

# Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Hill Hall — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 3, 2009

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1980)

Candide Overture

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16

*Allegro molto moderato*

Andrew Zhou, piano

2009 Concerto Competition Young Artist

Intermission

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39

*Andante ma non troppo - Allegro energico*

*Andante (ma non troppo lento)*

*Scherzo (allegro)*

*Finale (quasi una fantasia): Andante - Allegro molto -*

*Andante assai - Allegro molto come prima - Andante (ma non troppo)*

*Please join us after the concert for refreshments  
in the Hill Hall Lobby.*

We could entitle today's Chapel Hill Philharmonia program **"Musical Nationalism."** Norway's **Edvard Grieg** and Finland's **Jean Sibelius** are perpetually identified as their countries' greatest composers, while **Leonard Bernstein** broke new ground as America's quintessential musician. Yet as characteristic as the music of each may be to his respective land, these three geniuses transcend regional categorization and share a universal appeal. Today we hear youthful works that epitomize their unique sounds.

Massachusetts-born **Leonard Bernstein**, a graduate of the Boston Latin School, Harvard College, and Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, grew into a citizen of the world. He conducted historic performances in the Soviet Union, Japan, Great Britain (first American to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra), Italy (first American to conduct opera at *Teatro alla Scala* in Milan), and many more nations. The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, he led orchestras in both Israel and Palestine, and won the love of notoriously snobbish symphonic musicians in former capitals of the Third Reich. In December 1989 he conducted a series of "Berlin Celebration Concerts" as that divided city's Wall was being dismantled, including a Christmas Day performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in which the "Ode to Joy (*Freude*)" was transformed to an "Ode to Freedom (*Freiheit*)". He championed the disenfranchised, supporting groups ranging from Amnesty International to the Black Panther Party.



Leonard Bernstein, 1957

Bernstein had a special association with 'the Big Apple' ("New York, New York, it's a helluva a town/ the Bronx is up and the Battery's down..." – *On The Town*). Appointed an Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 1943, at age 25, he stepped into a national spotlight as a last-minute substitute for the indisposed Bruno Walter to lead a concert broadcast from Carnegie Hall. He became the Philharmonic's music director (1957-69), the first American native to hold the top artistic post with a major US orchestra. Beyond lasting impact as a conductor, pianist, and educator (Young People's Concerts, Norton Lectures at Harvard), Bernstein produced memorable symphonic works, operas, ballets, and choral pieces. His protégé John Mauceri, now Chancellor of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, believes these compositions reflect the city's influence on his mentor. "While [Bernstein's] music finds its spiritual home in his world view, his music speaks with a New York accent... [H]is lyrical expressivity... is wrapped in the rhythmic propulsion of a great American urban landscape. He has left us an aural image of his time and place and, at the same time, an eternal voice of humanity." 'Lenny's' voice found its most natural home on New York's Great White Way, Broadway. The eclectic sophistication of his scores was revolutionary. As Bernstein's daughter Jamie observed, "He wrote jazzy music for the concert hall and symphonic music for the Broadway stage." He also helped open the doors of American musical theaters to challenging subjects – gang war framed by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (*West Side Story*), and McCarthyism through the filter of *Candide*.

In his 1759 novella *Candide, or Optimism* the French *philosophe* Voltaire satirized Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's philosophy of optimistic determinism. Dr. Pangloss, a Leibniz caricature, teaches the naïve Candide and his Westphalian friends that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds." Candide finds abundant evidence to the contrary, as misfortunes

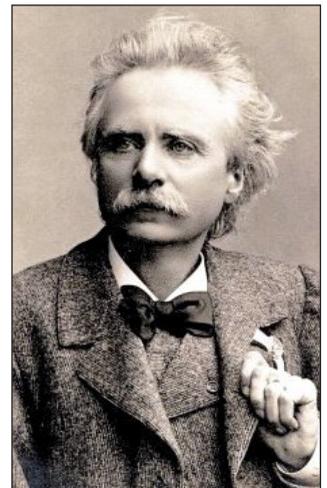
overtake him, one after the other – including the Seven Years' War, the devastating Lisbon earthquake and tsunami (1755), the rape and enslavement of his beloved Cunegonde, and his own flogging by the Spanish Inquisition. (The latter served as an obvious stand-in for the House Un-American Activities Committee, which publicly 'burned' political 'heretics', as captured in Bernstein's sardonic song: "What a day, what a day for an Auto-da-fé...it's a lovely day for drinking and for watching people die.")

Despite an all-star team, including famed playwright Lillian Hellman, the Broadway *Candide* (1956) initially bombed at the box office. *New York Times* critic Clive Barnes later noted: "It was no secret that [the] comic operetta *Candide* was not only the most brilliant work Mr. Bernstein has ever composed, but also that in its original staging it had been an unhappy, unlucky failure...It was the classic did-not-work-on-the-stage musical." A revamped production with a new book emerged as a surprise hit 17 years later. Moreover, Bernstein's score retained a life of its own. The ***Candide Overture***, with scaled-up orchestration, became a signature showpiece for the New York Philharmonic; Bernstein introduced the work with 'his' orchestra in 1957 and conducted it more than 50 times. At a memorial concert one month after Bernstein's death in 1990, the Philharmonic's musicians performed the piece without conductor in his honor, and have done so many times since. The *Overture* features several scintillating episodes, each set off with a bright fanfare, which exemplify Bernstein's (and Voltaire's) energy and wit. The climactic theme comes from "Glitter and Be Gay", a stunning parody of every over-the-top aria written for divas aspiring to nightingale-hood.

If Bernstein helped to liberate American symphonic music from European hegemony, Grieg and Sibelius were associated with actual national liberation. Each was born in a homeland controlled by a foreign power. Norway had been united with Denmark from the 16th century until 1814, and then, following defeat in the Napoleonic Wars, came under the domination of the Swedish crown until independence in 1905. Finland was part of Sweden from the 13th century to 1809 when Tsar Alexander I invaded and established it as an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. A Finnish nationalist movement began to grow in the 19th century, but achieved autonomy only after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

**Edvard Grieg** grew up in Bergen, a thriving port city on Norway's western coast. His great-grandfather came from Scotland and established the family as successful merchants, trading dried fish and lobster across the North Sea. Grieg's grandparents were active in one of the world's oldest music society orchestras, the *Musikkselskapet Harmonien* (established 1765), and his mother was Bergen's leading piano teacher.

Young Edvard gravitated to music, exploring at the keyboard for hours: "Why not begin by remembering the wonderful, mystical satisfaction of stretching one's arms up to the piano and bringing forth – not a melody. Far from it! No, it had to be a chord... both hands helping – Oh joy!...When I had discovered this my rapture knew no bounds." Even so, a musical career was barely a dream until the summer of 1858, when Ole Bull, a relative by marriage, visited the Grieg family. Norway's greatest violinist recognized the 15-year-old Edvard's potential, and recommended him to the excellent Conservatory in Leipzig, Germany. There, Grieg studied piano and composition. Although he rebelled against the rigid conservatism of some of his teachers, and barely survived an attack of pleurisy, he graduated in 1862 with good marks.



Edvard Grieg

Grieg moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, the seat of Scandinavian culture, where Niels Gade, formerly a close associate of Felix Mendelssohn's in Leipzig, led a vigorous musical community. A friendship with his countryman Rikard Nordraak, a patriot who composed the Norwegian national anthem but died of tuberculosis at age 23, stimulated Grieg's desire to create a specifically national music. He also re-encountered his first cousin Nina Hagerup, a pianist and singer. They married in 1867. Nina became known as the finest interpreter of her husband's songs.

The couple settled in Oslo (then known as Kristiana) and began a long struggle to build a following for serious music in Norway. Following in Nordraak's footsteps, Grieg studied Norwegian folk sources and soon wrote a number of short pieces that reflected this interest. During the next summer holiday he began the **Piano Concerto in A minor**, the breakthrough opus for which he remains best known. At its first performance, by pianist Edmund Neupert in Copenhagen (April 1869), the audience responded with great enthusiasm, interrupting with applause after the virtuosic first movement cadenza. The 25-year-old composer's work quickly became a staple of the Romantic literature.

Over the following years Grieg emerged as Norway's leading musical figure, and with a strong international following. His output included over 170 songs and choral works. Instrumental compositions included numerous piano works, three violin sonatas, a cello sonata, a string quartet, and theater pieces, notably incidental music for Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen's verse play *Peer Gynt* (1876). Grieg became a national icon and lived to see Norway's independence. Despite the handicap of chronic lung damage, he toured Europe frequently as pianist and conductor.

Grieg's works influenced many composers to explore their own national folk music as a rich a source of inspiration; Hungarian Béla Bartók, Englishman Frederick Delius, and Sibelius are prime examples. He also anticipated the more revolutionary modern idioms of the French 'Impressionists' Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, and of Igor Stravinsky (a Russian composer based for many years in Paris). Australian-born composer Percy Grainger, who befriended Grieg during the latter's visits to London, recalled an animated discussion in which Delius chided Ravel, "Fiddlesticks! Modern French music is just Grieg plus the Prelude to the Third Act of [Richard Wagner's] *Tristan*." Echoes of Grieg can even be recognized in George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). Grieg further gained admiration as a humble man of high integrity. Grainger was most impressed by his colleague's "acute sense of justice," typified by Grieg's refusal to perform in France during the imprisonment of Charles Dreyfus.

Descriptions of Grieg's **Piano Concerto** can go overboard in emphasizing its national character. For example: "To understand Grieg's music, one must imagine the narrow, steep-walled inlets of the sea along Norway's western coast, created long ago by the chiseling of receding glaciers. The majestic fjords of Norway were where Grieg's heart and soul were at home." (Dr. Beth Fleming) The work, however, had equal grounding in the German Romantic style. It owes a clear debt to Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto, also in A minor, which Grieg heard performed in Leipzig by Clara Schumann. Grainger suggests that the "extreme Norwegian-ness of Grieg's music" is a "mistaken notion" that pigeonholes the composer and undervalues his contributions. Instead, Grainger asks, "Is it not more realistic to view Grieg as a strictly cosmopolitan sophistication that entered into and enriched Norwegian music through the agency of one man?"

Nils Grinde in the *Grove Dictionary* points to specific folk influences in the Piano Concerto's first movement, which we hear this evening, but places them in a larger context. "A work of youthful exuberance, it opens with an impetuous solo passage built of a descending 2nd followed by a descending 3rd; this melodic motif, which recurs throughout Grieg's

works...is characteristic of Norwegian folk music and its borrowing typifies the pervasiveness of folk influence in his music. The concerto's first movement is made up of seven different thematic ideas, and though some of them are motivically related, there is also much contrasting material. It is to this proliferation of attractive ideas that the work finally owes its great conviction and popularity."

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**Andrew Zhou**, winner of the CHP's annual student concerto competition, is 14 years old and a 7th grader at Ligon Middle School in Raleigh. A straight-A student, Andrew participates in Mathcounts and Science Olympiad. He studies piano with Dr. Margaret Evans at Meredith College and has won numerous awards at the city and district levels, a Junior Pianist scholarship from the Raleigh Music Club, and second place in the Peter Perret Youth Talent Search of the Winston-Salem Symphony. About the work he performs this evening, Andrew writes: "I think that throughout this inspired piano concerto, Edvard Grieg is painting a portrait of his beloved homeland. Grieg's music describes Norway's fresh cold air, running waters, and beautiful snow-capped mountains. The piano's light trills and passagework represent the movement of frigid waters, while the grand chords represent the mountains and fjords. This concerto is also heavily influenced by Norwegian folklore, which involves elves, trolls, and dwarfs.



*Andrew Zhou*

We hear Norwegian folk tunes, or folk-inspired tunes. The music really makes me want to visit the country that Grieg is so proud of."

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**Jean Sibelius** seemed an unlikely candidate to achieve overwhelming national prominence. He was born in Hämeenlinna, a prosperous town with a strategic military garrison at the base of Finland's lake system, about 30 miles north of the capital city, Helsinki. Christian Gustaf Sibelius, the composer's father, was an army physician. Like most members of the professional classes, the family spoke Swedish, while typical townspeople and rural residents used Finnish. As in Canadian society today, the bilingual division of the country raised a potent political issue, with Finnish speakers feeling oppressed by the upper class.

Jean was only a toddler when Christian died in a typhus epidemic (1868), leaving his widow bankrupt and pregnant. Supported by relatives, and shifting between Swedish and Finnish language schools, Jean was a poor student whose musical potential went largely undeveloped. Finally, at age 15 he began violin lessons with a local bandleader and made rapid progress, despite the late start, a weak bow arm due to an old fracture, and a tendency to stage fright. A piano trio made up of Jean (violin), his older sister (piano), and younger brother (cello) found many opportunities to perform in a provincial community that depended almost entirely on amateurs for its musical life. Jean also received lessons from a local composer and pored through volumes on composition in the school library. His early chamber music compositions showed surprising skill for someone who was essentially self-taught.

In 1885 Sibelius entered university in Helsinki, planning, in response to family pressure, to study law. He quickly switched to music, his obvious passion. The faculty of Helsinki's Music Institute, founded by Martin Wegelius just three years earlier, considered him a most promising student – his violin teacher used the term "genius." Sibelius joined the university's string quartet and studied composition with Wegelius. A brilliant faculty member, the pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni, only a year older than Sibelius, became a close friend.

Upon graduation Sibelius received a fellowship for a year's study in Berlin. The move from a musical backwater to a major cultural center proved daunting. Now 24 years old, the aspiring musician was exposed, for the first time, to both core symphonic literature and works by contemporaries, such as Richard Strauss, that were far in advance of his own.

Sibelius moved on to Vienna, hoping to join the city's famed Philharmonic. He failed miserably at his audition, stymied by limited training and an attack of nerves, and returned home in tears. Music critic Michael Steinberg suggests the event evoked a phoenix-like transition: "That day Sibelius the imagined violin virtuoso vanished, and perhaps it was also that day that Sibelius the great composer was born." He focused anew on compositional studies with Robert Fuchs and Karl Goldmark, and, after being overwhelmed by a performance of Anton Bruckner's new *Third Symphony*, began to concentrate on orchestral works.

Like Grieg, Sibelius embraced his nation's folk sources, and therein discovered a fundamental element of his own compositional voice. In a letter to his fiancée Aino Järnefelt, he wrote, "I certainly do believe in Finnish music, regardless of the smirks of the self-appointed authorities. That sonorous, remarkably melancholy monotony in all Finnish melodies, although it is a defect, properly speaking, is nevertheless characteristic." He turned this 'defect' into a major strength.

Finnish folk culture provided the inspiration for Sibelius's first major symphonic work. Even before returning to Finland in 1891, he conceived *Kullervo*, a massive piece for orchestra, solo voices, and male chorus based on a violently oedipal story from the Finnish folk epic, the *Kalevala*. This set of ancient poems, compiled by a country doctor in 1835, embodied national myths of creation, gods and heroes. The musical incantation of its strong, repetitive meter struck Sibelius's ear as 'extraordinarily modern', resembling 'pure music' with 'themes and variations.' (Attendees of the CHP's December 2008 concert may recall that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow adopted the trochaic tetrameter of the *Kalevala* for his

own epic poem, *Hiawatha*, which, in turn, inspired Antonin Dvořák's *Symphony from the New World* of 1893.)

*Kullervo*'s premiere in April 1892 established its composer as a highly original force and set him on the path towards heroic status. Over the next years he developed his style, mainly in tone poems, and became allied with like-minded artistic supporters of Finnish nationalism. With the painter Akseli Gallén-Kallela and the conductor Robert Kajanus, founder of the Helsinki Orchestra (1881), Sibelius was a core member of a 'Symposium' that met frequently to discuss the evolution of a national culture. Convening at Helsinki's Hotel Kämp, the meetings were as much occasions for extended binges of alcohol consumption as for intellectual



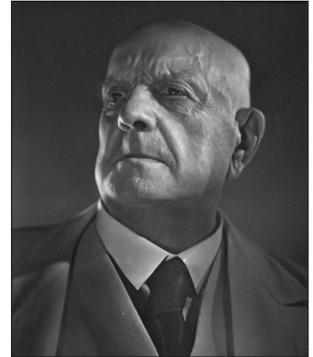
Symposium by Akseli Gallén-Kallela: (L to R) the painter; composer/critic Oskar Merikanto; conductor Robert Kajanus; Jean Sibelius (holding a cigar – he smoked them constantly).

exchange. (To this day the Hotel Kämp proudly advertises that Sibelius composed the maudlin but immensely popular *Valse Triste* there, after a bout of heavy intoxication.) Gallén-Kallela caused a scandal by depicting inebriated Symposium members in 'The Problem' (1894). A 'cleaned up' version of the painting ('Symposion'), shown here, replaced blind, drunken stupors with somewhat more philosophical demeanors.

Despite concerns over his drinking and other excesses, in 1898 the Finnish government awarded Sibelius a substantial pension. The initial 10-year period was perpetually extended until the end of his life in 1957, at age 91. Over time Sibelius became one of the best known and frequently performed composers, especially lauded in the United States and Great Britain. However, his popularity waned after harsh attacks from 'modernist' critics who found him outdated. His output included seven symphonies, a great violin concerto, and a number of theatrical works.

Mysteriously, for the more than three decades of his life after 1925, Sibelius produced no further large orchestral pieces, and only a handful of works of any kind. Various explanations have been suggested – depression, loss of confidence, alcoholism, reaction to impossible expectations that were the price for his iconic status, or merely having nothing more to say. But this future was hidden when Sibelius began to reach the height of his powers as a new century beckoned.

Sibelius completed his **Symphony No. 1 in E minor** in 1899. It was soon followed by the tone poem *Finlandia*, perhaps the composer's best-known work. These landmark compositions coincided with the growth of opposition to Russian domination, as the Tsar belligerently tightened control over Finland. Along with *Song of the Athenians*, a choral work recounting ancient Greek resistance to an invading power, they cemented Sibelius's stature within the Finnish nationalist movement. The Symphony also represented a major musical step forward and gained Sibelius growing international recognition. Although an abstract work with some features reminiscent of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky and other Russian Romantic symphonists, as noted by biographer Guy Rickards, "its timing was extraordinary. In other circumstances...[it] might even have suggested an artistic rapprochement with the Russians; yet in context it sounded more like a Finn beating them at their own game."



Jean Sibelius, ca 1945

The Symphony is in four movements. Michael Steinberg offers a poetic description: "The beginning is magical. Across a soft drumroll, a clarinet sings a long melody, dark in mood, and in slow decent. Shimmering violins catch it at its cadence." The entire work builds from the opening solo. The strings transform it into the first movement's main theme. Sibelius deftly plays with variations in tempo and orchestral color and builds to a dramatic crescendo with forceful brass and timpani, then suddenly pulls the plug.

In the slow (but not overly so) second movement, Sibelius "takes us into a different world. The soft sonorities are new, and the first chord of E-flat major comes as a real shock after the first movement's E minor." (Steinberg) The violins and cellos together play a tender melody, muted, answered by the woodwinds. A bassoon introduces a contrasting fugue-like episode. The horns respond by returning to a theme from the first movement. Shifts in tone color and tempo begin to unsettle the emotions, so that one feels the spooky harshness of Finland's icy forests, and an "unmistakable wind chill that somehow leaks through all the 'romanticism'." (Bill Scanlan Murphy)

The Scherzo begins with a robust theme played on the timpani – a gruff joke – with rhythmic accompaniment from the upper strings. It is tossed around the orchestra in an almost jolly way, until the Trio section introduces a remarkable contrast. The tempo slows to *Lento*, the melody centers on the horns and could approach the feeling of a religious chorale. But “the harmonies are enigmatic, the forward motion is all spasms and disruptions, and the atmosphere is uncanny and altogether unsettling.” (Steinberg) After this, the return to the opening section has an ominous feel.

The Finale, marked “like a fantasy”, brings back the melody of the original brooding clarinet solo, but now played forcefully by massed strings. Again the character varies dramatically, sometimes hesitant, sometimes lush. The violins play a warm, full melody on the lowest string that gives way to an agitated interruption, only to return softly in the clarinet. Again quoting Steinberg: “Striding across the harmonic landscape, the melody crests to a great climax with a romantic harp accompaniment...Then...the music seems to break apart.” It swirls over a timpani roll, reaching what appears to be a thundering climax in the tonic key of E minor. But “as in the first movement, the drums back off; as they do so, we hear two more chords of E minor, in gray pizzicato...It is a strange and haunting close.”

—Mark Furth

## Chapel Hill Philharmonia

**Music Director**  
Donald L. Oehler

**Violin I**  
Mark Furth\*  
Kim Ashley  
Cary Eddy  
Megan Guilliano  
Barbara Kamholz  
Katharine Liang  
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  
Jane Clarke  
Cheryl Harward  
Lindsay Lambe  
Eun-ju Lee  
Heather Morgan  
Sally Rohrdanz  
Laura Rusche  
Harriet Solomon  
Margaret Vimmerstedt  
Debby Wechsler

**Viola**  
Kitty Stalberg\*  
Jennifer E. Arnold  
Kalman Bland  
Alice Churukian  
Benjamin Filene  
Catherine Fowler  
Lindesay Harkness  
Jennifer Headley

Pamela Klein  
Mary Alice Lebetkin  
Laura Lengowski  
Eva Rennie Martin  
Erica Roedder  
Peggy Sauerwald  
Pat Tennis

**Violoncello**  
Dick Clark\*  
Karen Daniels  
Jim Dietz  
Len Gettes  
Janet Hadler  
Keith Hayes  
Megan Katsaounis  
Katie Kelly  
Courtney McAllister  
Jeffrey Rossman  
Jonathan Stuart-Moore

Rosalind Volpe  
Nancy Wilson  
Dorothy Wright

**Double Bass**  
Jim Baird\*  
Dan Thune

**Flute**  
Denise Bevington\*  
Pat Pukkila  
Mary Sturgeon

**Oboe**  
Judy Konanc\*  
John Konanc

**Clarinet**  
Mérida Negrete\*  
Wayne Carlson  
Steve Furs

**Bassoon**  
Chris Myers\*  
Colette Neish

**French Horn**  
Jerry Hulka\*  
Katrina Grigsby  
Garth Molyneux  
Sandy Svoboda  
Adams Wofford

**Trumpet**  
Dave Goodman\*  
Melissa Kotacka  
Doug Zabor

**Trombone**  
Charles Porter\*  
Steve Magnusen  
Julia West

**Tuba**  
Ted Bissette

**Timpani**  
Roger Halchin\*

**Percussion**  
Roger Halchin\*  
Theous Jones  
Myron Massey  
Alice Tien  
Jennie Vaughn

**Harp**  
Laura Byrne\*  
Alicia Reid

**Piano**  
Alice Tien

**Librarians**  
Alice Churukian  
William Slechta

\* section principal

### The Chapel Hill Philharmonia gratefully acknowledges these contributors

Tom Anderson  
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