

Bloomsburg University Community Orchestra

Welcome to our 50th Anniversary Celebration Concert! We are glad you are here. It is a rare occasion that we can partake in a celebration of 50 years of music making. Today's concert will celebrate where we have been and where we are going, both musically and culturally. The first half of the concert will feature three newer pieces written by some of today's best composers – Brian Balmages, Roger Zare, and Jack Jarrett. The second half will look back on history, giving evidence of where we have been with performances of the first movement of Schubert's 8th symphony, conducted by previous music director and professor emeritus, Dr. Mark Jelinek, and Faure's *Pavane*. These pieces will be followed by a world premiere of current music director David Tedford's *Celebration Fanfare*, written specifically for this concert! To help with the celebration, former members of the orchestra will be joining us on stage for the last three pieces.

Program notes for Saturday, April 29, 2023

On Top of the World – Brian Balmages

On Top of the World is a celebration of achievement that seeks to portray the feeling of standing on top of the world. It is an energetic overture centered around several core rhythmic and melodic ideas. The opening of the world begins in a minimalist fashion and introduces some rhythmic fragments that are further developed later in the work. The opening brass fanfare is transformed into a lighter melody in the strings that almost seems to be floating.

As the music continues to develop, a second theme is introduced that is quite lush and lyrical in comparison to the previous music. It goes through several iterations before the presentation of a third and final idea that hints at the rhythmic energy of the opening but through a new melody. This melody continues to develop until it is ultimately juxtaposed with the first theme presented in the piece.

The three themes continue to play off each other, weaving in and out of the texture in various ways. The music increases in intensity, moving into a short fugue before arriving at a massive and powerful tutti passage for the entire orchestra. The opening brass fanfares return and develop as part of a short code.

On Top of the World was commissioned by the East Chapel Hill High School Symphony Orchestra (North Carolina) and conductor Ryan E. Ellefsen. The funding was made possible through the generous donations of the East Chapel Hill School parents and community.

- *Brian Balmages*

Roaring Fork – Roger Zare

The Roaring Fork River is a tributary of the Colorado River and is known for its challenging whitewater rafting opportunities. I spent part of the summer of 2010 in Aspen, one of the cities next to which the river flows, and while I did not go rafting, I spent a lot of time admiring the sheer power of the river as I hiked alongside it. This work reflects upon this power as well as the excitement of whitewater rafting. The opening begins with calm waters but with an angular melody over static harmonies. As the momentum builds, the music starts to speed downstream. The angular melody from the opening returns, but with even more breadth. After a reflective moment featuring a solo violin, the music plunges back into the rapids until the end.

- *Roger Zare*

***Meditation* – Jack Jarrett**

Meditation is the third of a four-movement *Serenade for String Orchestra*. The entire work was written in 2003 while the composer was living in India, and was recorded under his direction in 2008 by the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra.

- Jack Jarrett

***Symphony No. 8 “Unfinished” - movement 1* – Franz Schubert**

The epitaph on Schubert’s tombstone reads: “The art of music has entombed here a rich treasure but even fairer hopes.” We all lament the “loss” of treasure that we never possessed, none perhaps more than great art that we presume may have come to pass but not for lives cut short in youth. We must remember that not all composers can live long productive lives like those enjoyed by Verdi and Strauss, for example. Often those who die young are nevertheless privileged to accomplish much, and Schubert, like Mozart, is exemplary. His short life was generally uneventful, and his personality still is somewhat lacking in vivid details for us today, but we do know that he lived and worked within a small circle of artists in various fields in Vienna. His was contemporaneous with Beethoven, but that master’s music exerted little influence upon Schubert; Haydn and Mozart were his models.

Franz Schubert’s short life roughly coincided with that of Beethoven’s—both passing away within about a year of each other. But what a difference there is between the life and music of these two giants of early romantic music! Beethoven—world renowned with fiery temperament, and master of struggling to hammer out profundities from modest ideas—strode across the musical landscape of Europe as a conqueror. Schubert, on the other hand, lived quietly within a circle of close friends, rarely capturing the public’s imagination, while turning out an immeasurable wealth of melodies, apparently with little effort. In his brief career Schubert composed orchestral music, dabbled in opera, produced masterpieces of chamber music, and created a significant body of compositions for piano. But his glory, and the world’s musical treasure, lies in his *Lieder* (German songs). It is astounding that he composed over six-hundred of them, and they constitute the defining repertory within that genre. No one else—not Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, Strauss, nor Mahler—come close to the defining mark of Schubert. Almost single handedly he created the first masterpieces of German song, and so many, at that. They are constituted of marvelously imaginative piano accompaniments (which are really equal in importance to the vocal part); innovative harmonies; poetic texts of high artist quality; and an unprecedented gift for an endless variety of exquisite melodies. And it is an understanding and appreciation of the centrality of song in Schubert’s *oeuvre* that informs our encounter with his instrumental music, including his symphonies.

He wrote nine symphonies, but two of them have garnered the most prominence: The “Great C Major” symphony and the “Unfinished.” Many have claimed that the latter really is “finished,” (owing to its genius), and many others have actually finished it (Fools rush in . . .) by composing the missing last two movements in Schubert’s style. But, manifestly it is unfinished, but of such gripping quality and beauty that it really doesn’t matter. Ironically, it did not meet the light of day (literally) until 1865, when it was retrieved, almost as an afterthought, from an obscure personality’s desk drawer. Schubert never heard any of his symphonies played by a professional orchestra, and none of them were published in his lifetime. Yet, here is an iconic work of early Romanticism that lay undisturbed almost from the time of its composition in 1822. In many respects it manifests most of the technical characteristics (and I won’t bother you with those) of late Classical symphonies such as those of late Haydn and Mozart, and perhaps early Beethoven. The essence of this great work is more elusive: its dark and reflective tone, its stunning and novel combinations of subtle instrumental color, the characteristic and striking harmonic language—and, of

course, the Schubertian melodies. Technical points pale beside these qualities—the “Unfinished” opens a new atmospheric sound world of Romanticism that is palpable beyond analysis.

- *Wm. E. Runyan*

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***Pavane* – Gabriel Fauré**

The bulk of Gabriel Fauré’s music – whether piano, chamber, vocal or orchestral – conveys the impression of a personal and private statement, an intimate conversation between the composer and his muse. Throughout his life Fauré’s ideal was to create chamber music; the grander forms, opera, symphony or concerto, were not for him. Although he tried several times to write symphonies, he abandoned or rejected them; the same fate awaited his attempt at a violin concerto. His music is admirably suited for performance in private homes or small halls. But the elegance and ease of much of his work belies the painstaking effort that went into the composition. Fauré was not one to wear his heart on his sleeve.

Fauré was a student of Camille Saint-Saëns, the quintessential French neo-classicist of the late nineteenth century who considered form as an essential component of “good” music. Fauré respected Saint-Saëns greatly, and while the structure of his works usually adheres to classical models, he often experimented and surprised audiences with unexpected phrasing and harmonies. His *Requiem*, for example, represents a quiet, comforting revolution in the Catholic approach to death (it lacks the *Dies irae*, describing the panic of damned souls awaiting judgment). Although a secret agnostic and freethinker, he worked for many years as organist and choirmaster at La Madeleine, one of the largest churches in Paris.

Quintessentially French, Fauré’s compositional style is particularly refined. His music, often said to be the reflection of French civilization in sound, demonstrates not only his artistic restraint, but also the unique qualities of his harmonic and melodic schemes. As an innovator, he infused his style with the classic spirit of ancient Greece and was writing impressionistically twenty years before Debussy.

Aaron Copland wrote about Fauré’s role as director of the famed Paris Conservatory in his book, *Our New Music*: “It is true, of course, that Fauré’s influence was confined almost exclusively to France. Nevertheless, as he was head of the Paris Conservatory for fifteen years and the teacher of Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Roger Ducasse, Nadia Boulanger, and many other leading figures in French musical life, his artistic principles gained broad circulation.”

One of his few orchestral works, the *Pavane* is a product of 1887. The work’s elegiac mood likely arose from Fauré’s grief over the death of his father, an event contributing to the creation of his *Requiem* in the same year. The relationship of these two works is somewhat more apparent upon hearing the original scoring of the work with ad libitum chorus (it is only rarely heard in this form). In three sections, the *Pavane* is based upon the melody first set forth by solo flute. A “pavane” is a dance form derived from a solemn courtly dance of early 16th-century Spain... a dance imitating the haughty gait of a peacock (pavo).

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***Celebration Fanfare* – David Tedford**

Celebration Fanfare aims at combining traditional orchestral music with new compositional trends. Perfect for a celebration of 50 years. The opening passage, a horn call, accompanied by static trombones, tries to capture a beginning – nebulous and meandering. A question is posed of “where are we going?”. The question is reiterated to reinforce its importance. In response, a typical rhythmic fanfare answers the

question, followed by the main statement played by solo trumpet. This melody, like J.S. Bach's Violin Concerto in E major with its arpeggiated start followed by eighth notes, continues the idea of looking back to orchestra history. Where Bach and other standard composers utilize four-bar phrases, I elongated the initial statement to be a fourteen-bar phrase made up of two seven-bar phrases. The second half of the piece alludes to a more contemporary style in orchestral music, lending it to a forward-looking style. I wanted this second section to be more jovial. Where the opening theme is traditional in its underpinnings, the second section is more contemporary in rhythm, due to the use of lopsided and compound meters. There is a brief return of the original theme, layered on top of a completely new idea, which furthers itself to newer styles of music history. The fun, light-hearted material returns, only to be interrupted by a final statement of the original theme played by solo trumpet. This last solo statement is the triumphal answer to the questioning horn solo, heard at the beginning of the piece.

- *David Tedford*