The St. Olaf College Department of Music presents

THE ST · OLAFF ORCHESTRA
Northfield · Minnesota · usa

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STEVEN AMUNDSON, conductor

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Sunday, March 16, 2007 ~ 3:30 p.m.
Boe Chapel, Northfield, Minnesota
Program

Leonore Overture No. 3 Op. 72 (1806)  
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven struggled for nearly ten years to complete a satisfying version of his only opera, Fidelio, which premiered in Vienna in 1805. Leonore Overture No. 3, the first of three revisions of the introductory music for the opera, perfectly captures the bold style of the composer's "heroic" period, and has become standard repertoire of the concert hall.

Leonore is the devoted wife of a political prisoner, Florestan. Disguising herself as a man (Fidelio), she gains access to the prison where she hopes to protect her husband and expose his mistreatment and unjust imprisonment, thwarting plans of the murderous jailer, Pizzaro. The opening downward scale represents Leonore's descent into the gloomy dungeon, and the unsettled harmonies that follow reflect the ominous situation. The clarinet foreshadows Florestan's lament aria, which returns later in the main exposition. An off-stage bugle-call, heard twice in the development section, signals the arrival of Don Fernando, the noble statesman who discovers Florestan’s innocence and ultimately frees him. Following a complete recapitulation of earlier themes, the culminating presto proclaims victory over evil. In 19th century Vienna, this "rescue opera" was recognized as a clear reference to unwarranted political imprisonment during the bloody French Revolution. Leonore is Beethoven's testament that "love, faith, and personal courage can overcome political tyranny."

~T.N.

Here, Now (2008)  
Christy Mooers (b. 1986)

Christy shares these comments about her composition: “This piece is about fall weather at St. Olaf College. I’ve written it with the uncertainty of life after college feeling like a powerful windstorm that threatens to sweep me from my feet and carry me off in an unknown direction. The unpredictability can be terrifying, so the solution, I think, is to give my full attention to each moment as it comes, and be truly here, now because too many anxious thoughts about the past and future crowd out the beauty of the present. And being open to the tremendous beauty all around makes the power and wildness of the storm exhilarating rather than terrifying.”

Christy Mooers is a B.A. music theory and composition major from Seattle, Washington. When not in class, she spends most of her time at St. Olaf in various ensemble rehearsals, including orchestra, jazz band, a jazz combo, a folk/bluegrass group, and the St. Olaf Ceilidh band performing Celtic music. She loves the outdoors, so doing research for this piece was fun because it meant lying out on the grass listening to the wind chimes or standing in the rain trying to memorize all the different sounds it creates. Although future plans are still uncertain, she plans to go back to Seattle to be close to her family and be reunited with the mountains and the ocean.
Concerto for Orchestra (1943)

Béla Bartók was a Hungarian composer of the 20th century. Along with his colleague Zoltán Kodály, he developed a large catalog of folk songs and unconventional modes collected on numerous trips through the rural regions of the Balkan States. These songs, and the musical concepts they are based on, became integral to Bartók’s compositional style. He very rarely quoted a tune but rather emulated the pitch content, metrical groupings and timbre of the voice or instrument he had heard perform it.

Fleeing Hungary to avoid the war, Bartók arrived in the United States in 1940. Battling leukemia, he composed nothing for three years, giving occasional lectures and recitals. In August of 1943, Serge Koussevitsky, the music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, visited the composer in the hospital. (Koussevitsky had been encouraged by some of Bartók’s friends to commission a work from the dying man so that the money could be used to ease the burden of his medical expenses.) Inspired by what seemed to be a vote of confidence, Bartók recovered his energy and set to work on the Concerto for Orchestra on August 15, finishing the score just eight weeks later on October 8, 1943. The Boston Symphony Orchestra premiered the work on December 1, 1944.

The Concerto for Orchestra is one of only a few of Bartók’s works that has made it into the standard orchestral repertory. It represents a brilliant synthesis of different musical concepts, with its construction and affect working alternately against and with each other.

At first, the title Concerto for Orchestra sounds like a misnomer. Ordinarily, a concerto features a solo instrument with the orchestra providing harmonic support, or in the case of the Baroque style a concerto grosso features a group of instruments from within the ensemble. While each section of the orchestra has multiple moments of virtuosic display, Bartók’s title seems to have been applied in lieu of a better term. This is a concert work, but not a symphony, it is connotative but has no program, and it is not atonal but not entirely tonal either.

The work is constructed in a five-movement arc, with the first and fifth movements being more substantial in length and difficulty while the second and fourth movements are much shorter and comparatively light-hearted. The third movement Elegy is the emotional core of the work and the most characteristically Bartókian sounding.

Introduzione

The first notes played by the low strings serve as the building blocks for the entire work, with an organization by fourths rather than thirds and fifths. The orchestra slowly piles on in a series of exhortations culminating in a brass fugue that returns the music to a more calm yet eerie level. Here, Bartók uses an overt folk reference with the woodwinds trading off in an asymmetric modal melody. The strings interrupt this and the whole ensemble comes roaring back to a declamatory finish.

Giuoco delle coppie

The title translates as “game of pairs” and five different wind instruments present themselves in pairs and in different parallel intervals. The bassoons enter in minor sixths, the oboes in minor thirds, clarinets in minor sevenths, flutes in fifths, and trumpets in major seconds. This playfulness is offset by a solemn and broad brass chorale, but the pairs return and dance their way to the end of the movement.
**Elegia**

This is the grimmest movement of the entire work. Bartók was said to have described this music as a “death song” but he never specified for whom. Otherworldly timbres and more folk-influenced tunes float and shriek from the orchestra.

**Intermezzo interrotto**

Scholars have suggested rather specific programs to this movement ranging from a gypsy wedding interrupted by the local authorities to a drunken village party where the local idiot is made fun of. Again, asymmetric rhythms and folk modes are employed but the organization is far more objective, relating to the structure of the first movement. A patriotic song “Oh Hungary, You are Beautiful” is quoted in the strings while a theme from the first movement Shostakovich’s *Seventh Symphony* is presented by the clarinet with the orchestra cat-calling and cackling wildly. (Earlier in 1943, Bartók had publicly criticized Shostakovich’s latest work “shallow and overblown.”)

**Finale**

By far the most difficult movement for the orchestra to perform, the finale roars with energy and bright textures with more than half of the orchestra in a high register during most of the movement. The fugue structure is employed multiple times, first featuring the woodwinds, then brass and finally strings all using a different form of the opening horn theme. After a violent recapitulation the texture breaks down into an atmospheric shimmer in the strings while the winds and brass spell out fragments of the main theme. This builds in intensity until the brass unleash yet another thematic statement that carries the whole orchestra to a glorious conclusion.

~L.V.

Program notes by Tom Niemisto,’08 and Luke Varland, ‘08
THE ST. OLAF ORCHESTRA

STEVEN AMUNDSON, conductor ~ RICHARD ERIKSON, manager

VIOLIN I
Olivia Bailey, Port Angeles, Wash.
Anna Bakk, Medina, Minn.
Allison Bengfort, Davenport, Iowa
Katherine Chatelaine, Owatonna, Minn.
Sean Dennis, Salina, Kan.
Jennifer Fargre, Cloquet, Minn.
Molly Gansen, Cedar Falls, Iowa
Helen Hassinger, La Crosse, Wis.
Michaela Gansen, Cloquet, Minn.
Anna Schoessler, Penfield, N.Y.
Emily Vigne, Montkont, Vt.

VIOLIN II
Aurora Adamson, Sandpoint, Idaho
Green Bouzard, Waverly, Iowa
Isaac Chaput, Mansfield Center, Conn.
Anna Dalager, Austin, Minn.
Mikaylin Heine, Westminster, Colo.
Brianna Hirst, Minot, N.D.
Kiersten Holland, Park Ridge, Ill.
Emily McLaughlin, Mansfield Center, Conn.
Joseph Mitchell, Minneapolis, Minn.
Alycia Overbo, Devils Lake, N.D.
Molly Pappenheim, Milwaukee, Wis.
Katelyn Reid, Northfield, Minn.
Sarah Rinehart, Northfield, Minn.
Katarina Schmitt, Neenah, Wis.
Anna Schoessler, Penfield, N.Y.
Bern Youngblood, La Grande, Ore.

CELLO
Rachel Dougherty, Fairway, Kan.
Sarah Gingerich, Conway, Ark.
Beau Gray, Fargo, N.D.
Briana Griffin, Newton, Kan.
Suzi Hintz, Black Hawk, S.D.
Hilary James, Golden, Colo.
David Moon, West Plains, Mo.
Tom Niemisto, Northfield, Minn.
Kirsten Peterson, Grand Forks, N.D.
Erik Radio, Shoreview, Minn.
Paul Sauey, Reedsburg, Wis.

BASS
James Bayless, Iowa City, Iowa
Bayard Carlson, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Eric Graalum, Fargo, N.D.
Jonah Hacker, Madison, Wis.
Carl Haskins, Lancaster, Wis.
Bryan Runck, Lamberton, Minn.

FLUTE/PICCOLO
Rebecca Lambrecht, Neenah, Wis.
Willa Lengyl, Eureka, Calif.
Corinne Mona, Severna Park, Md.

OBOE
John Groeich, St. Louis, Mo.
Martha Schwehn, Valparaiso, Ind.

CLARINET
Lauren Cook, Lincoln Neb.
James McKone, Mason City, Iowa
Whit Noble, Williamstown, Mass.

CLARINET BASS
Lauren Cook, Lincoln, Neb.

BASSOON/CONTRABASSOON
Luke Opel, Apple Valley, Minn.

HORN
Timothy Dwight, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
Chloe Ringlein, Bozeman, Mont.
John Schwehn, Valparaiso, Ind.
Clayton Smith, Norcross, Ga.

TRUMPET
Jacob Dalager, Austin, Minn.
Paul Heggeseth, Cypress, Texas
Matthew Preloger, Sioux Falls, S.D.

TROMBONE
Michael Murchison, Laurel, Md.
Stephen Peterman, Lino Lakes, Minn.
Katherine Virkler, Columbia, Mo.

TUBA
Daniel Larson, Minnetonka, Minn.

PERCUSSION
D.J. Erickson, Bloomington, Minn.
Eric Heimsoth, Grinnell, Iowa
Eri Isomura, Lauderdale, Minn.
Christina Koch, El Sugundo, Calif.
Amada Thorstad, Sun Prairie, Wis.

HARP
Anna Hagens, Middleton, Wis.

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