Overture (1943)
GRAŻYNA BACEWICZ N **1909-1969**

Composer, violinist, pianist and writer Grażyna Bacewicz (Grah-ZHEE-nah baht-SEV-ich) was among Poland's leading musicians during the early 20th century and the country's first female musician to gain international prominence since Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831), who toured widely throughout Europe as a virtuoso before being engaged as pianist at the Russian court and whose compositions influenced those of Frédéric Chopin. Bacewicz was born in 1909 into a musical family in Łódź, 75 miles southwest of Warsaw, and her father gave Grażyna her first instruction in piano, violin and music theory. She received her early professional training at the local music school before entering the Warsaw Conservatory in 1928, where her talents as violinist, composer and pianist developed in parallel. After graduating in 1932, she received a grant to study composition with Nadia Boulanger at the École Normale de Musique in Paris from Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the famed composer, pianist and Poland's Prime Minister in 1919, who used his fortune to aid, among many other causes, the country's most promising young musicians. Bacewicz also studied violin in Paris with the Hungarian virtuoso and teacher Carl Flesch, and gained her first notice as a soloist in 1935 at the Wieniawski International Violin Competition in Warsaw. The following year she was appointed Principal Violinist of the Polish Radio Orchestra in Warsaw and began touring as soloist in Europe, occasionally appearing with her brother Kiejstut, a concert pianist. (The University of Music in Łódź is named jointly in their honor.) Bacewicz composed and gave clandestine concerts during World War II, after which she resumed her touring career and joined the faculty of the Academy of Music in Łódź. In 1953, she retired as a violinist to devote herself to composition and teaching. For the three years before her death from a heart attack in 1969, three weeks short of her 60th birthday, Bacewicz taught composition at the Academy of Music in Warsaw. She received numerous honors throughout her career, including awards for lifetime achievement from the City of Warsaw, Polish Composers' Union and People's Republic of Poland, served twice as Vice-Chair of the Polish Composers' Union, and was an accomplished writer of short stories, novels and autobiographical anecdotes.

"The premise of Bacewicz's Overture for Orchestra," wrote Polish composer and conductor Artur Malawski, "is rhythm and motoric movement." Bacewicz composed the Overture seemingly in defiance of the time of its creation — 1943, the year of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising that presaged the final transport of the city's Jews to the extermination camps. The Overture begins with four soft, quick strokes on the timpani that may have been borrowed from the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony — short–short–short–long — which the BBC broadcast throughout the war as a hopeful symbol for Allied victory (i.e., Morse code for the letter "V": dot–dot–dot–dash). The Overture, however, whose muscularity and orchestral brilliance are cast into relief by a lyrical central episode, was perfectly suited to the time of its premiere, in Kraków on September 1, 1945, four months after Germany had surrendered.

Horn Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major, Op. 11 (1882-1883)
RICHARD STRAUSS N **1864-1949**

Franz Strauss, Richard's father, was one of the outstanding instrumentalists of his day. For over forty years as principal horn he was a chief adornment of the Munich Court Orchestra, a post he held until the age of 69; he was especially renowned for the power and artistry of his solos in Mozart's concertos, Beethoven's symphonies and Wagner's operas. The eminent pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow dubbed him "the Joachim of the horn" (Brahms wrote his Violin Concerto for Joseph Joachim), and Wagner, whose personality and music Franz detested, grudgingly admitted, "Strauss is an unbearable fellow, but when he plays his horn, one cannot be cross with him." Franz was also a composer, mainly of horn music, the conductor of an amateur orchestra, and a capable player of guitar and viola.

The sound of Franz's horn playing was a fixture in the Strauss household: it is said that Richard as a baby would coo and smile when he heard the horn, but cry at the sound of a violin. It is hardly surprising, then, that the boy wrote for the horn when his talent began to blossom. Two such early works are a song called *Alphorn* with horn obbligato and the *Introduction, Theme and Variations* for horn and piano, both with writing difficult enough to give the young composer's virtuoso father pause. Late in 1882, while he was a student at Munich University, Richard began a concerto for the horn, and completed it early the next year. (His Second Horn Concerto came 60 years later, in 1942.) Franz played through the work, and found it filled with such difficulties that he refused to perform it in public, though he occasionally tackled the piece for family concerts. The public premiere was given in 1885 by conductor Hans von Bülow and the principal horn of his Meiningen Orchestra, Gustav Leinhos, who, Strauss assured his father, was a player of "colossal sureness," a mandatory virtue for any performer of this challenging Concerto. The composer could not attend, but his uncle Carl Hörburger reported that the performance was presented and received "obviously with great commitment and interest." The First Horn Concerto was soon taken up by other performers, and remains the earliest of Strauss' works in the repertory.

Father Franz saw that Richard was trained strictly in the classical style of Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, with Wagner and Liszt treated more like anathema than mere composers. During the time of the First Horn Concerto, Richard shared his father's reactionary tastes (this changed radically after 1885 — when the young musician left home) and the piece is in Strauss' most untroubled classical vein. The Concerto opens with a brilliant fanfare-flourish from the soloist that becomes the main theme of the first movement. A more lyrical (though, for the soloist, no less demanding) section serves as a complement to the vigorous opening theme. A spirited orchestral tutti, gradually softening, leads without pause to the *Andante*, a sad, sweet song in three parts, the central section of which is marked by agitated, repeated-note figures in the accompaniment. The finale is a bounding rondo whose theme is a transformation of the principal melody of the first movement.

Symphony No. 1 in D major (1883-1888)
GUSTAV MAHLER [N] 1860-1911

Though he did not marry until 1902, Gustav Mahler had a healthy interest in the opposite sex, and at least three love affairs touch upon the First Symphony. In 1880, he conceived a short-lived but ferocious passion for Josephine Poisl, the daughter of the postmaster in his boyhood home of Iglau, and she inspired from him three songs and a cantata after Grimm, *Das klagende Lied* ("*Song of Lamentation*"), which contributed thematic fragments to the gestation of the Symphony. The second affair, which came early in 1884, was the spark that ignited the composition of the work. Johanne Richter possessed a numbing musical mediocrity alleviated by a pretty face, and it was because of an infatuation with this singer at the Cassel Opera, where Mahler was then conducting, that not only the First Symphony but also the *Songs of the Wayfarer* sprang to life. The third liaison, in 1887, came as the Symphony was nearing completion. Mahler revived and reworked an opera by Carl Maria von Weber called *Die drei Pintos* ("*The Three Pintos*," two being impostors of the title character) and was aided in the venture by the grandson of that composer, also named Carl. During the almost daily contact with the Weber family necessitated by the preparation of the work, Mahler fell in love with Carl's wife, Marion. Mahler was serious enough to propose that he and Marion run away together, but at the last minute she had a sudden change of heart and left Mahler standing, quite literally, at the train station. The emotional turbulence of all these encounters found its way into the First Symphony, especially the finale, but, looking back in 1896, Mahler put these experiences into better perspective. "The Symphony," he wrote, "begins where the love affair [with Johanne Richter] ends; it is based on the affair that preceded the Symphony in the emotional life of the composer. But the extrinsic experience became the occasion, not the message of the work."

The First Symphony begins with an evocation of verdant springtime. The movement's main theme, which enters softly in the cellos, is based on the second of the *Songs of a Wayfarer*, *Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld* ("*I Crossed the Meadow this Morn*"). The first movement is largely given over to this theme combined with the spring sounds of the introduction.

The second movement is a dressed-up version of the Austrian peasant dance known as the *Ländler* balanced by a gentle central trio. The third movement begins and ends with a lugubrious transformation of the European folk song known most widely by its French title, *Frére Jacques*. The middle of the movement contains a melody marked "*Mit Parodie*" (played "*col legno*" by the strings, i.e., tapping with the wood rather than the hair of the bow), and a simple, tender theme based on another melody from the *Wayfarer* songs, *Die zwei blauen Augen* ("*The Two Blue Eyes*").

The finale, according to Bruno Walter, conducting protégé and friend of the composer, is filled with "raging vehemence." The stormy character of the beginning is maintained for much of the movement. Throughout, themes from earlier movements are heard again, with the hunting calls of the opening introduction given special prominence. The tempest is finally blown away by a great blast from the horns to usher in the triumphant ending of the work.