Up Close and Personal: *German Masters*
October 15, 2022

The Master: Richard Wagner
May 22, 1813 - February 13, 1883
Dramatic composer and theorist

Wagner thought of opera (later referred to as "music dramas") as a "social ritual in which people came together to witness this huge, massive scope of an artistic venture. This is the idea Wagner called "Gesamkuntswerk," which translates to the total art work; "All things coming together for one objective" (Lumpkin, 2013).

The Material: *Rienzi, der letzte der Tribunen* (Rienzi, the last of the tribunes) | 1840
A grand tragic opera in five acts, based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel of the same name (1835). The opera is set in Rome and is based on the life of Cola di Rienzi (1313–1354), a late medieval Italian populist figure who succeeds in outwitting and then defeating the aristocrats, ergo raising the power of the people. But popular opinion changes and even the Church, which had urged him to assert himself, turns against him.

The overture begins with a solo trumpet call, with a quiet, brooding response from the strings; the second call is answered by the woodwinds. The third and final call is answered again by the strings, in a fashion similar to the first but leads into the melody of "Rienzi's Prayer." This melody returns in different ways through the movement. The remainder of the overture includes a second theme, that also reuses precious material in different ways. The ending is energetic and the militaristic material that could be interpreted as acts as foreshowing of the plot of the opera.

The Master: Johannes Brahms
May 7, 1833 – April 3, 1897
Romantic era composer, using a broad array of mechanisms for musical expression

The Material: Symphony no. 2 in d major, op. 73 | 1877
Four movements:
- *Allegro non troppo*
- *Adagio non troppo*
- *Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino*
- *Allegro con spirito*

Instrumentation included 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings.

Performance time of 40 minutes.

The first movement (*Allegro non troppo*) opens with the cellos and basses intoning a three-note motif that will return in various forms throughout the symphony. This movement also includes a waltz-like theme. The slow-tempo second movement (*Adagio non troppo*) alternates relaxation with moments of tension, not resolved until the final bars. The third movement (*Allegretto grazioso*) is the shortest of

the four movements. The concluding movement (*Allegro con spirito*) radiates energy and optimism from start to finish.

The Master: Paul Hindemith
November 16, 1895 - December 28, 1963
A composer, music theorist, teacher, violist and conductor

<u>The Material</u>: *Symphonic Metamorphoses After Themes by Carl Maria von* Weber | 1946
Four Movements:
- *Allegro*
- *Scherzo (Turandot): Moderato – Lively*
- *Andantino*
- *March*

Orchestration includes piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, small cymbals, small gong, snare drum, tambourine, tenor drum, tom-tom, triangle), and strings.

The first movement, *Allegro,* is upbeat and militaristic. It is based on Weber's Piano Sonata for Four Hands, which Hindemith used to play to his wife. The A and B sections highlight the two principal themes, which are threaded throughout this movement. This is an exciting interpretation by expanding the cadences, decorations, and harmonic choices.

The second movement, a scherzo, explores the incidental music that Weber originally composed for a play called *Turandot*. This music from his play is based on a pentatonic tone system (five-note), an element present in Chinese folk music.

The slow third movement is based on Weber's Piano Duet Op. 3 No. 2. The melodies are smoother, the rhythms are set in a balanced 2 throughout most of the movement, as opposed to the second movement. It also has innovative harmonic color, reminiscent of jazz influences.

The fourth movement, which is set as a march, is based on another piano work (op. 70). Hindemith has expanded this material to essentially show off every instrument of the orchestra. In a strong ABA structure, this movement utilizes Weber's melodic material fully. Although the piece is in a strict march at the beginning, the fourth movement does find a departure as it progresses.

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