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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
College of Fine Arts School of Music

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
WILLIAM LUMPKIN conductor

Sunday, December 3, 2006 at 8pm
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Sunday, December 3, 2006 at 8pm
CFA Concert Hall

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**
William Lumpkin conductor

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

Adagio-Allegro vivace
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

Intermission

HINDEMITH

Symphonic Metamorphoses on
Themes of Weber

Alegro
Turandot-Scherzo
Andantino
Marsch

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

Beethoven's Fourth Symphony has suffered an unenviable fate, that of obscurity. Standing as it does immediately after his heroic Third and just before his tragic Fifth, it was, in Robert Schumann's words, "a slender Greek maiden between two Norse gods." The comparison is apt; like that Grecian girl, this symphony has been utterly overshadowed by its indomitable neighbors. Yet the piece is no less masterful than its companions. In fact, the Fourth Symphony is in many ways an ideal example of Beethoven's style, for it blends the gracious Classicism of his early years with the hearty orchestrations of his later works. If it is less profound than the symphonies that precede and follow it, that is merely a product of the composer's state of mind, for in 1806 when Beethoven wrote the Fourth Symphony, he was enjoying a rare period of happiness. In this work, as in its contemporaries, the Fourth Piano Concerto and the Violin Concerto, we have proof that Beethoven was not always the anguished artist.

The Fourth Symphony was written for Count Franz von Oppersdorf. A relative of Beethoven's patron Prince Lichowsky, the Count met the composer at the prince's summer home near Troppau where Beethoven was enjoying a prolonged vacation. The occasion was a private performance of Beethoven's Second Symphony, which Count von Oppersdorf enjoyed so much that he immediately commissioned a new symphony, offering the composer a grand sum for the work's dedication. At the time, Beethoven was at work on what would eventually become the Fifth Symphony, a work he had started in earlier, darker days. Now, calmer and more contented, he set that traumatic score aside and began a cheerier symphony for the Count, one more in the mood of the Second Symphony that the Count had found to be so pleasing. Work proceeded quickly. The new symphony premiered in March of 1807 on a private concert at the palace of Prince Lobkowitz, another Beethoven patron. The Fourth Piano Concerto and the Coriolan Overture were also heard on that occasion. Only after the concert was Count von Oppersdorf presented with the symphony, a slight of protocol that he did not appreciate, particularly as he had heard rumors that the work was not well received. He would never again do business with Beethoven.

The Fourth Symphony is filled with musical jokes, mostly jokes aimed at other musical insiders, though there are also jokes for the rest of us. Beethoven's whimsical mood reveals itself even in the symphony's opening moments. He attaches a slow introduction to the head of an otherwise fast movement. This, in itself, is not unusual. Haydn, for example, did it with great frequency, but the theory always was that the slow introduction would introduce that which follows, hinting clearly at the key to come, rather in the way that an opera overture

will quote snippets of the arias and choruses to be heard later in the work. Beethoven, however, has no plan of being so transparent. His key changes meander here and there, and when he finally does arrive at exactly the place that had been hinted at by the opening chord, a harmonically tuned colleague would have reacted with disbelief.

The symphony's other three movements also have their idiosyncrasies. In the lyrical second movement, the strings are awarded an exquisite flowing melody that is constantly interrupted by a recurring "heartbeat" rhythm that sometimes forgets its place in the background and comes surging out into center stage. After each interruption, the strings resume their flow, seemingly oblivious to the offense.

The third movement is ostensibly a minuet. At least, that is what Beethoven calls it, but he exaggerates. Here is no graceful courtly dance in powdered wigs. It is too lively, too syncopated, and far too reminiscent of a boisterous folk dance. A minuet, after all, should have the aura of champagne, but Beethoven has chosen to write one that is far more evocative of beer.

By comparison, the fourth movement is fairly straight-forward. It is a brisk and bustling rondo that might have originated at Haydn's desk. Yet the frenzy and fervor that characterizes much of the movement is abruptly derailed in the final page. Sudden tempo changes force the conductor to stay on his toes, and a final brief bassoon solo sounds, more than anything else, like a parting chuckle.

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)

Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Weber

It should come as no surprise that Paul Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphoses* is a favorite of both audiences and performers. This music has many virtues: it is tuneful, clever, brilliantly scored, and short. (Back in the days of LPs, it fit easily on one side of a record.) Most amazingly, for music produced during the Nazi era by a refugee from Germany, it is buoyantly optimistic. Unlike work from the same time by Shostakovich (which we will perform later this season), its optimism is neither ironic nor temporary. Some people attribute this cheerfulness to a desire by the composer to please the "unsophisticated" American audience of the work's premiere (January 1944 in New York). Hindemith was actually a most "advanced" and controversial modern composer who delighted in complex counterpoint and shifting tonality. He departed from his usual practice to create such an approachable, hummable, piece of music. Of course, the principal tune of each movement comes from a much earlier, melodically gifted composer, Carl Maria von Weber (1786 - 1826). Hindemith makes each of Weber's tunes a bit spicier and then adds his own blend of modal harmony, colorful orchestration, and dramatic sense. The result is a true metamorphosis of ordinary Classical themes into pure musical magic.

The first movement opens in a burst of energy, a wild ride into a landscape of medieval-style open harmonies and exotic instrumental effects. Though Hindemith (who was a violist) wrote brilliantly for the string family, this piece is a showcase for woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments. The prominent use of horns (which in German music usually depict either hunting or mail delivery) and "woody" oboes and bassoons suggests a mythical forest, recalling Weber's best-known work, the supernatural hunting opera *Der Freischutz*. Movement 2 moves to the Orient, with a theme from Weber's *Turandot* (a Chinese story later used by Puccini). The melody originally appears in the woodwinds over a background of ethereal string harmonics, but makes the round of the entire orchestra in a set of variations featuring each instrumental family. The music reaches a furious climax, subsides, and then rebuilds through jazzy lines for the brass and virtuoso passages for percussion (drums, chimes, bells, cymbals, etc.) until a final quiet encounter of woodwinds and percussion. The lyrical third movement gives the listener some respite from the activity of movements 1 and 2. Woodwind instruments and horn are featured in this quiet, lullaby-like music, though there are also some lovely lines for the strings. The second half of the movement repeats the opening, but with a virtuoso flute solo on the melody. Suddenly, with a horn call, we plunge into the fourth movement, a march of energetic string rhythms, woodwind melodies, and drumbeats leading to an unabashedly heroic song first presented by the horn choir. When the whole orchestra joins in, it is hard for the audience to keep from bouncing in their seats. The image Hindemith conveys, while martial, is not of oppressive militarism but of joyous warriors. The lone hero is nowhere to be found, either; this is a victory march for the whole team.

WILLIAM LUMPKIN conductor

William Lumpkin is the Music Director / Conductor for the Boston University Opera Institute and appears regularly as a guest conductor with regional companies. Most recently, he led performances of *Hansel & Gretel* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Lumpkin has also appeared in performances of *Così fan Tutte* with Boston Lyric Opera and Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. In 2005 he led performances of *Flight* for Boston Lyric Opera. He was also the conductor for the EOS Orchestra at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where he led performances of the Philip Glass opera *Galileo Galilei*.

During the 2001 season, Mr. Lumpkin made his professional debut with Opera Theatre of St. Louis conducting *La Bohème* and returned the following season for performances of *The Magic Flute* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Mr. Lumpkin was guest conductor for the UIUC production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, receiving positive reviews both for his conducting and the finesse of the orchestral playing, and recently conducted William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge* with Indiana University Opera Theater. With the Los Angeles Opera, Mr. Lumpkin was Associate Pianist/Assistant Conductor for productions of *Xerxes*, *Don Pasquale*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Un ballo in maschera*. He has also served as Music Director/Conductor for the UCLA Opera, Principal Coach/Assistant Conductor for the USC Opera, and was on the professional staff at Oberlin Conservatory where he was Assistant Music Director/Chorus Master for Oberlin Opera Theater.

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**Boston University Chamber Chorus,
Women's Chorale, and Concert Choir**
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MARK BUCKLES graduate conductor
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Marsh Chapel

Tuesday, December 5, 8pm

Boston University Symphony Orchestra
DAVID HOOSE conductor
Haydn *Symphony No. 88*
Beethoven *Symphony No. 3 "Eroica"*
Tsai Performance Center

Wednesday, December 6, 8pm

ALEA III
THEODORE ANTONIOU conductor
Works by Hartmann, Gyftakis,
W. Antoniou, and Ligeti
Tsai Performance Center

Thursday, December 7, 8pm

Boston University Wind Ensemble
DAVID MARTINS conductor
Grainger Children's March
Erickson Over the Hills and Far Away
Schuller Symphony for Brass and Percussion
Wilson SHAKATA: *Singing the World into Existence*
Reed Russian Christmas Music
Tsai Performance Center

Friday, December 8, noon

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