

Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Sunday, 22 October 2023
3:00 p.m.

Moeser Auditorium
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

A Concert for Young People *Musical Chairs*

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| Fanfare and Chorale for Brass and Percussion | Garth Molyneux (b. 1958) |
| Petite Symphonie for Winds (1st movement) | Charles Gounod (1818-1893) |
| Andante Moderato for Strings (arr. Martin) | Florence Price (1897-1953) |
| Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, from The Planets, Op. 32 | Gustav Holst (1874-1934) |
| Radetzky March, Op. 228 | Johann Strauss Sr. (1804-1849) |
- (We invite young people to take the baton and conduct us in the march.)



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Musical Chairs

In today's concert for young people we will construct the orchestra step by step, introducing its choirs of instruments separately, and then combining them in a rousing piece for full orchestra. As an encore we will play a well known march, and invite young people to wield the baton.

Molyneux: Fanfare and Chorale for Brass and Percussion

(Notes by the composer, Garth Molyneux, a long time member of the orchestra's horn section.)

During the Chamber Music Workshop I attended in early June Don Oehler told me that he was thinking of presenting three works at the CHP's October concert for young people, to feature separately the strings, woodwinds and brass. The concert would close with Holst's *Jupiter*, played by the whole orchestra. He had specific pieces in mind for the strings and the woodwinds, but did not yet have a work for the brass. Knowing that I am a composer, trumpeter, and horn player, he asked if I would write a piece that would feature the brass family. Intrigued, I took up his challenge.

The resultant work, *Fanfare and Chorale for Brass and Percussion* not only features the brass section as a whole unit, there are passages within the work that feature each section of the brass family: the horns, the trumpets, the trombones and tuba, as well as various combinations of those sections. I added a small amount of percussion, (timpani, chimes, suspended cymbal and tam-tam) to help provide dynamic emphasis at certain points in the piece.

The opening fanfare begins with a wedge figure, whereby a chord progression emerges from a single tone. The work juxtaposes rhythms in six-eight time with those in three-four time. In other words, figures are two groups of three eighth notes versus three groups of single quarter notes, not unlike the song, "America" from *West Side Story*. The contrasting chorale section features each of the individual sections in a more lyrical presentation of these rhythmic figures. The fanfare material reappears near the end of the work, but a half-step higher than in the opening.

Gounod: Petite Symphonie for Winds (1st movement)

Charles Gounod is best known for two works: his enduringly popular opera *Faust*, and the melody he improvised to go with a Bach keyboard prelude, usually sung to the words of the prayer *Ave Maria*. In his later years he became a friend of the prominent flutist Paul Taffanel, a professor at the Paris Conservatoire credited with developing the French style of flute playing. Taffanel had founded a group of players who performed chamber music for winds, and he commissioned new works for them from contemporary composers. Among the pieces the group premiered only Gounod's contribution is still played today. It was first performed in 1885, as the last item in a very long concert.

The *Symphonie* is scored for nine players: pairs of horns, bassoons, clarinets, and oboes — as used in Mozart's serenades — with a flute part added for Taffanel. In form and style it harks back to a century earlier, with the usual four movements in structures Haydn might have used.

Today our wind players present the first movement. Its sonata form *Allegretto* is preceded by a slow introduction. Harmonies and melodies are simple and clear, perhaps Gounod's nod to the anti-Wagner sentiment then prevalent among French musicians.

Price: Andante Moderato, from String Quartet No. 1 (arr. Martin)

Born in post-Reconstruction Little Rock to mixed-race parents, Florence Price had a life of promise, waiting, success, and disappointment. At age 16 her talent got her into the New England Conservatory, where she was a star pupil of the composition teacher. She dreamed of a lifetime writing music. But her sex, her race, and the obligations of marriage kept her from realizing that dream for a long time. In 1927 a white race riot drove her family to Chicago, where she resumed studying and composing. For a time she had some recognition: her first symphony won first prize in a Wannamaker competition, leading to performances by the Chicago symphony and several other orchestras. But this success was not followed by others. Her submissions of scores to major orchestras were ignored. A few of her smaller pieces got single performances. She died largely unknown in American circles, except to a few black musicians such as Marian Anderson.

In 2009, in an old house she had lived in near Chicago, a large collection of her manuscripts was discovered. This archive has been curated, and many works from it have found performances by contemporary musicians. This has led to a late recognition of the quality of her work.

Among the things recently published from the Price collection is a string orchestra arrangement by Peter Stanley Martin of the second movement of her first string quartet from 1929. Like most of Price's music it is simple and direct, with much use of pentatonic melody and a few "blue" notes. Its three sections, in increasing tempos, are presented in the arrangement A-B-C-B-A.

Holst: Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity (from The Planets, Op. 32)

Gustav Holst came from a musical but not affluent British family. To support his studies at the Royal College of Music he used his skills as a trombonist and organist, playing a lot of what we now call gigs. After graduation he took on teaching positions at a college and a girls' school at the same time, leaving little time for composing. But, encouraged by good friends like Ralph Vaughan Williams, he kept writing and trying to get his works noticed.

On vacation with friends in Spain in 1913, he became fascinated by astrology and horoscopes. This provided him the idea for a suite of short tone poems about the various planets and their mythical properties. With his two teaching jobs he had little time to work on it, so it took until 1917 to complete. The opportunity to use a good hall and a fine orchestra on a Sunday morning led to the first performance, with girls from his school providing the wordless chorus for the last planet, *Neptune, the Mystic*. (Pluto had not yet been discovered). The invited audience full of musicians was enthusiastic, and a later public performance was a great success. Suddenly Holst found himself an important British composer.

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, which we play today, is performed separately more often than the other numbers in the suite. It is full of joyous fireworks-like patterns, and among its several upbeat melodies is one that took on a life of its own. Here is that story.

Sometime in 1921 Holst was asked, by the daughter of the former British ambassador to the USA — a schoolmate of Holst's daughter Imogen — to set to music her late father had written. It is a patriotic verse, beginning "I vow to thee, my country..." According to Imogen, her overworked father was not happy with this extra task, until he realized that the poem fit nearly perfectly the stately melody he had put into the middle of *Jupiter*. Making a few alterations to the tune Holst set the poem and gave the resulting hymn the name *Thaxted*, after the town where he was living. It was immediately successful; today it is in effect a second national anthem for the British. It is sung every year at the celebration of the British version of Armistice Day; it was also sung at the funerals of Winston Churchill and Princess Diana.

Strauss: Radetzky March, Op. 228

The elder Johann Strauss was the founder of the family's musical enterprise, but he didn't intend to be. Knowing the struggles of a performing musician, he forbade his sons from following in his footsteps. But when he walked out on the family his wife encouraged them, especially the first son, Johann Jr. By the time of the 1848 troubles the two Johanns had rival orchestras playing in Vienna. The son sympathized with the rebels, but the father supported the emperor. In celebration of a victory of Field Marshall Radetzky's forces over Italian rebels, Strauss Sr. wrote a concert march. Now an enduring part of Austrian culture, it ends the New Year's concerts by the Vienna Philharmonic as a clap-along encore. We will play it today in that style, and then we invite the young people in the audience to come to the podium, take the baton, and conduct us.

Notes by Lawrence Evans