

IN TRIBUTE

a concert of music
dedicated to the memory of

James Swisher

A benefit for

The American Cancer Society of Charlotte

Jean Roberts & John Roberts ~ pianos
Gary France ~ percussion

Davidson College Chamber Singers
Donna M. Di Grazia, conductor



DAVIDSON COLLEGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Richard Prior, conductor
Steven Duncan ~ trombone



8:00 pm — Monday, February 24, 1997
Booth Theatre, Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

presented by:
the Department of Music, Davidson College
and
The American Cancer Society of Charlotte



NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION, INC.

Davidson College Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Richard Prior, conductor

VIOLIN

Christopher Gyves
Elizabeth Parker
A. Eleanor Merrill
Jon Palma
Wesley Goldsberry
Brenda Bondesen
Erica Sutton
David Slenzak
Anne Stancil
Matthew Pfeiffer
Kate Lynskey
Sarah Jane Spivey

Owen Cauley
Sarah Davis
Howie Cockrill
Elizabeth Holt
Margaret Lumpkin
Benjamin Buxton
Nathaniel Cook
Jessica Bigazzi
Jocelyn Schultz
* Carole Kruger

VIOLA

Molly McGehee
Stephanie Eichenbrenner
* Mary Thornberry
Lauren Cayton (JYA)
Anna Swic (CSO)

CELLO

Amy Smith
Abby Kniffen
Katy Saldarini
Carrie Van Deest
Emily Simmons
Melissa Platner
Andrew Campbell
Angela Letizia (JSA)
Ted Weiant
Jason Roberts
Janis Nilsen (CSO)

BASS

Adam Sanders

FLUTE

Laura Sheaffer
Wendy Daniel
Beth DeWitt

OBOE

Mary Baxter
Deanna Yard

COR ANGLAIS

*Greta Munger

CLARINET

Jill Williams
Sakeitha Crowder

BASS CLARINET

Ed Anderson

BASSOON

Susan Plummer
Lori Tiberio (CSO)

HORN

Erika Rissing
Brian Campbell
Mariam Kamell
Kate Scibal

TRUMPET

Thomas Vanderbloemen
** William D. Lawing
Aaron Leshner
Kristina Taylor

TROMBONE

Steven Duncan
Anna Hathaway
Lewis Hoffman
Ethan McCutchen

TUBA

Jay Hudson

TIMPANI

Connie Kizer

PERCUSSION

Chris Martin
**Donna M. Di Grazia

JSA/JYA - Junior
Semester/Year Abroad

* - Davidson College
Faculty

** - Music Faculty

CSO - Charlotte
Symphony Orchestra

THE PROGRAM

An American in Paris

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

Jean Roberts & John Noel Roberts, pianos
Gary France, percussion

Liebeslieder-Waltzer, op. 52

Johannes Brahms
(1833-97)

Davidson College Chamber Singers
Jean Roberts & John Noel Roberts, pianos
Abigail Showalter, soprano

Intermission

(approximately 15 minutes)

Academic Festival Overture, op. 80

Brahms

Davidson College Symphony Orchestra

Fantasy for Trombone and Orchestra, op. 42

Paul Creston
(1906-85)

Steven Duncan, trombone
Davidson College Symphony Orchestra

Latecomers will not be seated until the first convenient pause in the performance.

Johannes Brahms (1833-97): Academic Festival Overture, op. 80

Scoring: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals and triangle), and strings.

Brahms's *Akademische Festouvertüre* (Academic Festival Overture) was written in 1880, not long after the composer was awarded a doctoral degree by the University of Breslau. This was just one of numerous awards he had accumulated by the end of the 1870s that recognized his stature among late nineteenth-century composers, including the prestigious Order of Maximilian from King Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1874 (much to Wagner's disgust, it is said), and a gold medal from the Royal Philharmonic Society of London. In 1877 he had also been offered an honorary D. Mus. from Cambridge, thanks to the efforts of the English composer, Charles Stanford. But one of the traditional stipulations for awarding such degrees was the presence of the recipient at the conferral ceremonies—in *absentia* awards were not allowed. Apparently Brahms's fear of crossing the English Channel prevented him from agreeing to make the trip, thus forcing him to decline the degree. Just one year later the faculty of Breslau voted to award him another honorary doctorate (this one in philosophy not music) as "the most famous living composer of serious music in Germany."

Contemporary descriptions of the overture's genesis report Brahms having called it a "potpourri of student songs" modelled after a similarly constructed composition by the contemporary Viennese composer Franz Suppé. Throughout the work, Brahms quotes several pre-existing melodies that would have been familiar to university students of the day. These include a chorale-style rendition of "Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus" ("We Have Built a Stately House"), sounded in the trumpets and other brass above timpani rolls; "Hört ich sing" ("Hear, I sing"), played lyrically in the strings; "Was kommt dort in der Höh" ("What comes there from on high"), in a jocular setting for woodwinds; and finally "Gaudemus igitur" ("Let us rejoice therefore"), the most pompous of the quotations, first regally sounded in the winds (brass and woodwinds) and percussion, but then taken up by the full orchestra. The work concludes in this mood of stately ceremony—a most academic tone indeed.

The overture received its premiere on 4 January 1881 at the University of Breslau in a concert devoted entirely to Brahms's compositions; the composer himself conducted the performance.

With a background as a cathedral chorister in his native England, Richard Prior received his bachelors degree with honors from the University of Leeds in 1988 where he was the Lord Edward Boyle Choral Scholar. He continued with doctoral studies in composition at the University of Nottingham with American composer James Fulkerson. His compositions have been performed in Great Britain, Europe and the United States and have received radio and televised broadcasts. Dr. Prior served as principal conductor of the Nottingham University Symphony Orchestra, Nottingham Philharmonia Orchestra and the University Chamber Choir. Davidson College Symphony Orchestra premiered his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra: 'Phoenix Rising' with pianist James Swisher in the Spring of 1996; current commissions include a major orchestral work for the Charlotte Symphony to be premiered in the Fall of 1997. Dr. Prior joined the faculty of Davidson College in 1993 and serves as Composer-in-Residence and conductor of the college symphony.

Steven Duncan is a senior at Davidson College pursuing a double major in music and biology, where he has been cited as both an outstanding trombonist and talented composer. A native of Naples, Florida, Mr. Duncan has played the trombone since the age of 11, beginning private study in 1993 with Bernard Schneider and continuing his studies with John Bartlett, principal trombonist of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. This is his second appearance with Davidson College Symphony Orchestra this season. Mr. Duncan is currently auditioning for master's performance programs across the country.

George Gershwin (1898-1937): An American in Paris, arr. Gary France

Scoring: 2 pianos and percussion (timpani, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, triangle, xylophone, bells, and taxi horns).

George Gershwin, one of the most recognizable of all twentieth-century American composers, began his career in the era of Tin Pan Alley and the burgeoning arena of the American musical theatre. A self-taught musician, his first compositions included a host of popular songs and musicals (usually written to lyrics by his brother Ira) from which all-American favorites such as *Fascinatin' Rhythm*, *Embraceable You*, *I Got Rhythm*, and *Someone to Watch Over Me* are drawn. He eventually moved to Hollywood in 1936, but he died just thirteen months later at the young age of thirty-eight.

An American in Paris was composed in 1928 during a trip to Europe with Ira, Ira's wife, and his sister Frances. Gershwin called the work a tone poem, presumably because of its single-movement layout and its conscious attempt to depict an American tourist's impression of the French capital as he strolls through its streets, taking in its disparate noises and atmosphere. Yet it is less a work of formal design and compositional working out of principal musical materials (themes, motives, key schemes, and so on), than it is a moodscape in which a succession of memorable, vibrant melodies are presented, unfolding as they do like a medley of showtunes for which Gershwin was already so famous. From the opening scene, described by most commentators as the "walking theme" (complete with those famous taxi horns!), to the tourist's pause in a café (here his thoughts turn melancholy—a bit of homesickness, perhaps—as the most famous tune of the work is heard, cast in the harmonic idiom of the blues), and his eventual return to the bustle of the great "City of Lights," Gershwin aptly captures the essence of his fresh, enlivened approach to writing music in this work. Perhaps it is not surprising that the composer himself remarked that it was "the most modern music I have yet attempted."