



BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

**WHAT'S IN
A KEY**

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WHAT'S IN A KEY

BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

Leon Botstein, *music director*

Renée Anne Louprette GCP '19, *organ*

**Johannes Brahms
(1833–97)**

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

**Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)**

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

I. Allegro con brio

II. Andante con moto

III. Allegro

IV. Allegro

Intermission

**Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835–1921)**

Symphony No. 3 (“Organ”) in C Minor, Op. 78

I. Adagio – Allegro maestoso – Poco adagio

II. Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Più allegro

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80 (1880)

Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, Germany, 1833

Died in Vienna, Austria, 1897

Johannes Brahms did possess a sense of humor, even if he didn't show it often in his compositions. (His voluminous correspondence is quite another matter.) There is something very Brahmsian in the fact that, when asked to write a solemn piece for an eminently solemn occasion, he would respond by producing the *Academic Festival Overture*, one of the merriest works of his entire career. (The same summer of 1880, Brahms also wrote a companion piece, the *Tragic Overture*, possibly for a theatrical project in Vienna that later fell through.)

The occasion for the *Academic Festival Overture* was the honorary doctorate presented to Brahms by the University of Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland). Brahms himself had never gone to college; the closest he ever came was spending some time in the German university town of Göttingen with his friend, the great violinist Joseph Joachim, who was taking classes there, and later with Agathe von Siebold, the daughter of a professor. (He was engaged to Agathe, but soon broke off the engagement, unable to commit to married life.) That he did not quite see himself as a serious academic, therefore, is understandable.

Certainly, no one could have expected any mischief based on the name of the piece he submitted to the university as his musical acceptance speech. (He tried, but did not get away with, sending a simple postcard.) In fact, what could be more formal than *Academic Festival Overture*? Truth be told, Brahms did not like the title but couldn't find a better one. He rejected *Viadrina*, a suggestion that had come from the university people, because it didn't sound right and besides, he had no idea what it meant. (It turns out to be the obscure Latin name of the river Oder, which flows through Breslau.) So, the name stuck.

The piece starts out perfectly academic and festive, a mood only reinforced by the first of several borrowed melodies: the chorale-like “Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus” (We had built a stately house), played by the brass. A second song, “Der Landesvater” (The father of the land), follows, shaped into a beautiful violin melody. But the humorous freshmen's tune, “Was kommt dort von der Höh” (What is coming down there from the hills), known as the “Fuchslied” (Fox song), breaks the solemn mood. All these melodies are later repeated as Brahms organizes his themes into a classical sonata form (in that, he would never compromise).

The final surprise comes when the whole orchestra, complete with the largest percussion section Brahms ever employed, intones “Gaudeamus igitur” (Let us all rejoice while we are still young), probably the most famous of all German student songs. The overture ends with this splendid arrangement of a song that every member of the Breslau University audience would probably have been able to sing along with—Latin words and all.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 (1808)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, 1770

Died in Vienna, Austria, 1827

“The reviewer has before him one of the most important works by the master whose pre-eminence as an instrumental composer it is doubtful that anybody would now dispute.” These words about Ludwig van Beethoven’s Fifth were written by E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), the preeminent German writer who was also a composer, in 1810, a year and a half after the symphony’s first performance (which he had not heard).

Although writings about this work would now fill a small library, few authors in the past 213 years have equaled Hoffmann’s sensitivity and ability to combine a poet’s imagination with the thoroughness of a musical scholar. Hoffmann immediately understood the significance of the symphony’s opening motif, the famous ta-ta-ta-TA: “Nothing could be simpler than the main idea of the opening Allegro, consisting of only two bars and initially in unison, so that the listener is not even certain of the key. The mood of the anxious, restless yearning created by this subject is heightened even further by the melodious secondary theme.” The fermata, the long-held note at the end of the first extended phrase, gives, according to Hoffmann, “presentiments of unknown mysteries.”

Everything in the first movement is, in one way or another, derived from that opening ta-ta-ta-TA.¹ The rhythm is almost always present in the bass or in the treble, in its original form or with modifications. Whether or not this theme represents “Fate knocking on the door,” as Beethoven may or may not have said, the dramatic tension of the music and the heroic struggle it portrays cannot be missed. Beethoven might well have called this symphony an “Eroica,” had he not used that name earlier for his Third Symphony.

In the second-movement *Andante con moto*, two themes alternate in a kind of double-variation form. A gentle opening melody is followed by loud military fanfares, and the movement is based largely on the transitions back and forth between these two kinds of material. In the course of the variations, the character of the first theme changes from lyrical to mysterious. The mood becomes dark again in the third-movement

Allegro. Beethoven did not use the title “Scherzo,” although it is obviously one of the fast movements in 3/4 time with a contrasting middle section that he elsewhere called scherzi (“jokes”). This time, however, we feel a chilly wind blowing as the cellos and double basses begin the pianissimo theme of the movement. Soon a variant of the first movement’s ta-ta-ta-TA motif appears on the horns; it sounds even more austere now that all four notes have the same pitch (that is, the last note does not drop a third as it did in the first movement).

The trio, which starts out as a fugue with an agile theme played by the cellos and double basses, provides some comic relief for a moment, but then a most extraordinary thing happens. The theme of the first section returns, but the strings play pizzicato (“with the strings plucked”) and the legato (“continuous”) melody is broken up into mysterious-sounding staccato notes. If the first version of the theme made a chilly impression, this time it is definitely freezing, and the recapitulation is followed by a section characterized by the deepest despair music has ever expressed. We hear a pianissimo kettledrum solo over the long-held notes of the strings; against this thumping background, a violin theme (related to the first theme of the movement) gradually emerges and rises higher and higher against the insistent ostinato in basses and timpani. In one of the most fantastic darkness-to-light transitions in the orchestral literature, we reach, after 50 measures of suspense and a stunning crescendo, the glorious Allegro in C major, which proclaims the victory at the end of a long battle.

Piccolo, contrabassoon, and three trombones (instruments Beethoven had never used in his first four symphonies) join the orchestra for this exuberant celebration, in a movement where the various themes follow one another with a naturalness and inevitability that is one of the greatest miracles of Beethoven’s music. The movement follows the traditional sonata pattern of exposition, development, and recapitulation, but between the last two, another surprise awaits us. (It is another miracle that, after a thousand hearings, it still strikes us as a surprise.) The last section of the third movement returns, and the transition from darkness to light is enacted all over again. However, nothing is repeated literally; the orchestration is new, made less gloomy by the more melodic woodwind parts. The transition itself is new, the “chilly” string melody is totally absent, and we reach the triumphant final Allegro much faster and more easily than the first time. The celebrated British musical essayist Donald Francis Tovey (1875–1940) wrote eloquently about the effect of this passage:

Beethoven recalls the third movement as a memory which we know for a fact but can no longer understand: there is now a note of self-pity, for which we had no leisure when the terror was upon our souls: the depth and the darkness are alike absent, and in the dry light of the day we cannot remember our fears of the unknown. And so the triumph resumes its progress and enlarges its range until it reaches its appointed end.

That appointed end, the “Presto” coda with its 54 measures of C-major chords, has raised, we must say, a few eyebrows. Even Hoffmann felt this was too much of a good thing: the final C-major strokes, separated by rests, reminded him of “a fire that is thought to have been put out but repeatedly bursts forth again in bright tongues of flame.” Yet a shorter coda perhaps would not have been enough to balance out the enormous tensions of the symphony. Like an airplane that, after landing, taxis on the ground for a long time before coming to a complete stop, Beethoven’s Fifth ends gradually; after the thematic material has disappeared, the music still continues with a bare restatement of the C-major tonality. Finally, even the C-major chord goes away, replaced by a single unison C that marks the final arrival.

¹In fact, an entire book is devoted to this motif (scholarly, yet accessible to any music lover): Matthew Guerrieri, *The First Four Notes: Beethoven’s Fifth and the Human Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

Symphony No. 3 (“Organ”) in C Minor, Op. 78 (1886)

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born in Paris, France, 1835

Died in Algiers, Algeria, 1921

With his third and last symphony, Camille Saint-Saëns set out to write a masterpiece. At 51, he was—and had long been—one of the most famous musicians in France, equally successful as a composer, conductor, pianist, and organist. (For many years, he served as the organist of the Madeleine, one of the landmark churches in Paris.) His career had started with the ringing endorsements of such luminaries as Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt, and Charles Gounod, and he had come to be considered a luminary himself.

At the same time, he had reason to feel that some of his best efforts in composition were not sufficiently appreciated. He had won great acclaim for his concertos and other virtuosic concert pieces. However, his symphonic poems, such as *Le Rouet d’Omphale* (Omphale’s spinning wheel) met with little enthusiasm in Paris, and his opera *Samson and Delilah*, which was particularly dear to his heart, was premiered, thanks only to Liszt’s unflagging support, in Weimar. At home, Saint-Saëns found himself locked in a bitter rivalry with César Franck, his senior by 13 years. He was antagonized by Franck’s students, and was increasingly isolated in the Société Nationale de Musique, which he had cofounded in 1871. This situation led to his resignation as the society’s president soon after the premiere of the Third Symphony.

Saint-Saëns, then, wanted to make a major statement, and the invitation of London’s Philharmonic Society to write a symphony provided just the incentive he needed. He conducted the premiere in London on May 19, 1886, to a standing ovation; the symphony was a success in France as well, when it was performed there. The published score was dedicated to the memory of Liszt, who had passed away on July 31, 1886.

In a program note written for the premiere, Saint-Saëns offered a detailed outline of the themes, described the basic structure of the work, and emphasized his innovations in orchestration. Some of these innovations were inspired by the symphonic poems of his mentor Liszt, who had used the organ in his *Hunnenschlacht* (Battle of the Huns). Saint-Saëns's method of motivic transformation is also indebted to Liszt.

Yet the organization of the symphony is quite novel, with the traditional four movements telescoped into two parts: the opening *Allegro* and the slow movement constitute part 1, and the scherzo with the finale makes up part 2. Moreover, motivic correspondences permeate all the movements so that the entire work is extremely rich in internal connections.

The main motif on which all the movements are based first appears in the opening *Allegro moderato*, preceded by a short introduction. The motif is developed extensively, along with a contrasting lyrical idea. In the ensuing *Poco adagio*, we hear the organ for the first time.

In the *Allegro moderato* that opens part 2 (a scherzo in all but name), we hear some new variants of our motif. The trio section, in a faster tempo and in C major as opposed to the scherzo's C minor, is distinguished by rapid piano scales as a special orchestral color. Both the scherzo and the trio are heard for a second time. Then a short contrapuntal section, based on the main motif, serves as a transition into the finale, which begins with the lush sounds of the organ and the piano (four hands). The main motif is now transformed, first into a solemn chorale and then into a fugue, where contrapuntal voices imitate one another. The work ends with a magnificent climax.

Saint-Saëns was well aware of the symphony's significance in his output. He never attempted to write another symphony; instead, he returned to operas, concertos, and chamber music. As he wrote about the "Organ Symphony" years later: "I have given all that I had to give. What I have done I shall never do again."

—Peter Laki, *Visiting Associate Professor of Music*
December 2023

BIOGRAPHIES

In addition to serving as music director of the Bard Conservatory Orchestra, **Leon Botstein** is music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO), founder and music director of The Orchestra Now (TON), coartistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra (JSO), where he served as music director from 2003 to 2011. He has been guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden, Taipei Symphony, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, and Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela, among others. Recordings include a Grammy-nominated recording of Gavriil Popov's First Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra, acclaimed recordings of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* with the ASO, Othmar Schoeck's *Lebendig begraben* with TON, as well as recordings with the London Philharmonic, NDR Orchestra Hamburg, and JSO, among others. He is editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and of *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton); publications include *Jefferson's Children* (Doubleday), *Judentum und Modernität* (Bohlaus), and *Von Beethoven zu Berg* (Zsolnay). Honors include an American Academy of Arts and Letters award and Carnegie Foundation's Academic Leadership Award. In 2011, he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

American organist **Renée Anne Louprette** GCP '19 maintains an international career as solo recitalist, collaborative artist, conductor, and teacher. At Bard College, she is assistant professor of music and college organist, and leads the Bard Baroque Ensemble in an annual Bach cantata series. She has directed the organ program at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts since 2013 and has also taught at the Manhattan School of Music, the Hartt School of the University of Hartford, and Montclair State University. She spent fall 2022 in Braşov, Transylvania, as a US-Romanian Fulbright Scholar, completing research on historic Romanian pipe organs, and is director of the American Guild of Organists' National Competition in Organ Improvisation. She has performed solo recitals at Royal Festival Hall in London, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, and at festivals in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, and elsewhere. Collaborations have included the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Piffaro, American Brass Quintet, and L. A. Dance Project. Her latest recording, of J. S. Bach's *Clavier-Übung III*, was released in September 2023. Louprette holds a master of music degree in conducting from Bard College Conservatory of Music, and a BM summa cum laude in piano performance and graduate professional diploma in organ performance from the Hartt School. She was awarded a Premier Prix from the Conservatoire National de Région de Toulouse, France, and a diplôme supérieur in organ performance from the Centre d'Études Supérieures de Musique et de Danse de Toulouse.

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Kayla Leacock, *Hiring/Special Projects Manager*

Nicholas Reilingh, *Database and Systems Manager*

Artistic Planning And Producing

Jason Collins, *Producer*

Carter Edwards, *Programs and Partnerships Manager*

Madeleine Reilly '22, *Producing Assistant*

Development

Debra Pemstein, *Vice President for Development and Alumni/ae Affairs*

Cate Hope, *Development Communications Manager*

Alessandra Larson, *Director of Institutional Advancement and Strategy*

Kieleigh Michasiow-Levy, *Senior Individual Giving Manager*

Caroline Ryan, *Development Operations Coordinator*

Jessica Wolf, *Associate Director of Development*

Facilities

Carmine Covelli, *Facility Operations and Safety Manager*

Ray Stegner, *Building Operations Manager*

Hazaiah Tompkins '19, *Building Operations Coordinator*

Environmental Services

Bill Cavanaugh, *Environmental Specialist*

Drita Gjokaj, *Environmental Specialist*

Will Marvin, *Environmental Specialist*

General Management

Shannon Csorny, *General Manager*

Jess Webber, *Interim Producing Operations Manager*

Marketing and Audience Services

David Steffen, *Director of Marketing and Audience Services*

Lukina Andreyev '23, *Assistant House Manager*

Ana Aparicio '24, *Assistant House Manager*

Angelina Bell, *Box Office Supervisor*

Brittany Brouker, *Marketing Manager*

Joas Erasmus '26, *Assistant House Manager*

Jardena Gertler-Jaffe VAP '21, *Audience and Member Services Coordinator*

Maria Giovanetti '23, *Box Office Supervisor*

Joel Guahnich '24, *Assistant House Manager*

Hamed Haidari '25, *Assistant House Manager*

Asa Kaplan '23, *Associate House Manager*

Maia Kaufman, *Audience and Member Services Manager*

Elyse Lichtenthal, *House Manager*

Garrett Sager HRA '23, *Assistant Marketing Manager*

Paulina Swierczek VAP '19, *Audience and Member Services Assistant Manager*

Courtney Williams, *Box Office Supervisor*

Communications

Mark Primoff, *Associate Vice President of Communications*

Amy Murray, *Videographer*

Production

Jared Goldstein, *Director of Production*

Dávid Bánóczy-Ruof '22, *Production Administrator*

Kat Sirico, *Production Manager*

Audio

Lex Morton, *Audio Supervisor*

Costumes

Moe Schell, *Costume Supervisor*

Sara Sa, *Assistant Costume Shop Manager*

Lighting

Josh Foreman, *Lighting Supervisor*

Nick Hawrylko, *Head Electrician*

Orchestra

Stephen Dean, *Orchestra Production Manager*

Grace Anne, *Orchestra Stage Manager*

Lauryn Elizabeth, *Orchestra Stage Manager*

Lydia McCaw, *Orchestra Stage Manager*

Nora Rubenstone '11, *Associate Orchestra Production Manager*

Scenery

Rick Reiser, *Technical Director*

Sam Dickson '19, *Carpenter*

Maggie McFarland '21, *Props Coordinator*

Duane Olson, *Interim Assistant Technical Director*

Video

Kat Pagsolingan, *Video Supervisor*

Theater & Performance and Dance Programs

Jennifer Lowm, *Program Administrator*

Sabrina Miller, *Artistic and Administrative Assistant*

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Executive Director

Irene Zedlacher

Artistic Directors

Leon Botstein

Christopher H. Gibbs

Associate Director

Raissa St. Pierre '87

Scholars in Residence 2024

Francesca Brittan

Sarah Hibberd

Program Committee 2024

Byron Adams

Leon Botstein

Francesca Brittan

Christopher H. Gibbs

Sarah Hibberd

Richard Wilson

Irene Zedlacher

Director of Chorus

James Bagwell

Vocal Casting

Joshua Winograde

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC PROGRAM FACULTY

Violin

Adele Anthony
Luosha Fang '11
Yi-Wen Jiang
Erica Kiesewetter
Honggang Li*
Weigang Li*
Daniel Phillips
Todd Phillips
Gil Shaham
Mira Wang
Carmit Zori

Viola

Luosha Fang '11
Marka Gustavsson
Brian Hong
Honggang Li*
Melissa Reardon

Cello

Raman Ramakrishnan
Peter Wiley

Bass

Jeremy McCoy

Bassoon

Marc Goldberg

Clarinet

David Krakauer
Pascual Martínez-Forteza

Composition

Mark Baechle, *film*
Da Capo Chamber Players
Missy Mazzoli
Jessie Montgomery
James Sizemore, *film*
Joan Tower
George Tsontakis

Flute

Tara Helen O'Connor

Harp

Sara Cutler

Horn

Barbara Jöstlein-Currie
Julie Landsman*
Julia Pilant
Hugo Valverde

Oboe

Elaine Douvas
Keisuke Ikuma
Alexandra Knoll
Ryan Roberts

Percussion

Eric Cha-Beach
Jason Haaheim
Jason Treuting

Piano

Reiko Aizawa
Benjamin Hochman*
Blair McMillen
Gilles Vonsattel
Terrence Wilson

Trombone

Demian Austin
Sasha Romero
Nicholas Schwartz
Weston Sprott

Trumpet

Edward Carroll

Tuba

Derek Fenstermacher
Marcus Rojas

Voice

Edith Bers
Stephanie Blythe
Teresa Buchholz
Richard Cox
Lucy Fitz Gibbon
Rufus Müller
Erika Switzer
David Sytkowski

Alexander Technique

Alex Farkas

Chamber Music

Marka Gustavsson, *Coordinator*
Frank Corliss
Raymond Erickson
Keisuke Ikuma
Nicholas A. Lewis
Blair McMillen
Raman Ramakrishnan
Melissa Reardon
Chen Tao
Mira Wang

Graduate Conducting

James Bagwell, *Codirector*
Leon Botstein, *Codirector*
Kyle Gann
Christopher H. Gibbs
Peter Laki
Zachary Schwartzman
Joan Tower

Graduate Vocal Arts

Stephanie Blythe, *Artistic Director*
Edith Bers
Richard Cox
Elaine Fitz Gibbon
Lucy Fitz Gibbon
Kayo Iwama, *Associate Director*
Lorraine Nubar
Joan Patenaude-Yarnell
Elizabeth Reese
Erika Switzer
Howard Watkins

Music Theory and History

Christopher H. Gibbs
Peter Laki
Xinyan Li
Ryan McCullough

Orchestral Studies

Leon Botstein
Erica Kiesewetter

Baroque Ensemble

Renée Anne Louprette GCP '19

Postgraduate Collaborative Piano Fellowship

Erika Switzer, *Director*

US-China Music Institute

Jindong Cai, *Director*
Chen Tao, *Chinese Ensemble*
Xinyan Li, *Chinese music history*
Qiao Jia, *Chinese percussion*
Chen Yan, *erhu*
Xu Yang, *ruan*
Mingmei Yip, *Chinese Music History*
Yu Hongmei, *erhu*
Zhang Hongyan, *pipa*
Zhao Jiazhen, *guqin*
Cui Junzhi, *konghou*
Yazhi Guo, *suona*

*master classes

FISHER CENTER AT BARD

The Fisher Center develops, produces, and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs that challenge and inspire. As a premier professional performing arts center and a hub for research and education, the Fisher Center supports artists, students, and audiences in the development and examination of artistic ideas, offering perspectives from the past and present, as well as visions of the future. The Fisher Center demonstrates Bard's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity. Home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley. The Fisher Center offers outstanding programs to many communities, including the students and faculty of Bard College, and audiences in the Hudson Valley, New York City, across the country, and around the world. The Fisher Center presents more than 200 world-class events and welcomes 50,000 visitors each year. It supports artists at all stages of their careers and employs more than 300 professional artists annually. The Fisher Center is a powerful catalyst of art making regionally, nationally, and worldwide. Every year it produces eight to 10 major new works in various disciplines. Over the past five years, its commissioned productions have been seen in more than 100 communities around the world. During the 2018–19 season, six Fisher Center productions toured nationally and internationally. In 2019, the Fisher Center won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical for Daniel Fish's production of *Oklahoma!*, which began life in 2007 as an undergraduate production at Bard and was produced professionally in the Fisher Center's SummerScape festival in 2015 before transferring to New York City.

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GRADUATE VOCAL ARTS PROGRAM
PRESENTS**



JACQUES OFFENBACH
**ORPHÉE
AUX ENFERS**

**MARCH 8 & 10, 2024
SOSNOFF THEATER**

Singers of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program
Bard Conservatory Orchestra
James Bagwell, Conductor
Katherine M. Carter, Director