



Joachim
RAFF

Symphony No. 8 'Frühlingsklänge'
Symphony No. 9 'Im Sommer'

Slovak State Philharmonic • Urs Schneider



Joachim Raff (1822–1882)

Symphonies No. 8 ‘Frühlingsklänge’ and No. 9 ‘Im Sommer’

Joachim Raff was remembered by a generation for his famous *Cavatina*, a composition that hardly does justice to the extent and quality of the music he wrote. Others may recall Raff as a footnote in the life of Liszt, with whom he was briefly associated in Weimar, charged with the orchestration of the master’s first symphonic poems. Raff was the son of an organist and teacher who had left his native Württemberg to avoid conscription into the French army and had settled in Switzerland. He was born at Lachen, near Zürich, in 1822, and was trained as a teacher at the Jesuit College in Schwyz, where he distinguished himself. In 1840 he began to teach at a primary school in Rapperswil, remaining there until 1844. He had already had instruction in music from his father, whom he had also served as a copyist, and had taught himself what he could in the course of his academic studies. Stimulated by the friends he found in Rapperswil, and in particular by Franz Abt, Kapellmeister in Zürich, he turned his attention to composition, dedicating his *Rondo brillant, Op. 7* to Abt. In 1844 a group of his piano pieces was published, on the recommendation of Mendelssohn, encouragement that proved decisive in his choice of career. Moving to Zürich, he set about earning a living from music, organising ambitious concerts at the resort of Bad Nuolen, but finding increasing difficulty in supporting himself. The following year he went on foot to Basel to attend a concert by Liszt. Arriving there too late to buy a ticket, he was fortunate enough to meet Liszt’s secretary Gaetano Belloni, who introduced him to his master. Liszt insisted that Raff should be given a place on the concert platform and afterwards invited him to accompany him on his concert tour from Zürich to Strasburg, Bonn and Cologne, securing for him a place in a music shop in this last city. From there Raff moved to Stuttgart, where he met Hans von Bülow and contemplated lessons with Mendelssohn, a plan

frustrated by the latter’s death in 1847. With the further help of Liszt he then moved to Hamburg to work as an arranger for a publisher and in 1850 moved again, joining Liszt in Weimar, assisting him in orchestration, copying and arranging music. He remained in Weimar until 1856, growing increasingly impatient with the perceived jealousy of Liszt’s mistress, the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, and with the anomaly of his position. It was in Weimar, however, that he met Doris Genast, the daughter of Eduard Genast, the stage director of the Court Theatre, who became his wife once he had moved to Wiesbaden. There, he established himself as a composer and musician of importance. In 1877 he was appointed director of the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, remaining there until his death in 1882.

Raff completed twelve symphonies, the first of which, an early work, has been lost. He completed his eighth symphony, *Frühlingsklänge*, in 1876, following it in 1878 with his ninth, *Im Sommer*. Two further symphonies, *Zur Herbstzeit* (1878) and the earlier composed *Der Winter*, completed in 1876 but published in 1883, make up the four seasons. The musical celebrations of spring and summer are written in an immediately attractive and approachable style, scored for a relatively modest orchestra of Classical rather than Wagnerian dimensions.

The eighth symphony opens by welcoming the returning spring, following this with the dance of *Walpurgisnacht*, the night of 1 May, when witches are about. The first blooms of spring lead to a romantic movement of *Wanderlust*, evoked by the season when the young may wander to their hearts’ content. The ninth symphony opens in the heat of summer, proceeding in its second movement to an elvish hunting party. A pastoral eclogue then leads to a final celebration of the harvest.

Keith Anderson

Slovak State Philharmonic



The Slovak State Philharmonic was established in 1968 as the second professional symphony orchestra in Slovakia. It is based in Košice, the capital of Eastern Slovakia, a city with a population of over a quarter of a million. Košice is a seat of the constitutional court, and has four universities, numerous research institutes, theatres, galleries and museums. The first concert of the newly founded orchestra was given in April 1969 under the then chief conductor Bystrík Režucha. In a short time the orchestra won wide recognition among both professional and general audiences and became one of the leading representatives of Slovak music in Slovakia and abroad. The nearly 90-strong ensemble includes professional musicians who are graduates of conservatories and famous music academies. Great success has been achieved with concerts in many European countries and also in leading cities in Asia. The orchestra has performed at international music festivals held in important cultural centres of the world, including Vienna, Salzburg, Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Antwerp, Lisbon, Barcelona, Athens, Rheims, Hong Kong, Luxemburg, and New York. In 1994 the orchestra undertook a month-long tour of the United States, marking the first appearance of the orchestra in America. In addition to performances for radio and television, there have been more than 130 commercial recordings, many of them for Naxos and Marco Polo. These include rare repertoire, as well as participation in the Marco Polo recordings of the complete works of the younger Johann Strauss and of his brother Josef Strauss. Since 1991 the orchestra has been the only one in the Slovak republic to hold two international festivals: the Košice Music Spring Festival and the International Organ Festival of Ivan Sokol. The orchestra has also organised the Festival of Contemporary Art since 2003. The orchestra's current music director is Robert Jindra.

www.sfk.sk

Urs Schneider



Urs Schneider was born in St Gallen, Switzerland, and first established his own orchestra at the age of 15. He studied the violin at the Conservatory in Zurich, and as conductor was a pupil of Rafael Kubelík, Igor Markevitch and Otto Klemperer. He began his international career in the United States in 1962. In the same year he founded Camerata Helvetica, and was principal conductor and artistic director until 2018, giving concerts all over Europe, and undertaking European tours with the New York Chamber Choir in 1979 and 1981 and the Hong Kong University Choir in 1990 and 1994. From 1967 to 1983 he was music director of Camerata Stuttgart. He spent a season as conductor of the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra and Opera Society in the United States, and was conductor of the Camerata Academica Salzburg from 1971 to 1973 and the Haifa Symphony Orchestra from 1982 to 1985. He is currently principal guest conductor of the Prague Chamber Soloists, and chief conductor and artistic director of the Taiwan Philharmonic. Since 1987 he has been a member of the jury of the Besançon 'Concours international de jeunes chefs d'orchestre'. Schneider's career has brought him engagements throughout the world in Europe, the United States, South Africa, Australia and the Far East. www.ursschneider.com

Joachim Raff's symphonies present a synthesis of pure music and the programmatic elements of the neo-German school exemplified in the symphonic poems of Liszt. His eighth symphony from 1876, *Frühlingsklänge*, was followed in 1878 with his ninth, *Im Sommer*, forming a celebration of spring and summer that are part of a set that make up the four seasons. Both are written in an immediately attractive and approachable style, and scored for a relatively modest orchestra of Classical rather than Wagnerian dimensions.

Joachim
RAFF
(1822–1882)

Symphony No. 8 in A major, Op. 205 'Frühlingsklänge'
(**'Sounds of Spring'**) (1876) **41:30**

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|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | I. Frühlings Rückkehr ('Spring's Return'): Allegro | 12:12 |
| 2 | II. In der Walpurgisnacht ('During Walpurgis Night'): Allegro | 8:17 |
| 3 | III. Mit dem ersten Blumenstrauss ('With the First Bunch of Flowers'): Larghetto | 8:56 |
| 4 | IV. Wanderlust: Vivace | 11:58 |

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 208 'Im Sommer'
(**'In Summer'**) (1878) **36:08**

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|---|---|--------------|
| 5 | Part I – Ein heisser Tag ('A Hot Day'): Allegro | 12:51 |
| 6 | Part II – Die Jagd der Elfen. Versammlung der Elfen; Oberon und Titania; die Jagd; Rückkehr der Elfen mit Oberon und Titania ('The Hunt of the Elves. Gathering of the Elves; Oberon and Titania; the Hunt; Return of the Elves with Oberon and Titania'): Allegro | 9:30 |
| 7 | Part IIIa – Ekloge ('Eclogue'): Larghetto | 7:03 |
| 8 | Part IIIb – Zum Erntekranz ('To the Harvest Wreath'): Allegro | 6:37 |

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