

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

JULY 9 • ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra
Michael Stern *conductor*
Yefim Bronfman *piano*

WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

BRITTEN: *Sinfonia da Requiem*, op. 20
RAVEL: *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No. 2
BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major*, op. 83

LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

BRITTEN: *Sinfonia da Requiem*, op. 20

English composer Benjamin Britten was saddened by the beginnings of World War II in Europe and moved to America in 1939 to avoid the conflict. Later that year he was asked to write this piece, and it reflects Britten's view of the war with long, sorrowful movements and the sounds of funeral marches. When he turned in this piece, the Japanese government, who had paid for the piece to be written to celebrate the country's 2,600-year anniversary, rejected it because it was too unhappy, however it was later premiered in New York. This purely orchestral work of Britten's does not include a soloist and is his most popular piece because of its strong emotion.

- What kind of music do you think Japan was looking for to celebrate the country's anniversary?
- Many composers use personal experiences to write their pieces. Do you think this is good or bad? Why?
- If you were writing a piece of music, what emotions would you want to express?

RAVEL: *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No. 2

This suite comes from a Russian ballet written by French composer Maurice Ravel. Ravel created this suite—an arrangement of several parts taken from a larger piece of work—so that it could be played by orchestras at concerts. The ballet is based on the Greek myth of two orphans, Daphnis and Chloé, who are raised by shepherds on an island and eventually grow up and fall in love. In the first part of the ballet, Chloé is captured by pirates. Daphnis is upset and prays to the Greek god Pan to help rescue her. Pan scares away the pirates and Chloé escapes. In the second

part, Daphnis and Chloé are reunited and get married.

This suite depicts the sun rising over the island and Chloé returning to Daphnis with great joy and excitement. The final part of the suite, called the *Danse Générale*, has a light and energetic sound meant to represent the characters in a festive dance.

- This ballet is based on a Greek myth—a story that teaches a lesson but is not necessarily true. What lesson do you think the myth of Daphnis and Chloé teaches?
- Does the ending sound like a dance to you? Why?

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major*, op. 83

Johannes Brahms's second piano concerto was completed in 1881. A concerto is a piece written for a soloist playing with an orchestra. Brahms is considered one of the greatest composers of Western orchestral music, but even he had some moments of doubt. After his first concerto wasn't a hit, he didn't write his second concerto until twenty-two years later! In letters to friends, he described the piece as "a tiny, tiny piano concerto" and "a few little piano pieces" when it was actually one of the largest and most challenging piano concertos ever written.

Piano Concerto No. 2 is dedicated to Eduard Marxsen, Brahms's piano teacher when he was a child in Hamburg, Germany. The two stayed friends for the rest of their lives, and Brahms often wrote to Marxsen to ask for advice.

- Are there times when you doubt yourself? How do you regain your confidence? Who do you ask for advice?
- Who would you dedicate a song to if you were a composer? Why?

music is what feelings sound like