

FREIMANN 4 – A Closer Look

Thursday, April 20, 2023 – History Center

Sunday, April 23, 2023 – Rhinehart Hall

To close the 2022-23 season of Freimann concerts the Philharmonic musicians have chosen two contrasting major chamber works by composers Max Bruch and Amy Beach. The final of our four highlighted women composers this season, Amy Beach was one of the first successful American composers and the only one of the group living into the 20th century.

The first half of the concert is devoted to the music of Max Bruch (1838 – 1920). He was active as a teacher, composer and conductor and best remembered for his Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor and Scottish Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra—both works having been performed several times by the Fort Wayne Philharmonic during the past few decades. The unusual pairing of solo instruments heard in tonight's work were similarly featured by Bruch in the Concerto he wrote for his clarinetist son—also named Max.

The Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Op. 83 open with an *Andante* movement. A stark single-line melody is introduced by each instrument in turn, beginning with the piano. The texture gradually becomes richer as the three join together, leading to a sunnier second theme presented first by the viola.

Allegro con moto – After a somewhat turbulent opening, the viola and clarinet engage in a more congenial conversation that progresses to a quiet close.

Andante con moto opens with several extended declamatory passages played by the viola in a forceful recitative style. The clarinet then answers in complete contrast, with a beautiful flowing melody. These two ideas are then repeated as the differences fade and both instruments gradually come together in peaceful harmony.

The quiet mood is abruptly banished with a roiling symphonic texture in the next piece, *Allegro agitato*. The piano abandons its accompanying role in a flurry of virtuosity. Bruch's lyrical side shines through in the soaring, tuneful second theme.

Over subdued arpeggiated piano chords, the viola intones a Rumanian folk song in the next *Andante*. The clarinet then sings a more decorated version underneath a viola descant. Finally, all three instruments intone the concluding verse in unison.

The *Nocturne* – *Andante con moto* opens with an extended solo passage from the piano, then the clarinet and viola in turn weave yet another of Bruch's beautiful melodies.

Next comes a sprightly scherzo marked *Allegro vivace, ma non troppo*, alternating bits of musical dialogue with forceful unisons.

The eighth and final piece marked *Moderato* mirrors the first, with a wistful melody similarly shared by all three instruments. After much inventive exploration of texture and mood, Bruch brings this unique work to a thoughtful and subdued ending.

As Max Bruch's music so ably represents the mature Romantic style, that of Amy Beach typifies the Impressionist sensibility. A younger contemporary of Debussy, Amy Beach was one of the first successful American composers. Living until the World War II years, she paved the way as one of the most significant women composers of the 20th century. She was the only female member of the 2nd New England School, along with John Knowles Paine, Arthur Foote, George Chadwick, Edward MacDowell and Horatio Parker. Beach produced much piano music, around 150 songs, as well as symphonic, choral and chamber music works.

The Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet, Op. 80, was written in 1916 and remains one of Beach's best-known works. The theme is introduced by the strings, marked *Lento di molto, sempre espressivo*. The first variation, *L'istesso tempo*, begins with a flute soliloquy strikingly reminiscent of the opening to Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*. Variation II then changes mood in a playful back-and-forth treatment of the theme by all five players, marked *Allegro giusto*. Next comes a slow, solemn dance variation, *Andantino con morbidezza*. Variation IV, *Presto leggiero*, is filled with extended melodies in the flute accompanied by scherzo-like perpetual motion in the strings. This is followed by *Largo di molto, con grand'espressione*, an expressive, chromatic treatment of the theme leading to a rhapsodic closing section. Variation VI then closes out the work cast in a fugal, symphonic texture marked *Allegro giocoso*.

The Philharmonic musicians have truly enjoyed preparing and presenting this season's offerings, concentrating on key works by Louis Farrenc, Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann and Amy Beach. We look forward to sharing more wonderful chamber works with you in future seasons!

— Adrian Mann

FREIMANN 4 – At A Glance

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Max Bruch – Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Op. 83

- Bruch is best known for his G minor Violin Concerto
- This trio was written for his son, a clarinetist
- The eight brief movements include a Rumanian folk melody

Amy Beach – Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet, Op. 80

- Beach was one of the first successful American composers
- Born just after the Civil War, lived until 1944
- This piece explores and contrasts timbres between the flute and strings