BLOSSOM FESTIVAL 2010

Saturday evening, **August 7**, 2010, at 8:00 P.M.

THE **CLEVELAND** ORCHESTRA

FRANZ WELSER-MÖST, *conductor*

CHARLES IVES
(1874-1954)

From the Steeples and the Mountains
(for trumpet, trombone, and chimes)

ALBAN BERG
(1885-1935)

Symphonic Suite from *Lulu*

1. Rondo: Andante and Hymn
2. Ostinato: Allegro
3. Variations
4. Adagio

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 73

1. Allegro non troppo
2. Adagio non troppo
3. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andantino)
4. Allegro con spirito

This concert is co-sponsored
by **Frantz Ward LLP**,
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We are pleased to welcome
The Milton and Tamar Maltz Family Foundation,
a Cleveland Orchestra Partner in Excellence.

*This concert is dedicated to **William P. Blair III***
in recognition of his extraordinary generosity in support
of The Cleveland Orchestra's 2009-10 Annual Fund.

From the Steeples and the Mountains

composed 1901

BY
Charles
IVES

BORN
October 20, 1874
Danbury, Connecticut

DIED
May 19, 1954
New York City

At a Glance

Ives wrote From the Steeples and the Mountains *in 1901, and utilized some of its ideas in the finale of his Third Symphony (written 1901-04). The original was not performed during Ives's lifetime. It received its world premiere with Lukas Foss leading members of the New York Philharmonic, in July 1965. Foss led the only previous Cleveland Orchestra performances, in October 1965 and May 1979. Ives scored this 4-minute work for trumpet, trombone, and chimes.*

CHARLES IVES was a true musical iconoclast. Raised within a safe New England upbringing, in a childhood filled with church and everyday smalltown pleasures, he nonetheless spent his life deconstructing music as it was known — and reconstructing it in remarkably disjointed but recognizable ways. A renegade in many ways, he pursued music as a hobby for many years while earning a fortune (and making innovations) in the life insurance industry. His music, much of it unperformed in his lifetime, has been recognized in the half century since his death as masterfully cutting edge, with some of it creating a near time-warp from the Civil War-era 19th century of his youth to our modern, pastiche-filled, multi-threaded, 21st-century world.

From the Steeples dates from 1901, when Ives was church organist at the Central Presbyterian Church in New York City. He wrote a number of hymns and organ pieces during his tenure there, and worked several of these into the symphony (No. 3) he was writing at the time. The symphony was first performed in 1946, but *From the Steeples and the Mountains* wasn't heard in performance until 1965, a decade after Ives's death.

From the Steeples and the Mountains, scored for brass and chimes, appears to recall the real-life musical "experiments" that Ives's father, George Ives, directed during Charles's youth. George had been a bandmaster in the Civil War and continued this musical leadership back home in Danbury. As his son later wrote, George liked "as an acoustical object lesson, to dispatch sections of various bands to different parts of the city, each playing variations on a hymn or march. One would be stationed in the church steeple, another atop a building on Main Street, and a third on the village green." At the end of the score for *From the Steeples*, Charles Ives wrote: "After the brass stops, the chimes sound on until they die away. . . . From the Steeples — the Bells! — then the Rocks on the Mountains begin to shout!"

Ives closed his Third Symphony with a version of some of the ringing-off chimes from *Steeples*, self-borrowing not unlike Copland's orchestral version of *Fanfare for the Common Man* in his Third Symphony. But, just like Copland (another musical iconoclast), the original setting rings with more truth — musical and otherwise — than the gussied-up symphonic echo.

—Eric Sellen

Symphonic Pieces from *Lulu*

arranged 1934 from the music of the unfinished opera begun in 1929

BY
Alban
BERG

BORN
February 9, 1885
Vienna

DIED
December 24, 1935
Vienna

ALBAN BERG'S FIRST OPERA, *Wozzeck*, aroused deep controversy when first performed in Berlin in 1925. But it was rapidly taken up by other opera houses, both in Germany and abroad, and it has since become a 20th-century classic.

Berg's second opera, *Lulu*, which he started in 1929, had no chance of performance in Germany after the Nazis took power in 1933. Berg had almost completed the draft score at that time and he pressed ahead with orchestrating the opera. The only way it could be performed, however, would be in the form of symphonic extracts, and so, urged by his publisher, he arranged a suite of five movements in the summer of 1934. This was first performed that November in Berlin under the direction of Erich Kleiber, one of Berg's most stalwart champions.

Orchestration of the rest of the opera was still incomplete when Berg died at the end of 1935, aged 50, as the result of an insect sting that led to septicemia. The premiere therefore not only had to take place abroad, in Zurich in 1937, but was also limited to only the first two acts. The final act was not made public until 1979, when the full work was heard at the Paris Opéra, conducted by Pierre Boulez.

Lulu has never attained the critical favor accorded to *Wozzeck*, nor have productions been more than rare. This is partly due to the extraordinary requirements of the score, starting with the role of Lulu herself, who has to have the appeal of an irresistible twenty-year-old prostitute and a coloratura soprano's range and technique. There is also a large cast of extraordinary characters and some unusual effects, including a film sequence. The vocal demands on all the singers are unusual, and the music is extremely difficult to sing. The story itself — the cautionary tale of a young woman who traffics in men and murders some of them, being finally herself murdered by Jack the Ripper — is not to everyone's taste.

The degradation and exploitation of the *Lulu* story, taken to a higher degree than similar themes in *Wozzeck*, called for music of extreme intensity, and this is what Berg was uniquely able to supply. He has been called a Romantic Modernist, because he enthusiastically embraced the new language forged by his teacher Schoenberg and applied twelve-note principles in

the composition of *Lulu* with considerable rigor. At the same time, he never wrote music without a powerful emotional core, so that one is never in doubt as to the tension, mood, or state of mind of the protagonists, and the climaxes have a cathartic effect. No one need know anything about serial technique to grasp the spell of the music, nor is it important to know that Berg was fond of complex contrivances such as the palindromic construction of scenes, or writing the second part of a passage with the music of the first part reversed. The orchestral sound often rests on a bed of familiar chords in the lower instruments, so that even when the upper voices are moving at all angles, the overall effect has an element of familiarity and comfort.

A 19th-century newspaper illustration of Jack the Ripper killing one of his victims. The infamous murderer invisibly takes part in the action of the opera Lulu, *killing the title character offstage in the final act.*

The *Lulu* Suite does not tell the story of the opera in sequence. Berg called it "symphonic pieces" on the title page of the score. It has sometimes been referred to as a Symphonic Suite, in part perhaps because the first movement is longer and weightier than the others. Berg has transferred the vocal line to a solo instrument such as the saxophone or a trumpet, and sometimes he leaves the vocal line out, with the orchestra carrying the main musical dialogue. A middle movement, omitted at this week's Blossom Festival performance, features a soprano soloist singing Lulu's Song.

The first movement, **Rondo**, is a condensation of two scenes in the second act between Lulu and one of her lovers, Alwa, who is also her husband's son. It begins with Alwa's entrance and some strong melodic lines in the violins and the alto saxophone. This leads to a climax when Alwa (represented by the vibraphone) confesses *"Ich liebe dich . . ."* ("I love you . . ."). The second part of the Rondo is the final scene of the act when Lulu, having "accidentally" shot her husband (Alwa's father), is alone with Alwa, celebrating the couple's freedom. A surprising held chord of B-flat major precedes their final love scene, with solos for violin and cello. There is a lighter passage marked *grazioso* followed by the "Hymn" (with *pizzicato* accompaniment). As the couple settle onto the sofa, Lulu remembers that this is the spot where Alwa's father bled to death, and the curtain falls heavily.

The **Ostinato** movement is the forceful and noisy interlude between the two scenes of the second act, constructed as

a palindrome around a central pause (vibraphone again, *pianissimo*). It was designed to accompany a film showing Lulu's arrest for the murder of her husband in the first part, and plans for her escape in the second.

The **Variations** form the interlude between the two scenes of Act Three. The tune is a cabaret song from the 1880s by Frank Wedekind, the author of the plays on which the opera is based (another of Wedekind's plays is the basis for the recent Broadway musical *Spring Awakening*). After some swift brass chords, the first variation includes the tune coarsely presented on four horns. In the second, it moves from section to section in heterophony — being played out of sync by different groups. The third variation is marked *funèbre* ("funereal"), with long notes on the trombones. The fourth features trumpet, then oboe, then horn, and finally we hear the tune itself as it appears in the opera, representing the barrel organ on a London street where the story comes to its gruesome end.

The **Adagio** is an abbreviation of the final scene of the opera. Lulu is murdered (offstage) by Jack the Ripper, who also stabs the Countess Geschwitz, Lulu's lesbian lover, who has come to her aid. The end, like the close of *Wozzeck*, is abrupt, as if someone has just switched off the music at random.

—Hugh Macdonald

Hugh Macdonald is Avis H. Blewett Professor of Music at Washington University in St. Louis and is a noted authority on French music. He has written books on Beethoven, Berlioz, and Scriabin.

At a Glance

Berg began composing his opera Lulu *in 1929, basing its story on two plays by Frank Wedekind:* Erdgeist *("The Earth Spirit") and* Büchse der Pandora *("Pandora's Box"). He continued work on the opera until his death, at which time some portions of the orchestration for Act Three remained incomplete. In 1934, Berg extracted the five Symphonic Pieces — widely known as the* Lulu *Suite — from the unfinished opera. The Pieces were premiered in Berlin on November 30, 1934, with the Berlin State Opera orchestra conducted by Erich Kleiber, with soprano Lili Claus as soloist in the middle movement.*

The Lulu *Suite runs about 35 minutes in performance — 30 minutes without "Lulu's Song." Berg's score calls for 3 flutes (1 or more doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling english horn), 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tam-tams, and triangle), vibraphone (optional), piano, harp, and strings.*

The Cleveland Orchestra first presented Berg's Symphonic Pieces from Lulu *in 1964 under the direction of Lukas Foss. Franz Welser-Möst and the Orchestra performed this work earlier this year, in May, at Severance Hall and at Carnegie Hall in New York.*

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 73

composed 1877

BY
Johannes
BRAHMS

BORN
May 7, 1833
Hamburg

DIED
April 3, 1897
Vienna

BRAHMS SPENT some twenty years composing his First Symphony, repeatedly revising details and soliciting advice from trusted musical friends. Having finally allowed its performance, in December of 1876, he quickly set to work on a successor, finishing this new composition during the summer he spent at the Austrian lake resort of Pörtschach in 1877.

Perhaps because Symphony No. 2 appeared so shortly after the unveiling of its stern predecessor, and was so unlike it in character, many of the composer's contemporaries thought it a slighter composition, its more cheerful demeanor disappointing after the Beethovenian drama of the First Symphony.

It is understandable that the new piece might be misapprehended in this way. In his Second Symphony, Brahms abandoned the tragic Romanticism, the *Sturm und Drang* ("storm and stress") that had propelled the earlier C-minor Symphony and formed the premise for its triumphant conclusion. In its place he offered an expansive lyricism and, in many passages, an undeniably pastoral charm.

The surgeon Theodore Billroth, Brahms's perceptive and musical friend, was not wrong when he wrote of the newly finished score, which the composer sent to him: *"This is utter blue sky, a murmuring of brooks, sunlight, and cool green shade! It must be beautiful at Pörtschach."* Karl Geiringer, one of the composer's biographers, likened Brahms's first two symphonies to the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies of Beethoven, in which the epic struggle conveyed in the former work gives way in the latter to tranquil nature music.

And yet, there is more to Brahms's Second Symphony than these observations imply. An artist of Brahms's ambition and power would not have limited himself in a major work to carefree sentiments and bucolic impressions. And the imposing scale and emotional complexity of the Second Symphony leave no doubt that it is indeed a major work.

This is, in fact, the longest of Brahms's four symphonies, and in many ways the richest in detail. In no other work does this composer achieve a more inventive development of his musical materials or more fascinating relationships among them. Melodies are transformed in unexpected ways while still retaining their identities; different ideas are set against each other in

convincing counterpoint; common motivic threads link successive sections; accompanying figures, on careful listening, turn out to be variations of principal themes.

Yet for all its ingenious artifice, the Second Symphony attains a rare depth of expression, and not all of this is of the bright quality detected by Dr. Billroth. Beneath its idyllic surface are undercurrents of more sober, even melancholy, thought. While these do not dominate the work, they do enrich its emotional complexion.

The **first movement**'s opening bar could hardly be more modest: cellos and basses sound a tonic D, dip down a note, and then return. But this three-note cell forms the seed from which much of the symphony grows. It punctuates the horn-call presentation of the first theme and begins the two variations of this theme — the first a flowing violin line, the second a robust orchestral tutti — that quickly follow. It appears in different guises again and again throughout the first movement and will emerge later as well.

Two subsidiary subjects also play roles in this initial movement: a minor-key variant of the familiar "Brahms lullaby" and a galloping pendant to that melody composed largely of the three-note motto. All this provides the composer with ample material for a rich and compelling musical fantasy.

The ensuing **second-movement** Adagio paints a darker picture. Beginning serenely with a theme that descends in the high register of the cellos against nearly its mirror image rising in the bassoons, the movement swells to several stormy out-

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A photograph of Brahms near the end of his life, circa 1895.

bursts before concluding on a softly radiant B-major chord.

The **third movement** returns us to a brighter landscape, though this is not without shadows. For there seems a wistfulness in the alternation between major and minor modes that marks the oboe's lilting melody after its initial statement. While that melody suggests an Austrian or German folk dance, later developments bring tripping passagework in the manner of a Mendelssohn elfin scherzo.

No ambiguity of tone or character informs the **fourth-movement** finale. The entire movement seems to flow effortlessly from a running theme stated softly by the violins in the initial measures. (That the first three notes of this melody are those of the opening "cell" provides a tangible link to the first movement and demonstrates Brahms's conception of the symphony as a unified structure.) Rhythmic vitality and skillfully varied instrumentation enliven the discourse, and the symphony concludes with one of the most joyous codas in the literature.

—Paul Schiavo © 2010

Paul Schiavo is program annotator for the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Symphony, as well as a frequent contributor to the program magazines of Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and other organizations.

At a Glance

Brahms wrote his Second Symphony soon after completing his First, composing it during the summer of 1877 while staying at an idyllic get-away in southern Austria. It was first performed on December 30, 1877, by the Vienna Philharmonic led by Hans Richter.

This symphony runs about 45 minutes in performance. Brahms scored it for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra first performed Brahms's Second Symphony in December 1919. The Orchestra's most recent performances were given in January 2010 led by Franz Welser-Möst, at Severance Hall and in Miami, Florida. The most recent performance at Blossom was in August 2007, led by Roberto Minczuk.