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2023-24 Season



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Symphony Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor

Jacob Kaminski, graduate conductor

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023

Macky Auditorium

Program

Overture in the Italian Style in C Major, Op. 170

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Jacob Kaminski, conductor

Sechs Lieder, Op. 68 (Brentano Lieder)

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

1. An die Nacht
2. Ich wollt' ein Sträusslein binden
3. Säusle, liebe Myrthe
4. Amor

Dawna Rae Warren, soprano

Winner: Honors Competition, Graduate Division

— Intermission —

Symphony in E minor, Op. 32, “Gaelic”

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)

1. Allegro con fuoco
2. Alla siciliana; Allegro vivace
3. Lento con molto espressione
4. Allegro di molto

Program notes

Overture in the Italian Style in C Major, Op. 170

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

During Schubert's very short but prolific career, he composed nine symphonies, dozens of chamber and solo piano works, and his contribution to the genre of the art song was significant, numbering more than 600 works. None of his operas were successful; in fact composing a successful opera was a challenge for any composer. As the battle between adherents to the German style (led by Weber) and the new Italian style (led by Rossini) raged on in Vienna, Schubert could sense the rising popularity of Rossini's music and composed two overtures "In the Italian Style."

The Overture in C is the second of the two (the other in D major). The spirited tempo and colorful orchestration of the C major overture demonstrates that Schubert grasped the new style well. While the opening short *Adagio* sounds rather traditional, the following *Allegro* points clearly toward Italy.

Sechs Lieder, Op. 68 (Brentano Lieder)

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Sechs Lieder ("Six Songs"), Op. 68, is a collection of six *Lieder* (German art songs) by Richard Strauss. He composed them, setting poems by Clemens Brentano, in 1918 for soprano and piano, and orchestrated one in 1933 and five in 1940. They are also known as *Brentano Lieder*.

Strauss, who had been a prolific writer of songs for voice and piano as a young man, composed no songs from 1906 to 1918, focusing on opera. Following the completion of his opera *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, he returned to the genre and set six poems by the Romantic poet Clemens Brentano as *Sechs Lieder*.

Clemens Brentano, together with his friend and brother-in-law Achim von Arnim, is known for the folk poem collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Strauss set three poems from the collection, but for *Sechs Lieder* turned to Brentano's

own lyric. Their imagery inspired him to virtuoso vocal composition and intricate piano writing.

Strauss had the voice of Elisabeth Schumann in mind when he composed the songs and dedicated the collection to her. While the central songs suit Schumann's light coloratura voice, the outer works require more dramatic expression. The *Brentano Lieder* became Strauss' most significant song collection before his *Four Last Songs* (1948). They were first published in Berlin in 1919 by Adolph Fürstner. The first five songs were first performed at the Berlin Singakademie on 30 May 1919 by Birgit Engell and pianist Georg Schumann, as part of the first festival Tonkünstlerfest of the association Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein after the World War, while the last one was premiered in Dresden on 29 September.

Strauss later set the songs for voice and orchestra. He first orchestrated No. 6 in 1933, the others in 1940.

Symphony in E minor, Op. 32, “Gaelic”

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)

Amy Beach (1867-1944) was one of the most successful American composers of her era. Born Amy Cheney in Henniker, New Hampshire, she began composing as a child, and more than 300 of her works were published in her lifetime. Her earliest works were piano pieces (she was also a piano prodigy) and songs, and those two genres dominate her output.

While Beach received expert training as a pianist, she had only a single year of training in music theory. It was an era when leaders of the day questioned whether higher education for young women was useful, and even posited it could damage women's health and reproductive abilities. It was probably such a mentality that resulted in Beach being denied formal training in composition. Her parents, seeking advice on the education of their daughter, consulted Wilhelm Gericke, the Conductor of the Boston Symphony. Instead of advising formal instruction in composition for their brilliant daughter, Gericke suggested that she teach herself by studying the works of the great masters. Thus, Beach was left to formulate her own course of tutelage. She carried out her

own music education through a disciplined and rigorous program that is documented in her surviving notebooks.

Beach composed songs and piano works before her marriage to Dr. H. H. A. Beach (in 1885), a prominent Boston physician. He urged her to turn to writing in larger genres, but it was also his wish that she restrict her public performances as a pianist, usually to one or two major events per year, with her participation unpaid (her proceeds going to charity). Beach had performed frequently before her marriage, so this was a vast amount of energy that was now rechanneled toward composition.

She diligently took up the study of orchestration, and launched on her first large work including orchestra, her Mass in E-flat, Op. 5, completed in 1891, and performed that year by Boston's noted Handel and Haydn Society. Its critical acclaim brought Beach wide national recognition and commissions for more music with orchestra. She began work on her Symphony (Op. 32, "Gaelic") in 1894 and finished it in 1896. While not formally a commission, the Boston Symphony programmed it in the fall of 1896, with the premiere taking place on Oct. 30.

When Beach turned to write a symphony, she was probably influenced by Antonín Dvořák, who was brought to the United States in 1892 to teach in New York City. In 1893, he stirred controversy in an article where he stated that "Negro Melodies" should serve as the basis of an American classical music. Beach was one of a group of Boston composers who responded in a newspaper article; she countered that the music of those of African descent was only one of many that might be brought to bear on an American musical style. She also named Native Americans, Italians, Swedes, Russians, English, Scottish, Irish, Germans, and Chinese as possible sources of influence on American music. As musicologist Sarah Gerk has pointed out, Beach argues for a diverse, inclusive and cosmopolitan view of American music, seeing it as an artistic vocabulary rich in transnational dimensions—part of a culture engaged with the larger world. Beach draws on Irish folk tunes in her symphony because of her genuine interest in the Irish character, as well as her compassion for the plight of Irish immigrants and refugees. Beach's own ancestry was Anglo-Scottish, and the elite "Brahmin" class of Boston that she

married into in general did not share her feelings of empathy for the Irish, and some of the negative reviews of the symphony may have been motivated by anti-Irish sentiment.

The first movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony employs one traditional Irish melody, and also borrows from her own song “Dark is the Night.” It begins with an agitated swirling rustling in the strings, building into the bold strokes of the first theme. This theme and the lyrical second theme are drawn from Beach’s song, which begins “The sea is full of wand’ring foam.” Gerk suggests that it illustrates the tempestuous ocean crossing of Irish migrants. For the closing theme of the exposition, Beach turns to the lively, bagpipe-like dance tune, “*Conchobhar ua Raghallaigh Cluann*” (“Connor O’Reilly of Clounish”), which provides a respite from the previous intense musical character. The development section focuses on the first two themes as the basis of its material. The closing theme is extended in the recapitulation. A dramatic coda section whirls into a new tempo and theme; this coda will be recalled as the opening of the last movement.

The tripartite second movement, features the Irish folk song, “*Goirtin Ornadh*” (“The Little Field of Barley”), and Gerk suggests the middle movement of Saint-Saëns’ Violin Concerto No. 3 as another source of influence. Beach praised the “sweetness” of that movements’ Siciliano melody when she heard it in 1890. Beach introduces her theme with the oboe to suggest a bagpipe, and then transforms it into a sparkling and effervescent scherzo. The second movement was consistently the favorite of audiences in Beach’s day.

The third and longest movement uses two folk tunes for the first and second sections respectively. Following a rhapsodic violin solo, Beach quotes the entire mournful lullaby, “*Paisdin Fuinne*” (“The Lively Child”) also known as “*Cushlamachree*,” in the solo violoncello part and also features the bass clarinet. The brighter second section tune is “*Cia an Bealach a Deachaidh Si*” (“Which way did she go?”).

Of the fourth, final, movement, Beach wrote that it “tries to express the rough, primitive character of the Celtic people, their sturdy daily life, their passions and battles, and the elemental nature of the processes of thought and its

resulting action.” All thematic material in the Finale derives its origin from the first movement material drawn from her song “Dark Is the Night.”

The “Gaelic” Symphony was received enthusiastically, particularly by the Boston audience and critics, and was programmed for subsequent performances during the following years by many symphony orchestras in the United States; before World War One it was performed in Germany as well. It marked the first successful performance and publication of a symphony by a woman in America, and it earned Beach national and international recognition. Composer and fellow Bostonian George Whitefield Chadwick congratulated Beach on her success, but his remark that she was now “one of the boys” can be interpreted as a reminder that she had overstepped traditional boundaries for appropriate female behavior.

While Beach wrote a Piano Concerto in 1899 (which she premiered with the BSO in 1900), after that she never wrote another symphony—she composed extensively, but no more purely orchestral music.

Following the death of her husband in 1910, Beach resumed her career as a pianist, performing widely in Europe and the United States. Beach’s music was forgotten after her death, but rediscovered starting in the 1970s as part of the reclaiming of women’s history by the second-wave of feminism, and the growing interest in American music of the classical tradition.

—Program note by Liane Curtis, Ph.D and Chris A. Trotman

Personnel

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink and can be clicked or tapped for more information.

Gary Lewis, conductor

Dawna Rae Warren, soprano

American coloratura soprano Dawna Rae Warren has established herself as an incredibly versatile performer. She brings a knack for captivating storytelling and musical sensitivity to all of her repertoire: opera, new music, baroque music, jazz and golden age musical theater.

Her most recent engagements have been as the soprano soloist in Handel's *Alceste* with The In Series, Musetta in *La Boheme* with Eklund Opera, Lady with a Hand Mirror in *Postcard from Morocco* with Eklund Opera, Violetta (cover) in *La Traviata* with Eklund Opera, Abigail Williams in Robert Ward's *The Crucible* at the University of Kentucky Opera Theater, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the International Summer Opera Festival of Morelia, Barbarina in *Figaro in Four Quartets* with The In Series, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* with Resonanz Opera, Königen der Nacht in *Die Zauberflöte* at Blooming Voce Summer Opera Workshop and The First Wood Sprite in *Rusalka* at the Toronto Summer Opera Workshop.

A champion of living composers, Warren has been a collaborator in Cleveland Opera Theater's New Opera Works Festival for several years where she has premiered pieces such as Griffin Candey's *Bernarda Alba* (Adela) and Dawn Sonntag's *Verlorene Heimat* (Hedwig). Other new music premieres include Michael Udow's *A Wall of Two* (Henia) and Mark Geiger's *Goddess' People* (Priestess). In addition to premiering new operas, she also actively works with composers to record and workshop their compositions throughout their writing process, taking joy in watching a piece of music shape and change as it comes to fruition.

Warren has been the recipient of awards such as the First Place Graduate Winner in the CU Boulder Honors Concerto Competition (2023), Third Place Winner of the Denver Lyric Opera Guild Competition (2023), First Place Graduate Winner in the Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition (2019), the Mel and Jena Hakola Prize for Vocal and Academic Excellence (2017), the MacDowell Vocal Scholarship (2014) and the VOCI Scholarship (2014).

On the concert stage she has performed as a featured soloist with the Longmont Symphony Orchestra in their 2022 Pops Concert, singing “O Mio Babbino Caro” and “Les Oiseaux Dans La Charmille,” and also as the soprano soloist in Handel’s *Messiah* (2022). She has also been seen as the soprano soloist in Faure’s *Requiem* and has also appeared with the Baldwin Wallace Bach Choir in the *St. Matthew’s Passion*, *St. John’s Passion* and Brahms’ *Ein Deutches Requiem*.

Warren is based in Cleveland, Ohio. She obtained an Artist Diploma at CU Boulder, master’s degree at the University of Kentucky and bachelor’s degree at Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music.

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