. Levin Theater, across Bettenbender Plaza.
- Water fountains are located on both sides of the lobby.

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Weekends: Saturdays, noon to 5:30 p.m.
Performances: one hour before curtain
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