



2015 SEASON / METRO #5



Ascension

SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 3:00PM
OLD MUSEUM BUILDING

CONCERT PROGRAM

SIBELIUS

Karelia Suite Op.11

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The Lark Ascending

SAMUEL DICKENSON

A Little Prayer (world premiere)

INTERVAL

SIBELIUS

Finlandia Op.26

SIBELIUS

The Swan of Tuonela Op.22 No.2

LISZT

Les Préludes

VIOLIN 1

Cameron Hough*
(Concertmaster)
Yvette McKinnon
Danielle Langston
Keith Gambling
Tove Easton
Emma Eriksson
Peter Nicholls
Matthew Harkness

VIOLIN 2

Amy Phillips*
Amanda Lugton
Lauren Jones
Anna Jenkins
Ryan Smith
Ailsa Nicholson
Emily Clark
Bec Johnson
Jane Mousley

VIOLA

Sarah Parrish^
Katrina Greenwood
Anna Jack
Daniel Tipping

CELLO

Helen Dolden*
Mathilde Vlieg
Edward Brackin
Gabriel Dumitru
Nicole Kancachian
Charmaine Lee

BASS

Samuel Dickenson*
Amelia Grimmer
Glenn Holliday
Harry Mulhall
Mike Watson

FLUTE

Jessica Sullivan*
Cassie Slater

PICCOLO

Thomas Melton*

OBOE

Gabrielle Knight*
Sadah Webster

COR ANGLAIS

Anton Rayner*

CLARINET

Daniel Sullivan*
Kendal Alderman

BASS CLARINET

Melissa Baldwin*

BASSOON

Carl Bryant*
Sarah Johnson

CONTRABASSON

Ashley Nott^

HORN

Laura-Nicole Guiton^
Emma Holden
Elisha Edwards
Chris Jensen
Amy Thomson

TRUMPET

Chris Baldwin*
Marissa Clarke
Michael Gray

TROMBONE

Phil Davis^
Nicholas Whatling

BASS TROMBONE

Neale Connor^

TUBA

Michael Adams^

PERCUSSION

Kerry Vann*
Michael Stegeman
Craig Rabnott
Lucie Allcock

HARP

John Connolly*

*denotes principal

**denotes co-principal

^denotes acting principal

#denotes guest performer



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Conductor CHEN YANG

BPO is delighted to be working once again with respected conductor Chen Yang.

Chen Yang has held the position as concertmaster of the *Queensland Theatre Orchestra* (QTO) after graduating from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music with distinction in violin performance. He later joined the *Queensland Symphony Orchestra* (QSO) for many years.

Chen performs regularly as leader & conductor of both *The Sinfonia of St Andrew's Orchestra* and *The Corda Spiritus Orchestra of Brisbane*. Last year he was invited as guest conductor for a successful Gala Concert with *The Northern Rivers*

Symphony Orchestra celebrating their 20th anniversary.

Chen has worked in music education for many years with his association with the *Queensland Youth Orchestra* (QYO) leading their *Junior String Ensemble* (JSE) consisting of up to 70 talented young string players. At present he is also conductor and string teacher at St Hilda's School, Southport.

His other musical interests include playing baroque violin with *The Badinerie Players of Brisbane*.



Soloist CHERIN LEE

Cherin Lee, aged fourteen, began playing the violin at four years old.

She has been a firstprize winner in various competitions including the AUSTA Q Concerto Competition and the Junior String Championships in the Redlands Eisteddfod. She was awarded the Most Promising String Player in the Redlands Eisteddfod in 2011 and won the Encouragement Award in the Southeast Queensland Aria and Concerto Competition (25 years old and under), when she was eleven years old. In 2014, she was the winner of the prestigious English Family Prize for Young Instrumentalists and as part of her prize, performed the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. At the age of ten, Cherin was awarded her AMusA with Distinction in violin and achieved her LMusA with Distinction in violin in the following year, at eleven years old. Consequently, she was invited to perform at the 2012 AMEB Annual Diploma Concert. In 2014, she performed as soloist with the Queensland Pops Orchestra at the New Year's Eve Gala Concert at QPAC, followed

by performances at their Viva Italia Supremo Concerts. In early 2015, Cherin was invited to participate in a masterclass with Shlomo Mintz. Cherin was the concertmaster of the Queensland Korean Orchestra Junior in 2011, and also was selected to participate in the Australian Chamber Orchestra String Workshops when she was eleven years old. In 2014, Cherin led the Somerville House Europe Tour Chamber Orchestra, performing solos in various cities in Europe, receiving standing ovations at every concert. She currently holds the concertmaster position in Somerville House's premier string orchestra, Somerville Strings.

She also graduated as Dux of School in Robertson State School in 2012. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 Cherin continued her success into high school at Somerville House, being awarded Dux of her year level for three consecutive years. She is currently in grade ten on a scholarship at Somerville House.

Composer SAMUEL DICKENSON



Queensland based composer, conductor and double bass player Samuel Dickenson has been hailed as one of Australia's most exciting and talented young composers, praised for his "singular and imaginative spark of individuality."

During his study at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Samuel achieved the Alan Lane Award for the highest achieving composition portfolio at the university. Currently studying a Ph.D. in composition at The University of Queensland, he has studied composition under the guidance of Josephine Jin, James Leger, Dr Gerardo Dirié and Dr Robert Davidson as well as received mentoring from local television composer Garry Smith and Hollywood orchestrator and conductor Tim Davies (Despicable Me, The Simpsons Movie, Frozen).

Samuel's music has been performed in several countries reaching audiences in venues such as the Singapore School of the Arts, Worms Trinity Church, Würzburg St

John's Church and the Bamberg Concert Hall. In 2013, he was admitted to the Australian Youth Orchestras National Music Camp program for Composition. In 2014, Queensland Youth Orchestras appointed him Composer-in-Residence, where he has composed seven original works for various ensembles. Samuel has also been commissioned by the Arts Council of Darwin, Germany-based Würzburg Chamber Players and various other ensembles such as the Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra and the Melbourne-based Plexus ensemble.

Currently, Samuel is exploring a stylistic extension of the romantic aesthetic, with an emphasis on craftsmanship. His music presents digestible, generous melodies and accessible structures.

ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

The Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) is Brisbane's leading community orchestra. The orchestra brings together up to 200 musicians a year to play a variety of classical orchestral music. Over 100 members of the incorporated association form the core of the orchestra. Other players perform as casual musicians, but often join as full-time members after their first concert with BPO. The orchestra was founded on principles of musical excellence and development, communal participation, and organisational professionalism.

Since its creation in 2000, the BPO has become the community orchestra of choice for over 500 musicians. It is eagerly sought as a performance partner for touring choirs, festivals, and internationally acclaimed instrumentalists and vocalists. The BPO performs its own series of symphony concerts and participates in multiple community and festival events throughout the year, attracting an audience of over 2,500 people.

The orchestra's main metropolitan concert series includes four to five symphony concerts at Brisbane City Hall and the Old Museum Concert Hall. Programs vary between concerts featuring the great

classical, romantic, and 20th century composers, light concerts including film music, as well as concerts with programs targeted at a younger audience. Additionally, BPO performs one chamber music concert, featuring multiple smaller groups in a more intimate setting.

The BPO maintains many community partnerships including with the Queensland Music Festival, 4MBS Festival of Classics, Brisbane City Council, and The Brisbane Airport Corporation. These partnerships provide essential connections in artistic, educational, professional, and social programs and cater to the association's increased responsibility to culturally enhance localities and bring a diversity of people together in a fast-paced, ever-impersonal global village. Unusually for a community orchestra, entry to the BPO is by audition and the ensemble is the only community orchestra within the city that rotates guest conductors by invitation rather than establishing a permanent Music Director. Uniquely, this allows a variety of the finest local professional conductors to deliver diverse and innovative programming to artistically stimulate members of the orchestra.

PROGRAM NOTES

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Karelia Suite, Op.11 (1983)

.....

In the late 19th century Finland was part of the Russian Empire and dominated culturally and politically by Russian interests. Towards the close of the century there was a great swelling of Finnish nationalism and identity, which Russia tried unsuccessfully to quell, and Sibelius found himself at the forefront of representing Finnish national identity through his music.

After the success of his first major orchestral work *Kullervo*, based on the national epic the Kalevala, he was commissioned to write music by the Viipuri Student Society at the University of Helsinki for a pageant celebrating the culture of Karelia - the region between Finland and St Petersburg that was culturally Finnish but is now largely part of Russia.

Sibelius produced an overture and a suite of eight movements of incidental music for the pageant, which was enormously popular and sold-out. The music was particularly well-received and Sibelius later published the overture as the Karelia Overture (Op 10) and three movements of the incidental music as the Karelia Suite (Op 11). The music is

deliberately folk-influenced and 'rustic' and includes a large contingent of percussion players as well as a full orchestra.

The first movement *Intermezzo* is taken from a scene of the pageant depicting a procession of Karelian foresters on their way to a royal festival, with shimmering strings and horn calls creating an anticipatory mood before the central section is a radiant brass-led chorale, which subsides back to the shimmering mood of the opening.

The second movement *Ballade* depicts a deposed king sitting in a castle listening to a bard singing (played initially by cor anglais and then taken up by the other orchestral sections and elaborated). With each iteration of the theme the orchestration and mood subtly changes.

The jaunty *Alla marcia* third movement is a robust and energetic march depicting soldiers marching to besiege a castle - slightly incongruous at first for such a happy-sounding work, although the robust central section with loud brass passages, fanfares and crashing percussion does suggest a more-martial atmosphere.



PROGRAM NOTES (CONT.)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

The Lark Ascending (1914/1921)

.....

*He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.
For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.
Till lost on his aerial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.*

Few pieces can be said to have embodied the end of an era as much as Vaughan Williams's "pastoral romance" for violin and orchestra based on the poem by George Meredith.

Begun in the summer of 1914, one of the most beautiful summers in living memory, the carefree world that it was intended to depict was brutally interrupted by the outbreak of World War One. Vaughan Williams enlisted as a stretcher-bearer and ambulance driver and barely composed throughout the war; when he picked up the work again post-war to revise and lengthen it, the piece now was indelibly changed into a bittersweet musical depiction of a lost era.

Before the war, Vaughan Williams was viewed as an 'up-and-coming' young composer; post-war he found himself considered one of the senior figures in the British musical scene, which was haunted by the losses of the war - for example Vaughan Williams's friend Butterworth (composer of *A Shropshire Lad*), killed at the Somme. The survivors faced the challenge of how to move on with their lives and find new ways of expressing themselves. Some, like Elgar,


had a jarring change in their musical language (compare the almost-despairing melancholy of the Cello Concerto with the noble optimism of the Enigma Variations or the First Symphony); Vaughan Williams style was less-changed but he still faced challenges in forging his new musical outlook.

The beauty of nature is still there, but viewed through a lens of melancholy for the unnatural carnage that had been unleashed on the world and had destroyed the innocence of pre-war life. *The Lark*, in its way, has something of the feel of a requiem or lament, while even at the same time emphasising the natural beauty which transcends human failings.

Vaughan Williams originally composed the work with the violinist Marie Hall in mind, and she gave the premieres of both the original and the revised versions. Originally composed for violin and piano, he revised it for orchestra in 1921 and Hall again gave the premiere of the version with orchestra, which is now the most-commonly performed version.

Although well-received enough at the time, Vaughan Williams showed a surprising apathy towards the work, and it was overshadowed by his other works for many years, before rising to immense popularity in the late 20th century after being used in several movies. Since then it has been voted listeners' most favourite work for many years running in BBC Classic FM's annual polls and shows no signs of being dislodged.

Vaughan Williams had studied with Ravel pre-war and was one of the foremost collectors of English folk songs, so it is natural that the Lark has groundings both in folk music (through the use of pentatonic melodies) as well as some "impressionistic" orchestral textures, even though it only calls for a medium-sized orchestra (bereft of trumpets, timpani and other "martial" instruments). The solo part feels very



“organic” in the way it intertwines and meshes with the orchestral parts - sometimes soaring above, sometimes flying in formation, but always feeling unhurried and expansive.

After a brief introduction that is little more than establishing the underlying tonality of the work - G major - the soloist enters with a solo cadenza, with trills and grace notes evoking birdsong. The serene, timeless atmosphere is created by the held note of the orchestral accompaniment and the cadenza being written without bar lines, allowing the soloist to unfold the “silver chain of sound” at their leisure, sounding as if improvised, and eventually ascending up to play the main theme of the work unaccompanied at the top of the instrument’s range, before descending down again and being joined by the orchestra as the work proper starts.

The gently-rolling 6/8 main theme has a characteristic dotted rhythm that will recur throughout the work, with the use of clarinet and oboe in the accompaniment providing a bucolic, pastoral atmosphere. A second, more-expansive melody is initially introduced by the orchestral strings and then taken over by the soloist playing a double-stopped version of the melody in one of the most technically-difficult parts of the work.

The first section ends with another violin cadenza, a shortened version of the opening cadenza, which ascends up to a high cadence point played by the soloist alone.

The second section, in 2/4 is slightly faster and more-energetic, with another folk-song melody introduced by the flute. The soloist takes over and plays more-rapidly with ecstatic flourishes and runs of notes, as if depicting the lark swooping across the valley.

This leads into a third section, now in F major and back in 6/8 time, with the soloist playing an extended sequence of trills over the top of a birdsong-like melody played by

the winds. At the end the soloist’s trills slow down and move seamlessly into a return of the second section’s melody, now played by the soloist and with a slightly-more melancholy mood, until a remarkable moment where there is a sudden change of chord and the soloist plays an eerie-sounding sequence of double stopped notes - parallel fifths, which firmly “break the rules” of traditional composition, but here make this section sound ethereal. The parallel fifths are framed between three “swells” of rhapsodic sound from the orchestra, the third of which leads into the final section which is a return of the “main” theme.

The main and second themes are presented again with subtle changes of mood and character, until the section “winds down” with the soloist, horn and clarinet playing a sequence of notes (moving in 4 - per bar against the prevailing 6/8 metre) which subside to a held chord.

The work finishes with yet another unaccompanied violin cadenza, slightly longer and with a different character - perhaps as if the lark is settling back into its nest and fluffing its feathers after a day’s flight - with the trills and chirrups ascending up to the same two note cadence that finished the second cadenza where the soloist, playing softly and at the top of the fingerboard, finally has “ascended” to bring the piece to a close.

Program notes by Cameron Hough



PROGRAM NOTES (CONT.)

Samuel Dickenson (1992-)

A Little Prayer (2015)

.....

This piece was initially born out of a short improvisation, similar to several other works of mine. During a late night at the keyboard back in 2014 I thought of a very short theme and recorded it. A while after this motif manifested I approached the Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra about the prospect of writing a piece for them—a prospect which was generously accepted. It was then I began to conceive that the piece would be comprised of two related materials which reflected two personally influential styles of composition; hymns and music of the romantic period. This represented both secular and sacred music coming together as one. There is much to be said about the intertwining of these two styles; after all, much of the romantic period owes itself to chorale writing and techniques exemplified in hymns. There are also plenty of examples of borrowing from hymns that can be detected in the romantic repertoire—a tradition that is now continued by me in a small way for those with a keen ear to detect.

This piece was written over the course of a year, from a small collection of pencil sketches scribbled in transit to larger orchestrations written out at the piano and computer. Over the year many things changed and ideas developed, one of them being the hymn themes. In July of 2015 an online friend from a small community I was part of passed away. This greatly affected all who knew him as a cheerful and positive person within the scene. As the days passed after the news I conceived a second hymn theme which is prominently featured throughout, first in the flutes, clarinets and strings, and later with the lower brass and contrabassoon joining in. Due to the dramatic effect he had on the completion of the work, I have dedicated this to Marck-Antoine Simoneau, along with a final farewell at the end of the piece labelled In Memoriam! signifying the little prayer of this work.

Despite the inspirations of this work, it ends on a positive note and is ultimately a celebration of life. Hopefully the message of this little prayer can lift your spirits and allow you to understand the musical story from my point of view.

Program notes by Samuel Dickenson

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

The Swan of Tuonela, Op.22 (1895)

Sibelius's music is steeped in the traditions and myths of his native Finland, so much so that even in non-programmatic music there seems to be some echo of the ancient sagas and legends. He wrote many works inspired by the Kalevala, the Finnish national epic, and began a grand Wagnerian opera "The Building of the Boat" inspired by scenes from the Kalevala. The piece now known as the *Swan of Tuonela* had its genesis in the orchestral prelude to the opera.

Although Sibelius swiftly became disenchanted with the Wagnerian style and abandoned the opera, he resurrected some of the music as the Lemminkäinen Suite, Op.22, which illustrates four episodes from the Kalevala, following its central hero, Lemminkäinen.

Lemminkäinen has been given a quest by Louhi, the Mistress of the Northland: to gain her daughter's hand in marriage, he must travel to Tuonela, the land of the dead, and kill the Swan of Tuonela. Lemminkäinen is unsuccessful, and is killed by a poisoned arrow, but is brought back to life by the magic of his mother.

The *Swan of Tuonela* is the second of the four tone poems, and is a deeply atmospheric and evocative piece evoking the ethereal swan gliding on a pitch-black lake surrounding the island of the dead.

Sibelius demonstrates his absolute mastery of orchestral texture in this piece, from its deliberately reduced orchestration (oboe, bass clarinet, bassoon, horns, trombones, timpani, bass drum, harp and strings, plus a prominent cor anglais solo part), which gives the work a dark and mystical nature.

The orchestral strings are muted throughout, which contributes to the dark and melancholy

texture, and Sibelius calls for some unusual playing techniques, such as playing *tremolo* passages *col legno* (that is, with the wood of the bow rather than the hair), which gives a dark, ethereal sound. The bass drum is used with restraint to produce a dull ominous "rumble", while the harp plays almost entirely in its lower register, sounding funereal rather than rhapsodic.

The layering of orchestral textures throughout the work gives it an almost timeless air – despite all of Lemminkäinen's intentions, the swan continues to float on the still waters – accentuated by the long, slowly-unfolding cor anglais solos, while an eerie effect is achieved by the uneven ascending passages begun by solo cello and seamlessly continued by solo viola.

Pizzicato strings create a sense of anticipation, before a muted fanfare of brass with harp flourishes provides a brief burst of warmth – almost like a solitary sunbeam lighting the lake and breaking through the gloomy chill – but the light is swiftly removed and the piece turns cold and reserved again. The uneven ascending phrase (passed smoothly from bassoon to solo cello to solo violin) marks the return to the gloomy depths of the water, before one final ascending phrase on solo cello brings the tone poem to a melancholy close.

Finlandia (1900)

Finlandia is a rare thing in music – the expression of a national identity through a single piece, and became the musical symbol of Finland's struggle for independence from Russia in the early 20th century ("Hot with the spirit of revolt" was the description of one critic!), and has since become virtually Finland's second national anthem.

Originally titled "Finland Awakens", the tone poem has its origins in music Sibelius wrote based on the poem *The Melting of the Ice on the Ulea River*, which was later recycled

PROGRAM NOTES (CONT.)

for a public fund-raising event intended to support establishment of a free Finnish press at a time when Russian control of cultural affairs was strong.

Finlandia formed the finale of the event and was received with resounding success, being frequently performed in the following years (although due to censorship it was usually slipped into the programme under a different name!).

It is interesting for those who view Sibelius as something of a conservative composer to see Sibelius the radical through the medium of *Finlandia* – foreshadowing perhaps some of the 20th century's later "political protest" music.

The emotional structure of the work reflects the theme of "awakening" – the opening minutes are deeply dark and turbulent, evoking the current dark political atmosphere, rising in intensity and volume before subsiding to reveal the famous central

section, which is based around a fervent, hymn-like theme, introduced by woodwinds over a shimmering accompaniment of hushed strings, and then expanding into a majestic version played by the strings.

The central section has indeed been adapted as a hymn ("Be Still My Soul") and has been used (or proposed) for national anthems and patriotic songs for other countries. Its triumphant return at the end of the work marks the emotional high point of *Finlandia*, culminating in a mood of hopeful triumph – a vision of the future independent Finland?

Finlandia shares with all of Sibelius' work his deep love of Finland, and in words he himself wrote to the central "hymn tune" he extols the beauty of a land of "great long hills, where tempests brood and gather, primeval earth beneath primeval sky", and expresses his great longing for his country to have freedom.



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Franz List (1811-1886)

Les Preludes (1854)

.....

Liszt was the originator of the form of the symphonic poem (at least by that name), in which an extra-musical idea is given symphonic treatment, although the genre has its roots in the concert overtures of Mendelssohn, Beethoven and others. *Les Preludes* is the third of Liszt's thirteen symphonic poems, and the first of them to be titled as such; it is also by far the most popular of his symphonic poems and the only one to have entered the standard orchestral repertoire. The published score includes this text in the preface:

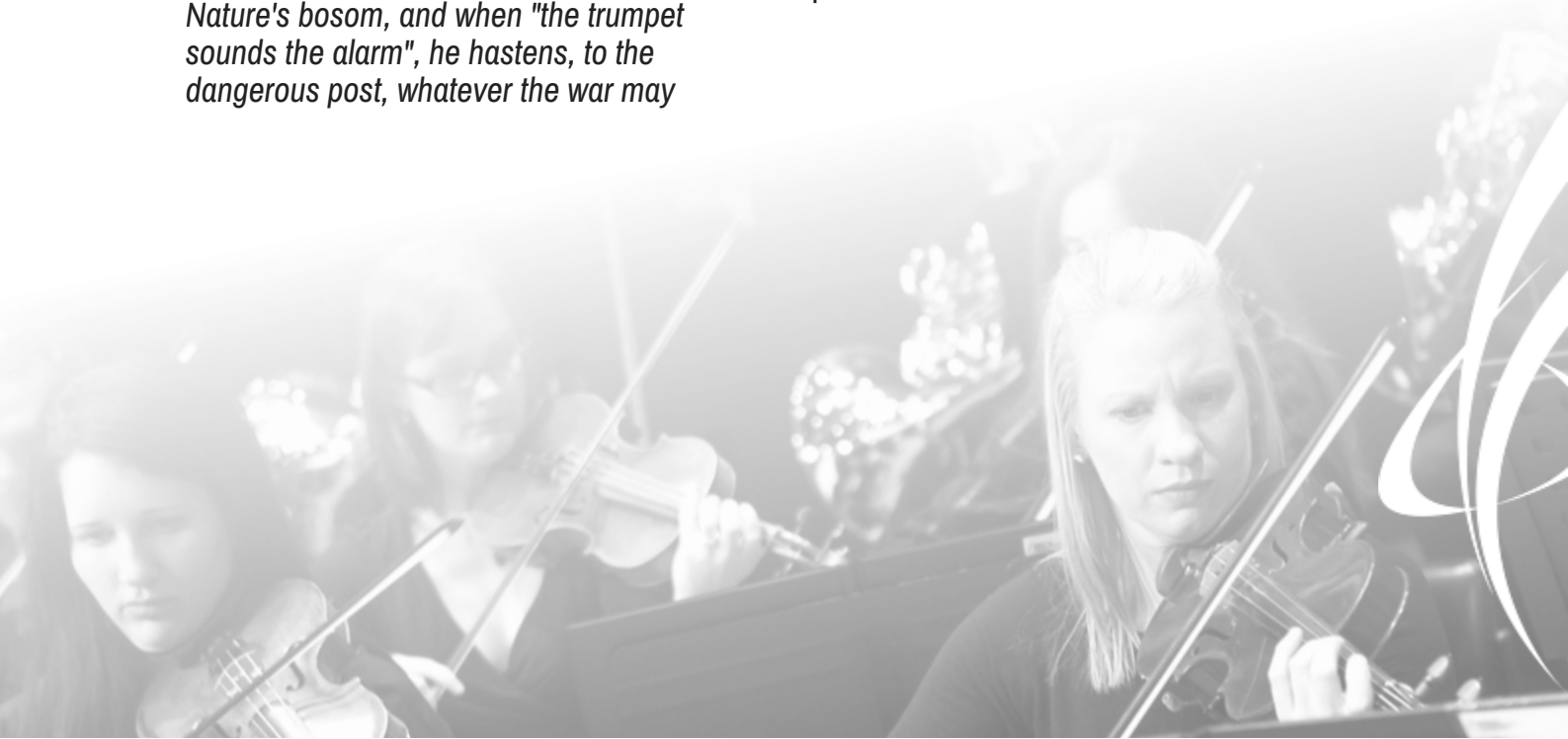
What else is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown Hymn, the first and solemn note of which is intoned by Death?—Love is the glowing dawn of all existence; but what is the fate where the first delights of happiness are not interrupted by some storm, the mortal blast of which dissipates its fine illusions, the fatal lightning of which consumes its altar; and where is the cruelly wounded soul which, on issuing from one of these tempests, does not endeavour to rest his recollection in the calm serenity of life in the fields? Nevertheless man hardly gives himself up for long to the enjoyment of the beneficent stillness which at first he has shared in Nature's bosom, and when "the trumpet sounds the alarm", he hastens, to the dangerous post, whatever the war may

be, which calls him to its ranks, in order at last to recover in the combat full knowledge of himself and his full strength.

It dates from Liszt's period at Weimar, where he was the music director of the court, settling down and focussing on composition after a tumultuous early career being feted across Europe as the foremost concert pianist of his generation - the focus of "Lisztomania"!

The piece was partially inspired by the poet Lamartine (particularly the line "what is life but a series of preludes..."), although later on Liszt downplayed the connection to Lamartine and suggested that it also had autobiographical tendencies - viewed as a young man's journey to maturity, or else as Liszt's own journey to being a composer.

It was originally conceived as an orchestral prelude to and contains musical material from a prior choral song cycle by Liszt titled "The Four Elements", and is structured in several sections, scored for full Romantic orchestra with tuba, harp and large percussion section. Despite the large orchestra, some sections have a very chamber-music like intimacy, particularly the very effective writing for the four horns, the interplay between the harp and the winds, and in the textures available from the orchestral strings frequency playing divisi, with the 'inside' and 'outside' players of each desk playing different (and independent) parts.



PROGRAM NOTES (CONT.)

The first section, the “question” begins searchingly with two pizzicato notes by the strings and then the first quotation of the “question motif” with its characteristic dotted rhythm and rising-and-falling melodic line, played by the strings, which is answered by another motif in the winds - the notes C-B-E. which are the opening phrases of the “love” motif later in the work.

The interplay between the strings and winds continues, with each successive statement of the ‘question’ becoming more-insistent and more-expansive until after an extended sequence of notes the full ‘question theme’ is played majestically on lower strings and brass underneath a brilliant torrent of notes played by the upper strings.

The running semiquavers form a seamless transition into the second section, “Love”, where the love theme is finally heard for the first time, played by the cellos and offset by statements of the question theme by the bassoons. Although quoting from the “Stars” movement of the “Four Elements”, this love theme is also a transformation of the question theme - having the same opening intervals.

The love theme is then itself transformed into a more pastoral version - again using the same intervals - and played by the horns, and then stated for the second time by horns and oboe against a harp accompaniment and offset by violin countermelodies. After further development of the melodic material, the love theme is heard again by horn and then flute (with a partial quote from the pastoral theme on top).

After a brief pause, the cellos introduce the next section - the Storm, which is again a transformation of the question theme, and rapidly grows in intensity via a scurrying series of notes until the full fury of the orchestra is unleashed in a turbulent section with chromatic torrents of notes and a malevolent brass fanfare.

However, the unsettled mood does not last long, and the love theme returns, heralding the next section - Pastoral Life - where the mood becomes bucolic and carefree with harp and expansive horn solos leading into a rollicking 6/8 section with pastoral clarinet and flute. The strings join in the festivities, with interplay between the strings and winds leading into a restatement of the ‘pastoral’ theme previously heard in the second section, now with a more playful and upbeat accompaniment (itself reusing some of the music from the transition section between the love theme and the pastoral theme).

The music grows in intensity and the melody is restated with different instrumentation, becoming more joyous and energetic each time, until a series of abrupt chords herald the next section - Battle and Victory, where underneath scurrying scales of semiquavers passing between the violins, the brass intone a call to arms - a fanfare again derived from the question motif. This robust section includes extensive use of the brass and percussion underneath shimmering semiquavers in the strings, and grows into the finale, in which the full ‘question theme’ is restated by the full orchestra, with the fanfare now returning triumphantly and leading to a magnificent conclusion.

The return of the question - “regaining full knowledge and strength” and now answered in the final bars, and the use of this “thematic transformation” (a key feature of Liszt’s work) is dramatically effective and shows off his compositional mastery - especially how the melody of each section is related to the initial ‘question’ - as if saying that each of life’s experiences is ultimately related to and is part of the ultimate question: all of life is itself a prelude to whatever comes next.

Program notes by Cameron Hough

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