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School of Music

Boston University Concert Programs

2009-12-08

Boston University Symphony Orchestra, December 8, 2009

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Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music
presents

Boston University Symphony Orchestra

David Hoose and Tiffany Chang, conductors
Edwin Barker, double bass

Tuesday

December 8, 2009

7:30pm

Tsai Performance Center

Founded in 1873, the **School of Music** combines the intimacy and intensity of conservatory training with a broadly based, traditional liberal arts education at the undergraduate level and intense coursework at the graduate level. The school offers degrees in performance, composition and theory, musicology, music education, collaborative piano, historical performance, as well as a certificate program in its Opera Institute, and artist and performance diplomas.

In 1954, the **College of Fine Arts** was created to bring together the School of Music, along with two new entities: the School of Theatre and the School of Visual Arts. The University's vision was to create a community of artists in a conservatory-style school offering professional training in the arts to both undergraduate and graduate students, complemented by a liberal arts curriculum for undergraduate students. Since those early days, education at the College of Fine Arts has begun on the BU campus and extended into the city of Boston, a rich center of cultural, artistic and intellectual activity.

Boston University, founded in 1839, is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 30,000 students, it is the fourth largest independent university in the United States. BU contains 17 colleges and schools, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes that are central to the school's research and teaching mission.

**Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music**

Boston University Symphony Orchestra
Tiffany Chang and
David Hoose, conductors
The 76th event in the 2009–10 season

December 8, 2009
Tsai Performance Center

Giuseppe Verdi
(1813–1901)

Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani*

John Harbison
(b. 1938)

Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra

Lamento: Introductione, Tempo giusto, commodo
Cavatina: Moderato e semplice
Rondo: Allegro commodo

Boston Premiere

Edwin Barker, double bass

~Intermission~

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)

Symphony No. 2 in C, op. 61

Sostenuto assai—Allegro ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro vivace—Trio I, Trio II
Adagio espressivo
Allegro molto vivace

John Harbison

John Harbison is one of America's most distinguished and one of Boston's most beloved composers. His works include four string quartets, five symphonies, concerti for violin, cello, flute, oboe, a double concerto for oboe and clarinet, the cantata *The Flight Into Egypt* (composed for Cantata Singers), which earned him a Pulitzer Prize in 1987, *But Mary Stood* (also for Cantata Singers), *Requiem* (for the Boston Symphony Orchestra), *Four Psalms* (commissioned by the Israeli Consulate for the Chicago Symphony to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel), numerous motets (for Emmanuel Music), many chamber works with voice, and three operas, including *The Great Gatsby*, commissioned by The Metropolitan Opera.

Mr. Harbison has been composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood, Marlboro, and Santa Fe Chamber music festivals, Songfest, and the American Academy in Rome. His music has been performed by the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lincoln Center Chamber Players, the Santa Fe and Aspen festivals, Boston Musica Viva, Dinosaur Annex, and Collage New Music, among others. Altogether, more than sixty of his compositions have been recorded.

As conductor, John Harbison has been Music Director of Cantata Singers; has served as Creative Chair with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; and has led the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, and Handel & Haydn Society. He is currently Acting Artistic Director of Emmanuel Music. Mr. Harbison is the recipient of the Distinguished Composer award from the American Composer's Orchestra (2002), the Harvard Arts Medal (2000), the American Music Center's Letter of Distinction (2000), the Kennedy Center Frickheim First Prize (for his Piano Concerto), a MacArthur Fellowship (1989), and the Pulitzer Prize (1987). He also holds four honorary doctorates. Mr. Harbison is President of the Aaron Copland Fund for Music and is Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Edwin Barker, double bass

Edwin Barker is recognized as one of the most gifted bassists on the American concert scene. Acknowledged as an accomplished solo and ensemble player, Mr. Barker has concertized in North America, Europe, and the Far East.

Edwin Barker has performed and recorded with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and with the contemporary music ensemble Collage, a Boston-based contemporary music ensemble, and is a frequent guest performer with the Boston Chamber Music Society. Mr. Barker gave

the world premiere of James Yannatos' Concerto for Contrabass and Chamber Orchestra and of Theodore Antoniou's Concertino for Contrabass and Chamber Orchestra; he was the featured soloist in the New England premiere of Gunther Schuller's Concerto for Double Bass and Chamber Orchestra, conducted by the composer with The Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra.

Mr. Barker graduated with honors from the New England Conservatory in 1976, where he studied double bass with Henry Portnoi. That same year, while a member of the Chicago Symphony, he was appointed at age 22 to the position of principal double bass of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His other double bass teachers included Peter Mercurio, Richard Stephan, Angelo LaMariana, and David Perleman.

Mr. Barker was invited to inaugurate the 100th anniversary season of the Boston Symphony Orchestra with a solo performance of the Koussevitzky Bass Concerto; other solo engagements have included appearances at Ozawa Hall (Tanglewood), Carnegie Recital Hall's "Sweet and Low" series, and at major universities and conferences throughout the world, as well as concerto performances with the Boston Classical Orchestra, the Athens State Orchestra (Greece) and with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Boston and Europe. He was a featured premiere soloist with the Boston Symphony of John Harbison's Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra at Tanglewood's 2007 Festival of Contemporary Music.

Mr. Barker is an Associate Professor at the Boston University College of Fine Arts where he teaches double bass, orchestral techniques, and chamber music. His other major teaching affiliations include the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Music Center, where he is Chairman of Instrumental and Orchestral Studies.

Edwin Barker's solo CD recordings include Three Sonatas for Double Bass, on Boston Records, James Yannatos' Variations for Solo Contrabass, on Albany Records, and Concerti for Double Bass, on GM Recordings, which includes bass concerti by Gunther Schuller and Theodore Antoniou. Concerti for Contrabass also includes his highly praised performance of Tom Johnson's *Failing*, which was recorded live at Harvard University's Sanders Theater. Edwin Barker's latest solo offering on CD is a recently released performance of James Yannatos' Concerto for Contrabass with Collage.

Tiffany Chang, conductor

Originally from Taiwan, Tiffany Chang graduated from Oberlin Conservatory in 2009, with a Master of Music Education degree, Bachelor of Music degrees in cello performance and music education, and minors in composition and music theory. Ms. Chang has served as the Music Director of the Oberlin College

Symphony, the assistant conductor of the Northern Ohio Youth Orchestras, and a student conductor of the Oberlin Orchestras. Her versatility as a conductor further developed through conducting in the 2008 Taipei International Choral Festival, guest-conducting school ensembles across the globe, and collaborating with composers and soloists. She studied conducting with Bridget-Michèle Reischl, Amy Chang, and David Hoose; other mentors include Robert Spano, Timothy Weiss, Hugh Floyd, and Gábor Hollerung. Having studied cello with Amir Eldan and Hans Jensen, Ms. Chang actively teaches and performs as a cellist. She also studied composition with Amelia Kaplan and has been commissioned to write for schools and orchestras. Finally, her notable awards include the Phi Kappa Lambda Prize for Musicianship, Theodore Presser Scholarship, Ernest Hatch Wilkins Memorial Prize, and Oberlin Conservatory Dean's Scholarship. Ms. Chang is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in orchestral conducting under the guidance of David Hoose.

David Hoose, conductor

David Hoose is a professor of music in the School of Music at Boston University, where he is Director of Orchestral Activities. He has been Music Director of the Cantata Singers and Ensemble since 1984, and has been Music Director of Collage New Music since 1991. For eleven years, Professor Hoose was also Music Director of the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Hoose is the 2008 recipient of Choral Arts New England's Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award. He is also the recipient of the 2005 Alice M. Ditson Conductors Award, given in recognition of exceptional commitment to the performance of American music, and whose past recipients include Leonard Bernstein, André Previn, Eugene Ormandy and Leopold Stokowski. During tenure with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, the city of Tallahassee decided a week to be named after him in recognition of his contributions to the cultural life of the region. As a horn player and founding member of the Emmanuel Wind Quintet, he was a recipient of the Walter W. Naumburg Award for Chamber Music, and he was the recipient of the Dmitri Mitropolous Award for his work at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Under Mr. Hoose's leadership, Collage and Cantata Singers have given hundreds of premieres and have been active commissioners of dozens of new works, including music by John Harbison, Peter Child, James Primosch, Andrew Imbrie, Earl Kim, Stephen Hartke, Donald Sur, T.J. Anderson, Lior Navok, and Andy Vores. His recordings with these two organizations include music of Charles Fussell, Seymour Shifrin, Irving Fine, Ezra Sims, Child, Sur, Harbison and others; his recording with Collage of Harbison's *Mottetti di Montale*, for New World Records, was a 2005 Grammy Nominee for Best Performance by a Small Ensemble. His other recordings appear on the Koch, Nonesuch, Delos, CRI and GunMar labels.

He has conducted the Chicago Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony, Utah Symphony, Korean Broadcasting Symphony (KBS), Orchestra Regionale Toscana (Florence), Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra, Arbor Symphony, Opera Festival of New Jersey, and at the Warebrook, New Hampshire, Monadnock and Tanglewood music festivals. In Boston, he has appeared as guest conductor with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, Handel & Haydn Society, Back Bay Chorale, Chorus Pro Musica, and numerous times with both Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and Emmanuel Music. He has also conducted Auros, ALEA III, Dinosaur Annex, Fromm Chamber Players, and the Brandeis Contemporary Players, the last of which he also served as founder.

Mr. Hoose has several times been guest conductor at the New England Conservatory, and has conducted the orchestras of the Shepherd School at Rice University, University of Southern California, and the Eastman School. For the past three summers, he has been a faculty member at the Rose City International Conducting Workshop, in Portland, Oregon. Conductors whom he has mentored at Boston University now serve in a wide variety of distinguished conducting positions, from music directorships of college and youth orchestras, assistant and associate conductors of major U. S. orchestras, to music directorships of professional orchestras and opera companies.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to I Vespri Siciliani

During the French occupation of Sicily in 1282, the Sicilians organized a successful revolution against the government that resulted in a brutal six-week massacre of French officials. Because the start of the revolution occurred on the first day of Vespers, this event became known as the Sicilian Vespers. Giuseppe Verdi's five-act opera, based on Charles Duveyrier and Eugene Scribe's libretto, is set in this turbulent context. The plot also subjects its main characters to a sleuth of romantic, patriotic, and ethical dilemmas, all within what was Verdi's first grand opera.

The overture, one of his longest, begins with a substantial slow introduction featuring hushed, ominous battle rhythms beneath an elegant, long-lined tune. Just as the introduction's last note fades away, an explosive *Allegro agitato* interrupts, vividly painting the battle scene. In this main section of the overture, Verdi writes episodic music, linking and layering passages of varying lengths, moods, and musical themes. A soaring, lyrical cello melody, Rossini-like transitions, and the transformation of a short musical idea from the very opening of the introduction characterize the music. An exciting *Prestissimo* joins the forces of all the brass (including two cornets) in unison fanfares—suggestive of the ringing of church bells that were the secret signal for starting the revolution. Above the glory of the brass and whirlwind woodwinds, notoriously virtuosic music for the strings flies by at lightening speed.

I Vespri Siciliani was commissioned for and premiered at the Paris Exhibition of 1855, where the opera was very well received. Despite the opera's success, the Italian composer's choice of subject for his French audience may always seem unusual.

—Tiffany Chang

Tiffany Chang is a first-year DMA student in orchestral conducting

* * *

Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra (2006)

First performance: April 1, 2006; Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Joel Quarrington, bass; Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Hugh Wolff, conductor.

First USA performance: May 6, 2006; Jones Hall, Houston, Texas; Tim Pitts, bass; Houston Symphony, Hans Graf, conductor

This concerto was commissioned by the International Society of Bassists. It is in three movements and lasts roughly twenty minutes.

The first movement, *Lamento*, begins with an Introduction which reminds the listener that the bass viol is the oldest instrument in the modern orchestra, grand survivor from the medieval viol family. Near the end of the introduction, the latter two movements are foreshadowed. The Lament begins under emotional duress, gradually moving to a more elegiac tone which may mask a more dangerous state of mind. A closing section mimes sonic images of farewell.

The second movement is a *Cavatina*, which my Italian dictionary defines as “sustained Air.” Having played in various chamber music pieces bearing this name, I believe *Cavatina* has come to mean a song led throughout by a principal player, which eventually arrives at an unpredicted dramatic destination.

Rondo: return. In the classical tradition it refers to the return of themes. In this piece, I am playing with the return of a very short motto, which becomes increasingly rough and forthright.

My main experience of the bass viol is traceable to conducting over fifty Bach cantatas and playing in many jazz groups. In both situations my colleague played two roles: ensemble catalyst, and soloist. I've drawn on these associations often, not just in this piece.

—John Harbison

* * *

Bach—*Thou*
Beethoven—*We*
Mahler—*Me*
Stravinsky—*It*

J.S. Bach's music, whether an intimate cantata or the *Mass in B minor*, focuses on Heaven, even while it preaches to us mortals in his congregation. Ludwig van Beethoven's most public music, from *Missa Solemnis* to the Ninth Symphony, strives to speak for all humanity, to draw us together as one family, all the while the composer imagines the world's collapse. Gustav Mahler, from the *Finale* of his First Symphony to the incomplete Tenth, lies on Freud's couch and invites us to be voyeurs of his own analysis. And Igor Stravinsky, sometimes irascible and always tough, would have us believe that music expresses nothing but itself. He thinks his voice is that of *It*, and he works to compose *It* music, but he fails every time he invents something that breaks our hearts—the slow movement of the Piano Concerto, Symphony in C, *The Rake's Progress*, the closing pages of *Petrouchka*.

Schumann—*I*

Not *Me*, *We*, *It*, or even *Thou*, whether the music is as deeply personal as the A major String Quartet, as intimate as *Dichterliebe*, as ambitious as *Scenes from Goethe's "Faust,"* or as brilliant as the Second Symphony. Free of self-focus, ego or narcissism, his musical voice struggles to speak not *about* Schumann, but *from* Schumann. It is the pure voice of *I*, a voice constantly trying to break through often stifling bonds to a fully unrestrained spirit, whether filled with grief or joy. His desire to push through his blocks energizes the *I*, ignoring the *Me*, *We*, and *Thou*. Peter Ostwald, in Schumann—*The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius*, suggests that the composer was driven by an inhibition of rage. Not by rage, but by the *inhibition* of rage. The music is not about Schumann's struggle; it is his struggle.

Schumann seems not to be concerned with us. Whether anyone is listening is a big question, for his music is often impatient, anxious, or even desperate. Maybe to him it doesn't matter. John Harbison has pointed out that the wonder of Schumann's late works lies in his seeming lack of concern for what anyone else would think of what he was writing. Harbison's observation, born of love and admiration for the music, could easily be extended to much of the earlier music, as well.

If we are going to listen, if we're willing to meet Schumann exactly where Schumann is, it's great. If we're not, the music can seem bafflingly neutral, or just baffling. The music of Johannes Brahms (the composer we most naturally associate with Schumann) doesn't require the listener to be as flexible, since often it both is inspired by universally shared emotions and provokes universal ones. Those inclusive emotions, however, may conceal Brahms' own caution and reluctance to reveal himself, a characteristic seldom heard in Schumann's riskier and more unbuttoned music. The boldly open voice of Schumann may not be so easy to handle, and a more comfortable may be more to our liking. We make room for *We*, *Me*, *It*, and

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Wednesday, December 9, 6:30pm

Student Recital
Shuyu Lin, collaborative piano
Concert Hall

Wednesday, December 9, 8:30pm

Student Recital
Meng-Heng Chen, recorder
Concert Hall

Wednesday, December 9, 8:30pm

Student Recital
Anton Belov, baritone
Marshall Room

Friday, December 11, 6:30pm

Student Recital
Dan Bryce, tuba
Marshall Room

Friday, December 11, 7:30pm

Student Composers' Concert
Concert Hall

Saturday, December 12

Electronic Music Concert
Joshua Fineberg, director
Marshall Room

Saturday, December 12, 4:30pm

Student Recital
Yu-Fang Chang, cello
Concert Hall

Saturday, December 12, 6:30pm

Student Recital
Youlee Kim, violin
Concert Hall

Saturday, December 12, 6:30pm

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Christopher Whyte, percussion
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* Denotes principal on
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+ Denotes principal on
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even *Thou*, but *I* can give us trouble.

Schumann's voice is a sharp one, seldom at ease but never guarded, skittish yearning for comfort, depressed but never hopeless. (Much of Schumann's r. thrilling and optimistic music comes out of his darkest days.) Yearning to speak more than to be heard, his music—above all—strives. It has no choice. "Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, das Können wir erlösen." — *Whoever endeavors to strive, to him may we grant redemption.* Words from Goethe's *Faust* that drive the climactic central chorus of Schumann's own *Scenes*, could have been the composer's own.

I yearn for the day when a thoroughly sympathetic view of Schumann emerges, one to supplant the lingering idea, passed on from biographer to musician to music-lover and back, that his music, while selectively inspired, was hampered by enough contrapuntal inexperience, unevenness in motivic invention, formal insecurity, and outright incompetence in orchestration that it should not be considered in the same sphere with Chopin's, Liszt's, or even Brahms's. Over a century after Schumann's death, critics—with a few notable exceptions that include John Daverio—still have not challenged this condescending attitude. Biographers often seem more interested in pointing out supposed weaknesses than in trying to experience the music on its own terms, or even in puzzling over what the composer was trying to do. Even the principal English-language writer on Schumann, Gerald Abraham, author of *Schumann: A Symposium*, and of the Schumann entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edition 1980, is either unwilling or unable to muster much enthusiasm for a great segment of his music. Few composers of any significance receive such ill treatment. Minor works of Brahms receive more respect, and even the most bizarre music of Liszt inspires sincere admiration.

If we are open to meeting Schumann, or meeting him at the conjunction of h. and our own (without blurring the two), we see the flaws—not in the music, but in the criticism. The purported uncertainty of his large designs evaporates in the face of an engaging, if sometimes twisting, narrative flow, more like Wagner than Brahms. Schumann's much maligned orchestration becomes clear in its intention: to focus on the musical idea, without the attraction (or distraction) of glamorous colors. And, the oft-repeated notion of his melodic and rhythmic limitations falls when we hear the powerful consequence of an unusual and clear-minded concentration of ideas.

The Second Symphony perfectly rebuts the doubts. From this listener's perspective, it is as perfect a symphony as exists—by anyone. Intellectually compelling, emotionally searing, kinetically irresistible, gorgeous in detail and large sweep, and a thrilling convergence of all his gifts, the Second Symphony is Schumann living his most determined struggle. The unusually shaped phrases, the black-and-white but somehow vivid color of the orchestra, the extraordinary concision of ideas, and a vigorously subtle larger rhythmic sense surpassed only by the mature Haydn, create a music that is, at every turn, fresh and vivid. Unshakable nervousness harasses irrepressibly aching lyricism; ease and dis-ease fight for the same space; the feelings fight to get out.

Although the agitation of the first movement's *Allegro* and of the fiery *Scherzo* may be somewhat softened by this second movement's freely sailing second trio, and then, in the aching third movement, the anxiety never fully evaporates. Within the calmer moments lurks the need for relief, a cause the last movement will pick up and thrillingly fulfill. This *Finale* suffers none of the musical/dramatic problems that so often plague composers: how to sustain and intensify the thoughts that propelled the earlier movements. In the last pages of this symphony, with the music burning hotter and hotter, the aspiring gesture that had opened the first movement reappears, now in a thrusting, white heat, and the music begins find its long-sought freedom. Schumann wrote, "The symphony was written in December 1845 while I was still half sick: I feel as though one must hear that in it. Not until the last movement did I begin to feel well again; really, after the whole work was completed, I became better again. But otherwise...it reminds me of a dark time." Not even the glorious exultation at the close can conceal the extraordinary cost of the journey.

—David Hoose

