Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Hill Hall — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

7:30 p.m. Sunday, December 13, 2009

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart (1756-1791)

Symphony No. 25 in G minor, K. 183

Allegro con brio

Andante

Menuetto & Trio

Allegro

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

Polovtsian Dances

Intermission

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 54

Elizabeth Tomlin, piano

Allegretto affettuoso

Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso

Allegro vivace

Tonight's Chapel Hill Philharmonia concert bears the title "Music for Dreaming". A dream can connote "a visionary creation of the imagination," often marked by rapid shifts between contrasting moods. But a dream also can be "a strongly desired goal or purpose." The programmed works by **Wolfgang Amadé Mozart**, **Alexander Borodin**, and **Robert Schumann** convey dreaming in both senses. The visions and aspirations embodied in these compositions marked important steps forward in their authors' musical development.

Miloš Forman's film *Amadeus*, scripted by playwright Peter Shaffer, opens nightmarishly. Old Antonio Salieri, once Vienna's dominant opera composer, confesses in a hallucinatory fit to killing **Mozart**. He begs the imagined victim, "Pietà! Pietà! Forgive your assassin!" As two servants break in to find Salieri lying on the floor in a pool of blood, an open razor in his hand, his throat cut, we hear "the stormy, frenzied opening" of Mozart's **Symphony No. 25 in G minor**. Undoubtedly, when he composed this work in 1773 at age 17, Mozart did not intend it to depict an attempted suicide in atonement for his own historically unsupported murder. Still, the propulsive opening, with syncopated strings giving way to a haunting oboe, conveys deep foreboding. The intensity, maintained by driving rhythms and unexpected shifts in color and dynamics, hardly lets up throughout the first movement (*Allegro con brio*). This is the epitome of the *Sturm und Drang* ("storm and stress" or "passion and energy") style, the forerunner of Romanticism. This powerful new wave in 18th century German literature was exemplified by Goethe and Schiller, and influenced painters such as Henry Fuseli. It was captured most notably in music by Joseph Haydn. Indeed, HC Robbins Landon, a noted musicologist who died last month at age 83, suggested that Haydn's 39th Symphony (1767-8), also in the key of G minor and also featuring four French horns, directly inspired his young admirer's 25th.

The *Andante* movement of the Mozart symphony is gently dreamy, in a major key (E-flat), with muted violins. The two bassoons play leading roles, adding rich sonority. Subtle rhythmic ambiguities and dissonances show the composer's growing mastery of his craft. The *Menuetto*, played by the strings, returns sternly to G minor, while the *Trio*, played by the winds in G major, provides apt contrast. The finale (*Allegro*) extends the *Sturm und Drang* character of the piece. Agitated syncopation, a driving melody, and a wide dynamic range create a controlled turmoil that leads to a powerful coda.

W.A. Mozart, 1777

Maynard Solomon in *Mozart – A Life* points to the 25th Symphony, along with the 29th and several more works composed in 1773-4, as signposts of a key transition. "At a certain point in his development, a gifted young composer becomes more than the sum of the influences he has absorbed from tradition, more than simply an amalgamator of other composers' styles, more than an imitator, more than a disciple, more than a transmitter of conventions. He becomes an adept, he speaks in a tongue that has not previously been heard, he finds his voice." From early childhood the prodigal Mozart had toured Europe, usually shepherded by his domineering father, reaping accolades and financial rewards. The cinematic Salieri, as an envious lad, listens to his own father contemptuously dismiss the boy he dreams to emulate: "Do you want to be a trained monkey? Would you like me to drag you around Europe doing tricks like a circus freak?" But at 17, the real prodigy failed to land a job in any of the great cities he had wowed for a decade. Mozart had no alternative but to return to his native Salzburg, a musical backwater, and serve a man he detested, the autocratic Archbishop Colloredo. It was another eight years before Mozart broke away to Vienna in pursuit of a dream – an independent musical life. Shaffer, through Salieri, lyrically echoes Solomon in describing Mozart's emerging voice: "This was no composition by a performing monkey! This was a music I'd never heard. Filled with such longing, such unfulfillable longing, it had me trembling. It seemed to me that I was hearing a voice of God."

Despite great talent, **Alexander Borodin's** professional dreams lay outside of music. The illegitimate son of Russian Prince Gedianov, Borodin was raised under the assumed name of a serf family. At 17 he began studies at the Medico-Surgical Academy at St. Petersburg and completed a doctoral thesis in chemistry. He served a year as a house surgeon, then continued research training in various laboratories in western Europe. Borodin joined the Academy faculty in 1862, published some important papers in the young field of organic chemistry, and co-founded the Russian Chemical Society. He also made a mark as an educator, starting the first medical courses for women in Russia.

In music Borodin was a passionate amateur cellist who enjoyed playing chamber music, often in company with his wife Ekaterina Protopopova, a fine pianist. The two were known as Bohemians who shared liberal political and social views. The busy chemistry professor also squeezed in time to write music, encouraged by Mily Balakirev, who inspired an informal confederation of five composers from varied backgrounds, all lacking conservatory training, but committed to a nationalistic Russian music. This Five or "Mighty Handful" laid the groundwork for a remarkable generation to come.

Bronislava Nijinska & V. Karnetzky, Polovtsian Dances, Paris ca. 1912

Unlike the others of the Five, Borodin admitted to being a mere "Sunday composer". "Others have the composition of music as the goal of their lives. For me, it is only rest, fun which takes time from my serious business as a professor." Nevertheless, Borodin managed to produce substantial works, including two string quartets, three symphonies, and the tone poem *In the Steppes of Central Asia*. His most ambitious project, spanning 18 years from 1869 until his death in 1887, was the opera *Prince Igor*, based on an ostensible 12th century narrative assembled by a friend, the critic Vasily Stassov. In 1185 Igor's city, Puitvil located in present-day Ukraine, is invaded by the Polovtsi, a coalition of fierce Turkic tribes from near the Black Sea. The Prince and his son Vladimir depart for battle, under the ill omen of a solar eclipse. In their absence Igor's debauched brother-in-law Galitsky plots a palace coup. Igor and Vladimir fall captive to Khan Konchak, the Polovtsi leader. The Khan seeks to win over his prisoners with lavish entertainments, including a series of enchanting dances by his slaves. Borodin's ***Polovtsian Dances***, the core of his opera's Act II, feature exotic, sinuous melodies, driving folk-inspired rhythms, and an eerie choral accompaniment. Despite these blandishments, Igor contrives to escape. However, Vladimir falls in love with Konchakovna, the Khan's daughter, and remains with her. Konchak permits the young couple to marry. Igor returns home to a joyful reunion with his wife Yaroslavna, overcomes Galitsky's treachery, and prepares to redouble the defense of a reunited Russia against the Polovtsi invaders.

In 1875 at the request of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, a former sea officer turned music professor and a fellow member of the Five, Borodin prepared a symphonic version of the *Polovtsian Dances*. These are usually performed, as in this evening's program, without chorus and coupled with the *Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens* from *Prince Igor*'s Act I. As a deadline loomed, Rimsky-Korsakov helped Borodin to complete the orchestration. The work proved popular in the concert hall, but the full opera remained unfinished in 1887 when Borodin, while dancing at a fancy dress ball in a traditional Russian peasant costume, suffered a fatal heart attack. Rimsky-Korsakov and other friends completed the opera's score and supervised its first performance in 1890.

The exoticism of the *Polovtsian Dances* ensured them a life of their own. In 1909 Sergei Diaghilev choreographed the dances for his ballet troupe in Paris. In 1953 Robert Wright and George Forrest used them, along with other Borodin scores, as a source of tunes for their Broadway musical *Kismet*. The main melody of the first dance is now universally recognized as *Kismet*'s dreamy romantic theme song, "Strangers in Paradise." The main melody of the first dance is

now widely known as Kismet's dreamy theme song, with the lyric "Take my hand / I'm a stranger in paradise / All lost in a wonderland / A stranger in paradise..."

The hand taken by **Robert Schumann** was not a stranger's, but that of Clara, the daughter and outstanding pupil of his piano instructor Friedrich Wieck. Robert lived for a time in the Wieck home and witnessed Clara, a child nine years his junior, develop as a prodigy and maturing artist of great stature. In an era when the virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt was idolized more than the best known rock stars today, Clara would tour for decades with great success. By contrast, Robert Schumann's own aspirations to become a virtuoso-composer went unrealized. Despite his formidable musical intelligence, Robert's late start, his unstable temperament, and a chronic finger injury (exacerbated by use of the chiroplast, a hand-strengthening contraption), combined to preclude a career as a pianist. Like many other "failed" performers, Schumann found alternate outlets. In 1833, at age 23, he established an influential journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Music*, and served as one of its lead writers. He also emerged as an increasingly accomplished composer, initially of piano solo pieces and later of songs, choral works, chamber music, and symphonies.

Robert & Clara Schumann, 1847

Love blossomed between Schumann and Clara Wieck when he was in his mid-20s and she only 15 years old. Friedrich Wieck forbade their courtship, but a year later the couple undertook a secret engagement. The battle raged for five more years, as Friedrich accused Schumann of drunkenness and worse. For extended periods Robert and Clara maintained contact by correspondence, with an occasional covert meeting. Finally, they won a court decree over Friedrich and wed on September 12, 1840, a day before Clara's twenty-first birthday. Theirs was a legendary relationship, but one with flaws. Robert suffered bouts of severe depression, particularly when Clara was on tour – a frequent activity, despite raising eight children.

Eventually, the dream marriage turned into a nightmare. In 1854 Robert attempted suicide and spent the next two years in an asylum where he died in 1856, age 46. Clara was allowed to visit him there only once, two days before the end. At home she was comforted and supported by the young Johannes Brahms, whose career Robert Schumann had helped launch with an extraordinarily laudatory article in his journal. The likely cause of Schumann's psychosis and fatal dementia was tertiary syphilis, he having been treated for the disease with arsenic almost 25 years earlier.

Despite his emotional struggles, Robert found great inspiration with Clara. Their shared understanding, especially of music, was remarkably deep. They kept a shared "marriage diary," alternating weekly entries. Clara championed her husband's compositions, and most of Robert's piano and chamber pieces were written with Clara's strong encouragement and the knowledge that she would be the first to perform them.

Schumann's **Piano Concerto in A minor**, Opus 54, his only completed work in the genre, had its genesis in the happy first year of the marriage. Having filled many months composing songs, Robert produced a one-movement Concert Fantasy for piano and orchestra. Clara was delighted with the Fantasy and read it with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in August, two weeks before the birth of the couple's first child. After learning the hard way that publishers had little interest in a single movement work, five years later Robert added a pensive middle movement and energetic rondo-finale to make up the concerto's final structure. Clara gave the first complete public performance on New Year's Day 1846, again with the Gewandhaus, Leipzig's leading orchestra.

The Piano Concerto is sunny and lyrical, like the early years of Robert and Clara's marriage. Schumann eschewed the purely virtuosic displays that characterized many concertos of the day, describing his goal as "something between symphony, concerto, and grand sonata." Phillip Huscher, in notes for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, clarifies, "It's not any of those, but an extensive work for piano solo with an indispensable orchestral commentary." While the piano has moments to shine alone, particularly in the grand cadenza at the end of the first movement, the delicate give and take between soloist and orchestra is noteworthy, especially in the mercurial mood swings of the opening fantasy. While lacking the elfin quality of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the Schumanns' good friend Felix Mendelssohn, director of the Gewandhaus, the interweaving of piano and orchestra suggests the relationship of a loving couple. Critic William Steinberg concludes, "above all the Schumann Concerto is a work of conversation both intimate and playful — whether in the almost whimsically varied first movement, the confidences exchanged in the brief middle movement, or in the splendidly energized finale."

Elizabeth Tomlin is an active piano soloist, chamber musician and new music advocate. She graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and earned masters and doctorate degrees in Music at the University of Michigan and Indiana University, respectively. Her principal teachers include Edward Auer, Louis Nagel and Duke Miles. Elizabeth joined the Duke University music department as Lecturer in Piano and Accompanist in 2005, and was previously on the music faculties of the Harid Conservatory of Music and UNC-Chapel Hill. She performs throughout the Southeast as a member of the Blue Mountain Ensemble (www.bluemountainensemble.org) and appears with many North Carolina-based musicians including the Mallarmé Chamber Players, Durham Choral Society, and Carolina Wind Quintet. She has been a chamber coach at the UNC Chamber Workshop, American String Workshop, and Depauw University, and coordinated the piano accompanying programs at Indiana University and the Harid Conservatory of Music.

This 2009-2010 season, Elizabeth will be performing several concerts in honor of bicentennial composers Frédéric Chopin and Robert Schumann, culminating at Indiana University's International Chopin/Schumann Bicentennial Festival. Other solo performances include the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Dudley Profiles Series at Harvard University, and performances with orchestras in Illinois, Indiana and North Carolina.

— Mark Furth

In Memoriam

This evening's concert honors Donald S. Schier (1914-2009), a retired member of the Village Orchestra and Chapel Hill Philharmonia, who passed away on April 21st. Don was born in Fort Madison, Iowa on September 10, 1914. He took his BA at the University of Iowa and received a doctorate in Modern Languages from Columbia University. He studied briefly at the Sorbonne in Paris, then served in the U.S. Signal Corps during World War II, reaching the rank of Captain and participating in the D-Day invasion. Don spent most of his distinguished academic career (1946-1980) at Carleton College, Northfield, MN, teaching modern romance languages, and retired as Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities. He came to Chapel Hill 1982, in no small measure because of friendship with the Woodward family, who shared his love for music.

Don studied violin as a child in Iowa, and it became a lifelong passion. He played in our orchestra from its inception in 1983 until 2003, and served on the organization's board for 15 years. Don also participated avidly in chamber music and formed a regular string quartet with fellow residents of the Carol Woods Retirement Community. For 10 years he was the "impresario" of the weekly concert series at Carol Woods. We remember Don with fondness and miss him greatly. The Philharmonia thanks a close friend of Don's for a generous anonymous gift in his memory.

Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Music Director
Donald L. Oehler

Violin I
Mark Furth*
Regina Black
Jocelyn Lim Chua
Katie Eckert
Cary Eddy
Anna Geyer
Kristen Hopper
Barbara Kamholz
Katharine Liang
Katherine Melling
David O'Brien
Michael Peach
Kamakshi Rao
William Slechta
Susan Strobel
Doris Thibault

Violin II
Lawrence Evans*
Elizabeth Johnson*
Tom Anderson
Tom Beale
Celina Charles
Jaeda Coutinho-Budd
Cheryl Harward
Kotomi Kobayashi
Lindsay Lambe
Laurane Mendelsohn
Heather Morgan
Sally Rohrdanz
Laura Rusche
Harriet Solomon
Margaret Vimmerstedt
Debby Wechsler

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Kitty Stalberg*
Jennifer E. Arnold
Kalman Bland
Alice Churukian
Benjamin Filene
Catherine Fowler
Lindsay Fulcher
Lindesay Harkness
Mary Alice Lebetkin
Laura Olson
Jocelyn Salada
Peggy Sauerwald
Pat Tennis
Elsa Youngsteadt

Violoncello
Dick Clark*
Karen Daniels
Jim Dietz
Stephen Ellis
Len Gettes
Janet Hadler
Katie Kelly
Eva Rennie Martin
Courtney McAllister
Jeffrey Rossman
Rosalind Volpe
Dorothy Wright

Double Bass
Jim Baird*
Dan Thune

Flute
Denise Bevington *
Pat Pukkila
Mary Sturgeon

Oboe
Judy Konanc*
John Konanc

English Horn
John Konanc

Clarinet
Mérida Negrete*
Wayne Carlson
Steve Furs

Bassoon
Paul Verderber*
Clain Anderson

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Julia Suman
Adams Wofford

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Dave Goodman*
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Melissa Kotacka

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Charles Porter*
Steve Magnusen

Tuba
Ted Bissette

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William Slechta

* section principal

The Chapel Hill Philharmonia gratefully acknowledges these contributors for 2008-2009

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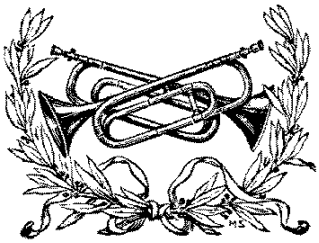

Please join us for our other concerts this season

Sunday, Feb. 14 at 3:00 PM in Hill Hall Auditorium
Guest conductor, Evan Feldman
Yellow River Concerto — Xian Xinghai
Alice Tien, soloist
Symphony No. 2 — Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky

Sunday, May 2 at 7:30 PM in Hill Hall Auditorium
Guest conductor, Yoram Youngerman
Symphony No. 7 — Ludwig van Beethoven
Winner of the 2010 Young Artist Concerto Competition

For more information about the Chapel Hlll Philharmonia and our upcoming concerts, visit
www.chapelhillphilharmonia.org