

University Symphony Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor

With

Sabina Balsamo, soprano

*Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of
the house manager.*

7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2019
Macky Auditorium



College of Music

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Program

Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9

Hector Berlioz
(1803-1869)

Four Songs, Op. 27

- I. Ruhe, meine Seele
- II. Cécilie
- III. Heimliche Aufforderung
- IV. Morgen!

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Sabina Balsamo, soprano

— Intermission —

Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14

- I. Rêveries. Passions.
- II. Un Bal
- III. Scène aux champs
- IV. Marche au Supplice
- V. Song d'une nuit du Sabbat

Hector Berlioz

Program notes

Roman Carnival Overture, Op. 9

In Jan. 1844, Berlioz published his famous handbook on the art of orchestration, the *Traité d'instrumentation* and in the same month, by way of concise and brilliant demonstration of the techniques set forth therein, he composed the scintillating *ouverture caractéristique* he called *Le Carnaval romain*. He drew virtually all the material for this piece from his opera *Benvenuto Cellini*, a grandly conceived work that occupied him intermittently for more than three decades. The opera's unsuccessful premiere was given in Paris on Sept. 10, 1838;

by the time Liszt introduced the first revised version at Weimar, in 1852, *The Roman Carnival* had been in the orchestral repertory for eight years and Berlioz suggested that it might serve as prelude to the opera's second act, a carnival set in the Piazza Colonna. Most of the overture's more vigorous sections were drawn from that part of the opera, while the lyric theme introduced by the English horn is from the duet between Cellini and his beloved Teresa at the end of Act I. This second theme is one of those Berlioz recycled from his early *Messe solennelle* for use in *Cellini* and other

works; once it is taken up by other elements of the orchestra, it comes to assume a more extrovert spirit, and the concluding portion of the piece is in the form of a grand saltarello, set forth with glorious abandon. In his memoirs, Berlioz reported that he was once treated to a performance of this orchestral showpiece at a party by five musicians who distributed themselves among two pianos and an early form of harmonium called the physharmonica:

“They took the allegro far too slowly; the andante went well, but when they resumed the allegro at a still more dragging speed than before, the blood rushed to my head, I grew scarlet and, unable to keep my temper, cried out, “It is not the Carnival, it is Good Friday they are playing!” I leave you to imagine the mirth excited among the audience by this exclamation. It was impossible to restore silence, and the overture was finished amid the laughter and noise of the assembly, but still quite slowly, and apparently without my five placid interpreters having been in the least disturbed.” —note by Richard Freed

Four Songs, Op. 27

Richard Strauss composed the four opus 27 songs in 1894 as a wedding present to his wife, Pauline de Ahna. He completed the first, third and fourth songs over several days in May and then completed the second song in September, the day before their wedding. Though composed as a set, each song is very different in its musical nature and when Strauss orchestrated these songs, he chose to do so individually rather than maintaining them as a set. The first of the four songs, “Ruhe, meine Seele” (Rest thee, my soul), is a setting of a poem by Karl Henckell. The music beautifully depicts the struggle of a tortured soul searching for, and ultimately finding, rest. “Cäcilie” (Cecilia), by the poet Heinrich Hart, is a love song. Musically

it is a full, lively and romantic outburst after the calm and serene nature of “Ruhe, meine Seele”. Large, orchestral flourishes express the speaker’s passionate desire to be with their loved one. The third song in the set, “Heimliche Aufforderung” (The Lover’s Pledge) is a setting of a text by John Henry Mackay. Strauss altered a few of the words from the original poem in his setting of the text. The first line of the poem, “Up, raise the sparkling cup to your lips,” is beautifully matched in the orchestra with a jubilant and light hearted texture that evokes the sparkling nature of the cup and the sentiment behind the text. The last song in the set, “Morgen!” (Tomorrow!), is also based on a poem by John Henry Mackay. Perhaps the best known of the opus 27 songs, “Morgen!” features a violin solo that the voice picks up and joins in on. The orchestral setting is simple and pure, as is the sentiment of the song which speaks of tomorrow when the sun will rise and shine again upon a happy couple. —note by John McKeever

Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14

Hector Berlioz was an unlikely musical revolutionary. Not at all a prodigy, he was 12 before he began dabbling in composition and teaching himself harmony out of a book. His father, a physician, disapproved of these musical pursuits, so the young Berlioz never took lessons or mastered an instrument. At age 18, he moved to Paris to study medicine, and waited another five years before finally enrolling at the Paris Conservatoire. Remarkably, it was only four years later that he wrote a work that redefined orchestral music, the *Symphonie fantastique*. Berlioz’ rapid development as a composer came from his keen receptivity to outside influences. Certain artistic encounters, such as his discoveries of Faust and Beethoven symphonies, left indelible imprints on his music. One particular evening that marked a sea change came in 1827, when he first

experienced Shakespeare through a production of *Hamlet*. In future years, Berlioz would write much music on Shakespearean themes, but the immediate impact was more personal: Berlioz left the theater smitten with Harriet Smithson, the Irish actress who played Ophelia.

Berlioz' obsession soured by 1830, at which point personal suffering became creative fodder. Expanding from the model of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, with its "pastoral" program, Berlioz conceived a symphony built around a dramatic tale of failed romance. This work's true title was *An Episode in the Life of an Artist*—*Symphonie fantastique* was the subtitle—and its explicit link between instrumental music and a narrative story marked the birth of a new genre. To support this programmatic format, Berlioz stretched the symphony to new extremes of structure (using five movements), thematic unity (with one *idée fixe* appearing throughout), and instrumentation (incorporating recent inventions such as valve trumpets and ophicleides, and doubling the harp and timpani). The radical work debuted in 1830 at the Paris Conservatoire, and it caused such a stir that the school's director, Luigi Cherubini, struck Berlioz from the registry of students.

Berlioz' own program note describes the symphony's narrative in detail. He introduces "a young musician of morbid disposition and powerful imagination" — a plain surrogate for Berlioz—who "poisons himself with opium in an attack of despairing passion." In the ensuing opium dream, "the beloved herself appears to him as a melody, ... an obsessive idea that he keeps hearing wherever he goes." The first movement, titled *Daydreams – Passions*, "recalls the sickness of the soul, the flux of passion, the unaccountable joys and sorrows he experienced before he saw his beloved; then the volcanic love she suddenly inspired

in him, his delirious raptures, his jealous fury, his persistent tenderness, his religious consolations." The beloved's *idée fixe* enters about five minutes into the form, stated by violins and flute, and sparks a flight of passion.

Next, the artist attends *A Ball*, and Berlioz sets the scene with a flowing waltz. In *The Scene in the Country*, the artist "broods on his loneliness," contemplating "two shepherds" (a dialogue of English horn and oboe) and later the "distant sound of thunder" (played by the timpani). The fantastical nature of the work emerges in the *March to the Scaffold*, in which the artist "dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned, led to the scaffold and is witnessing his own execution." At the end, a whiff of the beloved's *idée fixe* from the clarinet is silenced by the startling crash of the guillotine, followed by mocking peals of major triads. The macabre final chapter is the *Dream of a Witches' Sabbath*, featuring "a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for [the artist's] funeral." Berlioz depicts "strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter" with diabolical orchestral effects, and introduces a terrifying quotation of the *Dies Irae* (Days of Wrath) plainchant melody.

The *Symphonie fantastique* is a rare leap forward in music, an achievement that is almost inconceivable from a 26-year-old student, working a country with little symphonic tradition, and coming only six years after Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Berlioz followed with many more masterful orchestral scores, and his treatise on instrumentation is still essential reading for aspiring composers. The late-blooming Berlioz turned out to be a new breed of virtuoso, one whose "instrument" was the orchestra. —note by Aaron Grad

Personnel

Sabina Balsamo (soprano) is a masters student in the vocal performance program at CU Boulder. She premiered the role of Anne in *Verlorene Heimat* with the Cleveland Opera Theater and was in the workshop cast of Tom Cipullo’s new opera, *Hobson’s Choice*. Her other recent roles include: Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Rose in *Ruddigore*, and Elsie in *The Yeomen of the Guard* with the Pittsburgh Savoyards; and Fredrika in *A Little Night Music*

with Pittsburgh Festival Opera. As a student at CU she sang Maria in *West Side Story* and the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. As an undergraduate at Baldwin Wallace University, she sang Blanche in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and Polly in *The Threepenny Opera*. She will be appearing in the Eklund Opera’s production of *It’s a Wonderful Life* in November and Cleveland Opera Theater’s premiere production of *Bernarda Alba* in January.

University Symphony Orchestra

Violin

Mariama Alcantara
Ingrid Anderson
Jackson Bailey
Laena Batchelder
Kimberly Bill
Seth Bixler
Maggie Brady
Ben Ehrmantraut
Grace Hemmer
Robbie Herbst
Lindey Hoak
Mackenzie Hoffman
Ryan Jacobsen *
Alisa Johnson
Hannah Kennedy +
Jenna Kramer
Yukina Ono
Natalie Smith
Caitlin Stokes
Julia Taylor
Sophia Thaut
An Tran

Viola

Jaryn Danz
Jordan Holloway
Jessica Kus
Thomas Maeda
Tyler McKisson
Stephanie Mientka +
Sela Park
Conrad Sclar
Gina Stonikas

Cello

Chas Barnard
Ethan Blake
Ernie Carbajal
Eliot Johnson
Gabriel Ramos
Jake Saunders +
Emily Taylor
Matthew Wiest

Bass

Justin Barrera
Luis Granda
Isaiah Holt
Evan Indge
Portia Pray
Jason Thompson +

Flute

Kaleb Chesnic
Rachel Crowell
Grace Law
Mara Riley
Brice Smith

Oboe

Brittany Bonner
Grace Stringfellow
Clayton Williams

Clarinet

Charles Burnside
Kelsi Doolittle
Jacob Eichhorn
Randel Leung
Gleyton Pinto

Bassoon

Gyungsun Im
Anthony Federico
Kristina Nelson
Victor Zhang

Horn

Dilon Bryan
Megan Hurley
Natalie Miller
Annika Ross
Benjamin Shafer
Erin Zinda

Trumpet

Ben Chapman
Tristan Frank
Max McNutt
Ian Mertes

Trombone

Kenny Ross
Declan Wilcox
Aaron Zalkind

Tuba

Brian Sugrue
Patrick Young

Percussion

Christopher Eagles
Mallory Graves
Andrew Grossman
Dylan Norbury
Andrew Quinlan
John Sevy

Harp

Jenna Allen
John McColley

* *Concertmaster*
+ *Principal*

Upcoming performances

💰 Ticketed events 📺 Live stream at cupresents.org

Wednesday, Sept. 25

Pendulum New Music Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Tuesday, Oct. 1

Faculty Tuesdays

Love and Death

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Thursday, Oct. 3

Fall Festival of Choirs

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 📺

Monday, Oct. 7

CU Philharmonia Orchestra

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Tuesday, Oct. 8

Faculty Tuesdays

Die schöne Müllerin

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Wednesday, Oct. 9

Artist Series: Chick Corea Trilogy with

Christian McBride and Brian Blade

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 💰

Chamber Winds

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Thursday, Oct. 10

Concert Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble II

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Oct. 11-13

Edges

By Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Musical Theatre Program

Old Main Chapel

Friday, Oct. 11

No-No Boy in Concert

Presented by the American Music Research Center

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Tuesday, Oct. 15

Faculty Tuesdays

Songs We Love to Play

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall 📺

Thursday, Oct. 17

CU Symphony Orchestra

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium 📺

Events are subject to change:

call us at 303-492-8008 or visit us online at cupresents.org to verify.

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