Wednesday Evening, October 15, 2014, at 8:00
Isaac Stern Auditorium/Ronald O. Perelman Stage
Conductor's Notes Q&A with Leon Botstein at 7:00

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

presents

Marriage Actually

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

RICHARD STRAUSS — Four Symphonic Interludes from *Intermezzo*

- Reisefieber und Walzerszene ("Travel excitement and waltz scene")
- Träumerei am Kamin ("Reverie by the fireplace")
- Am Spieltisch ("At the gaming table")
- Fröhlicher Beschluß ("Happy conclusion")

Parergon on *Symphonia Domestica*, Op. 73

MARK BEBBINGTON, *Piano*

Intermission

RICHARD STRAUSS — *Symphonia Domestica*, Op. 53

- Theme 1: Bewegt/Theme 2: Sehr lebhaft/ Theme 3: Ruhig
- Scherzo (Munter)
- Wiegenlied (Mäßig langsam)
- Adagio (Langsam)
- Finale (Sehr lebhaft)

This evening's concert will run approximately two hours and 10 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission.

ASO's Vanguard Series at Carnegie Hall is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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FROM THE Music Director

Marriage Actually
by Leon Botstein

The musical language of late Romanticism, its rhetoric and vocabulary, were inspired in part by the 19th century's fascination with what music as an art form could accomplish relative to other art forms. The 19th century witnessed the development of the realist novel and of historical and genre painting; art was being used to evoke idealized versions of an imagined past, a threatened present, and real and familiar objects and events. It was inevitable that the nature of music would be interrogated with a view to finding out whether music too could weave its own illusions of realism, tell a story, and communicate emotions. Could music be used as a form of narrative, or were its beauty and content simply formal in character? Could music actually illustrate or portray something, or was it purely an abstract art form?

These philosophical musings occupied the first generation of Romantic composers, particularly Mendelssohn and Schumann. Mendelssohn famously argued counter-intuitively that music was more "precise" than language. These issues became contentious in the 1850s and 1860s as a rift grew between the defenders of the formalist traditions of the 18th century and the practitioners of "program" music, composers who rejected forms such as the quartet and traditional symphony in favor of instrumental "tone poems" with literary titles, and, predictably, music with words, notably opera. Liszt and Wagner, the leaders of the "New German" school, were characterized by the formalists as debasers of the high art of music, apostates who abandoned the unique formal possibilities of music and turned it into a cheapened illustrative medium.

But this division was more ambiguous than it appears. Wagner's grandiose theatrical ambitions inspired him to use repetition and musical signature motives to generate a clear narrative arc in his music. But at the same time, Wagner's love of myth and philosophical pretentions led him to ascribe a metaphysical dimension to his music, idealist properties beyond its purely descriptive function. In this sense he was much closer to Mendelssohn and Brahms in his recognition of the special power of music than the surface of the conflict suggests. And Mendelssohn and Brahms, for their part, may have worked within the traditional framework of forms such as chamber music and symphony, but they had no doubt as to the collective emotional power of music, which worked by evoking musings and memories, sensations and experiences, just as poetry and painting did.

Of the composers of the generation after Wagner and Brahms, Richard Strauss was the most representative of a synthesis of the two opposing camps. Strauss was, for a composer, among the most sophisticated of readers and the keenest of observers. Influenced by Nietzsche, he had little use for religion. As much as he admired Wagner, he eventually became disenchanted by Wagner's mythic and philosophical claims on behalf of music. Strauss was suspicious of grandiose metaphysical and political dreams, in which music was required to play a role, though at the same time, he was never in doubt about the power of the Classical and Romantic traditions to depict and illuminate the human experience.

Strauss began his career as a young composer sympathetic to Brahms. He then turned to opera and embraced the Wagnerian. But ultimately the composer he most revered throughout his career was Mozart. Of Strauss' contemporaries, the most distinguished was Gustav Mahler, who was, for much of his career, an avowedly confessional composer whose symphonies had specific programs, some drawn from his personal life. Tonight's program reveals how Strauss used the personal, but, in contrast to Mahler, not in a confessional, psychological sense. The "characters" in *Symphonia Domestica* may be his own wife and child, but in Strauss' hands the experience of daily life, from the quarreling to the lovemaking, are rendered believable but accessible and familiar through music to the audience; they are human archetypes built out of the detail of Strauss' everyday life. In this sense, the predicaments that unfold in *Symphonia Domestica* resemble, as a source, the universal sensibilities that are evoked by Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Using a huge and highly differentiated orchestra, Strauss manipulates every sonority and technique available to a symphonic composer. A Liszt-like illustrative strategy is integrated with traditional formal procedures of thematic development, as was the case in many of Strauss' famous tone poems. But in *Symphonia Domestica* Strauss reveals his sense of humor. He pokes fun at all those who seek to elevate music as an abstract, profound experience "above" the mundane. What he desires to show instead is that music, like all great art, must (in the late Arthur Danto's words) "transfigure the commonplace" in its own way. The ordinary life of people can be the basis of art, because real human life is the only subject worth examining through art. The work contains triumph, heartbreak, love, remembrance, aspiration, and suffering within its epic proportions. Strauss makes it plain that a composer does not have to resort to gods and heroes to ascend to the height of meaning. No wonder the radical realism of Strauss' writing in *Symphonia Domestica* infuriated Charles Ives, among others, who found it brash and vulgar.

Symphonia Domestica premiered in 1904 in New York during Strauss' tour of the United States (which also permitted the photographer Edward Steichen to make a stunning portrait of the composer). It also received two performances a month later in Wanamaker's department store in New York, which somehow seems fitting, given its domestic subject matter.

This work, one of Strauss' last major orchestral compositions, forms the basis of tonight's concert. When it was written, Strauss and his wife were still a youngish couple with an infant son; thus the narrative draws its episodes from the daily life of a young family. The *Intermezzo* interludes and the parergon were written much later, in the 1920s. By then Strauss was already regarded as an old master and possibly an outdated one. He resented this bitterly. He was shunned by a new generation of modernists because he never lost faith in tonality and in the possibilities of the grand musical tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. Like Brahms before him, Strauss developed a bittersweet nostalgia about the world in which he lived. He thought of himself as a witness to a dying golden age. He came to suspect that he was the last exponent of a grand tradition.

Strauss was unusually consistent, productive and disciplined as a composer. He hated the social delusions and pretensions of "artsy" bohemian artists. He portrayed himself explicitly as an unapologetic bourgeois who was shamelessly

absorbed with making money, copyrights, card playing, and his comfortable life at Garmisch. He made no apologies for his egotism and had no doubt about his own superior talent.

One aspect of his domestic life that never ceased to puzzle his friends and followers was his deep devotion to his wife, the soprano Pauline de Ahna, whom very few people seemed to have liked. She badgered and criticized him, was imperious and thought herself socially superior to her husband, the descendent of a brewer. She was offended by *Intermezzo*. But something worked between them; Strauss and Pauline were married for 55 years, and she survived him by only 8 months. That Strauss was truly a family man, devoted to Pauline and to his son and daughter-in-law, there can be no doubt.

But behind this veneer of unremarkable middle-class respectability—Strauss' mask—was a perceptive and deeply solitary man whose happiest moments were not playing cards but when he was composing or reading. Strauss was the heir to Mozart, who also displayed wide contrast between his visible social self-presentation and the complexity, subtlety, and humanity audible in his music. There are indeed few composers who have written instrumental music that illuminates and penetrates the contradictions, shortcomings, and sufferings of the human condition as consistently and persuasively as the music of Strauss and Mozart.

In this concert we hear Strauss' reflections over a 20-year period on marriage, love, family, human frailty, and jealousy, as well as the fear of death. The music is personal and becomes personal for the listener. But it betrays no intimacies. Rather, Strauss' personal experience inspired him to create a musical commentary on life. Through music Strauss transcends his mask by using it and pays tribute to the woman he loved and the relationship that gave him the stability to realize his genius to the fullest extent.

THE Program

by Peter Laki

Expanded versions of these concert notes can be read at AmericanSymphony.org.

Richard Strauss
Born June 11, 1864, in Munich
Died September 8, 1949, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Four Symphonic Interludes from *Intermezzo*
Intermezzo composed in 1918–23 and premiered on November 4, 1924, at the Dresden Semperoper, conducted by Fritz Busch
Symphonic suite compiled in 1929
Approximate performance time: 24 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, percussion (triangle, snare drum, cymbals), piano, harp, 24 violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

Strauss had written his own lyrics to his first opera, *Guntram*, but later on always enlisted the help of professional librettists (his long collaboration with the celebrated Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal was legendary). He departed from this established practice only in *Intermezzo*, where he offers a portrait of himself and his wife, Pauline, that no other librettist could possibly have attempted. The conductor Robert Storch and his temperamental wife, Christine, are thinly disguised stand-ins for the Strausses. The opera was based on a true incident in the couple's lives, when a very friendly note from a young woman, intended for another musician, was addressed to Strauss by mistake and ended up in Pauline's hands. She was ready to file for divorce before the misunderstanding was cleared up.

Strauss called *Intermezzo* a "conversation piece" in music—an equivalent to comedies about domestic life in spoken theater. Still, he felt the need, at several important junctures, to let the conversation stop and purely instrumental music take over. These instrumental interludes (intermezzi within *Intermezzo*) represent some of the most glorious music within the opera, and Strauss later arranged them into an orchestral suite in four movements. The first of these, *Travel Excitement and Waltz Scene*, shows the maestro's hasty departure for a series of performances, following a heated argument with his wife. To console herself in her solitude, Christine goes to a toboggan party where she meets a handsome but not very intelligent young Baron with whom she later attends a ball.

In the second movement we see Christine sitting by herself in the living room of her large apartment. She feels slightly attracted to the Baron, yet her thoughts soon turn back to her husband whom she loves deeply, despite all appearances to the contrary. The music is effusively lyrical, with lush harmonies and lavish orchestration.

In the meantime, Storch enjoys a post-performance card game with his

friends; the cheerful score even evokes the sound of the cards being shuffled. It is during this card game that Storch receives word of the unfortunate mix-up that occurred at home—a situation whose happy resolution is celebrated in the final movement of the suite.

Parergon on *Symphonia Domestica*, Op. 73
Composed in 1924–25
Premiered June 10, 1925, in Dresden by Paul Wittgenstein with the Berlin Philharmonic
Approximate performance time: 23 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon, 5 French horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, harp, 24 violins, 9 violas, 8 cellos, 6 double basses, and solo piano (left hand)

In 1924 Richard Strauss received a commission from Paul Wittgenstein, a pianist who lost his right arm in World War I, to compose a work for piano left hand and orchestra. The pianist, older brother of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, came from a prominent Viennese family; their father, Karl, was a steel magnate, arts patron, and host of a salon where many of the greatest luminaries of the time, including Brahms, were regular guests. Strauss had known the Wittgenstein family before the war, and he used to play piano duets with Paul when the latter was a child.

The commission reached Strauss at a time when he had just finished his autobiographical opera *Intermezzo*. In the opera, Kapellmeister Storch and his wife had a young son named Franz, just as the Strausses did in real life. But the opera captures a much earlier moment in the Strausses' lives; by 1924 Franz Strauss was a grown man. Recently married, he contracted typhus on his honeymoon in Egypt and for a while his life was in danger. Under these circumstances, Strauss' thoughts naturally turned to his *Symphonia Domestica*, written two decades earlier, also inspired by his family life. Franz was a child then, and he was given a lyrical theme that, along with the themes of his parents, formed the basis of much of the work. Elements of the child's theme, now "grown up," inform the *Parergon* (the Greek word means "addendum" or "supplement"), which, as Strauss' sketches attest, was based on the ideas of illness and recovery.

The conflict between those two opposite emotional poles generates the entire structure of the work, as an extensive, brooding, and chromatically complex introduction gives way to a more upbeat, faster section with a soaring, energetic theme. Yet this material is abruptly cut off and the uncertainties return with some more agitated and dissonant music. After a meditative interlude culminating in a cadenza, the woodwinds intone a peaceful song which symbolizes the simple world of the child. This hymn-like tune turns out to be a variant of the soaring theme we heard before; it returns in its original form and is given a dazzling development. The peaceful version of the theme reappears, now sounding more lyrical in a richer orchestration, before the grandiose and triumphant ending.

Symphonia Domestica, Op. 53

Composed in 1902–03
Premiered March 21, 1904, at Carnegie Hall with Strauss conducting the Wetzler Symphony Orchestra
Approximate performance time: 45 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 1 oboe d'amore, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 D clarinet, 1 bass clarinet, 1 soprano saxophone, 1 alto saxophone, 1 baritone saxophone, 1 bass saxophone, 4 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon, 9 French horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (glockenspiel, triangle, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum), 2 harps, 26 violins, 10 violas, 10 cellos, and 8 double basses

Fairy tales often end with the phrase "happily ever after." We are rarely told what happens after the hero and heroine have settled down to make a home, have children, and (we hope) lead an exemplary life. Richard Strauss, married and the father of a young son himself, took up the challenge to sing the praises of family life.

The symphony is based on three major themes introduced at the outset, one each for father, mother, and child. The "mother" theme is the inversion of the "father" theme, containing a descending major sixth instead of an ascending one. The "child" theme, in a slower tempo, is a tender melody played by the oboe d'amore. The powerful off-key trills in the woodwinds and the violins' wild runs may find their explanation in a remark made by Strauss in a letter written soon after his son's birth: "The boy is screaming like hell."

The baby and its musical theme take center stage in the scherzo. The child's antics are ended by Mama's stern reminder that it is bedtime. We hear a lullaby based on a theme from Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*; Papa and Mama say goodnight with their respective leitmotifs. The glockenspiel imitates the seven strokes of the clock, indicating the time when baby goes to sleep.

In the next section, entitled *Schaffen und Schauen* ("Creation and Contemplation"), Papa sits quietly in his study. His wife's entrance is announced by her theme, and within a few moments, Papa and Mama are transformed into Tristan and Isolde as their themes become entwined in a lush hyper-Romantic orchestration. At last, their passion spent, the couple fall asleep until they are awakened by the clock striking seven—this time, 7 a.m.

The finale opens with a double fugue representing a domestic argument. With the quarrel resolved or at least put aside, the parents take a moment to play with little Franz, as we hear a quasi-folksong in a slower tempo. But there isn't much time for games, and a more turbulent form of family activity is resumed. The work ends with a *fortissimo* rendition of Papa's theme. He has the last word in the symphony, although we are told this was not how things usually went in real life at the Strausses'. But composers are luckier than most other people: they can have their way at least in their music.

Peter Laki is visiting associate professor of music at Bard Conservatory of Music.

THE Artists

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

RIC KALLAHER

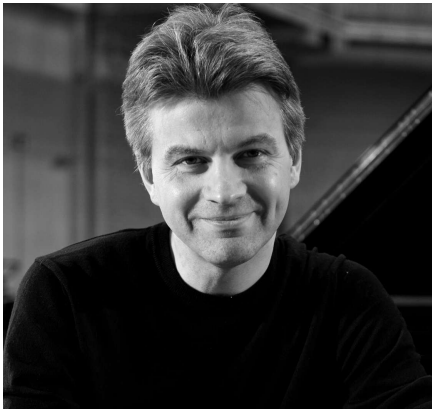
Leon Botstein is now in his 23rd year as music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. He has been heralded for his visionary zeal, creating concert programs that give audiences a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hear live performances of works that are ignored in the standard repertory, and inviting music lovers to listen in their own way to create a personal experience. He is also co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11.

Mr. Botstein leads an active schedule as a guest conductor all over the world, and can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including their Grammy-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are available for download online. Upcoming engagements include the Royal Philharmonic, the Russian National Orchestra, and the Taipei Symphony. Last season he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and the Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela and Japan, the first non-Venezuelan conductor invited by El Sistema to conduct on a tour.

Highly regarded as a music historian, Mr. Botstein's most recent book is *Von Beethoven zu Berg: Das Gedächtnis der Moderne* (2013). He is the editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and the author of numerous articles and books. He is currently working on a sequel to *Jefferson's Children*, about the American education system. For his contributions to music he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Caroline P. and Charles W. Ireland Prize, the highest award given by the University of Alabama; the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music; the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society; and Carnegie Foundation's Academic Leadership Award. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

Mr. Botstein is represented by Columbia Artists Management, LLC.

MARK BEBBINGTON, *Piano*


RAMA KNIGHT

Mark Bebbington makes his New York and Carnegie Hall debut at tonight's concert. He has recorded extensively for the SOMM label's New Horizons series. His most recent CDs, released in 2013, include four British piano concertos with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. His solo recital recordings earned seven consecutive sets of five stars in *BBC Music Magazine*.

Over recent seasons Mr. Bebbington has toured extensively throughout Central and Northern Europe (both as recitalist and as soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras), as well as the Far East and North Africa. Within the United Kingdom he has appeared in concerts with the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, and Philharmonia Orchestras; the London Mozart Players; and the Orchestra of the Swan. He has been featured both as soloist and recitalist on BBC Television and Radio and also on major European television and radio networks.

Projects for 2014–15 include continuing releases for the SOMM label of both 20th-century British piano music and further concerto recordings with the Ulster and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras; appearances in major concert series and festivals both in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe (including a debut at the Husum Piano Rarities Festival in Germany and the Grand Theatre at Opera National de Bordeaux as part of the Bordeaux International Festival); concerts with the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, and BBC Concert Orchestras; and London solo recitals at the Southbank Centre, St John's Smith Square, and Wigmore Hall.

THE AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Now in its 53rd season, the American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski, with a mission of making orchestral music accessible and affordable for everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely-performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The orchestra's Vanguard Series, which includes these themed programs as well as an opera-in-concert and a celebration of an American composer, consists of six concerts annually at Carnegie Hall. ASO goes in-depth with three familiar symphonies each season in the popular series Classics Declassified at Peter Norton Symphony Space, and has an upstate home at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where it performs in an annual subscription series as well as Bard's SummerScape

Festival and the Bard Music Festival. The orchestra has made several tours of Asia and Europe, and has performed in countless benefits for organizations including the Jerusalem Foundation and PBS.

Many of the world's most accomplished soloists have performed with the ASO, including Yo-Yo Ma, Deborah Voigt, and Sarah Chang. The orchestra has released several recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and many live performances are also available for digital download. In many cases these are the only existing recordings of some of the rare works that have been rediscovered in ASO performances.

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Wednesday, December 10, 2014
Requiem for the 20th Century
Vaughan William's Sixth Symphony, Ligeti's Requiem, and the U.S. premiere of Schnittke's *Nagasaki*

Friday, February 20, 2015
Mona Lisa
A concert performance of Max von Schillings' opera

Thursday, March 26, 2015
Opus Posthumous
Once lost, hidden, and forgotten works by Schubert, Bruckner, and Dvořák

Sunday, April 19, 2015
Music U.
A celebration of Ivy League composers, including a world premiere with the Cornell University Glee Club and Chorus

Friday, May 29, 2015
American Variations: Perle at 100
Two works by George Perle, alongside variations by Copland, Lukas Foss, and William Schuman