

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Beyond the Lullaby

DSO festival gives Brahms his due

By Gary Graff

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Most of the world knows Johannes Brahms for a lullaby. But during the next three weeks, Leonard Slatkin and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra hope to wake up audiences to the balance of the 19th century German composer's oeuvre.

This month's Brahms Festival is the DSO's third Winter Music Festival, following a 2013 immersion into Ludwig Van Beethoven and last year's survey of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. As Slatkin explains, "The initial rationale behind this idea was that during those winter months we lose many of our loyal patrons to either the South or the mountains. They go away. I was trying to think of some way to attract a different audience, and a kind of total immersion concept emerged from my head."

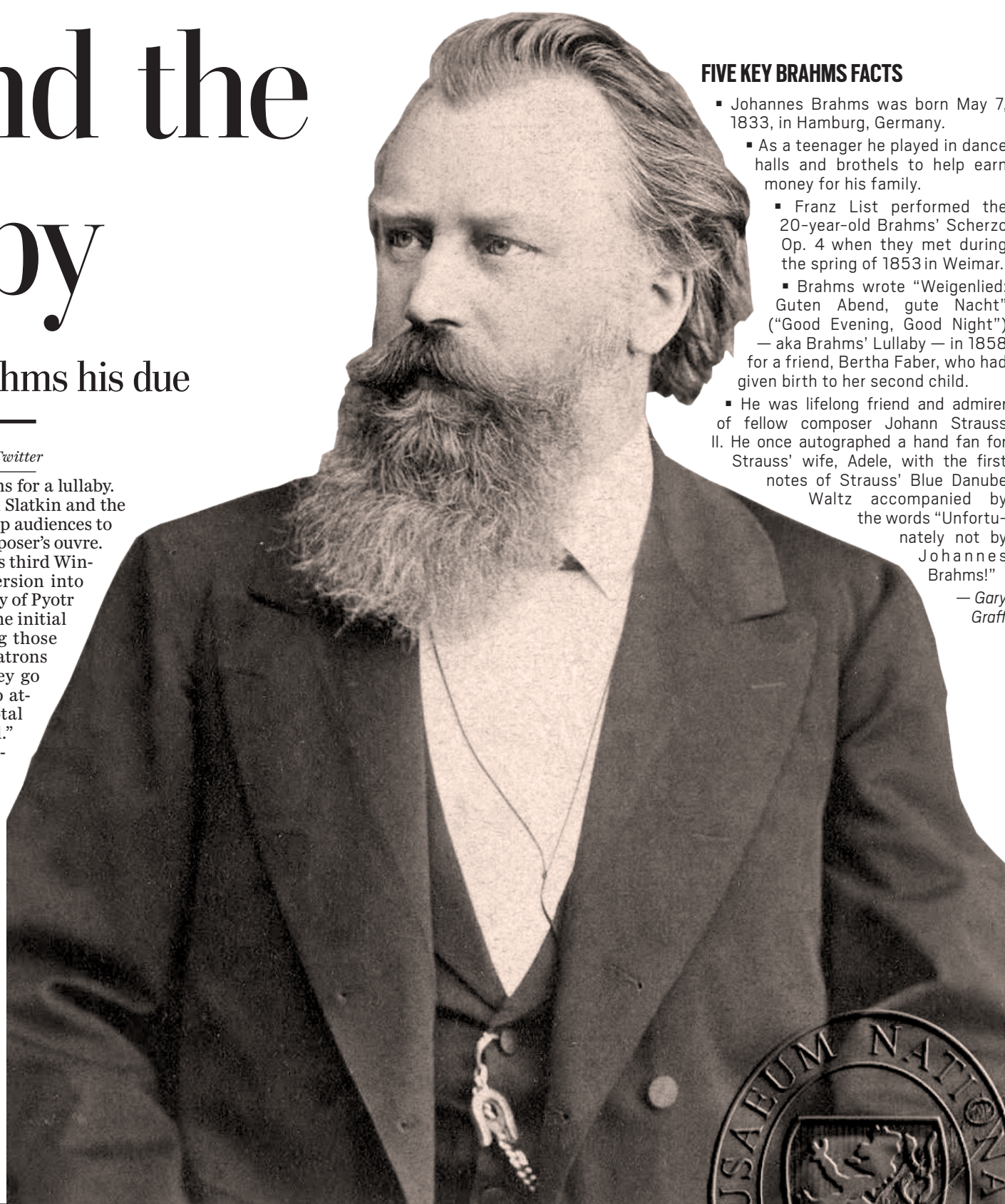
It proved popular, and Slatkin is confident the Brahms series — 18 events between Thursday, Feb. 11, and Feb. 27 — will have just as much appeal. And perhaps be even more illuminating.

The Hamburg-born composer (1833-1897) was not as prolific as other classical icons, especially on the orchestral front, and certainly didn't produce as much work as the Beethoven and Johann Sebastian Bach, with whom Brahms is often grouped as "The Three B's."

"We don't think about Brahms as being that limited, but in reality he only wrote 13 pieces for orchestra, so we're able to do all of them over three weeks."

— Leonard Slatkin

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FIVE KEY BRAHMS FACTS

- Johannes Brahms was born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany.
- As a teenager he played in dance halls and brothels to help earn money for his family.
- Franz List performed the 20-year-old Brahms' Scherzo Op. 4 when they met during the spring of 1853 in Weimar.
- Brahms wrote "Weigenlied: Guten Abend, gute Nacht" ("Good Evening, Good Night") — aka Brahms' Lullaby — in 1858 for a friend, Bertha Faber, who had given birth to her second child.
- He was lifelong friend and admirer of fellow composer Johann Strauss II. He once autographed a hand fan for Strauss' wife, Adele, with the first notes of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz accompanied by the words "Unfortunately not by Johannes Brahms!"

— Gary Graff

THEATER

Musical 'Atomic' at MBT a story long in coming

Regional premiere of historical story brings creators from Australia

By Malissa Martin
For Digital First Media

At 9 years old, Danny Ginges first read about atomic war and was terrified. The frightening thought stayed with the Australian native, and it wasn't until he was in his 30s that he heard about The Manhattan Project, the research and development behind the first nuclear weapon.

"I thought I'd find out more about it and I borrowed this book from the library on 'The Making of the Atom Bomb' by Richard Rhodes," Ginges says. "This fellow, this character, Leo Szilard — who I've absolutely never heard of — kept coming up. The more I read about him the more I thought: why don't I know about this guy?"

Ginges, an adman by trade, says the story stayed with him for years, so he decided to transition the event into a script and called it "Atomic". The musical debuts at Meadow Brook Theatre on Wednesday, Feb. 10, and runs through March 6.

The play is about the making of the atom bomb and its creators, including Szilard (played by Ron Williams), Manhattan

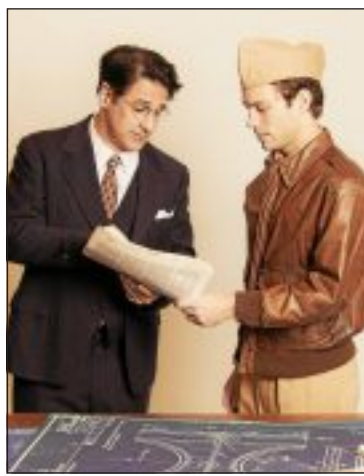


PHOTO COURTESY OF SEAN CARTER
 Lucas Wells and Ron Williams in Meadow Brook Theater's production of "Atomic," a musical about the Manhattan Project.

Project director J. Robert Oppenheimer (played by Rusty Mewha), scientist Enrico Fermi (played by Richard Marlatt), their wives and others involved in the top-secret mission. Ginges says the story must be told "because it was the first time in the history of the world that we could wipe ourselves off the planet."

The creators of the bomb battled many challenges for years, ethically and emotionally, about making such a powerful weapon.

Ginges' screenwriting friend helped him outline a script af-

IF YOU GO

- "Atomic"
- Feb. 10-March 6.
- Meadow Brook Theatre, 207 Wilson Hall at Oakland University, Rochester Hills.
- Tickets are \$33-\$42 at the Meadow Brook box office or mbtheatre.com.
- For more information, call 248-377-3300.

ter discussing the idea at a party, and it took Ginges a year to write the script. Once completed, he attended a pitch festival in Los Angeles and shared the story with producers. Things didn't go as he hoped, however; the producers were looking for writers with numerous projects, and Ginges only had one. So he flew home, went back to advertising, and put the project on hold for eight years. But he never stopped thinking about it.

After being retrenched, Ginges decided to give "Atomic" one last shot.

"I thought there was something about the ending, and I wasn't happy with the script," Ginges says. "And I thought, 'Oh, I'll fix up the ending.' So I dusted it off the shelf and rewrote the ending. And I thought, 'Yeah, that's really powerful.' I really

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ART

West Bloomfield artist produces videos for other painters

By Megan Swoyer Garbinski
For Digital First Media

It's not every day that you find a passionate artist who also runs a thriving teaching, publishing and video-recording business.

For that matter, running any business is difficult for most serious artists, as they spend their days visualizing, learning, experimenting and turning out works they hope will be juried into a show or hung in a gallery.

But watercolorist Chris Unwin of West Bloomfield Township isn't just any artist. And, if truth be told, she's got a great support system in husband Don, who is an attorney.

Her most recent offering is a DVD set taped in Novi, which features renowned Washington state artist Bev Jozwiak teaching watercolor painting, with a focus on figures and animals.

"I started out in the 1980s organizing teaching workshops with nationally known artists," recalls Unwin, whose company is called Creative Art Press.

With five children and the first starting college at the time, the watercolor guru, who once taught grade school, figured the artist-workshop business could be gainful.

"I ended up doing workshops for a number of years, here and

all around the world, on cruises — you name it," Unwin says.

By 1995, Unwin was turning out a body of colorful award-winning work while teaching art. She also became a signature member of the National Watercolor Society — a prominent juried certification. Known for her loose brushwork and flowing, fresh colors complemented by fitting detail,



Unwin

her soulful creations are inspired by everything from her trips West and to the Caribbean to subjects right here in metro Detroit. Unwin made her first teaching video out West in 1995.

"Don filmed it — they didn't have high-quality cameras then," she says. Don had "worked with some television advertisement professionals with a company for his business, so afterward, he showed them what he did."

The professionals suggested that Chris and Don hire a proficient video company for the next shoot, which they did, and soon after, the Unwins started to sell teaching videos for watercolor students.

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MAKE A HAPPY HOME

Your days are busy; family obligations, work and community commitments take up your time. Our new Sunday Homefront is designed to help you at home. From beautifying your surroundings to attending to your own physical and emotional health and improving family relationships, we bring you stories and ideas to make your home life better.



Look for it every Sunday.

— Nicole Robertson, features editor

