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2010

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

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
FRANZ WELSER-MÖST, *conductor*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)

Symphony No. 4 (“Tragic”)
in C minor, D417

1. Adagio molto — Allegro vivace
2. Andante
3. Menuetto: Allegro vivace
4. Allegro

INTERMISSION

RICHARD STRAUSS
(1864-1949)

A Hero’s Life, Opus 40

1. The Hero
 2. The Hero’s Adversaries
 3. The Hero’s Companion
 4. The Hero at Battle
 5. The Hero’s Works of Peace
 6. The Hero’s Withdrawal from the World
and the Fulfillment of His Life
- (played without pause)*

SOLO VIOLIN: **William Preucil**



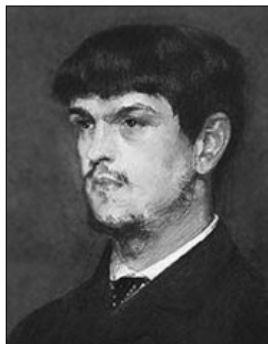
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a Cleveland Orchestra Partner in Excellence,
and by **The Mary S. and David C. Corbin Foundation.***

*This concert is dedicated to **Mr. and Mrs. Douglas A. Kern**
in recognition of their extraordinary generosity in support
of The Cleveland Orchestra’s 2009-10 Annual Fund.*

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

composed 1892-94



BY

Claude DEBUSSY

BORN

August 22, 1862
Saint-Germain-en-Laye,
near Paris

DIED

March 25, 1918
Paris

At a Glance

Debussy began writing his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* ("Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun") in 1892 and completed it in the summer of 1894. The first performance took place in Paris on December 22, 1894, conducted by Gustave Doret.

This work runs about 10 minutes in performance. Debussy scored it for 3 flutes (the first including extensive solo passages), 2 oboes, english horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 harps, antique cymbals, and strings.

THE 19TH-CENTURY WRITER Stéphane Mallarmé was one of the greatest innovators in the history of French poetry. His works, which abound in complex symbols and images, sought to represent states of mind rather than ideas, and to express moods rather than tell stories. Mallarmé tried to capture that elusive line between dream and awakening that most of us (who are not poets) are well aware of, but are mostly unable to put into words.

Mallarmé's pastoral poem *L'Après-midi d'un faune* ("The Afternoon of a Faun") was published in 1876. Claude Debussy first set Mallarmé's poem to music in 1884, at the age of 22. Shortly thereafter, the young composer joined the circle of poets and artists who met at Mallarmé's house every Tuesday night for discussions and companionship. Thus Debussy was thoroughly familiar with the poet's style before he began work on his own "Prelude" to Mallarmé's "The Afternoon of a Faun" in 1892.

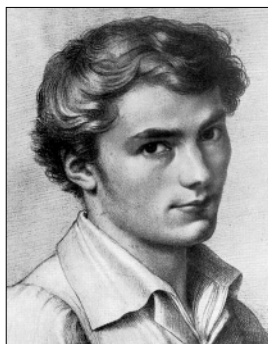
The first-person narrator in the poem is a faun, a mythological creature who is half man and half goat. The faun lives in the woods, near a river surrounded by reedy marshes; he is daydreaming about nymphs who may be real (or mere figments of his imagination). The faun's desire is filtered through the vagueness of its object as he recalls past dreams, which emerge from the shadows only to recede into the darkness again.

The faun plays a flute, which evokes the *syrinx* (the Greek panpipe), and it is quite natural that in Debussy's music the orchestral flute is given a solo part throughout. The languid opening melody, which descends, mostly in half-steps, from C-sharp to G-natural and rises back to C-sharp again (thus outlining the "exotic" interval of the tritone, or augmented fourth), has become famous as an example of a melodic style independent from any traditional models. As it unfolds, the orchestral accompaniment becomes more and more intense. After a short resting point, a new section starts and the tempo becomes more and more animated. A new melody is introduced, in sharp contrast to the chromatic flute theme that opened the piece. Finally, the first theme returns in its original tempo, followed by some brief agitation. Then, the music settles into a serene and peaceful idyll leading to a gentle ending.

—PETER LAKI

Symphony No. 4 (“Tragic”) in C minor, D417

composed 1816



BY
Franz
SCHUBERT

BORN
January 31, 1797
Himmelpfortgrund,
near Vienna

DIED
November 19, 1828
Vienna

EVEN THOUGH Schubert personally appended the nickname or subtitle “Tragic” to his Fourth Symphony, we should not expect tragedy on the scale of Beethoven’s Fifth, or even on the scale of Schubert’s own song *Der Erlkönig* (“The Elf King”), written a year before the Fourth Symphony. As a writer of orchestral works, the 19-year-old Schubert was not yet ready to take on the challenge of Beethoven’s heroic style; the classical tradition of Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven was his rightful inheritance, and it was this style to which he was making highly individual and mature contributions.

The overwhelming majority of 18th-century symphonies were written in a major key, which was traditionally associated with bright and exuberant feelings. On the rare occasions when composers chose a minor key, the mood tended to darken and become more agitated. This manner of writing was a musical counterpart of the *Sturm und Drang* (“storm and stress”), a literary movement in Germany that favored tragic moods and paved the way for Romanticism. It was almost inevitable that Schubert should try his hand at this “tragic” genre established by his predecessors. Similar to the minor-key symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, which are distinguished by an exceptional emotional intensity, Schubert’s C-minor symphony stands out among his symphonic works before the later so-called “Unfinished” Symphony (also in a minor key).

In their minor-key works, Haydn and Mozart often engaged in harmonic adventures less frequently tried when the tonality is major. For this symphony’s **first movement**, the young Schubert, well aware that business is never as usual when writing in the minor, wrote one of the most complex and profound *Adagio* introductions he had yet created. (It has been compared to the “Chaos” prelude from Haydn’s oratorio *The Creation* and to the opening of Mozart’s “Dissonant” String Quartet K465, each of which was written in those composers’ full maturity.) Frequent key changes take the music as far from the initial C minor as the Classical tonal system allows (reaching the remotest part with a long-held G-flat-major chord). Upon a no-less eventful return to C minor, the movement’s main *Allegro* section begins. It is a stormy movement with a first theme of great urgency and

a contrasting lyrical second theme. The harmonic experiment continues: instead of gradually modulating keys, Schubert “jumps” around, at one point, from A-flat to E to C and back to A-flat. It was probably one of the first times in formal music that the octave (A-flat to A-flat) was divided like this into three equal major thirds — a symmetrical division that cuts across different tonalities. This simple idea had enormous implications for the evolution of harmony in the later 19th century. The accumulated harmonic tensions are finally resolved at the end of the movement when the tonality changes to the major. Usually, composers of minor-key symphonies saved this particular move for their last movements, but Schubert evidently couldn’t wait that long to introduce a powerful contrast between high drama and joyful celebration.

The **second-movement** *Andante* opens with a gentle major-key melody played by the strings, soon followed by an agitated passage in the minor mode. Schubert’s model here seems to have been the second movement from Mozart’s Symphony No. 39, built on a similar thematic contrast. In his book on Mozart, Maynard Solomon found a particularly apt name for lyrical slow movements with dramatic middle sections: “Trouble in Paradise.” As in the Mozart, the “trouble” goes away at the end of the movement, and peace and order are restored in “paradise.”

The **third movement** follows the outlines of a normal Scherzo, but the mood, instead of being playful, reverts to the *Sturm und Drang* world of the first movement, with an angular melodic motion emphasizing chromatic harmonies (which tend to destabilize the feeling of tonality). The middle Trio section brings temporary relief from the tensions, but even here the unusual key changes bespeak a certain sense of restlessness.

In the **fourth-movement** finale, Schubert introduces a “dark” C-minor theme but treats it with incredible grace. In the second theme, first violins and clarinets alternate to the lively accompaniment of second violins and violas, with persistent single notes thrown in by the first horn, to a splendidly humorous effect. The final switch to the major mode occurs sooner than it did in the first movement; although traces of the “dark” minor mode persist to the very end, the closing section is happy and buoyant. Whatever “tragedy” there was at the beginning has surely been overcome by now.

—PETER LAKI

At a Glance

Schubert completed his C-minor symphony on April 27, 1816. The name “Tragic” was added by the composer himself at a later date. The symphony was probably performed privately the year it was written; however, the first documented public performance — led by A. F. Riccius in Leipzig — did not take place until November 19, 1849, the 21st anniversary of Schubert’s death. The first American performance was conducted by Eugene Luening at the Milwaukee Academy of Music on February 2, 1897, three days after the 100th anniversary of Schubert’s birth.

This symphony runs about 30 minutes in performance. Schubert’s score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra first performed Schubert’s Fourth Symphony in February 1963, under Robert Shaw. The most recent performances were led by Gerd Albrecht in November 1987 at Severance Hall and by Steven Smith during the 2000 Blossom Festival.

Ein Heldenleben [A Hero's Life], Opus 40

composed 1897-98



BY
**Richard
STRAUSS**

BORN
June 11, 1864
Munich

DIED
September 8, 1949
Garmisch-Partenkirchen,
Bavaria

RICHARD STRAUSS used to insist that he himself was the hero in *Ein Heldenleben* — though commentators have found it hard to reconcile this belligerent self-portrait with Strauss's distinctly un-heroic personality, or with later, mellower self-representations in *Sinfonia domestica* and the opera *Intermezzo*. On the other hand, those who knew Strauss's wife, the former Pauline de Ahna, say the section marked "The Hero's Companion" fits her like a glove. Strauss and de Ahna, a soprano, were married in 1894; their marriage lasted until Strauss's death 55 years later. The series of magnificent, supremely capricious and concerto-sized violin solos of the "Companion" episode is peppered with directions to the soloist, such as "loving," "angry," "sentimental," "nagging," "flippant" or "hypocritically languishing" — adjectives more often used to describe a person than a musical performance. In a letter to French novelist and music critic Romain Rolland, Strauss admitted having portrayed his wife in *Ein Heldenleben*.

Yet the essence of art always lies in the way it transcends the subject matter that provided the initial impulse. The question we must ask is how Strauss used autobiographic material to create this tone poem.

Unlike the majority of Strauss's tone poems, *Ein Heldenleben* was not based on any particular literary work. Rather, it sought to express, in the composer's words, "a more general and free ideal of great and manly heroism." This followed logically from Strauss's previous tone poem, *Don Quixote*, which, based on Cervantes, was a specific case of misguided heroism, "a crazy striving for false ideals." As Strauss pointed out, "*Don Quixote* is only fully and completely comprehensible when put side-by-side with *Heldenleben*."

The subject of *Ein Heldenleben* is, then, heroism in general (and not just a portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Strauss). But what exactly is meant by "heroism" here? In the world of Romantic ideals that Strauss inherited, a hero is someone who confronts the whole world all by himself. The prototype of the Romantic hero, on whom Strauss modeled his protagonist, is Goethe's Faust. Like Faust, the hero of *Ein Heldenleben* fights for his ideals, meets a woman, and works for the good of society. Unlike Faust, however, Strauss's hero ultimately withdraws from



Richard Strauss, in addition to being a composer, was also one of the most gifted conductors of his generation (he was an early champion of Gustav Mahler's music). In this period pictorial, the wildness of Strauss's music is lampooned in the angry, hard-working musicians.

the world and finds fulfillment in an idyllic state that has more to do with Rousseau than with Goethe.

Besides the literary and philosophical motifs reflected in the tone poem, there are some clear musical echoes as well. The most obvious ancestor of *Ein Heldenleben* is Beethoven's "Eroica" [*Heroic*] Symphony, which shares with Strauss's work not just the word in the title but the key of E-flat major. In addition, the portrayal of the adversaries (critics) owes a great deal to Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger* ("The Mastersingers"), in which the real-life music critic Hanslick was transformed into the villain Beckmesser. The parodying episode in the *Meistersinger* Overture (also in the key of E-flat major, like *Heldenleben*), with the sarcastic *staccatos* (short, separated notes) in its woodwind parts, was probably not far from Strauss's mind when he wrote the section of the adversaries.

Strauss was only 34 years old when he completed *Ein Heldenleben*. It was to remain the last work he called a "tone poem": the two large-scale symphonic works he was to write later, *Sinfonia domestica* and *An Alpine Symphony*, have the word "symphony" in their titles. Thus, *Ein Heldenleben* closes the great cycle of tone poems that had occupied Strauss for a whole decade; in this work, he took stock of his achievements, looked back, and summarized. Had Strauss died the following year (at 35, like

At a Glance

Strauss completed his symphonic poem *Ein Heldenleben* (“A Hero’s Life”), in 1897-98, and conducted the first performance in Frankfurt on March 3, 1899. The United States premiere took place a year later, on March 10, 1900, with Theodore Thomas conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The published score was dedicated to Willem Mengelberg and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Ein Heldenleben runs approximately 40 minutes in performance. Strauss scored it for piccolo, 3 flutes, 4 oboes (fourth doubling english horn), small clarinet in E-flat, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 8 horns, 5 trumpets, 3 trombones, tenor tuba, bass tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, tenor drum, snare drum, cymbals, tam-tam, triangle), 2 harps, and strings.

The Cleveland Orchestra first performed *Ein Heldenleben* in February 1928, at a pair of subscription concerts conducted by Nikolai Sokoloff. The most recent performances were led by David Zinman at the 2001 Blossom Festival.

Mozart), we would see this work as the high point of his output, and the extensive self-quotations near the end (more about those later) would take on an even greater symbolic significance.

But Strauss lived on for another half-century, during which time he concentrated most of his energies on an impressive series of operas, fourteen in all, including *Salomé*, *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. Therefore, *Ein Heldenleben* merely closes one chapter in Strauss’s life, though, no doubt, a very important one.

Throughout the work, straightforward E-flat-major tonality alternates with tonalities that encompass a few unorthodox touches, and with passages of rapidly changing, sometimes completely disappearing, key centers. The first theme, firmly in E-flat major, has the irregularity of emphasizing minor and major sevenths in a way no earlier, strictly classical composer would have done. The music of the adversaries, on the other hand, contains 11 of the 12 tones of our Western scale, in a theme whose tonality is anybody’s guess.

The violin solo, representing Pauline or the “eternal feminine,” again drifts in and out of tonal stability. One of the most stable areas is the tender love scene that follows the great violin solo; another is the peaceful song toward the end, of the hero retired from the world. In stark contrast to these, the battle scene — which Romain Rolland called the best battle music in the orchestral literature — is full of abrupt key changes. The violent orchestral sounds of this section show the extent to which Strauss expanded the vocabulary of 19th-century orchestral music in his desire to offer the most complete panorama of human emotions and characters.

In a true compositional *tour de force*, Strauss managed to combine the program of his tone poem with traditional sonata form (see chart on next page). According to this scheme, the section about the hero’s peaceful deeds comes as the recapitulation after the battle scene, which represents the development. The recapitulation, however, is enlarged by an extensive new episode with a series of quotations from some of his own earlier musical works, beginning with the great theme from *Don Juan*, followed by themes from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Don Quixote*, and *Macbeth*, as well as the opera *Guntram* and the songs *Befreit* (“Liberated”) and *Traum durch die Dämmerung* (“Dreaming at Twilight”). These references, sometimes simultaneous and sometimes successive, amount to a survey of the hero’s (in this case, Strauss’s) past life, followed

Formal Outline of *Ein Heldenleben*

(based on the work of Norman Del Mar)

I. The Hero	1st subject
II. The Hero's Adversaries (or critics)	Transition
III. The Hero's Companion	2nd subject
IV. The Hero's Battlefield	Development
V. The Hero's Works of Peace (and struggles in the face of continued criticism)	Recapitulation (with added episode)
VI. The Hero's Withdrawal from the World and the Fulfillment of His Life	Coda



by a final outburst, after which the music settles into the peaceful, pastoral mood of the coda.

It should come as no surprise that a work as innovative as *Ein Heldenleben* should sharply divide critical reaction. Strauss's music came in for more than its share of invectives — ranging from “outrageously hideous noise” to “*Hundeleben*” (“A Dog’s Life”). Some of the best musicians of the time, however, immediately recognized the importance of the work. After the Paris premiere, Claude Debussy wrote a review in which he referred to Strauss as “close to being a genius.” And there was a 20-year-old conservatory student in Budapest named Béla Bartók, whose life received new meaning from the revelations of *Zarathustra* and *Ein Heldenleben*. Bartók made Strauss’s *Heldenleben* into something of a signature piece, performing it in his own piano arrangement (which he, to our great loss, never wrote down) to great acclaim in Budapest and Vienna. In 1904, he wrote his first major orchestral work, *Kossuth*, about a Hungarian hero. (This piece brings in Kossuth’s wife and contains a major battle scene, but has a tragic, rather than idyllic, ending.) Bartók’s Straussian fever eventually cooled off, but he, and other composers of his generation, proceeded further — in their many different ways — along the path of musical innovation that Strauss himself eventually abandoned.

—PETER LAKI

Peter Laki is a musicologist and frequent lecturer on classical music. He is a visiting associate professor at Bard College in New York and a contributing writer to The Cleveland Orchestra’s program books.