

UNCSO

UNC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
TONU KALAM, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.
Beasley-Curtis Auditorium, Memorial Hall

PROGRAM

Schicksalslied, Op. 54 (1871)

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Carolina Choir
UNC Chamber Singers
Susan Klebanow, director

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (1888)

Andante—Allegro con anima
Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza
Valse: Allegro moderato
Finale: Andante maestoso—Allegro vivace

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

*The audience is cordially invited to greet the performers
in the Memorial Hall lobby at the conclusion of the concert.*

PROGRAM NOTES

BY TONU KALAM

Tonight's concert juxtaposes two profoundly different masterpieces, both inspired by the overarching theme of Fate and its relationship to humanity. Brahms and Tchaikovsky—who coincidentally shared the same birthday of May 7, seven years apart—are towering figures in 19th-century German and Russian music, respectively. Yet they inhabit distinctly opposite poles of creative expression and, therefore, their interpretations of the concept of Fate emerge in strikingly different manners.

Johannes Brahms: Schicksalslied, Op. 54

When one hears the name Brahms, his symphonies, concertos, and chamber music immediately come to mind. However, he was also a great lover of choral music, conducting many choral groups in Hamburg and Vienna and writing several important choral works during his prolific career. Most notable among them was his German Requiem, which he completed in 1868—the same year he commenced work on the Schicksalslied (Song of Fate).

While visiting his friend Albert Dietrich in Wilhelmshaven, Brahms discovered *Hyperions Schicksalslied* in a book of poetry by the German Romantic poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin. He was so inspired by this poem that he cut short his vacation and returned to Hamburg to begin setting the poem for chorus and orchestra.

After completing work on the opening two stanzas, which portray the serene beauties of heaven, and the stormy final stanza that depicts the dark and desperate fate of humanity, Brahms struggled with how he should finish the composition, as he did not wish it to end with a bleak outcome. It was not until three years later, in 1871, that he arrived at a unique solution, which was to resurrect the sublime music of the opening section, reorchestrated and transposed to a new key, but notably leaving the chorus entirely silent. Thus, the listener is left to question whether the darkness of the final choral stanza is resolved by the ethereal orchestral coda—and whether the Divine or the Human aspect of the poem prevails. The result is a remarkable work that stands as one of Brahms' most inspired creations.

Ihr wandelt droben im Licht
Auf weichem Boden, selige Genien!
Glänzende Götterlüfte
Rühren euch leicht,
Wie die Finger der Künstlerin
Heilige Saiten.

You make way there above in the light
On smooth ground, blessed spirits!
Lustrous divine breezes
Touch you gently,
Like the fingers of the Muse
The holy strings.

Schicksallos, wie der schlafende
Säugling, atmen die Himmlischen;
Keusch bewahrt
In bescheidener Knospe,
Blühet ewig
Ihnen der Geist,
Und die seligen Augen
Blicken in stiller
Ewiger Klarheit.

Fateless, like the sleeping
Infant, the heavenly ones breathe;
Chastely kept
In modest bud,
Eternally blossoms
Their spirit,
And their blessed eyes
Gaze in silent
Eternal clarity.

Doch uns ist gegeben,
Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn.
Es schwinden, es fallen
Die leidenden Menschen
Blindlings von einer
Stunde zur andern,
Wie Wasser von Klippe
Zu Klippe geworfen,
Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.

But to us is allotted
To rest at no abode,
Suffering humanity
Wastes away, falls
Blindly from one
Hour to another,
Like water hurled
From crag to crag,
Year after year downward
into uncertainty.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Tchaikovsky's inherent genius rested in creating music that is primarily melodic and episodic, such as his ballets, tone poems, and suites. He was initially less comfortable handling the rigors of classical sonata-form structures, particularly in his earlier symphonies. Over time, however, he demonstrated a steady evolution in the effective command of large-scale musical architecture. The Fifth Symphony is a particularly successful example of this acquired mastery, and it remains one of his most popular pieces.

A recurring motive in E minor—the Fate motive—is stated in a dark and gloomy fashion at the opening by the two clarinets playing in unison. This motive becomes the basis for many of the subsequent ideas in the piece, and it returns at crucial points in every movement, always transformed in character and instrumentation until it blooms expansively in the major key at the beginning and end of the Finale.

The eminent scholar Christoph Flamm, editor of the recently published authoritative critical edition of this symphony, quotes an excerpt from Tchaikovsky's diary in which the composer wrote: "Program of the 1st movement of the symphony: Introduction. Complete submission to fate, or, what is the same, to the unfathomable predetermination of providence." In his preface to the score, Flamm proceeds to say: "...it is evident that the 5th symphony's narrative...revolves around the eternal themes of being human, of the *conditio humana*, the individual subject in the face of Eros and Thanatos, sufferings and joys, transitoriness and eternity." Finally, Flamm notes: "It is an open question whether in the end the turn into triumph should portray the individual's victory over destiny or the victory of destiny over the individual."

We are left with open-ended questions at the conclusion of both pieces on tonight's program. Did Brahms manage to transform the turmoil of the human condition into something divine by returning to the music of the opening section of the Schicksalslied to end the piece? And is Tchaikovsky's transformation of the minor-key Fate motive into the blazing major-key ending of the 5th Symphony a triumph for humanity, or something else altogether? The optimists among us would undoubtedly prefer to draw the most positive conclusions in both cases.

UNC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

TONU KALAM, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

VIOLIN I

Frances Norton, *concertmaster*
Tony Feng
Gilda Ferrie
Sharayu Gugnani
Martha-Grace Jackson
Woody Livesay
Maria Manning
Karyn Ostrom
Nidhi Pandrangi
Ameer Qaqish
Keel Roven
Shanna Swaringen, DO
Siana Wong
Henry Woodburn
Alanna Zhang
Amber Zhen

VIOLIN II

Anant Malpani, *principal*
Nicolas Asanov
Avanish Bharadwaj
Lauren E. Burris
Nathan Butler
Olivia Coyne
Daphne Davis
Mani Pourfazli
Nicole Razhanskiy
Chloe Robinson
Lilliana Soucaze
Krista Telford
Perry Tseng
Kaley Wong
Alice Zhong

VIOLA

Lauren Southwell, *principal*
Jacob Bandy
Abigail Benzinger
Natalie Druffner
Garrett Haynes
William Jackson
Andrew Jensen
Broderick Merz
Charlotte T. Spurr

CELLO

David Kim, *principal*
Katherine Chay
Olivia Fults
Cameron Hayward
Jiyoon Moon
Arush Narang
George Nielsen
Marion Rambler
Ellie Rogers
Vidur Shah
Claire Warr

BASS

Matt Gimbel, *principal*
Benjamin F. Burch
Julien Cox
Olivia Jones
Nora O'Donnell
Katherine Ropp
Cindy Xu

FLUTE AND PICCOLO

Hylton Baker, *principal*
Emily Qiu
Abigail Poirier

OBOE

Emily Harmon, *principal*
Stephen Litt
Anna Lassiter

CLARINET

Kevin Chen, *principal*
Garrett Sapp
Jillian Z. Diaz

BASSOON

Bartley Meinke, *principal*
Sam Brunetz, *co-principal*
J Suddreth

HORN

Monet Jowers, *principal*
Neha Bharadwaj, *co-principal*
Thayer Hicks
Harrison L. Dixon

TRUMPET

Mia Sabin, *principal*
Naomi Major, *co-principal*

TROMBONE

Jordan Shirtz, *principal*
Derek Y. Yao
Andrew Kuntz, *bass*

TUBA

Daniel Horn

TIMPANI

Ben Frens

PERCUSSION

Joey Padow

STAGE MANAGER

Katherine Gu

String players are listed alphabetically following the principals in each section

CAROLINA CHOIR

SUSAN KLEBANOW, DIRECTOR

THOMAS BASTABLE, REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

SOPRANO

Emma-Katherine Bowers
Leah Bragin
Ella Kate Guthrie
Caroline McGirt
Lily Melroy
Aurora Milholin
Isabella Sarvey
Taylor N. Smith
Victoria Song
Lindsey Vaughan
Georgia Wood

ALTO

Robyn Ardern
Julia Dow
Rosemary Ellsworth
Lauren Evancho
Maren Kloempken
Dalia Marquez
Alex Mitchell
Faith Mynheer
Alexandra Neinast
Mason Roth

TENOR

Ryan Dugan
Scott Gilliam
George Harris
Brady Leger
Dinelka Nanayakkara
Kevin Tillman
Ashrith Yelavarti

BASS

Matthew Bare
Henry Vivona Farnham
Jacob Lovins
Edgar Perez-Palacios
Evan Vordemesche
Stokes Willingham
Nahum Yared

UNC CHAMBER SINGERS

SUSAN KLEBANOW, DIRECTOR

THOMAS BASTABLE, REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

SOPRANO

Ann Ascher
Orly Baum
Jessica Cotton
Regan Rhymes
Ana Katherine Weeks

ALTO

Amelia Mehr
Alice Park
Shruti Temkar
Suzanne Winchell

TENOR

John Paul Savino
Tim Yardley

BASS

Ethan Bunch
Henry Vivona Farnham

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