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The Firebird, Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra, June 2, 2017

Lawrence University

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The Firebird

Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra

Mark Dupere, conductor

Friday, June 2, 2017

8:00 p.m.

Lawrence Memorial Chapel

Carnival Overture, op. 92

Antonin Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner
(1813-1883)

◆ INTERMISSION ◆

Firebird Suite (1919)

Introduction - The Firebird and its dance -

The Firebird's variation

The Princesses' Khorovod (Rondo, round dance)

Infernal dance of King Kashchei

Berceuse (Lullaby)

Finale

Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

Please join us for a reception in Shattuck 163 following the performance.

PROGRAM NOTES

Carnival Overture, op. 92

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Born: September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves (Czech Republic)

Died: May 1, 1904, Prague (Czech Republic)

Composed: 1891

Premiered: April 28, 1892, National Theater in Prague, conducted by the composer

1892 was a year of change for Antonín Dvořák as he prepared to embark from his native Prague to New York City, where he had accepted a job as the director of the new National Conservatory of Music. It was under these circumstances which the composer wrote a set of three overtures, originally titled *Nature, Life, and Love*. Their conception served a dual purpose: both as a farewell to his homeland, as well as a greeting to the New World. Today, these pieces are known, respectively, as *In Nature's Realm, Carnival, and Othello*. While the outer two works of this triptych have fallen into relative obscurity, *Carnival Overture* enjoys a sterling reputation.

In a time when the Western-European musical world was falling for Wagnerian programmaticism, where every musical minutia fit a strictly defined narrative, Dvořák mostly remained true to Brahmsian absolute music. In this style, the most oft-mentioned exemplar being the music of Johannes Brahms, the audience is not guided by an extra-musical program. Of absolute music, the respected 19th century German music critic, Eduard Hanslick, famously argued, "Music has no subject beyond the combinations of notes we hear, for music speaks not only by means of sounds, it speaks nothing but sound." While Hanslick was retroactively assigned to the "anti-Wagner" camp, it was, ironically, Richard Wagner who first coined the term "absolute" as a descriptor of musical events.

Dvořák's seeming alignment with absolute music notwithstanding, *Carnival Overture* does follow a program. The composer's own description of the overture, written for the work's American premier at Carnegie Hall, reads:

The lonely, contemplative wanderer reaches the city at nightfall, where a carnival is in full swing. On every side is heard the clangor of instruments, mingled with shouts of joy and the unrestrained hilarity of people giving vent to their feelings in their songs and dance tunes.

Right out of the gate, the orchestra jumps in to this scene of gaiety. The violins sing out a melody that immediately urges the listener to get up and dance. The tympani thunders an exclamation point to cap the phrase. This immediate and prominent use of traditional folk instruments, the fiddle and drum, puts the music in the hands of the carnival itself, not the musicians on-stage. Even through brief turns to a romantically shaded minor key, the inextinguishable joy of the overture remains steadfast.

A few minutes into the work, a significantly more passionate section brings a certain depth to the stereotypically shallow genre of the overture. The score turns inward, and one can hear the early signs of Dvořák's characteristic "American" sound heard in his later *Symphony No. 9 in E minor: "From the New World"*, as well as the *String Quartet No. 12 in F, "American"*. The prominent use of the solo English horn, with its incredibly rich and vibrant tone, foreshadows a similar atmosphere in the second movement of *Symphony No. 9*.

The *Carnival Overture* ends in even more excitement than which it began. Just when you thought that there could be no more elation, the music kicks it up a notch. The tempo leaps ahead, without warning, and the delightful fiddle melody spins wildly toward the impending finish. As a final exclamation point, the trombones and tambourine raise to the fore, bring the score to a triumphant close.

Siegfried Idyll

RICHARD WAGNER

Born: May 22, 1813, Leipzig, Germany

Died: February 13, 1883, Cannaregio, Venice, Italy

Composed: 1869

Premiered: December 25, 1870, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich

Wagner wrote this piece specifically for his wife, Cosima, to celebrate her birthday, Christmas, and the birth of their son, Siegfried. It was premiered on Christmas morning in 1870, on the stairs of their villa at Tribschen, Switzerland. It was since performed privately every year for Cosima, and was originally titled *Tribschen Idyll with Fidi's birdsong and the orange sunrise*, with "Fidi" being the nickname for Siegfried. Cosima wrote in her diaries that morning:

When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew even louder,
and I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music

was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, Richard came in to me with the five children and put into my hands the score of his “Symphonic Birthday Greeting.” I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household; Richard had set up his orchestra on the stairs and thus consecrated our Tribschen forever!

This piece has affectionately been referred to as “Wagner unplugged” for its departure from Wagnerian operatic norms. It is remarked on by scholars for its expansiveness, both in its long sweeping melodies and motivic chords, drawing on augmented intervals rather than the angst-ridden desire chords of Wagner’s famous *Tristan & Isolde* opera. There is a fulfillment and sense of peace and resolution that is not often heard in Wagner’s music here. Wagner enjoyed the process of ascribing meaning to his musical motifs; the lack of meaning attached to the melodic fragments in the *Idyll* is suggestive of the personal and intimate nature of this work to Wagner and Cosima – some of these fragments reappear in letters between them and reveals the deep significance this piece has to their relationship and to each individually. For example, the original title’s reference to the birdsong as belonging to “Fidi” and the German Christmas song played by the solo oboe has been linked to Wagner’s oldest daughter, Eva. The original piece, for 13 musicians, was never intended to be published, only to recover from financial debt did Wagner reorchestrate for larger instrumentation.

The *Idyll* begins as if with a breeze – with soft, slight, susurruses from the strings, sweeping the opening melody around the chamber orchestra, a cradle for pastoral tropes and techniques. Hunting calls abound from the horns, reminiscent of the idyllic landscapes – possibly evocative of the landscapes surrounding Wagner and Cosima at the time of its composition. The music does not remain without conflict, but most of the strife is enveloped in constant reassurance and an immediate settling back into calmness and contentment. The oboe nostalgically introduces a children’s Christmas song, filled with tenderness and youthful serenity. Surges rush towards a return of the bucolic peacefulness from the instruments. This calmness and notable expansiveness is achieved through repetition throughout the orchestra in higher and halcyon registers, communicating an ever more joyous blissfulness, to be meditated on and revisited for an idyllic eternity; this music is an expansion of time and musical space in the ideal.

The Firebird: 1919 Suite for Orchestra

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Born: June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum, St. Petersburg, Russia

Died: April 6, 1971, New York City, New York

Composed: 1909-1910

Premiered: June 25, 1910, Paris, France, Ballet Russes

Stravinsky composed the music for the ballet *L'Oiseau de feu* (*The Firebird*) in late 1909 and early 1910, from a commission by Sergei Diaghilev for the Ballet Russes. It was the first ballet to feature a score originally composed for it. The ballet makes use of Russian and Slavic folklore and music, and tells the story of Prince Ivan and his encounters with the mystical Firebird, Katschei the Immortal, and his army of subjects. The premiere was a huge success, and Stravinsky later composed three suites – one in 1911, 1919 (which will be performed tonight), and another in 1945.

The suite opens with a murky and murmuring introduction in the low strings, with fleeting woodwind accompaniment, depicting Ivan wandering through Katschei's mystical garden. This illusory and enigmatic serenity is suddenly ruptured by tumultuous commotion from the strings and woodwinds, announcing Ivan's discovery of the Firebird. Directly following is a witty variation, full of musical onomatopoeias, such as the bird-like "flapping" effects from the violins and woodwinds. Ivan captures the Firebird, and in sparing her life she grants him an enchanted feather with which to summon her in dire need.

As Ivan continues his journey in the enchanted garden, he comes across thirteen princesses under Katschei's spell, dancing to a slow, gluey round dance, with calm and quiet melodies shared throughout the orchestra. The dance slowly spirals into fuzzy uncertainty as Ivan falls in love with one of the enchanted dancing princesses. Ivan summons the Firebird to aid him in lifting the curse, and she sends Katschei and his subjects into mad paroxysms, in the Infernal Dance. This darkly manic dance is another rondo, with mixed meter as introduced melodies fall victim to rhythmic ambiguity and distortion, achieved by dividing the orchestra into both double and triple meters simultaneously. The dance ends as suddenly and angrily as it began, leaving us suspended in unresolved harmony from the oboes and solo horn.

The Firebird tries a new tactic as Katschei and his subjects are worn out, and sings a Berceuse to lull them into a deep sleep. An ostinato pattern is played by the violas and harp, while a slow, sorrowful theme is

introduced by the solo bassoon, interrupted by passionate outbursts from the oboe and muted strings. At the end of the Berceuse, Katschei is murdered by Ivan, and the muted strings wander off in harmonics, depicting the “profound darkness” after the Firebird’s disappearance.

Finally, the darkness breaks, and a quiet and majestic theme is played by a solo horn as the knights and princesses are released from their spell and come back to life. This folk-like theme transforms and swells throughout the orchestra, accumulating in intensity and grandeur, erupting into profound, celebratory statements from the brass and strings as the freed subjects enjoy their victory. With a massive, triumphant fanfare from the brass, a final crescendo ends the suite with a stellar, ecstatic flourish.

(Bryn Rourke, Eleanor Legault, Nathaniel Sattler, LSO Musicians)

2017 GRADUATING SENIORS

Maddy Brotherton

Major/degree: B.Mus. in violin performance and a minor in Russian

Post-Graduation Plans: I will be returning to Austin, Texas after graduating to pursue the wide variety of musical opportunities there, classical and otherwise. I look forward to being able to take more long-term commitments and develop stronger connections with fellow musicians in town. This summer I will also be attending the Decoda Skidmore Chamber Music Institute.

Justin Coyne

Major/degree: B.A in mathematics, B.Mus. in trombone performance

Post-Graduation Plans: Moving to Boston to get my M.Mus. in trombone performance at Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

Isabel Dammann

Major/degree: B.Mus. in violin performance, B.A. in geology with a minor in environmental studies

Post-Graduation Plans: This summer, I will be working as a technician in a medical marijuana oil distillery lab in Portland. Next year, I am moving to Minneapolis with some friends to pursue life as a freelance musician before looking into graduate schools for rocks... or violin... or rock violin!

Dominic Ellis

Major/degree: B.Mus. in music composition

Post-Graduation Plans: Attending the University of Maryland for graduate studies in composition.

Nathan Gornick

Major/degree: B.Mus. in instrumental/general music education and clarinet performance

Post-Graduation Plans: Next year I will be student teaching in the Appleton and Kimberly Area School Districts.

Adam Korber

Major/degree: Instrumental Music education/cello performance

Post-Graduation Plans: Student teaching, and teaching cello in the area

Sara Larsen

Major/degree: B.A. in biochemistry, B.Mus. in flute performance

Post-Graduation Plans: I will be taking a gap year before medical school and spend my year working at Björklunden and nannying.

Alaina Leisten

Major/degree: B.Mus. in bassoon performance

Post-Graduation Plans: I am moving to Los Angeles in August to pursue a M.Mus. in bassoon performance at University of Southern California, and I will be studying with Judith Farmer.

Isaac Mayhew

Major/degree: B.Mus. in music composition

Post-Graduation Plans: Take some time off from school before grad school to pursue music in the Twin Cities.

Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra

VIOLIN I

Isabel Dammann
Laura Duggan
McKenzie Fetters
Abigail Keefe
Eleanor Legault
Sylvia Middleton
Amanda Milne#
Margaret Norby
Rehanna Rexroat
Rachael Teller

VIOLIN II

Maddy Brotherton*
Jessica Gehring
Emily Hauer
Trace Hybertson
Wendell Leafstedt
Clancy Loebel
Joan Shalit
Winifred Waters
Katie Weers

VIOLA

Laura Burke
Lia Eldridge
Trent Guerrero
Gabriel Hartmark
Nat Sattler
Julia Tibbetts
Gawain Usher*
Matthew Wronski

VIOLONCELLO

Maggie Anderson
Rosie Bauer
Julian Bennett
Allison Brooks-Conrad
Natalie Galster

VIOLONCELLO, cont.

Julia Johnson
Adam Korber
Alex Lessenger*
Mikaela Marget
Henry McEwen
Sarah Ogden
David Sieracki
Evan Stroud
Joshua Tan
Noah Whiteman

BASS

Jeanette Adams
Jessica Cable
David De Stasio*
Emmett Jackson*
Clay Knoll
Sarah Krysan
Zoe Markle
Steven Traeger

FLUTE

Sara Larsen*
Jordan Peterson (picc)
Erec VonSeggern

OBOE

Nick Kalkman (EH)
Maralee Mindock
Delaney Olsen

CLARINET

Abbey Atwater
Nathan Gornick*

BASSOON

Alaina Leisten*
Renaë Tuschner

TRUMPET

Dean Chen
Ricardo Jimenez
Isaac Mayhew

HORN

Emma Jensen
John O'Neill
Zach Prior
Bryn Rourke*
Nick Suminski

TROMBONE

Justin Coyne*
Dominic Ellis
Liam McDonald (bass)
Laura Van Asten

TUBA

Tim Platt*

PERCUSSION

Koby Brown
Adam Friedman
Brian Mironer
Dylan Senderling

HARP

Lily Atkinson

PIANO/CELESTE

Ethan Valentin

*Denotes principal or section leader

*Denotes concertmaster

LSO Stage Crew

Justin Coyne
Carl Johnson
Nicoletta Pignatello

LSO Librarians

Renae Tuschner
Adam Korber
McKenzie Fetters

We gratefully acknowledge the important role all of the Lawrence faculty play in preparing our students academically and musically, from our colleagues in music history and theory, to our colleagues in sight-singing, aural skills and keyboard skills, and to our colleagues in the liberal arts. We give special thanks to the studio instrumental faculty.

Special Thanks to the Lawrence University Conservatory Instrumental Artist Faculty

Samantha George, violin
Wen-Lei Gu, violin
Matthew Michelic, viola
Janet Anthony, cello
Mark Urness, bass
Nathan Wysock, guitar
Suzanne Jordheim, flute
Erin Lesser, flute
David Bell, clarinet
Howard Niblock, oboe
Leslie Michelic, oboe
Andrea Hixon, oboe
Sumner Truax, saxophone
Steve Jordheim, saxophone

Carl Rath, bassoon
James DeCorsey, horn
Jeffrey Stannard, trumpet
John Daniel, trumpet
Nick Keelan, trombone
Tim Albright, trombone
Marty Erickson, tuba and
euphonium
Dane Richeson, percussion
Catherine Kautsky, piano
Michael Mizrahi, piano
Anthony Padilla, piano
Kathrine Handford, organ

Upcoming Performances

Watch our website for the 2017-18 season!

As a courtesy to the artists and to those in attendance, please be aware that sounds such as whispering and the rustling of programs and cellophane wrappers are magnified in the hall. Please turn off all watch alarms, pagers, and cellular telephones. And please, no flash photography.