

the tramp of a giant like him behind us.” It was Schumann who planted the seed of a symphonic destiny for Brahms when he compared him to Beethoven and suggested that Brahms was most likely Beethoven’s successor, if not his progeny. Twenty-three years later, Brahms finally completed his first symphony. Its first performance took place on 4 November 1876 in Karlsruhe (Germany), with Felix Dessoff conducting, and the second in Mannheim several days later, with Brahms on the podium.

Walter Niemann (1876–1953), Brahms’ biographer, who detected a relationship between Brahms’ *First Symphony* and Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*, remarked that the choice of C minor translates into a “hard, pitiless struggle, demonic, supernatural shapes, sinister defiance, steely energy, dramatic intensity of passion, dark fantasy, [and] grisly humor.” The first movement (*Un poco sostenuto; allegro*) resonates with high drama. The unhurried introductory statement announces several themes and is draped in austerity, with an undercurrent of calamity and hopelessness. This gloomy mood, however, has an ephemeral reprieve that appears in the form of an *allegro* section. The second movement (*Andante*) luxuriates in elongated melodies of reflective gentleness. The third movement (*Un poco allegretto e grazioso*) is a paragon of lucidity and elegance. Here one finds Brahms replacing the classical third-movement forms of Haydn and Beethoven with his own intermezzo. “A stroke of originality; [it owes] nothing to the past” (Jonathan D. Kramer, *Listen to the Music: A Self-guided Tour through the Orchestral Repertoire*). The fourth movement (*Adagio; allegro non troppo, ma con brio*), with its mirror image of the sonata’s opening movement, commences with a leisurely passage that presents several themes. The lasting despair that was so prevalent in the first movement is dissipated when the high drama at the climax is interrupted by an ambrosial melody, introduced by the horns and accompanied by trombone chords and muted, tremulating strings. From this point on, the music soars to a glorious height that assures a triumphal conclusion. Lawrence Gilman of the Philadelphia Orchestra was moved to label this movement “the greatest symphonic finale in all music.”

Program notes by Elmer Booze

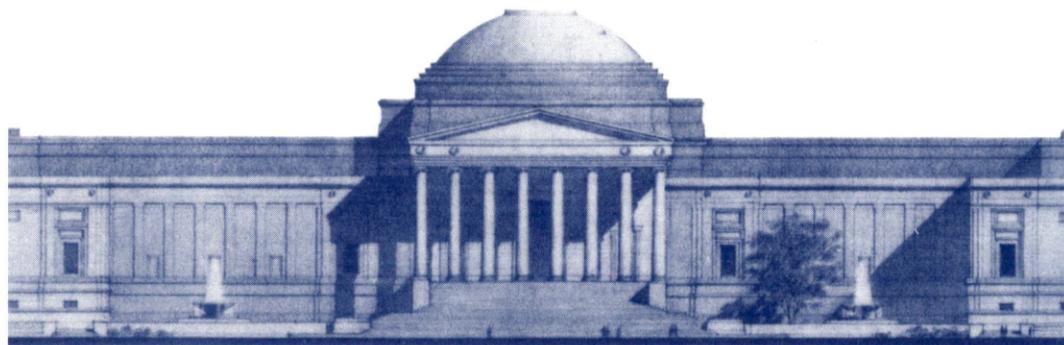
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performances is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

The Fifty-eighth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2351st Concert

NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA

GEORGE MANOS, *conductor*

Sunday Evening, 4 June 2000
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

Felix Mendelssohn Overture: The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)
(1809–1847) Op. 26 (1830)

Jean Sibelius En Saga (A Tone Poem)
(1865–1957) Op. 9 (1891–1892)

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C Minor
(1833–1897) Op. 68 (1855–1876)

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

*Selections from concerts at the Gallery
can be heard on the second Sunday of each month
at 9:00 p.m. on WGMS, 103.5FM.*

Conductor, composer, and pianist **George Manos** has been director of music at the National Gallery of Art and conductor of the National Gallery Orchestra since 1985. He is also artistic director of the American Music Festival and of the National Gallery vocal and chamber ensembles, which he founded. Manos' career as a performing pianist and teacher has included several years on the faculty of Catholic University in Washington, DC, where he taught piano, conducting, and chamber music. In addition, he held the directorship of the Wilmington, Delaware, School of Music, presenting an annual jazz festival and clinic. Maestro Manos founded and directed for ten years the renowned Killarney Bach Festival in the Republic of Ireland and was the music director of the 1992 Scandinavian Music Festival in Kolding, Denmark.

Fingal's Cave, a large cavern on an islet west of Mull in the Hebrides of Scotland, has been an important tourist attraction for more than a century. Mendelssohn became enamored with the genius loci surrounding the cavern during his visit there in 1829 and wrote to his sister, Fanny: "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, the following came into my mind there." The letter proceeds with a manuscript of the first twenty-one measures of the melody that later became the opening passage in the overture known as *The Hebrides*, or *Fingal's Cave*. Mendelssohn's ability to translate the wild, desolate beauty of that world into music may well be linked with his skill as a draftsman and watercolorist. Some of his best landscape drawings were done in the course of that same journey.

Sibelius was twenty-seven years old in 1892 when the conductor Robert Kajanus, who was to become a champion of his works, approached him with an invitation to compose an "insubstantial" composition for the Helsinki Philharmonic Society's coming concert series. The resulting composition became the now famous *En Saga*, a magnum opus that ranks as one of Finland's greatest works. Sibelius gleaned much of the material for *En Saga* from an octet that he wrote in 1891 for flute, clarinet, and strings, but never published.

Brahms, who reached middle age before completing his *Symphony No. 1 in C Minor*, Op. 68, actually drew up a sketch for it at age twenty-five. The year was 1853, the same year in which he completed two movements of his *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor*, Op. 15. Brahms' reluctance to compose a symphony was still strong some years later, when he confided in a friend that attempting to compose a symphony after Beethoven was not a laughing matter: "You have no conception of how the likes of us feel when we hear