

THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY

Christoph Eschenbach
Conductor and Pianist

Thursday Evening, March 7, 1991, at 8:00
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

P R O G R A M

Carnival Overture, Op. 92 Dvořák

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 23 in A major, K. 488 Mozart

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro assai

Christoph Eschenbach

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 Brahms

Un poco sostenuto, allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio, piu andante; allegro non troppo, ma con brio

Christoph Eschenbach plays the Steinway piano available through Hammell Music, Inc., Livonia.
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Carnival Overture, Op. 92

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK (1849-1904)

“**N**ature, Life, and Love” – that is the title Dvořák initially planned for a series of three concert overtures he composed in 1891 and 1892. Perhaps because Simrock published them with separate opus numbers, *In Nature's Realm*, Op. 91, *Carnival*, Op. 92, and *Othello* (after Shakespeare), Op. 93, are all known individually and are rarely heard together as the composer intended them. His biographer Schönzeler calls the triptych “Dvořák’s most important, most misunderstood, and most underrated compositions.” He likens them to Schumann’s *Overture, Scherzo, and Finale*, as a sort of three-movement symphony lacking a slow movement.

Carnival has fared the best of Dvořák’s three concert overtures, earning a prominent niche as a curtain-raiser on symphonic programs. Like its companion pieces, it has no association with an opera or stage work, but was rather conceived as concert music. Its popularity derives from the exuberant energy of the music, a reflection of the composer’s childhood memories of village celebrations. From the opening cymbal crash, vibrant Bohemian dance rhythms burst forth at a furious pace, rarely relinquishing their hold on our sensibilities.

The overture is in A major, a particularly bright key for strings. To enhance that brightness, Dvořák wrote for one of the largest orchestras he ever employed. Swash-buckling flair and big gestures are the order of the moment in *Carnival*. But to place undue emphasis on the dazzling brilliance of the piece and its clangy loud sections does an injustice to the composer. His quicksilver moods require consummate control from both conductor and orchestra; his customary melodic abundance provides many rich glimpses of individual orchestral talent. The pastoral middle section, marked *Andantino con moto*, is particularly lovely, showcasing English horn, flute, clarinet, and violin soloists. Dvořák takes a coy bow to Wagner, referring frankly to the Venusberg music from *Tannhäuser*.

Carnival was dedicated to the Czech University in Prague and was conducted by the composer at the premiere in April 1892 as part of a farewell concert prior to his American tour. All three overtures figured prominently in the concerts that Dvořák conducted during that visit, but *Carnival* established its preeminence then and has held it steadfastly.

Dvořák’s score calls for piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, clarinets, bassoons, four horns, trumpets, trombone, bass trombone and tuba, harp, timpani, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, and strings.

Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Mozart reserved the key of A major for special works. His compositions in that key reflect tranquility, clarity of spirit, and a measure of intimacy that are rarely present in other tonalities. For example, the late violin-piano sonata, K. 526, and the two late clarinet pieces – the Quintet, K. 581, and Concerto, K. 622 – all seem to glow with a diffuse inner light that derives in no small part from their casting in A major. Mozart’s String Quartet in A major, K. 464, is spiritually consistent with these works, sharing their linear clarity and twilight benignity.

Both of Mozart’s A-major piano concertos (K. 414 and K. 488) are exquisite jewels with an immediate melodic appeal that does not preclude emotional weight. In particular, the later concerto, which dates from 1786, holds a special place in the Mozart canon, more fully realizing the tenderness, pathos, and sparkle hinted at so generously in the earlier work.

A distinguishing feature of this lovely concerto is its transparent scoring. It is one of a very few concertos in which Mozart called for the sweeter clarinets rather than the more piquant oboes. The reedy, nasal sound of the oboes was incompatible with the wistful character of this music. Additionally, Mozart scaled back the aggression of the previous year’s concertos (the famous D minor, K. 466, and the splendid C major, K. 467, both

dating from 1785, are the best known examples) by forgoing timpani in K. 488.

As a performing artist in the Vienna of the 1780s, Mozart was famed for his brilliant improvisations. In his 27 piano concertos he left us a tantalizing glimpse of his improvisatory style in the surviving cadenzas. These cadenzas, which occur uniformly in the first movements, occasionally in the finales, and very rarely in the slow movements, present a paradox: Mozart generally committed them to manuscript paper only when they were intended for someone else. When performing concertos in public, he relied on his own inexhaustible invention, creating the cadenzas spontaneously. Thus, those cadenzas produced for his students are the best surviving evidence we have of his imaginative, freer playing. They submit readily to the interpretive keyboard gifts of other pianists. The first movement cadenza to the A-major concerto is Mozart's own and holds the distinction of being the only original cadenza for any of the dozen concertos composed between 1784 and 1786. It is played by virtually all pianists who perform this work.

Many writers have noted the increasing importance of opera in Mozart's instrumental works during the 1780s. It is surely no coincidence that K. 488 is contemporary with *The Marriage of Figaro*: its dancing bassoon lines in the zesty finale look forward to the irresistible shenanigans brought to such masterly perfection in the Da Ponte opera. Even more striking is the emotional intensity of the slow movement. H. C. Robbins Landon has drawn a parallel between the *Adagio* and the affective arias of Mozart's *opera seria* heroines; there is a prescient relationship between this music and that of Pamina in *The Magic Flute* as well. Surely, here is nobility of spirit.

Once again, tonality plays an important role: this *Adagio* is the only instance in all of Mozart of a movement in the dark key of F-sharp minor, the relative minor of A major. Musicologist and pianist Charles Rosen singles out the slow movement as an astonishingly poignant expression of grief and despair, referring to its "passionate melancholy." Mozart achieves this by the simplest of means; no virtuoso figuration interferes with the tragic intimacy of this lovely *Adagio* in slow *siciliana* rhythm. Rosen has written:

"Mozart's genius lay in the understanding of how the expressive possibilities of such a simple progression could be used, and how

it could give unity to a phrase, and to the movement between phrases, while the melodic line that traced and decorated the progression was as varied in rhythm and phrasing as the character of the music demanded."

Despite the jollity and brilliance of the ensuing rondo-finale, our memory of the slow movement is never fully erased. Mozart gives us a powerful reminder of it in a thrilling F-sharp minor episode. He concludes the concerto with brilliant figuration in an exuberant style, but that echo of wistfulness still hangs in the air.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms left behind no excess baggage when he died in April 1897. Unlike Beethoven, who hoarded all his musical sketches and conversation notebooks, Brahms left no record of his creative and thought processes. If a composition did not satisfy him after revision, he destroyed it. Occasionally, he reworked one composition into another; the Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 15, for example, was originally intended to be a symphony. But Brahms took the legacy of Beethoven very seriously, and the spectre of Beethoven lay heavily on his shoulders.

"You do not know what it is like hearing his footsteps constantly behind one," Brahms wrote. As early as 1854, probably with Robert Schumann's encouragement, Brahms, then 21, was at work on sketches for a symphony. Two decades elapsed before that music found its way into any permanent form. Clara Schumann and Albert Dietrich both saw a draft of the first movement in 1862, in a version not yet preceded by slow introduction. Some five years later, Brahms wrote a letter to Clara including the famous horn theme that became the transition to the hymn of the finale. Not until 1873, however, did Brahms start to concentrate seriously on the completion of his First Symphony. He waited until the age of 43 to contribute to the symphonic canon.

Between 1867 and 1873, Brahms composed hardly any instrumental music, focusing his energies on a wealth of choral compositions. Most significant among these is, of course, *A German Requiem*, Op. 45

(1868). In short order followed the dramatic cantata *Rinaldo*, Op. 50 (1869), the *Alto Rhapsody*, Op. 53 (1869), *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54 (1871) and *Triumphlied*, Op. 55 (1870-71). All these choral works were paired with full orchestra, and Brahms was steadily increasing his mastery of orchestral technique. With the symphonic version of *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Op. 56a (1873), he sailed forth with “solo” orchestra, his first such foray since the early serenades and the Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 15. The masterly *Variations* were an unqualified success; the way was paved for the long-awaited symphony.

Op. 68 was finished at Lichtenthal during the autumn of 1876 and premièred at Karlsruhe in November. Brahms chose the smaller town because it was a less politically stressful musical community than Vienna or Leipzig. He wrote to Otto Dessoff, conductor of the Karlsruhe orchestra: “It was always my cherished and secret wish to hear the thing first in a small town which possessed a good friend, a good conductor, and a good orchestra.”

Dessoff was delighted by the honor accorded his orchestra. Brahms knew that the symphony would not have direct popular appeal, writing to Carl Reinecke of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra: “And now I have to make the probably very surprising announcement that my symphony is long and not exactly amiable.”

He need not have worried. Dessoff's first rendition was successful enough to warrant repeat performances under the composer's direction in Mannheim and Munich shortly thereafter. Once the First Symphony was complete, it unleashed a slew of symphonic works. For the next eleven years, Brahms's orchestral harvest was bountiful: three additional symphonies, three more concertos, and two overtures.

It is not without reason that the Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68, was hailed as “the Beethoven Tenth” when it was premièred in 1876. Because of its heroic stance and C-minor tonality, the work is most often compared with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Both pieces have a general progression from tragic struggle to triumph and victory. Brahms's First bears equal comparison to the Beethoven Ninth (Beethoven's other minor mode symphony), primarily because of the obvious parallel in hymnlike finales.

Brahms's good friend Theodore Billroth likened the First Symphony's first movement to “a kind of Faustian overture” that might be thought of as a grand introduction to the whole work. Indeed, its complicated chromatic themes and inexorable timpani at the opening are hardly the stuff of which popular “singable” tunes are made.

Hans Gal offers an insightful commentary as to why Wagner and his followers would have experienced impatience listening to the opening movement: “The nobility of this first movement rests on qualities that were alien to the dramatic composer: a thematic interplay worked out to the smallest detail and based on polyphonic structure; a delicate balancing, from beginning to end, of tonal relationships; and a formal design whose grandiose dimensions only become apparent when one experiences the whole movement as a single, great continuum.”

The perspective is significant because Wagner's followers constituted such a major portion of the listening public in the 1870s.

One unusual feature of this very large symphony is the presence of two slow introductions, one for each of the outer movements. Slow introductions are rare in Brahms's music in any case, and this double occurrence is unique among his compositions. In both movements, the introduction signals something portentous and monumental. It is a measure of Brahms's genius that the effect is entirely different in the two: ushering in heroic conflict in the opening movement; introducing serene exaltation in the conclusion. By contrast, the inner movements are both shorter and lighter in emotional weight. In the slow movement, Brahms indulges in some orchestral decoration, embroidering his already rich music with a rare, breathtakingly lovely violin solo. Here, and in the graceful *Un poco allegretto*, we have a welcome emotional breather between the powerful pillars of the outer movements.

If there were any shortage of melodies early on, Brahms compensates with abundance in the expansive finale. From the magical horn call to the majestic closing chords, unforgettable melodies vie with one another for center stage in our aural consciousness. Thanks to the famous finale, Brahms's First Symphony is a proud contender among his most beloved original themes.

About the Artists

The Houston Symphony, now making its first Ann Arbor appearance, is one of America's oldest performing arts organizations and the oldest symphony orchestra in the Southwest. Miss Ima Hogg played a major role in founding the orchestra in 1913 and continued to take an active role in its leadership until her death in 1975. Since 1913, the orchestra has grown from an ensemble of 33 part-time musicians to its present roster of 95 full-time players.

The Houston Symphony has enjoyed steady growth artistically under the direction of strong musical leaders. These include Ernst Hoffmann (1936-47), Efreim Kurtz (1948-54), Ferenc Fricsay (1954), Leopold Stokowski (1955-61), Sir John Barbirolli (1961-67), André Previn (1967-69), Lawrence Foster (1974-78), Sergiu Comissiona (1979-88), and now Christoph Eschenbach, who was appointed music director in September 1988. Maestros Hoffmann and Kurtz hired strong professional musicians who remained part of the orchestra for 30 or more years. Leopold Stokowski brought international visibility by commissioning new music and making recordings. In Sir John Barbirolli's years, the Symphony flowered under the influence of English Romanticism and moved into Jones Hall, its new home, in 1966. In 1971, the Symphony signed its first 52-week contract with the musicians, allowing the orchestra to compete for talented personnel.

Today, The Houston Symphony fills each season with its Classical Series concerts, Houston Symphony/Exxon Pops series, Mozart and More summer concerts, *Messiah* performances and special Christmas concerts for families, a New Year's Eve gala, First Concerts for children, various educational outreach concerts, and two summer series of free concerts. Strengthening the educational outreach programs are over 200 docents who visit approximately 250 schools, libraries, and hospitals each year. In all, an estimated 500,000 people attend more than 200 Houston Symphony events annually. In addition, the Symphony plays for most of Houston Grand Opera's performances.

Christoph Eschenbach is now leading his third tour with The Houston Symphony. The tour begins tonight in Ann Arbor, followed by performances in Hershey, Pennsyl-



vania, and New Brunswick, New Jersey, culminating with concerts in Washington's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and at Carnegie Hall in New York. The latter is part of Carnegie Hall's centennial celebration in the series "Great Ensembles at Carnegie Hall," in the company of the Vienna, Leningrad, and Czech Philharmonics and Washington's National Symphony. In 1990, Eschenbach led the orchestra on a five-city tour of Florida, and last June they performed three concerts at the Singapore Festival of Arts, the first major orchestra ever to perform at the festival. Earlier, in 1985, the orchestra made an appearance at Carnegie Hall under Maestro Eschenbach when he conducted as a last-minute replacement for then-music director Sergiu Comissiona, who was suddenly taken ill.

In July 1990, Virgin Classics signed The Houston Symphony and Christoph Eschenbach to a four-year recording contract, beginning with a session to record Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini* and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*. Led by Maestro Eschenbach, the Symphony will record a minimum of two discs per year. Further recordings will include the cycle of Brahms symphonies, starting with the First Symphony this year. Eschenbach and the Symphony have recorded several works by the contemporary American composer Tobias Picker, one of which features Sir John Gielgud narrating *The Encantadas*, just released. The Houston Symphony has also released numerous projects on the Pro Arte label, among them Schumann's four symphonies with Sergiu Comissiona.

The Houston Symphony is active in commissioning new music from American and international composers. Recent world premières have included Ezra Laderman's Symphony No. 6 and *Dance Overture* by George Perle, 1986 winner of the Pulitzer Prize in music. The orchestra has also given several world premières of new works by Tobias Picker, who spent five years as composer-in-residence with the Symphony. In addition to composing, Mr. Picker conceived and administered The Houston Symphony Citicorp Fanfare Project, which commissioned 21 new works from renowned composers including William Schuman, Elliott Carter, John Williams, John Adams, and John Harbison.

The Houston Symphony is an active participant in broadcast activities for KUHF-FM, Houston Public Radio, and KRIV-TV. In February 1990, the Symphony's performance of Liszt's *Hexameron* for six pianos and orchestra was taped for subsequent broadcast on PBS.

Christoph Eschenbach's 1988 appointment as music director of The Houston Symphony places him in a distinguished line of past music directors. Previously, he had been music and artistic director of the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich and principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic. He continues to make conducting appearances with the major orchestras of Europe and North America, and in past seasons he has made appearances in the United States with the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, and the National Symphony. In Europe, he has led the Vienna Symphony frequently in Vienna and on two tours in Japan and one in the United States, has conducted the Orchestre National de France, the Israel Philharmonic, and all of the German Radio Orchestras. A guest conductor at major American summer festivals, Maestro Eschenbach appeared at Tanglewood for the 15th time and at the Ravinia Festival this past summer. He has also conducted at the Hollywood Bowl, New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Blossom Festival, and at many European festivals.

In addition to his recording activities with The Houston Symphony for Virgin Classics, Christoph Eschenbach will record a

complete Schumann cycle of the symphonies and overtures with the Bamberg Symphony. His other recordings include the complete music to Grieg's *Peer Gynt* and the Saint-Saëns "Organ" Symphony with the Bamberg Symphony on the Ariola/RCA label, and Berlioz's *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* and *La Mort de Cléopâtre* with the Czech Philharmonic on the Supraphon label. He has also recorded Marc Neikrug's *Through Roses* with Pinchas Zukerman and seven other soloists on the Deutsche Grammophon label. Scheduled for release is a disc of Mozart's complete Violin Concertos with violinist Young Uck Kim and the London Philharmonic for a two-CD recording on RPO Records. In the dual role of conductor and pianist, Eschenbach's recordings include the Mozart concertos for two- and three pianos with Justus Frantz and former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (an accomplished amateur pianist) with the London Philharmonic.

Christoph Eschenbach had already earned a distinguished international reputation as a concert pianist before turning to conducting. Born in Breslau, Germany, in 1940, he studied piano in Hamburg with Eliza Hansen and conducting with Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg, both of whom he regards as the principal mentors of his artistic development. He won several prizes, including the Steinway Young Artist Competition at age 11 and the International Music Competition in Munich at age 22. His career as a pianist was heightened by winning first prize in the Clara Haskil Competition in Lucerne in 1965. Four years later, he made his American debut as a pianist with The Cleveland Orchestra and George Szell, opening the door to both orchestral and recital engagements throughout the world.

Meanwhile, Eschenbach continued to study conducting with George Szell and in 1972 made his conducting debut in Hamburg with a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 3. His North American conducting debut came in 1975 with the San Francisco Symphony. In 1978, the maestro made his operatic conducting debut and has since been a regular guest in major opera houses.

Christoph Eschenbach now returns after making his Ann Arbor debut as both pianist and conductor with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in two concerts of the 1986 May Festival.

A New Day Dawns In Houston

Excerpted from an article in Musical America by Carl Cunningham, March 1989

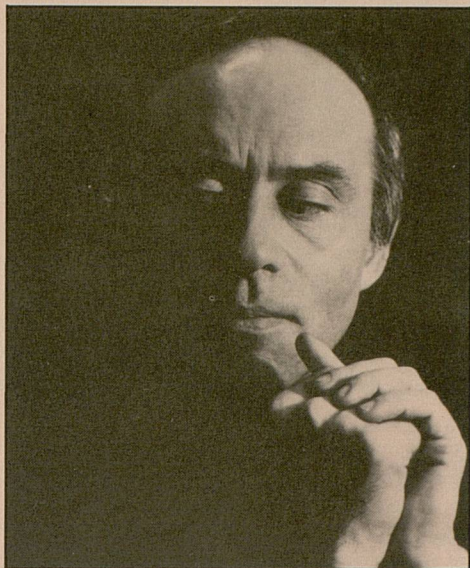
When performing arts organizations celebrate major anniversaries, they commonly look back fondly upon a glorious history.

However, The Houston Symphony's current 75th anniversary is an exception to that custom: it is a celebration not of the past but of the present, as well as an expression of optimism for the future. That focus is a matter of necessity, for the orchestra's recent past has not been the happiest era in its history.

But the future has suddenly become very bright, with the appointment of Christoph Eschenbach as the orchestra's new music director, the recent infusion of millions of dollars in financial support, and a new union contract that begins to redress the monetary penalties the musicians have suffered during Houston's current depressed oil economy. Eschenbach, who began his tenure in September, has raised the orchestra's morale and its artistic achievement to the highest sustained level in many years. His appointment brings The Houston Symphony its most renowned music director since Sir John Barbirolli occupied the podium more than 20 years ago. It also brings Houston one of the few conductors who can legitimately claim an equally renowned career as a touring soloist — in this case, as a concert pianist.

The breadth of Eschenbach's gifts as a symphonic and opera conductor, a chamber music pianist, and a concerto soloist has been fully revealed in a dozen engagements during the past five years. He made an unheralded Houston debut as a guest conductor in December 1983, eliciting a rather favorable reaction from orchestra members. But the unbreakable bond between conductor and orchestra was really formed two seasons later, shortly after Eschenbach's second guest engagement in a Mozart/Bruckner program in October 1985.

Suddenly, in November of that year, he was recalled to rescue the orchestra's imperiled Carnegie Hall engagement, when Comissiona fell ill during the symphony's Eastern tour. Eschenbach flew from Europe to New York and prepared two piano concertos with touring soloist Emanuel Ax and, in a single two-hour rehearsal, restored the Bruckner Sixth Symphony he had conducted



in Houston. While the orchestra's performance did not meet his own highest standard of discipline and inspiration, it came off creditably. Best of all, it engendered a deep, abiding bond of affection and respect between Eschenbach and the orchestra. He later marveled: "It was amazing; they remembered everything I had told them when I was in Houston."

Eschenbach's greatest feat of musicianship came in July 1987, when he returned to conduct and perform in three opening programs of The Houston Symphony's first Mostly Mozart Festival. He set himself a five-day marathon that would have staggered many a colleague, rehearsing and performing brilliantly as conductor and pianist in three different programs. All this was accomplished despite the fact that on the day he began rehearsals he faced a dispirited, frustrated orchestra that had just been obligated to accept a take-it-or-leave-it one-year contract that did little to relieve the financial stress or the shrinkage in personnel permitted under a policy of attrition. Within a few days, Eschenbach sublimated the players' economic frustration into an expression of artistic euphoria.

By means of this set of Mozart programs and his previous guest engagements, Eschenbach had demonstrated to his audiences, to the symphony board, and to the 13-member conductor search committee that he met

their prime qualification for a conductor: someone who would be a master of the German Romantic repertory. Curiously, The Houston Symphony has not had such a person since the six-month tenure of Ferenc Fricsay in 1954. Leopold Stokowski (1955-61) was most noted for his work in the Russian repertory, and Barbirolli (1961-67), though he displayed complete mastery of the entire spectrum of European music, claimed the Impressionists, Mahler, and early twentieth-century English composers as his specialties. André Previn (1967-69) showed a proclivity for the works of Walton and Vaughan Williams, but he was still in the formative stages of his career during his stay in Houston. Lawrence Foster (1971-78) built a substantial reputation in a broad range of styles, but showed the greatest strength in twentieth-century music, especially the Second Viennese and Russian schools. Comissiona (1980-88) was also experienced in a broad repertoire, but he left his special stamp upon the works of Berlioz and East European composers.

It appears, however, that Eschenbach will match or surpass all of his predecessors in each of their specialties. As the conductor search began to focus upon him in the fall of 1987, he returned with glorious orchestral performances of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto and Mahler's First Symphony. In March, he capped the announcement of his appointment by turning to modern music, with blazing interpretations of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's orchestral prelude *Photoptosis* and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*. He began his tenure by enlivening a wide variety of orchestral chestnuts with a series of brilliant, definitive interpretations. Brahms's First Symphony, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, Ravel's *Boléro*, and Rossini's *William Tell* Overture – all were vivid, compelling, deeply felt performances.

But last fall's crowning achievement came when Eschenbach took members of his orchestra over to Wortham Center to make his debut as an opera conductor in Houston Grand Opera's new production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Though it had the advantage of a strong cast and is part of an admired new cycle of Mozart/Da Ponte operas staged and designed by the team of Goeran Jaervefelt and Carl Friedrich Oberle, the performance was

clearly inspired by Eschenbach's deep insights into the score. It was one of the few times in memory that an opera production in Houston has enjoyed the centralized control of an inspiring conductor who could unquestionably make the dramatic action on stage proceed from musical values expressed in the orchestra pit.

Considering the breadth and the intensity of Eschenbach's musical vision, it would seem that Houston suddenly has a Herbert von Karajan in its midst. The 48-year-old Eschenbach actually credits Karajan's instruction as an important factor in his musical formation, but he gives prime credit to George Szell. Though Eschenbach trained as a pianist under Eliza Hansen during his youth in Hamburg, a conducting career was always in the back of his mind, and he studied that discipline with Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg.

Eschenbach launched his pianistic career after winning several piano competitions, capped by the 1965 Clara Haskil Prize in Lucerne. That, in turn, led to his acquaintance with Szell, through his engagement as tour pianist for The Cleveland Orchestra's European tour to the festivals at Salzburg, Edinburgh, and Lucerne. During that tour, and subsequently, he studied conducting with Szell when time permitted. He also made his American keyboard debut performing under Szell's baton in 1972.

"One of the main things Szell taught was phrasing," Eschenbach recalls. "He not only wanted listeners in the first two rows to hear the music clearly, but also listeners in the thirtieth row of the fifth tier. One almost had to exaggerate to accomplish that."

Eschenbach's studies with Karajan were less extensive, consisting of coaching sessions and opportunities to observe the Berlin Philharmonic conductor in rehearsal. "In a sense, Karajan is at the other end of the musical spectrum," Eschenbach says. "With Karajan, everything is melody and color, and the bridging of lines."

One can hear both influences in Eschenbach's conducting. His interpretations invariably have a powerful thrust, projecting the music out into the auditorium with real impact. And Szell's influence can be heard in the startling clarity with which details of orchestral texture are set forth, as has been demonstrated in woodwind ensembles of a Beethoven concerto for string accompani-

ment figures in Dvořák's *New World* Symphony.

But the Karajan side of Eschenbach's conductorial training has come forth in his beguiling interpretation of the *New World's* shopworn "Goin' Home" melody, which held a cough-prone Jones Hall audience enraptured throughout the movement. And considering Eschenbach's central focus as a Mozart specialist, the iridescent tone colors he evoked in a haunting interpretation of *Boléro* has been a startling revelation of his talent in the field of French Impressionism.

Eschenbach's remarkable career stands in striking contrast to a tragic infancy that might easily have robbed the musical world of a great talent. He was born Christoph Ringmann on February 20, 1940, in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland). His mother died in childbirth. His father was a musicologist teaching at the University of Breslau, but because he resisted the Nazis, he was dismissed from that position and sent to a minor university. Eventually, he was forced into the army and was later killed in battle.

Young Christoph was left with a grandmother, adrift in refugee camps. After her death in one of these camps, he was left alone in various places until he was found by an aunt named Eschenbach. He was raised by her and her husband, whose name he adopted.

Living mainly in Hamburg, the child found music in his new home. His aunt was a singer and pianist, and she gave him his first piano lessons. He also credits her with teaching him about breathing and singing technique, talents that have made him a prized accompanist of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. When he was 11, she sent him to study piano with Eliza Hansen, whom he cites as his major teacher. Since Hansen was a pupil of both Edwin Fischer and Artur

Schnabel, Eschenbach likes to joke that "I am a sort of pianistic grandson – or grand-student – of Schnabel and Fischer." In conducting, he names Wilhelm Furtwängler as his idol.

Though the Clara Haskil prize and his own early career quickly created the image of a Mozart/Beethoven/Schumann specialist, his performances in Houston and his recordings show a far broader range of tastes, especially in the field of twentieth-century music. Mozart is well represented in his discography, and he has also recorded and performed extensively throughout the entire field of German Classical and Romantic keyboard, song, chamber music, and concerto literature. Furthermore, he has premiered major twentieth-century concertos by Gunther Bialas and Hans Werner Henze and has recorded major works by Berlioz and Marc Neikrug.

The Houston Symphony is a finer, more polished orchestra than most people across the nation realize. Major conductors have been greatly surprised to discover this during guest engagements here; critics and audiences in other cities have also acknowledged it during the orchestra's occasional tours to New York and other major musical centers. The quality of its playing was the key factor in attracting Eschenbach to accept the music directorship.

Eschenbach is a full mature musician, but he also has the youth and energy that were fading from the lives of his predecessors Stokowski and Barbirolli during their tenures here 20 to 30 years ago. He also seems to have the patience, the iron discipline, and an awareness of the practical realities that will be needed to lift the orchestra to a higher level.

So, as the orchestra's supporters have stated many times in the past, "The Houston Symphony is on the brink of greatness." This time, all parties seem to have a common will to carry the orchestra over the brink.

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Hitai Lee
Margaret Ruttenberg*
Deborah Moran
Ruth Zeger
Margaret Bragg
Martha Chapman
Kevin Kelly
Elena Diaz
Harvey Wechsler
Dorothe Robinson
Inessa Kupin
William Chandler
Jane Kimmes**
William Pu**

Violas

Wayne Brooks+
Thomas Elliott++
George Pascal#
Phyllis Herdlika
High Gibson
Joy Plesner
Thomas Molloy
Kyla Bynum
Fay Shapiro
Bernice Beckerman
Linda Goldstein
Violeta Moncada

Cellos

Thomas Bay##
Winnie Safford
Wallace Chair

Robert Deutsch
Christopher French
Marian Wilson

Kevin Dvorak
Jeffrey Butler
Myung Soon Lee
James Denton

David Garrett

Double Basses

Fred Bretschger+
David Malone++
Mark Shapiro
William Black
Robert Pastorek
Kendrick Wauchop
Newell Dixon
Michael McMurray

Harp

Paula Page+

Keyboard

Scott Holshouser

Flutes

Aralee Dorough##
General Maurice
Hirsch Chair

Lynette Mayfield++

Wendy Williams**

Carol Slocomb

Piccolo

Carol Slocomb

Oboes

Robert Atherholt+
Lucy Binion Stude Chair

Barbara Hester

Larry Thompson

English Horn

Larry Thompson

Clarinets

Thomas LeGrand##

Randall Griffin**

Acting Associate Principal

Don G. Slocomb

Richard Nunemaker

E-flat Clarinet

Don G. Slocomb

Bass Clarinet/

Saxophone:

Richard Nunemaker

Bassoons

Benjamin Kamins+

Eric Arbiter++

Richard Hall*

James Rodgers**

Gregg Henegar

Contra-Bassoon

Gregg Henegar

Horns

William Ver Meulen+

Erik Ralske++

James Horrocks

Nancy Goodearl

Jay Andrus

Philip Stanton

Trumpets

John Dewitt+

James Wilt++

Robert Walp#

Dick Schaffer

Trombones

Allen Barnhill+

John McCroskey

Co-Principal

David Waters

Bass Trombone

David Waters

Tuba

David Kirk+

Timpani

Ronald Holdman+

Brian Del Signore++

Percussion

Brian Del Signore+

Fraya Fineberg

George Womack

Personnel Managers

James Hewitt

Christine Pastorek, Assistant

Librarians

E. Lynn Barney

Michael McMurray,

Assistant

+ Principal

++ Associate Principal

Assistant Principal

Acting Principal

* On Leave

** Contracted Substitute



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Orchestra

A Benefit Concert for
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James Levine

Jessye Norman

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Hill Auditorium

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Program

Ludwig van Beethoven

Scene and Aria, *Ah, Perfido!*, Op.65

Alban Berg

Three Pieces for Orchestra, Op.6

Intermission

Richard Strauss

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme Suite, Op.60

Richard Wagner

"Immolation" Scene from *Götterdämmerung*

University Musical Society
of The University of Michigan
Burton Memorial Tower
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1270

**Gewandhaus Orchestra
of Leipzig**

Kurt Masur, conductor

May 1-4, 1991

8:00 p.m. Hill Auditorium

Midori, violinist

Christian Funke, violinist

Jürnjakob Timm, cellist

Elisabeth Leonskaja, pianist

Claudine Carlson, mezzo-soprano

The Festival Chorus

Thomas Hilbish, director



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Programs

Wednesday, May 1

Sibelius: Violin Concerto in D minor (Midori)

Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 3, "Scottish"

Thursday, May 2

Brahms: "Double" Concerto in A minor for Violin,
Cello, and Orchestra (Funke/Timm)

Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D major

Friday, May 3

Prokofiev: Excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*

Henze: *Seven Love Songs* for Cello and Orchestra
(Timm)

Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*

Saturday, May 4

Glinka: *Ruslan and Ludmila* Overture

Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major
(Leonskaja)

Prokofiev: *Alexander Nevsky*, cantata for
Mezzo-soprano, Mixed Chorus, and Orchestra
(Carlson)

programs subject to change



Music Happens Here

313.764.2538

Monday-Friday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

University Musical Society

of The University of Michigan

Burton Memorial Tower

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1270

May Festival