



TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH SYMPHONY



Friday, April 19, 2024
Alpharetta Methodist Church



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TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH SYMPHONY

Friday, April 19, 2024

Alpharetta Methodist Church
69 N. Main Street, Alpharetta

Dr. Grant Gilman, *conductor*
Dr. Torrence Welch, *oboe*
Alpharetta Symphony

Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.

"Gabriel's Oboe" from *The Mission*

Ennio Morricone
(1928-2020)

Torrence Welch, *oboe*

Finlandia, Op. 26

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

I. Andante—Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

III. Valse. Allegro moderato

IV. Finale: Andante maestoso—Allegro Vivace—Meno Mosso

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Funding for this program is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners.

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Alex Paul
Adam Quinn
Sage Segal
Courtney St. Clair
Peace Stegall
Andrea Vella
Paul Wakim
Thomas Williams
Amanda Womack

* in-kind

** in-kind and monetary

ABOUT THE SOLOIST



Torrence Welch, oboe

A native of Baton Rouge, LA and a true woodwind specialist, Dr. Torrence Welch has performed with numerous esteemed ensembles on oboe, English horn, saxophone, flute, and bassoon. Originally a self-taught oboist, at age 23, Dr. Welch began formal oboe study with Barbara Cook and later studied with Martin Schuring (Arizona State University) and Elizabeth Tiscione (Principal Oboe, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra).

Around Atlanta, Dr. Welch performs as principal oboe of the Alpharetta Symphony, principal oboe of Orchestra Noir, and solo English horn and associate principal oboe of the Georgia Philharmonic Orchestra. In October 2023, Dr. Welch was honored to perform as principal oboe for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on the Talent Development Program's 30th Anniversary concert.

As a soloist, Dr. Welch was selected as winner of the 2006 Georgia Institute of Technology Concerto Competition, performing Glazunov's Concerto in E-flat Major for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra. He was also selected as winner of the 2015 Atlanta Philharmonic Orchestra Concerto Competition, performing Lebrun's Concerto No. 2 in G minor for Oboe and Orchestra. Dr. Welch can be heard on oboe and English horn on the two most recent recordings by the Georgia Boy Choir, *Solace* (2021) and *Heaven* (2023).

Away from music, Dr. Welch has a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering and works as an engineering consultant and expert witness in the area of injury biomechanics, analyzing human injury to determine their causes and methods for injury prevention. He loves international travel and trying new restaurants, and prides himself that he has never lost a chili cook-off.

PROGRAM NOTES

Written by Missy Mahon

Missy Mahon writes all of the program notes for the Alpharetta Symphony and she has been a part of the Symphony since 2017. Missy has a Master's degree in Musicology from Temple University and a Bachelor's degree in Flute Performance from Columbus State University.

***Finlandia*, Op. 26 | Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)**

For nearly 700 years, Finland existed peacefully as part of the Kingdom of Sweden; however, as a result of the Finnish War, Sweden lost Finland to Russia in 1809. From that point, Finland became a grand duchy of the Russian empire; its constitution was respected, and the country was generally left alone for 90 years. But in February of 1899 at the height of Russian nationalism, Tsar Nicholas II issued the February Manifesto which allowed him to implement "Russification" measures, ruling Finland by command and without consideration for the grand duchy's constitution. It was against this unjust usurpation that a political demonstration was held in December of 1899 in Helsinki, to which Sibelius, as the country's greatest composer, agreed to contribute a piece.

Sibelius originally titled the tone poem *Finland Awakes*, but revised the title the following year to *Finlandia*. He wanted a piece that exuded Finnish nationalism and style without using actual folk music. What resulted was a powerfully stirring piece with a singable hymn, of his own creation, that grasped every Finnish heart. Sibelius described the piece as "Freedom! My Finlandia is the story of this fight. It is the song of our battle, our hymn of victory." The newly formed Helsinki Philharmonic took the piece with them on a European tour, launching Sibelius into international fame. After a time, the piece's popularity irritated the composer as it overshadowed his more substantial works.

"Gabriel's Oboe" | Ennio Morricone (1928-2020)

This delightful and unforgettable piece was originally written as the main theme for the 1986 film *The Mission* starring Robert de Niro, Jeremy Irons, and Liam Neeson. Although the film was not particularly successful, Morricone's score won him a Golden Globe and a BAFTA for Best Original Score, as well as an Academy Award nomination. It has become a popular wedding processional and has also been transcribed and arranged for a wide variety of instrumentation.

The film tells the story of Spanish Jesuit missionaries who build a mission in South America as they try to convert the natives to Christianity as well as protect them from exploitation. In an attempt to befriend the natives of the Guarani tribe who have curiously been stalking him, the protagonist, Father Gabriel, bravely stops by a waterfall and begins to play the Morricone's melody on his oboe. Puzzled by the unique sound, most of the tribesmen emerge from the brush to listen. The chief of the tribe, however, is displeased; he takes Father Gabriel's oboe and snaps it in half

over his knee, throwing it to the ground. A member of the tribe picks it up and offers it back to Father Gabriel, who shows him that it is broken, but another tribesman kindly attempts to fix the broken instrument. This moment of sympathy and kindness allows a relationship to form between the Guarani natives and Father Gabriel.

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op.64 | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

In the present day, Tchaikovsky is considered to be the most popular Russian composer; however, during his lifetime his music was not perceived as being very “Russian” (at least not to the nationalistic standards of the time) and the Russian critics published copious negative comments about his work (thankfully, reviews were more favorable in Europe). Ultimately concerned with how his music affected the listener; Tchaikovsky’s melodies wear their heart on the sleeve, and his harmonies are picturesquely colorful through his brilliant and skilled orchestration. Unfortunately, all the negative criticism would plunge him into periods of extreme self-doubt. It was during one such period that he approached his Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64. To his brother, he shared his concerns that his imagination was dried up and that he had nothing left to express musically. To his wealthy benefactor, Nadezhda von Meck, whose monthly salary allowed him to focus on composition full time, he wrote “I am exceedingly anxious to prove to myself, as to others, that I am not played out as a composer”; it had been 11 years since his masterful Symphony No. 4.

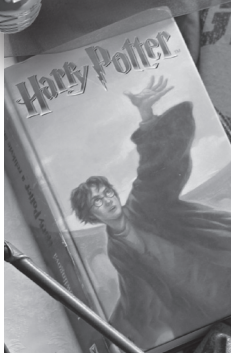
Tchaikovsky spent the summer of 1888 at his idyllic vacation residence at Frolovskoe, not far from Moscow. “Little by little” the composer collected “material for a symphony” finding inspiration in the countryside. “Have I told you that I intend to write a symphony?”, he wrote to Mme. von Meck, “The beginning was difficult, but now inspiration seems to have come. We shall see. . .”. In his letters to his patron, Tchaikovsky alludes to the emotion of the symphony; musicologist James M. Keller sums it up as “resignation to fate, the designs of providence, murmurs of doubt, and similarly dark thoughts”; a sort of “triumph over fate”. The back-and-forth struggle as the music transitions from its beginning minor key to its conclusive major key resembles the struggle in Beethoven’s fifth symphony. If you remember back to the program notes from our Beethoven concert earlier this season, it is uncertain how much Beethoven meant for his iconic *ba-ba-ba-bum* to represent “fate knocking at the door”, or for the rest of the fifth symphony to be a journey to overcome that fate. Similarly, many take Tchaikovsky’s initial sketches about fate, providence, and doubt too definitively. Surely those initial thoughts influenced the overall shape of Symphony No. 5, however Tchaikovsky himself claimed that the symphony was not necessarily programmatic. After four short months, he had finished the work, exclaiming, “Thank God, it is no worse than my previous ones”, he even managed enough optimism to believe that “it has turned out well.”

Unfortunately, his optimism was short-lived. Even though the audience and his friends were enthusiastic at the premier, the critics were harsh, partially due to the composer’s conducting skills (he had only just overcome his fear of conducting about a year prior). After a few months, Tchaikovsky had convinced himself that the critics were correct, lamenting to Mme. von Meck, “Having played my Symphony twice in Petersburg and once in Prague, I have come to the conclusion that it is a failure. There is something repellent in it, some over-exaggerated color, some insincerity of fabrication which the public instinctively recognizes. It was clear to me that the applause and ovations referred not to this but to other works of mine, and that the Symphony itself will never

please the public.” However, the following year, after a performance in Hamburg, Brahms expressed his admiration for the Symphony No. 5 prompting Tchaikovsky to reconsider his earlier opinion. “My earlier judgement was undeservedly harsh,” he wrote to his nephew, “I have started to love it again”.

His trepidation about the work centered around the form and the “organic sequence” from one idea to the next. Keller explains, “The work’s orchestral palette is indeed unusually colorful (despite the fact that the composer employs an essentially Classical orchestra of modest proportions). The composer was quite on target about ‘the management of form’ being his weak suit; and, indeed, the Fifth Symphony may be viewed as something of a patchwork—the more so when compared to the relatively tight symphony that preceded it eleven years earlier. And if Tchaikovsky was embarrassed by the degree of overt sentiment he reached in the Fifth Symphony, it still fell short of the emotional frontiers he would cross in his Sixth.”

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 **ALPHARETTA**
SYMPHONY

THE ALPHARETTA SYMPHONY

Grant Gilman **Conductor & Music Director**

Violin I

Earl Hough, *concertmaster*

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In honor of Mary Betron

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Golett Richardson-Jackson
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Missy Mahon
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Chris Petre-Baumer

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Tyler Smith

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Bass Trombone

Brad Griner

Tuba

Brian Faire

Timpani

Dominic Ryder *

Percussion

Noah Samuelson
Cuong Tran

Keyboard

Julian Calvin

Harp

Tyler Hartley

* Principal

** Assistant or Acting Principal

*Musicians in each section are listed in
alphabetical order, after the principals.*

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