MICHAEL MONROE, Creative Portfolio

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Table of Contents

Program Notes

Program Booklets, Posters, etc.

See also, online:

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 1*

By his late twenties, Beethoven had already made his mark as a pianist and composer, but had yet to write a symphony. He was tentative in part because this was a genre in which his teacher Haydn had achieved great success. Just as a new century dawned, the first of Beethoven's symphonies finally debuted in 1800. Though it shows the classical influence of Haydn and Mozart, there is plenty of evidence of the distinctive voice that would soon make Beethoven's nine symphonies the ultimate standard for composers that followed.

The symphony famously begins with a sort of musical question: a few quirky chords that resolve indecisively, setting up an introduction that is both lyrical and anticipatory. After about a minute or so, the high-spirited main theme arrives, first quietly, with follow-up questions, and then grandly. The rest of the first movement displays Beethoven's distinctively rustic brand of elegance as he takes simple primary materials and tosses them about energetically, interspersed with a few passing moments of mystery and unrest.

The second movement is more elegant than rustic, though there is a persistent playfulness in the way the lilting main theme is passed around the orchestra. There are some lovely countermelodies introduced when the main theme returns and the music occasionally aspires to grandeur, but a more lighthearted spirit is always around the corner.

The third movement is all rustic exuberance, full of bouncing tunes and lively accents. In the middle of this brief "scherzo" (an Italian word for "joke") there's a wonderfully subdued back and forth between melodic woodwinds and racing strings before the opening idea returns.

The beginning of the finale shows Beethoven's remarkable ability to make something dramatic out of the simplest materials. Violins hesitantly pass unaccompanied scales back and forth, each time adding a note until suddenly a brilliantly sunny tune bursts forth. The music is almost relentlessly chipper for the rest of piece, reminding us that this most notoriously defiant of composers could also express carefree joy – but it's Beethoven, so there are still some good-natured bumps along the way.

Mendelssohn: ***Symphony No. 5*** (paired on program with Beethoven's 1st)

Felix Mendelssohn began composing his "Reformation" Symphony less than three decades after Beethoven's first symphony debuted and only a couple of years after Beethoven's death. Of course, by 1829, Beethoven himself had changed expectations for what a symphony might be, especially with his monumental "Ninth" (1824) which incorporated multitudes of voices, one of history's most famous tunes, and an inspiring message about universal brotherhood. The symphony up until then had most often been a vehicle for a purely non-representational kind of musical discourse (as one finds in Beethoven's "First"), but the rising generation of nineteenth-century composers was clearly inspired by this new marriage of message and medium.

The young Mendelssohn (about the age of many of our student musicians) was particularly attracted to the free-flowing dramatic narratives of Beethoven's late instrumental works, so perhaps it's not surprising that he chose a symphony (with no voices or text) as his contribution to the 300th anniversary celebrations of a famously meaningful text, the Augsburg Confession. This 1530 document, approved by Martin Luther himself, is the primary confession of faith for the Lutheran church, a church into which Mendelssohn's family had converted. Mendelssohn's other most important historical mentor, J.S. Bach, wrote his majestic *Cantata No.80 "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"* one-hundred years before, possibly in honor of the Confession's 200th anniversary, and certainly as a tribute to the Reformation. Bach's cantata is closely based on Luther's most well-known hymn, known in English as "A Mighty Fortress is our God"; Mendelssohn uses the same hymn tune as the basis for the triumphant finale of this "Reformation" Symphony, much as Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" anchored his ninth symphony.

Mendelssohn's own relationship to this symphony is complicated; for a variety of reasons, it took some time for it to be premiered, and he ended up choosing not to publish it. There is some evidence that he regarded the work as "juvenilia," but we should remember that this "juvenile" was only history's most remarkable musical prodigy as a composer. (Yes, even more impressive than Mozart when it comes to works from the teenage years.) So, although this was actually the second full-scale symphony Mendelssohn wrote (following some remarkable string symphonies from those teen years), it was only published years after his death and thus is known as his No.5. Whatever reservations its composer might have harbored, this is music of great sincerity and fervor, offering a compelling dramatic arc from darkness to light.

As with Beethoven's 1st, the opening movement of Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony begins with a mysterious introduction, though here longer and more portentous – the music is in a major key but projects weariness via soft melodic fragments that slowly ascend and suspend. It's as if Mendelssohn is trying to evoke a distant past, filled with uncertainty. A few minutes into this solemn prelude, brass fanfares are twice answered by the "Dresden Amen," a hushed six-note rising figure that was well-known as a standard liturgical response. This leads directly into the stormy main body of the first movement. The look to the past has turned up trouble and continues mostly in this vein, though a reprise of the "Dresden Amen" offers hope.

The second movement is, surprisingly, rather lighthearted, featuring dancing woodwind tunes suggestive of country-dancing; perhaps this is meant to evoke the populist spirit of the reformers. However, the third movement draws us back into a sense of unfulfilled longing and, as is

common with late Beethoven, functions more as transition than as a free-standing musical statement. The heartfelt lament is answered by the voice of a single flute intoning the heart-stirring first phrase of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”; phrase by phrase, the texture is enriched by other instruments in a passage notable for the understated but deeply comforting way in which good news is unveiled.

The fast-paced finale is then launched as the first phrase of Luther’s hymn is passed around the orchestra and is soon answered by an exuberant theme reminiscent of Mendelssohn’s famous wedding march. A bounding secondary theme in common time recalls the triple time country dance of the second movement, and midway through the movement we get a more reflective tour of the second half of Luther’s tune, but the triumphant spirit predominates, ending with a blaze of “Mighty Fortress” glory.

Grieg: Holberg Suite (paired with Schumann's 4th)

There's a fascinating contrast between the two larger works on this program. Schumann's 1841 symphony looks with optimistic Romantic fervor towards a break from rigid structures of the past while Grieg's 1884 suite looks back nostalgically at a simpler, more elegant time. It's tempting for us to see all of this music as simply "past," but illuminating to consider how these composers interact with time and history. Grieg wrote his suite, a genre which itself suggests a loose collection of formal dances that are separate but compatible, as a 200th birthday tribute to Ludvig Holberg, a Danish-Norwegian playwright. Of course, Grieg's music doesn't sound like it's from 1684, but its elegant forms and light textures are a tribute to the older styles of composers like Bach and Handel (each born in 1685!)

The institution of "classical music" as we know it (marked by reverence for the music of past masters) was really just settling in in the late 19th century, so such marriages of the old and the new were kind of a new thing. Grieg's Russian contemporary Tchaikovsky wrote his own old-fashioned suite, *Mozartiana*, in 1887, and Grieg also wrote a series of charming second piano parts to four Mozart sonatas which reveal a whimsical affection that lovingly distorts the past. Since Grieg's present is now our past, we can smile at this double-mirror effect, and perhaps even see something of ourselves in the distant reflection. Actually, the *Holberg Suite* was originally written for piano, so this well-known arrangement for strings adds another reflective layer which accentuates some of the inherent Romanticism in the tunes.

The outer movements are the most characteristically keyboard-oriented, though the original **Prelude's** imitations of perpetual motion harpsichord figuration are converted into a galloping figure for strings around which gentler melodies revolve. Grieg's stately **Sarabande** is the kind of piece that manages to sound sad even though it's written in a major key – the phrases are poised and balanced as in olden times, but the composer's signature brand of Nordic melancholy is just as evident. The bouncing **Gavotte** is the most lighthearted of the set. It features a contrasting musette section in the middle which begins over a folksy drone and builds to a passionate climax. The **Aria** is the most heartfelt of all the movements, and probably gives a sense of how the Romantics heard Bach's ornamented melodies, which often float about the same kind of solemnly descending harmonies used by Grieg. This music is full of dark shadows and intense outbursts. The mood changes immediately for the rustic **Rigaudon** finale, which in the orchestra version turns into a showpiece for violin solo, with the orchestra providing robust cadences. As with the third movement, there's a contrasting middle section, reflective and in a minor key, but the high spirits prevail.

Schumann: ***Symphony No. 4***

Even within the moody, idiosyncratic world of artists, Robert Schumann stands out as a composer for whom inner personal vision and creative output are inextricably linked. His is a heart-on-sleeve art, not so much in the grand mold, but more as confessional expression of soul through sound. For this reason, he often seems most at home in intimate, small-scale genres featuring just one or a few musicians, especially character pieces for solo piano and art songs for voice and piano – in such works, the interior world of the composer can map naturally onto the interior world of the performer. In short, Schumann and the symphony don't seem like a natural fit. But, like most of his contemporaries, Schumann was also a big admirer of the ambitiously extroverted music of Beethoven, and he inevitably came to reckon with the challenge of writing symphonies, thus aspiring to transmit deeply individual feelings through a large-scale collective body.

Fortunately, the best art is often about such tensions and the kind of problem-solving and inspiration that results. Indeed, Schumann's four symphonies are all boldly conceived and earnestly engaging, marked by inventive solutions to formal challenges and irresistible ideas which range from dreamy and poetic to manic and exuberant. This "public" Schumann is more optimistic than one might expect from one of history's most famous manic-depressives, but the optimism always comes across as genuine. Schumann was unembarrassed about what he loved (be it his wife, the music of Schubert and Chopin, or the wild stories of E.T.A. Hoffman), and he clearly loved the idea of communicating through the vibrant voice of the orchestra.

The fourth symphony is actually the second of the four symphonies Schumann composed, but it was the last one published; he made some changes when it was finally presented as No.4 in 1851, but tonight you will hear his original 1841 version. This work follows the path set by Beethoven in his iconic fifth and ninth symphonies, beginning in troubled minor and ending in a blaze of major key glory. Along the way, Schumann shows a particular investment in having the four separate movements work together as an integrated whole – the kind of thing also pioneered by Beethoven. Some of the connections are obvious (e.g. the portentous music of the first movement's opening returns in the middle of the second movement, the fourth movement opens with memories of the first), and others are more subtle likenesses of melodic gesture, but there's definitely a sense of an ongoing musical narrative from which none of the individual movements should be separated.

The opening of the symphony is dark and mysterious, with an undulating melody searching this way and that – the evenly flowing notes lead to a big climax which soon leads to the hard driving main theme, also characterized by even streams of notes. However, these notes go flying by in the violins, scampering wildly up and down and punctuated by strong accents from the rest of the orchestra. Much of the rest of the movement is occupied with this temperamental idea, which sometimes runs into virtual walls of indecision, sometimes turns cheerful, and is occasionally countered by heroic flashes. Brief respites are offered by a lovely tune which is quickly dismissed several times but ends up leading to a manically jubilant conclusion.

This is countered right away by a "long ago and far away" chord which ushers in a much more introverted and chamber-like second movement. The mournful main tune is presented by the

unusual timbre combination of oboe and solo cello at the octave. The searching melody that began the symphony interrupts for a while, and a sweetly contrasting middle section features a tenderly twisting violin solo, but the slightly creepy oboe/cello tune closes this brief interlude.

The third movement returns to the relentlessly anxious mood of the first – the main theme is angry, alternating a simple circular pattern with slashing syncopations. As with the second movement, contrast is provided by a sweeter rustling figure in the violins. The angry theme returns, is countered again, and soon we are being quietly ushered into the finale, with soft, slow-motion echoes of the first movement's temperamental tune and somber pronouncements from trombones. It doesn't take long for the jubilant mood that ended the first movement to return in triumph.

The rest of the finale is mostly euphoric, with a variety of melodic ideas that are alternately spirited, soaring and skipping. A couple of stentorian outbursts interrupt the proceedings melodramatically and introduce some momentary tensions, but these seem calculated mostly to allow ever more triumphant resolutions. Schumann has crafted for the audience a wonderfully satisfying journey from searching in darkness to exulting in brightness.

Fauré: *Requiem*

The history of Western music up through the sixteenth century is inextricably linked with settings of the Roman Catholic mass and other liturgies. Though interest in more humanistic genres such as opera and the symphony would slowly overtake the leading role of church music, even nineteenth century Romantics still found inspiration in these ancient texts, none more intensely than in the requiem – the mass for the dead. The subject of death, of course, is of great interest to humans; both composers and listeners have been drawn in by the inherent drama of death, judgment, and the promise of eternal rest. Two of the most famous requiems are from the operatic masters Mozart (1791) and Verdi (1873), each of whom forged searingly powerful blends of the personal and the eternal, with particularly vivid responses to the Day of Wrath. Other notable settings include an extravagant creation by Berlioz (1837); the *German Requiem* by Brahms (1869) in which the composer chose his own, more comforting selection of biblical texts; and Britten's pacifist *War Requiem* (1962), which incorporates modern poetry.

Though less grandiose than these titanic works, Gabriel Faure's *Requiem* is surely as beloved as any. Relatively humble in conception, part of its power lies in Fauré's conscious decision to emphasize consolation and rest; the word "requiem," after all, means "rest." The composer reworked the standard text, eliminating almost all of the famous 57-line *Dies irae* (Day of Wrath) sequence, and inserting texts from other sources. The work has a somewhat complicated history, having been composed originally as a five-movement work for Fauré's Paris church in 1889. The two movements with baritone solo were added later, and the original orchestration was filled out quite a bit in the version that first became well-known. However, the noted conductor and scholar John Rutter has convincingly argued that Fauré may have had little to do with this thickening of the orchestra, and Rutter's 1983 reconstruction of the more transparent scoring that Fauré likely intended is what will be heard today. The orchestration is often little more than a subtle augmentation of the central organ accompaniment, but the unusual absence of violins leaves the top of the string section in the hands of divided violas and cellos, providing a distinctively warm aura.

The Requiem opens in an arresting manner, with unified voices pleading for rest in phrases that sound more speech-like than measured; the word "shine" (*luceat*) is given special emphasis. Though Fauré has a great gift for melody, the writing for chorus is often quite restrained, as if evoking the austerity of Gregorian chant. Soon, the orchestra takes up a richly flowing tune, over which the tenors sing a plaintive melody that is first fixed on a few pitches, but which eventually becomes more expansive. The movement builds to a climax imploring God to hear the prayers (*exaudi orationem*), and the tenor melody is recapitulated by unison choir in the traditional pleas for mercy (*kyrie eleison*).

The second movement begins in a more mystical manner, as shadowy visions of eternal torment are intoned by hushed counterpoint in the choir and quietly ominous interjections from the cellos and basses. The baritone soloist takes up the plea for protection of the departed in music that is restlessly optimistic. When the choir repeats the text from the opening of the movement, the counterpoint is both denser and more sustained than before, perhaps the most sophisticated writing for choir in the entire work, though still mostly subdued in tone. As is so often the case

with Fauré, the mastery is in the subtlety of his craftsmanship. A radiant “Amen” suggests a hopeful transformation from the darkness that began this prayer.

The *Sanctus* is pure celestial radiance throughout, featuring a soaring solo violin and harp in the accompaniment. The use of violin is especially striking because of the reliance on the darker viola timbre elsewhere. As with the flowing orchestra tune that supports the tenors in the first movement, the accompanying violin line is more shapely than the simple phrases that are passed back and forth between the women and men of the chorus, as if the voices are transfixed by the heavenly vision. These unhurried melodic fragments range ever wider until a triumphant arrival at *Hosanna in excelsis*, from which the violin trails off into eternity.

Whereas the *Sanctus* ripples along continuously, the *Pie Jesu* is remarkable for its stillness. Though written in 4/4 time, Fauré subverts a strong sense of meter, floating exquisitely tender soprano phrases above the simplest of accompaniments. The orchestra echoes the soloist twice with a gentle rocking motion that gradually becomes a more regular part of the texture; the lullaby-like effect perfectly undergirds the soprano part as it rocks back and forth on two pitches, singing of eternal rest (*sempiternam requiem*).

The *Agnus Dei* begins with a sublimely rhapsodic melody in the violas. This becomes a countermelody to the arching tenor entrance that follows, as once again Fauré weaves an intricate instrumental idea around a less ornate vocal line. The full chorus responds more ominously, but the soaring tenor line returns. The previous movement is echoed as the tenors rock back and forth on *sempiternam requiem*, leading to a magical chord change on *lux aeterna* (light eternal); the whispered words that follow are bathed in the richest, most harmonically complex choral sonorities heard yet, as if something is gloriously illuminated from a great distance. A climax is reached and suddenly we are back at the starkness of the very beginning of the work, the lights having gone out. Again, the arresting plea for eternal rest is heard; consolation is offered as the rhapsodic viola melody concludes the movement.

There are many satisfying symmetries among the seven movements, including the placement of the intimate soprano solo in the center and the use of baritone solo in the second and sixth movements, which have the darkest texts. Whereas the second movement puts the baritone's music in the middle, the *Libera me* is framed by solo sections. This movement had actually been written years before, and it features the most melodramatic, least chant-like vocal writing. This is especially true of the baritone solo, which could come right out of an opera with its ringing references to fiery judgment. The chorus responds with appropriately mortified trembling, and the intrusion of tolling horns summons up violent visions of the Day of Wrath. Most melodramatically of all, the chorus then takes up the soloist's tune in grim, trembling unison.

Just as the dark second movement is followed by a radiant *Sanctus*, the sixth is followed by the even more ethereal *In Paradisum*. This is music of great delicacy that hardly needs description. The sopranos lead the way throughout, finding rest in the support of the chorus at cadences and an unending bed of arpeggios in the organ. In this year in which Gordon College has been investigating various perspectives on biblical shalom, Fauré's music provides a wonderful framework for thinking about the eternal promise of peace.

Dvořák*:* Symphony No. 9

Antonin Dvorak actually wrote a very fine requiem of his own, but he's better known as a composer who can make instruments sing, whether writing for small ensembles or full orchestra. Works with a programmatic title always seem to have an advantage in the public eye, but Dvorak's ninth and final symphony, "*From the New World*," certainly deserves its popularity. Written in the same year (1893) that Fauré was adding the two movements to his *Requiem*, it is a celebration both of the "old world" ideal of a symphony in the mold of Beethoven and Brahms and of being open to new inspirations. It was written while on an extended stay in America, during which the composer spent a lot of time listening to and advocating for what he thought of as America's music, especially that of Native Americans and African Americans. He strongly believed that American composers should mine these resources, but it's open to speculation how much their influence can be heard in the *New World Symphony*. There are plenty of folk-like melodies, but that can be said of many of his works; Czechs have folk-songs too. If the work doesn't really sound like the more distinctive American music that sprouted in the twentieth century, there's something about its big-hearted gestures and wide-open spaces that connects with the optimism that a new world promises; just as importantly, the moments of melancholy may suggest a longing for the composer's homeland. In the final analysis, the main point is that the work surely reflects something of Dvorak's experience as a stranger in an exciting land.

The opening of the first movement is shrouded in mystery, beginning in the subterranean depths and echoing in the woodland heights; thus, the sense of a spacious canvas has been created even before the symphony proper has really gotten under way. After a series of violent outbursts, tentative woodwind figures are answered by the first occurrence of the symphony’s primary motto – a rhythmic pattern of long-short-short-long with a syncopated stress on the last note. Finally, a drumroll and tremolando violins announce the arrival of the principal theme, introduced by the french horns. Constructed from a rising triadic pattern in the rhythm of the new world motto, the theme functions like an open-ended question. The working out of the movement is mostly concerned with explorations of this questioning idea, which draws forth a wide variety of responses from across the orchestral palette. There are quieter, chamber-like moments as well, including a gentle transformation of the motto into a sort of prairie tune, but a sense of unrest predominates and leads to a defiant close.

The second movement begins with a striking series of chords from the brass that magically transports us from the turbulent E minor of the first movement to the distant realm of D-flat major. (These chords will return at the end of this movement and, in blazing fashion, near the end of the last movement.) The modulation sets up the english horn to sing one of the most famous of all themes, beautifully tailored to the instrument's plaintive voice. The movement proceeds at a leisurely pace, though a more restless minor-key theme is introduced in the flute, music that could easily be interpreted as a longing for home. This is followed by an unexpectedly merry, dance-like tune in the oboe that suggests happy memories, memories that are soon interrupted by a dramatic reentrance of the new world motto – the outburst sets the stage for the return of the english horn theme. This time, the second half of the tune is taken up by a small group of muted strings – their hushed phrases trail off into several heart-stopping silences, but an even smaller group of soloists leads the way back home.

Whereas the major key of the second movement is tinged with persistent sadness, the minor key third movement is a spirited scherzo in ABA form, full of lively cross rhythms and playful echoes back and forth across the orchestra, with the timpani a featured player. One could say that the symphony as a whole gives lie to the notion that minor key music is always sad. Here, the vigorous main idea of the A section is countered by a more relaxed major key tune that anticipates the kind of cowboy song one might hear in a Western movie; the A section is rounded off with a return to the vigorous minor key music. Cellos and violas then recall the new world motto as a means of connecting to the good-natured B section, featuring yet another free-range cowboy tune. The A section is then repeated, though its ending is briefly interrupted by another dramatic reentry of the new world motto.

The final movement begins in startling fashion with unison strings biting away at the same half-step interval that would later be associated with a great white shark. This rush of excitement ushers in a heroic fanfare theme, first delivered by trumpets and horns. Dvorak's seemingly endless supply of catchy tunes and dance figures is put to good use in the kaleidoscopic finale, but the fanfare theme is never far away. As if this variety isn't enough, the heroic trumpet theme is converted into a viola ostinato over which the primary themes of the second and third movements are set dancing. Of course, the new world motto becomes part of this melting pot, and several great climaxes are achieved. One senses that the composer hates to say goodbye to such rich material, as apparent endings are extended several times; after quietly reminiscing on the middle movement themes one last time, the new world motto is combined with the heroic fanfare theme to set up a final race to the finish.

Ravel: *Valses nobles et sentimentales*

Maurice Ravel's "noble and sentimental waltzes" contain eight short and colorful pieces which are intended to be played as a set. The title pays homage to Franz Schubert whose many sets of waltzes for the piano include *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales*. However, the spirit of Ravel's dances is more reminiscent of the later Viennese style made famous by the Strauss family, albeit filtered through a distinctive French sensibility.

The first seven pieces are waltzes in contrasting characters and the final piece is an *epilogue* in which fragments of the previous dances are heard. (*about 15 minutes*)

1. Brilliant and rhythmic with biting harmonies decorating the insistent ♫♩ ♩ pattern.
2. Most lyrical of the set; the tender and sad tune returns at the very end of #8
3. Light, delicate, and somewhat quick, moving without pause into #4
4. Faster, more complicated rhythms that confuse the waltz feeling
5. Hesitant, searching phrases; the slowest of the waltzes
6. The quickest of the waltzes, again with complicated rhythms and unexpected accents
7. The last phrase of #6 is hesitantly questioned several times before a luxurious and sweeping waltz is gradually ushered in. The waltz reaches two grand and noble climaxes with a faster, more frenetic middle section providing contrast.
8. The *epilogue* is mostly soft and mysterious with an air of nostalgia which is enhanced by the vague references to the earlier pieces.

Schumann: *Kreisleriana*

This cycle of eight fantasies gets its title and inspiration from an unusual source: Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler is the literary invention of E.T.A Hoffman, an author best known for his famous story about a nutcracker. The Kreisler character is an exceedingly eccentric and mad musician. Robert Schumann loved the dark and fantastic stories of Hoffman and other German Romantics, and he seems to have particularly identified with the bizarre Kreisler character. Schumann himself struggled with mental illness; though he would eventually lose that struggle, this work was written when his creative powers were at their height. Thus, the music is both superbly crafted and disturbingly unsettled.

The fantasies in *Kreisleriana* do not tell a story, but rather display a wide variety of moods that range from tender and poetic to wild and manic, sometimes with little transition between the two. The result is a musical picture of a highly emotional, passionate, and unstable personality, a picture that is surely as much autobiographical as it is about Herr Kreisler. (*about 30 minutes)*

1. Begins wildly, almost out-of-control with a mad sweep up the keyboard. A middle section is much more relaxed and lyrical before the crazed opening material returns.
2. The longest piece of the set features a beautiful and reflective melody that three times builds to satisfying resolution. There are two completely contrasting *intermezzi*, the first scampering and playful and the second much darker and more dramatic.
3. The first appearance of a sinister sort of mood that returns in #5 and #8. The contrasts of #2 are reversed as here the middle section is lyrical and poetic, while the outer sections are full of darkness and foreboding.
4. This slow movement begins hesitantly and continues in a fragmentary search where time seems occasionally to stop. The music leaves more questions than answers and leads directly into #5
5. More sinister material, as themes seem chase themselves around the keyboard. Always lively, but with several sudden character changes before the opening material reappears and fades into #6.
6. Another fragmentary slow movement begins with a beautiful, simple song-like tune. As in #4, the music goes in several unexpected directions, but always returns to the heartfelt song.
7. Even wilder than the opening movement, this shortest of the fantasies exhibits Schumann's most passionate and manic side. Then, suddenly, the music changes to something very simple and hymn-like at the end.
8. In this final piece, the sinister mood returns and triumphs in a bizarre little dance which features a bass-line that is increasingly out of phase with the right hand. There are two contrasting sections, the second of which is bold and assertive, but the sinister idea wins out as the music dissolves into nothing.

Brahms: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*

This monumental work exhibits two of the most characteristic features of Johannes Brahms' work as a composer: his masterful command of the full Romantic palette of sonorities and expressive devices and his reverence for the "old-fashioned" music of composers such as Bach and Handel. While these variations reveal a big, 19th-century conception of pianistic possibilities, they are structured in a characteristically 18th-century manner. In fact, the theme on which these 25 variations are based was composed by Handel as the theme for a more modest set of five variations for harpsichord. Also typical of the older style is the use of a fugue as a sort of grand finale.

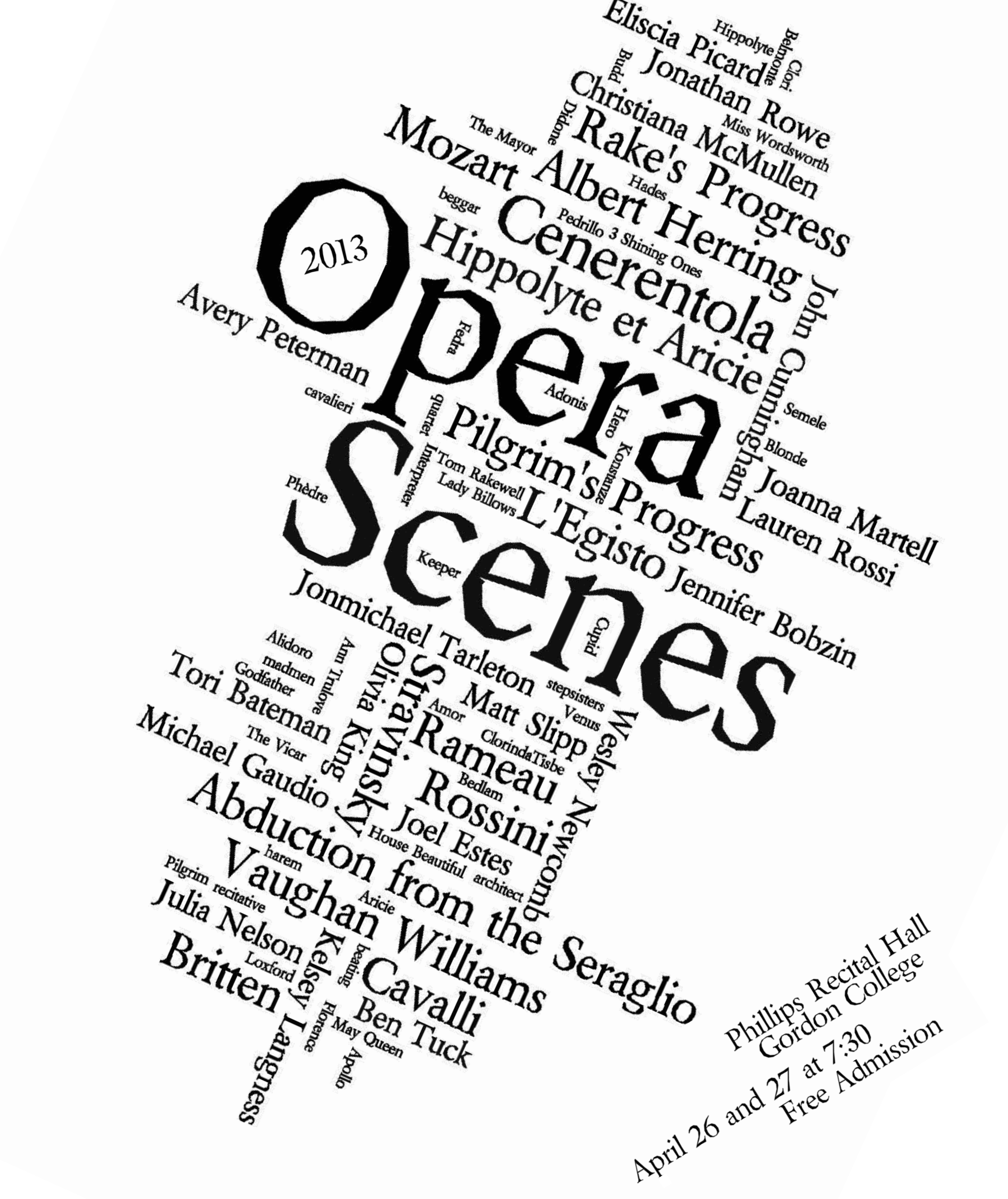
Still, it would be impossible to imagine this music played on a harpsichord. One of the ways in which Brahms sustains interest throughout such a long piece is through a wide variety of instrumental colors and effects. The piano is treated almost as an orchestra, and in fact these pieces have been orchestrated by the English composer, Edmund Rubbra. The variety of styles in the variations is also expertly balanced by Brahms so that there is a satisfying dramatic flow to the music. Notice the way in which variations 11 and 12 bring the energy level down in preparation for the midpoint 13, which is the longest and most free-standing movement. Later, variations 21 and 22 have a dream-like quality that connects the sleepy 20 with the big buildup (23-25) to the fugue.

Although the fugue has a reputation as a very academic and cerebral sort of musical form, in this context one senses that the composer is thrilled to have thrown off the square and unvaried phrase structure of the variations for the relatively free phrasing allowed by the fugue. There are dutiful entries of four different fugal voices and all the familiar fugal tricks such as augmenting, diminishing, and inverting the simple subject, but in this music Brahms is free to let his imagination run wild in a way that brings everything to a thrilling conclusion.

THEME – a very simple and square tune punctuated with lively trills.

1. Playful and energetic, as if the simple theme has suddenly broken free of the harpsichord.
2. Quiet and more inward with a sense of yearning
3. Delicate dialogue between the two hands
4. Brilliant octaves in both hands; first time the full piano sonority breaks free
5. Completely different; nostalgic and lyrical; first of two variations in the minor key
6. Austere canon between the hands continues the "long ago and far away" mood of #5
7. Return to major key and merriment; imitations of trumpets and drums
8. Continuation of #7's character that trails off into the music's first significant pause
9. Grand and imposing phrases that start big and end more gently
10. More athletic phrases that also end with less energy than they begin
11. Lyricism prevails; in #11 and #12, the general energy level comes down in preparation for #13
12. Tender, hesitant phrases in the right hand against soft horn calls in the left
13. A serious and stately gypsy march which, as the midpoint of the variations, has a certain gravity
14. The playfulness bursts back with full energy leading right into #15
15. Big sonorities, but equally energetic as #14
16. Acrobatic and playful, but not as big as #15
17. Yet more playful and lighter, even humorous
18. Very gentle sweeps up and down the keyboard relaxing into #19
19. A graceful and lilting dance in a pastoral character
20. Mysterious, thick chords searching slowly for a home
21. A wisp of a variation, in a minor key, and restless
22. A charming little music box is evoked
23. Beginning of build to finale; string pizzicato is imitated
24. Buildup continues with streams of notes leading to
25. A grand finale to the variations that uses the full sonority of the piano and heads into

THE FUGUE


Opera Scenes
2013
Eliscia Picard
Hippolyte
Belmonte
Clori
Jonathan Rowe
Budd
Christiana McMullen
Miss Wordsworth
Didone
Rake's Progress
The Mayor
Mozart
Albert Herring
Hades
beggar
Cenerentola
Pedrillo 3 Shining Ones
Hippolyte et Aricie
John Cunningham
Avery Peterman
Fedra
Adonis
Semele
cavalieri
quartet
Hero
Blonde
Pilgrim's Progress
Konstanze
Joanna Martell
Interpreter
Tom Rakewell
Lady Billows
Phèdre
Lauren Rossi
L'Egisto
Keeper
Jennifer Bobzin
Jonmichael Tarleton
Cupid
Alidoro
madmen
Ann Trulove
Godfather
Tori Bateman
Olivia King
Stravinsky
Amor
Matt Slipp
stepsisters
Venus
Wesley Newcomb
The Vicar
Rameau
ClorindaTisbe
Michael Gaudio
Bedlam
Rossini
Abduction from the Seraglio
Joel Estes
House Beautiful
architect
harem
Vaughan Williams
Pilgrim
recitative
Aricie
Julia Nelson
Kelsey Langness
beating
Loxford
Cavalli
Britten
Ben Tuck
Florence
May Queen
Apollo
Phillips Recital Hall
Gordon College
April 26 and 27 at 7:30
Free Admission

THE GORDON COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

presents

OPERA SCENES 2013

L'EGISTO, Act II: Finale — Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676)
sung in English translation

Amor ..... Avery Peterman
Semele ..... Joanna Martell
Fedra ..... Lauren Rossi
Hero ..... Eliscia Picard
Dido ..... Jennifer Bobzin
Apollo ..... Ben Tuck

Semele, Fedra, Hero and Dido, all legendary women who died for love, have trapped Amor (better known as Cupid) in Hades where he'd gone on an errand for his mother. They plan to exact vengeance for the suffering Amor has caused them. Amor pleads with them in vain until Apollo arrives; the mighty sun-god needs the boy's assistance to rekindle Clori's love for Egisto. Apollo successfully bargains for Amor's release, but the ladies and Apollo warn lovers everywhere to be wary of Cupid's arrows. (*12 minutes*)

THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO, Act II: Finale — W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
sung in German

Konstanze ..... Christiana McMullen
Blonde ..... Julia Nelson
Belmonte ..... Matthew Slipp
Pedrillo ..... John Cunningham

The Act II finale of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* begins with the joyful reunion of the noble Belmonte and his beloved Konstanze, who has been captured into a harem. Their servants, Pedrillo and Blonde, are also in love and the four are eager to carry out their plan to escape; however, there is tension when the men express their concerns about whether the women have managed to remain faithful in such a setting. Pedrillo is particularly concerned about the interest shown in Blonde by Osmin, the cruel overseer of the harem. The women are insulted by such questions; in a tender ensemble, the women express their bitterness at such jealousy while the men see that very bitterness as proof of faithfulness. Belmonte and Pedrillo beg for forgiveness which is finally granted, leading to a jubilant denunciation of jealousy and mistrust. (*11 minutes*)

HIPPOLYTE ET ARICIE, Act IV: Finale — Jean-Philippe Rameau (1783-1864)
sung in French

Phèdre ..... Kelsey Langness
Hippolyte..... Joel Estes
Aricie ..... Joanna Martell

Phèdre is married to Theseus, son of Neptune, but has fallen in love with Hippolyte, Theseus's son by another woman. Hippolyte has resisted his stepmother's advances, but Theseus has come upon them and assumes Hippolyte has forced himself on Phèdre. Rather than reveal what Phèdre has done, Hippolyte goes into exile in the forest with his beloved Aricie, but Theseus has Neptune send a sea monster to destroy his son.

As our scene opens, forest celebrations of the goddess Diana are interrupted by the monster. Hippolyte rushes in to fight, but almost immediately Aricie laments that her love has disappeared into the flames. Phèdre comes upon the scene and, when told by the people what happened ("Hippolyte n'est plus"), confesses that she has caused his death. She tumultuously asks herself how she could have done this ("Qu'ai-je fait?"), denounces the cruelty of the gods ("Dieux cruels") and resolves to confess to Theseus, remembering Hippolyte as an honorable hero.(*6 minutes*)

ALBERT HERRING, Act I, Scene 1 — Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Lady Billows..... Mary Speta
Florence Pike ..... Olivia King
Miss Wordsworth..... Julia Nelson
Mr. Upfold, the Mayor..... Jonmichael Tarleton
Mr. Gedge, the Vicar..... Jonathan Rowe
Superintendent Budd..... Wesley Newcomb

Albert Herring, is set in a small British town, Loxford, that is ruled by the imposing Lady Billows (and by her equally imposing assistant, Florence). As our scene opens, the town leaders arrive to help decide which local young girl should represent virtue as the town's Queen of the May. However, the alarmingly efficient Florence has found reasons to dismiss all nominees, leading to a spectacular mad scene for Lady Billows. Superintendent Budd soon comes up with a surprising solution to the problem. (*25 minutes*)

INTERMISSION

LA CENERENTOLA, Act I, Scene 1 — Gioacchino Rossini
sung in Italian — (1792-1868)

Cenerentola	Kelsey Langness
Clorinda	Avery Peterman
Tisbe	Eliscia Picard
Alidoro	Wesley Newcomb
Cavalieri	Joel Estes
	Michael Gaudio
	Ben Tuck

Rossini's "Cinderella" story begins with two rude stepsisters boasting about their own beauties. Their efforts to stop Cenerentola from singing a plaintive song (about a king who values innocence and goodness over wealth) are interrupted by the arrival of a mysterious beggar, Alidoro, who will eventually make it his business to bring about a happy ending. The stepsisters want nothing to do with Alidoro, but Cenerentola is secretly kind to him. Things get more interesting with the arrival of soldiers proclaiming that Prince Ramiro is on his way, searching for the most beautiful girl in the kingdom to be his bride. (*11 minutes*)

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS, Act III: Scene 3 — Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

Tom Rakewell	Matthew Slipp
Anne Trulove	Christiana McMullen
Father Trulove	Ben Tuck
Keeper of the Madhouse	Michael Gaudio

As we come to the final scene of Stravinsky's moral fable, *The Rake's Progress*, the Faust-like Tom Rakewell, having given up happiness with his beloved Anne Trulove to follow the devilish Nick Shadow, has regained his soul in a game of cards by holding to his belief in love; however, the sore loser Nick has condemned Tom to insanity and we find him in an asylum, believing he is Adonis awaiting the arrival of Venus. Anne comes to see him and she willingly plays the role of Venus in a tender duet. She then sings him to sleep with a gentle lullaby that entrances all of the inmates. Anne's father comes to take her away and Tom awakens for a final mad scene before dying and being mourned by the other madmen. (*15 minutes*)

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, Act I: Scene 2 Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Pilgrim ..... Wesley Newcomb
The Interpreter ..... John Cunningham
Three Shining Ones..... Lauren Rossi
Tori Bateman
Jennifer Bobzin

The 1733 story on which Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* is based is, of course, a take-off on John Bunyan's 1678 classic allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. We close tonight's program with a scene from early in Vaughan Williams' setting of Bunyan's story. The wandering Pilgrim stumbles upon the cross and is welcomed into the "House Beautiful" in a scene that symbolizes baptism into the church. (*11 minutes*)

~

Michael Monroe, Music Director and Producer

Olivia King, Director

Since 2003, Gordon music professor Michael Monroe has overseen annual productions featuring scenes from about fifty different operas, and has also conducted fully staged productions of *The Pirates of Penzance, H.M.S. Pinafore* and Gounod's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* as well as Theatre Department productions of *Into the Woods, Sweeney Todd*, and *The Secret Garden*.

Senior Olivia King produced and starred in Gordon's wildly successfully January production of *Sweeney Todd*, and sang the role of Buttercup in 2012's *H.M.S. Pinafore*. She has also been in several Theatre Department shows including *Into the Woods* as Jack's Mother, *Lizzy, Darcy, and Jane* as Mrs. Austen and Cassandra Austen, and *Working* as the teacher.

Special Thanks to:

Greg Lowther
The Department of Theatre Arts
Gordon Music Faculty


Diana Rhys
THE MAYOR
fountain
north
ocean
VÉRONIQUE
Hymns
Kreigh Knerr
AENEAS
THE SANDMAN
gingham
David Allen
green
PASQUIN
Bizet
Michael Monroe
SAM
flags
Megan Muthersbaugh
TOP
Nile
DIDO AND AENEAS
Diana
Catherine Hawkins
OLD MAID AND THE THIEF
Miserable
graduation
neighbors
GRANDPA
Humperdinck
Christopher Zini
Heaven
Hullo
Amen
living
hope
Forest
HANSEL
Drifters
Elissa
Gordon College
groves
Lonely
Eternity
Opera
Nate Haywood
Confess
LAURIE
Mother
Repent
Poor
Bitter
mankin
MISS TODD
Cupids
Cadenza
Hand
Menotti
Ron Luchsinger
MISS PINKERTON
drooping
Katie Hayashi
LAURETTE
Sara Gassert
Rachel-Anne Minor
Come
Roderick Caesar
forsook
Preacher
basket
Elders
Scenes
Overshoes
labors
afraid
harvestin
Host
Beautiful
Appalachia
Burns
Parents
Guest
hungry
Oh dear
Farmers
Lost
Christine Houlette
MARTIN
SUSANNAH
Copland
James Cassell
Ideal
GRETEL
Purcell
Floyd
Flowers
DR MIRACLE
food
Lover
OLIN BLITCH
belly
lonesome
glimmering
Cuckoo
friends
critters
Phoebe
Disgusting
DIDO
Jove
Heart
party
Eggs
Lacy Palmer
Carthage
east
Disguised
Evangelyna Etienne
Beggar
give
angry
Bethany Persenaire
Jessie
Butter
gentle
Ian Good
haste
Hesperian
Hurrah
Evelynn Sawyer
Confession
Darkness
crocodile
TENDER LAND
Ho ho
THE SORCERESS
LAETITIA
Prince
Graduate
Mantelet
HANSEL AND GRETEL
Death
Promise
growing
Omelet
potatoes
Lament
BELINDA
hire

The Old Maid and the Thief, Scene 1 — Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)
(10 minutes)

Miss Todd.....Megan Muthersbaugh
Miss Pinkerton.....Bethany Persenaire
Laetitia (Miss Todd's servant).....Evelynn Sawyer
Bob.....Kreigh Knerr

Miss Todd and Miss Pinkerton talk over tea;
Each is sad to be old and still absent a he.
Laetitia comes in to announce there's a vis'tor.
Miss Todd and Laetitia are thrilled it's a Mister.

Dr. Miracle, The Omelette Quartet — Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
(10 minutes)

Laurette.....Sara Gassert
Véronique.....Catherine Hawkins
Pasquin.....David Allen
The Mayor of Padua.....Nate Haywood

A resourceful young man makes an omelette as part
of an opera-like plan to secure his sweetheart.
Later on in the plot, to her parents' surprise,
it's revealed that this chef thing was just a disguise.

Susannah, Act II: Scenes 1-2 — Carlisle Floyd (b.1926)
(20 minutes)

Susannah.....Christine Houlette
Sam (Susannah's brother).....Christopher Zini
Rev. Olin Blitch.....Kreigh Knerr

An innocent bath seen by Elders has meant
that Susannah's been shunned, told she has to repent.
Sam consoles her, but leaves. Later, at the revival,
she's preached at by Blitch when he notes her arrival.

INTERMISSION

Hansel and Gretel, Act II: Scenes 1-2 — Engelbert Humperdinck (1854-1921)
(12 minutes)

Gretel .....Katie Hayashi
Hansel .....Diana Rhys
Sandman .....Evelynn Sawyer

Gretel sings to a mushroom while Hansel picks berries,
but the coming of night makes them slowly aware
that they're lost in the woods. Enter Sandman, who ferries
them off to their dreams, though they first say a prayer.

Dido and Aeneas, Act II: Scene 2 – Act III — Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
(20 minutes)

Dido.....Evangelyna Etienne
Aeneas.....David Allen
Belinda (Dido's sister) .....Bethany Persenaire
Attendant.....Diana Rhys
Sorceress.....Lacy Palmer
Spirit .....Katie Hayashi
Witches .....Sara Gassert, Catherine Hawkins
First Sailor .....Ian Good

Aeneas and Dido are all set to marry,
attendants are singing when storm clouds are spied;
as all haste away, an imposterous fairy
gives Aeneas false news that he must leave his bride.

While sailors prepare, witches plot their destruction,
which delights them no end, having also forseen
that the mistreated Dido will end the production
by lamenting and dying, a heartbroken queen.

The Tender Land, Act I: Finale — Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
(12 minutes)

Laurie.....Rachel-Anne Minor
Ma .....Lacy Palmer
Martin.....Christopher Zini
Top .....Nate Haywood
Grandpa.....Kreigh Knerr

Two drifters, out looking for work, are quite glad
when they come 'cross a girl, a wide-eyed high school grad.
Though Grandpa and Ma both express some misgiving,
soon they all join in singing "The Promise of Living."

The Gordon College Department of Music Presents
A SOPHOMORE GENERAL RECITAL
Sunday, February 28, 6:00 PM

Sinfonia No. 1 in C Major.....Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Chris Vigneau, piano

(...in which Mr. Bach shows how elegantly he can weave three voices together with only two hands)

Partita No. 2 in D minor .....Johann Sebastian Bach
I. Allemanda (1685-1750)

Chad Irwin, violin

(...in which Mr. Bach shows how a single violin can provide melody & harmony in a curiously serious and flowing dance)

Prélude, Fugue, Variation, Op. 18 ..... César Franck
II. Fugue (1822-1890)

Maya Bam, organ

(...in which the the Belgian Franck proves that, well more than a century after Bach, there's still a place for fugues)

Partita No.2 in D minor.....Johann Sebastian Bach
III. Sarabande (1685-1750)

Julie Parsons, violin

(...in which Bach's violin laments eloquently, while once again providing its own rich harmonies)

Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 22..... Henryk Wieniawski
I. Allegro moderato (1835-1880)

Tim Lee, violin
Nathan Skinner, piano

(...in which the great Polish virtuoso Wieniawski unhurriedly merges passionate Romanticism with every violin trick in the book)

I attempt from Love's sickness to fly ..... Henry Purcell
From *The Indian Queen* (1659-1695)

Louis DeFrancesco, tenor
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which a deceptively light-hearted tune is merged with words suggesting that love is a deceptively happy sort of thing)

Hymn..... Dominick Argento
from *Six Elizabethan Songs* (b. 1927)

Abby Booth, soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which Ben Jonson's Renaissance celebration of the goddess Diana is delivered over radiant chords in the piano)

Verborgenheit ..... Hugo Wolf
(1860-1903)

Shirley Guzman, soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which Wolf's sumptious harmonies let us hear the pain expressed by Mörike's world-weary words)

Gretchen am Spinnrade..... Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Cory D'Arco, soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which the piano imitates Gretchen's spinning wheel while she passionately but anxiously thinks of Faust and his kisses)

Six Metamorphoses after Ovid .....Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

III. Niobe, who, lamenting the death of her fourteen children, was turned into a mountain.

IV. Bacchus, at whose feasts is heard the noise of gaggling women's tattling tongues and shouting out of boys.

Emma Gibbins, oboe

(...in which the great Roman poet's words inspire wordless meditations from the oboe)

Concerto in E-flat Major.....Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

II. Andante

Katie Iatesta, trumpet
Nathan Skinner, piano

(...in which the brash trumpet proves it can sing sweetly for the middle movement of this most popular of trumpet concerti)

Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op. 33.....Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)

I. Allegro non troppo

Beth Sharp, cello
Nathan Skinner, piano

(...in which, right from the beginning, the wide-ranging expressiveness of the cello is explored top to bottom)

Erotik, Op. 43, No. 5.....Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Nathan Gosselin, piano

(...in which Norway's great composer explores the sensual, tender side of the piano)

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1..... Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Erica Roark, piano

(...in which a particularly sad, lonely tune is richly treated, leading to a fiery climax and passionate return)

2 Pieces for Horn and Piano, Op. 28, No. 1 ..... Leone Sinigaglia
I. Lied (1868-1924)

Andrew Skinner, horn
Nathan Skinner, piano

(...in which the horn is given many chances to soar, in phrases that always seem to be heading upwards)

Concert Rondo in E flat Major, K. 371 ..... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Matthew Shute, horn
Nathan Skinner, piano

(...in which the horn is treated much more playfully, with a lively tune that keeps coming back)

Beau soir ..... Claude Debussy
(1826-1918)

Brianne Gilbert, soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which Debussy's magical piano sonorities create a stillness that has the poet musing about the passing of life)

Dans un bois solitaire ..... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Rachel-Anne Minor, soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...the poet sees Cupid in the woods and makes the mistake of awakening the mischievous god, who responds with cruel arrow)

Vedrò con mio diletto ..... Antonio Vivaldi
from *Il Giustino* (1678-1741)

Evangelyna Etienne, mezzo-soprano
Jessica Modaff, piano

(...in which Vivaldi spins a lovely melody over a repetive accompaniment as the words tell of intensely devoted love)

Concerto in E minor ..... Edward Elgar
IV. Allegro (1866-1934)

Korynne Bolt, cello
Michael Monroe, piano

(...in which a fiery, main theme travels all over the cello and orchestra (piano), but a slower, full-hearted theme gradually takes over before this extended final movement comes to a dramatic close.)

MICHAEL MONROE

FACULTY PIANO RECITAL

BACH
ALLEMANDE

CHOPIN
BALLADE #4

BRAHMS
"HANDEL" VARIATIONS

DVORAK
"DUMKY" TRIO

SATURDAY, SEPT 15, 7PM
PHILLIPS RECITAL HALL
GORDON COLLEGE
FREE

FEATURING THE DEBUT OF
MONTRIEAU
W/ SUSANNA & KAREN MONROE

MONTRIEAU

Program Booklet for Faculty Recital
September 15, 2012

Contents

The Gordon College Music Department

presents

A FACULTY RECITAL

Michael Monroe, piano

Allemande ..... J.S. Bach
from *Partita No. 4 in D Major* (1685-1750)

Ballade No. 4 in F Minor ..... Frédéric Chopin
Op. 52 (1810-1849)

Variations & Fugue on a Theme by Handel ..... Johannes Brahms
Op. 24 (1833-1897)

INTERMISSION

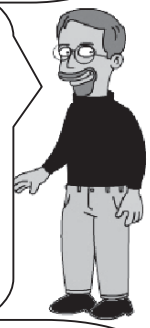
Piano Trio No. 4 in E Minor "Dumky" ..... Antonín Dvořák
Op. 90 (1841-1904)

MONTRIEAU
Susanna Monroe, violin
Karen Monroe, cello
Michael Monroe, piano

MM TALKS TO MM

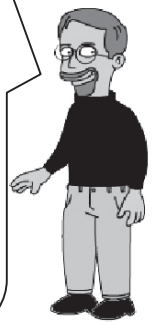
You wrote on your blog that a piano recital is "countercultural?" Are you just saying that to excuse this silly Simpsons design scheme? Do you even know what "countercultural" means? Isn't classical music as cultured as it gets?

"Cultured" maybe, but only in the worst sense of that word. But look, there is something kind of countercultural in this hyper-techy world about a bunch of people sitting fairly still and listening to long stretches of unamplified music with no words (except these). It's a bold excursion to the border of rapture and boredom.



Yeah, you're really on the edge here. So how did you choose this program of old and older music? You're a thoughtful guy with a blog and all, I'm sure there must be some grand design behind this …selection of compositions.

I'm a little embarrassed about this, but the truth is, I chose this program based on the following: "**These are pieces I want to play**." And not even according to some process of elimination. It's more like these pieces popped on my radar screen and chose me. In each case, once I started thinking about the music, I felt I had to play it. It's all very selfish.



Contents

UNCHAINED MELODY

J.S. BACH'S "WANDERING" ALLEMANDE

I first became aware of this piece through the remarkable pianist Jeremy Denk, who devoted a 7-day blog series to the **Allemande** from Bach's **Partita #4 in D Major** in May, 2007. Denk writes:

"Bach sees Jane run. At the beginning of the Allemande, in the left hand, a plain Jane progression…which is (ho hum) the generic declarative sentence of tonal music. See the tonic run to the dominant and back, a scaredycat afraid to wander. But in the right hand I have a wanderer…."

Bach's genius has so much to do with his merging of elegant structures with inspired freedom, but even for Bach, this tune seems to be making things up as it goes along. The pulse is steady, but the rhythmic patterns are ever-changing and although this could be heard as the stylized dance that its title suggests, it evokes a kind of atmosphere that anticipates the dreamy nocturnes of Chopin – perfect for listening as the sky darkens over the pond. (9 minutes)

THE AGONY & THE ECSTASY - (AND THE AGONY)

CHOPIN'S BALLADE #4 IN F MINOR

Chopin, the great "poet of the piano," is probably best-known for smaller-scale pieces in regular forms, such as waltzes, mazurkas, etudes, preludes, and nocturnes. Although he did compose several sonatas (2 of which are cornerstones of the piano repertoire), his 4 ballades represent some of his most original experiments in larger-form musical storytelling. In fact, the title "Ballade" was pioneered by Chopin and is intended to suggest a connection to the world of literature and poetry.

Chopin may have been inspired by particular tales of heroism and horror, but I prefer to think of this work as a purely musical narrative. It features one of the composer's most heart-breaking melodies, a lonely tune which returns several times, each time seemingly infected by something more disturbing than before. There is a lovely, lilting song in the middle which later inspires a great climax, but then… (11 minutes)

Everything's Connected

Brahms'

Variations & Fugue on a Theme by Handel

This monumental opus exhibits two of the most characteristic features of Johannes Brahms' work as a composer: his masterful command of the full Romantic palette of sonorities and expressive devices and his reverence for the "old-fashioned" music of composers such as Bach and Handel. While these variations reveal a big, nineteenth-century conception of pianistic possibilities, they are structured in a characteristically eighteenth-century manner. Also typical of the older style is the use of a fugue as a sort of grand finale.

Thus, there's a wonderful sense of connection to past models (including Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*), but a set of variations also gives a composer a chance to explore a wide variety of colors, characters, and emotions, while showing that they all are connected. Variety in Unity. The variety of styles in the variations is also expertly balanced by Brahms so that there is a satisfying dramatic flow to the music. #11 & #12 bring the energy level down in preparation for the midpoint #13, which is the longest and most free-standing movement. Later, #21 and #22 have a dream-like quality that connects the sleepy #20 with the big crescendo (#23-25) to the fugue. (29 minutes)

A Brahms-Handel Listening Guide

THEME - a very simple and square tune punctuated with lively trills.

1. Playful and energetic, as if the simple theme has suddenly broken free of the harpsichord for which Handel wrote it.
2. Quiet and more inward with a sense of yearning.
3. Delicate dialogue between the two hands.
4. Brilliant octaves in both hands; first time the full piano sonority breaks free.
5. Completely different; nostalgic and lyrical; first of two variations in the minor key.
6. Austere canon between the hands continues the "long ago and far away" mood of #5.
7. Return to major key and merriment; imitations of trumpets and drums.
8. Continuation of #7's character that trails off into the music's first significant pause.
9. Grand and imposing phrases that start big and end more gently.
10. More athletic phrases that also end with less energy than they begin.
11. Lyricism prevails; in #11 and #12, the general energy level comes down in preparation for #13.
12. Tender, hesitant phrases in the right hand against soft horn calls in the left.
13. A serious and stately gypsy march which, as the midpoint of the variations, has a certain gravity.
14. The playfulness bursts back with full energy leading right into #15.
15. Big sonorities, but equally energetic as #14.
16. Acrobatic and playful, but not as big as #15.
17. Yet more playful and lighter, even humorous.
18. Very gentle sweeps up and down the keyboard relaxing into #19.
19. A graceful and lilting dance in a pastoral character.
20. Mysterious, thick chords slowly searching for a home.
21. A wisp of a variation, restless and in a minor key.
22. A charming little music box is evoked.
23. Beginning a crescendo to finale; string pizzicato is imitated.
24. Crescendo continues with streams of notes leading to . . .
25. A grand finale to the variations that uses the full sonority of the piano and heads into . . .

THE FUGUE

LIFE IS GOOD – AND SAD

DVORAK'S 'DUMKY' TRIO & THE BEAUTY OF MELANCHOLY

Dvorak was a great admirer of Brahms and often worked to achieve the kind of structural sophistication one finds in Brahms' sweeping sonata forms. However, in this trio, rather than worry about elaborate development techniques, Dvorak lets his great gift for melody lead the way. The title "Dumky" is a Ukrainian word that suggests melancholy, and perhaps only Tchaikovsky can equal Dvorak when it comes to writing soulful Slavic tunes.

Here, one finds one gorgeous melody after another (often introduced by the cello), alternating with frantic dance episodes that whip the instruments into manic frenzies. Each of the six movements features passages both slow and fast; although tearful laments pop up on every page, there is something life-affirming about the juxtapositions of moods and the sheer beauty of colors and textures Dvorak creates. Whereas Chopin's ballade seems genuinely tragic, this music is more a reminder of how beautiful all aspects of life are – and, perhaps, a reminder that sadness means life matters. (30 minutes)

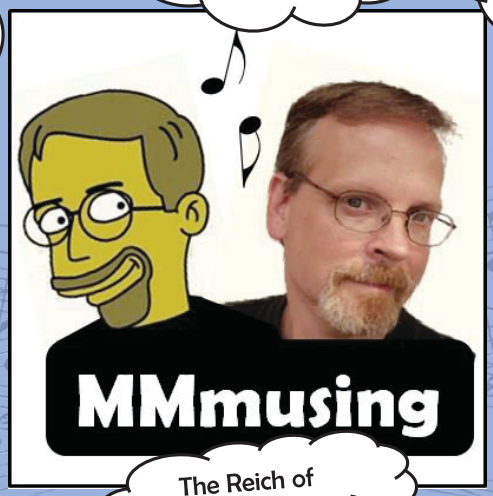
The MMmusing Mashup Recital

Including some music played as originally intended!

Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata vs. Debussy's Clair de lune

A.J. Gordon plus J.S. Bach

McCartney meets Messiaen



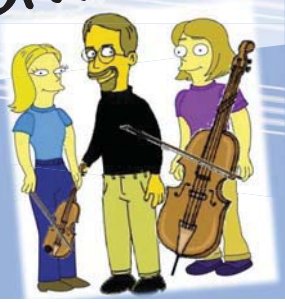
Grieg embellishing Mozart

Randomized Gymnopédie

The Reich of Spring

Faculty pianist Michael Monroe presents a series of live experiments in musical mashing, featuring music/ideas by Adolphe, Bach, Beethoven, Gordon, Grieg, McCartney, Mendelssohn, Messiaen, Monroe, Newcomb, Ravel, Reich, Satie & Stravinsky.

With guests Stephanie Emberley, Wesley Newcomb and MONTRIEAU



Sunday, September 22 at 4 P.M.
Gordon College ~ Phillips Recital Hall
Free Admission

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song pleasant and long;
Or since all musick is but three parts vied and multiplied.
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

George Herbert, 1633

The Gordon College Department of Music presents

MICHAEL MONROE, PIANO
A FACULTY RECITAL/HAPPENING

Sunday, September 22, 2013
Phillips Recital Hall

PRELUDE: A FAMILY AFFAIR

Minuet "Quartet" in C ..... tune by J. S. Bach
arranged by Michael Monroe

Susanna & Christina Monroe, violins
Henry & Karen Monroe, cellos

PART I: EXPERIMENTS IN MUSIC MASHING

My Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring ..... tune by A. J. Gordon
accompaniment after J. S. Bach
arranged by M. A. Monroe

Montrieau

Crab Canon, from *The Musical Offering* (1747)..... J. S. Bach

Susanna & Christina Monroe, violins

Clapping Music (1972) ..... Steve Reich

The Reich of Spring ..... rhythms by Steve Reich
chords by Igor Stravinsky
concept by Wesley Newcomb

Wesley Newcomb & Michael Monroe, hands

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Randomnopédie ..... music by Erik Satie
concept by Michael Monroe
phrases from Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 1* (1888)
random phrase generator designed by Wesley Newcomb

Piano Puzzler (February 11, 2009) ..... tune by Paul McCartney
accompaniment after Olivier Messiaen
arranged by Bruce Adolphe

Michael Monroe, piano

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Sonata in C Major, K. 545: I: Allegro ..... Mozart/Grieg
1st piano part by W. A. Mozart (1788)
2nd piano part to Mozart's by Edvard Grieg (1900)

Clair de moon ..... Beethoven/Debussy
1st piano part by Ludwig van Beethoven (1801)
2nd piano part by Claude Debussy (1905)
concept by Michael Monroe

Stephanie Emberley & Michael Monroe, pianos

~ INTERMISSION ~

PART II: CHAMBER MUSIC
(without any funny business)

Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus ..... Olivier Messiaen
from *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (1941)

Karen Monroe, cello
Michael Monroe, piano

Tzigane (1924) ..... Maurice Ravel

Susanna Monroe, violin
Michael Monroe, piano

Trio in D Minor, Op. 49 (1839) ..... Felix Mendelssohn
II. **Andante con molto tranquillo**
I. **Molto allegro ed agitato**

Montrieau

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You can read much more about today's program at the blog which inspired just about all the musical experiments in Part I.

Go to:

MMmusing.blogspot.com
(September, 2013)

Special Thanks to the Gordon College Department of Music, Greg Lowther, Stephanie Emberley, Wesley Newcomb, Christie Dennis, and my unbelievably patient family.


MICHAEL
MONROE
FACULTY PIANO
RECITAL
GORDON COLLEGE
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
PHILLIPS
RECITAL
HALL
BRAHMS Variations and
Fugue on a theme by Handel
RAVEL Valses nobles et
sentimentales
3:00
PM
SCHUMANN Kreisleriana

It's not the same as soap opera . . .
but it's close.

Ron Luchsinger, director
Michael Monroe, music director

Margaret Jensen Theater
Barrington Center for the Arts
January 25 at 8pm, January 26 at 3pm and 7:30pm