

Chapel Hill

Philharmonia

3 p.m. Sunday
October 22, 2017

Moeser Auditorium
Hill Hall
UNC-Chapel Hill

Guest Conductor
Evan Feldman

Young People's Concert

The Star Spangled Banner

Masquerade Suite

by Aram Khachaturian

Waltz

Romance

Galop

The Composer is Dead

by Nathaniel Stookey with text by Lemony Snicket

Narrator (The Inspector) – Marc Callahan

Star Wars Suite & Harry Potter Suite

by John Williams

Young people conducting



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This program is supported by the NC Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

On Halloween we go door to door bedecked in extravagant costumes, cadging candy from our neighbors. In olden days masks were meant to disguise their wearers from the scary spirits thought to roam the earth on that special night, All Hallows' Eve. Often people chose spooky masks in order to resemble those very phantoms, hoping to escape notice by blending into the goblinish crowd. When we trick-or-treat in the get-up of ghouls, ghosts, and other ghastly incarnations, we carry on that folklore.

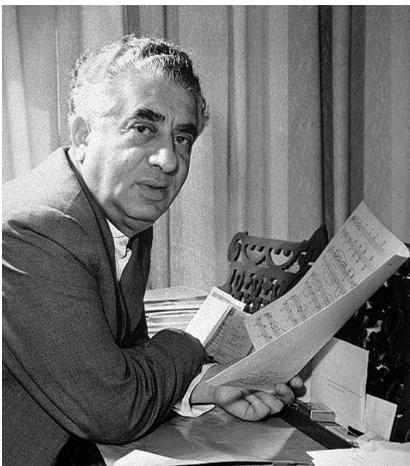
Of course, masks can serve more sinister purposes. When disguised from family, teachers, and neighbors, even the best of us may behave in ways that otherwise would be unthinkable. Certain Halloween tricks come to mind. And robbers or other evil doers wear masks to evade the long arm of the law. The two main pieces in The Chapel Philharmonia's concert today are based on stories in which the central question is the identity of someone who hides behind a mask or commits a bad deed.

Masquerade Suite

When else do people wear masks? More than 700 years ago in Europe a tradition began of masked balls or masquerades—grand dance parties in which the guests cloaked themselves in costumes like those worn on Halloween. The custom continues today, for example during the yearly Carnival in Venice, Italy, which is famous for balls featuring fantastically masked dancers.



In 1835 Mikhail Lermontov, a young Russian, wrote a play that centers on a masked ball. He called it "Masquerade." For a new production over 100 years later, in 1941, Aram Khachaturian composed music to add extra feeling to the play's action. He later put together five selections from that music as a Suite for orchestra. We play three of them this afternoon.



Aram Khachaturian

Khachaturian was born in 1903 in the Russian Empire, later the Soviet Union, and spent much of his life in the city Moscow. His family came from Armenia, a small country in Western Asia. The ancient traditions of that region strongly influenced Khachaturian's compositions. He wrote, "I grew up in an atmosphere rich in folk music: popular festivities, rites, joyous and sad events in the life of the people always accompanied by music, the vivid tunes of Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian songs and dances performed by folk bards and musicians...[These] became deeply engraved in my memory...[and] determined my musical thinking." You will hear sounds of that folk music in "Masquerade."

Lermontov's play is set in St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia, and focuses on members of the city's "upper

crust." Masked balls formed a big part of their social lives. In the story Prince Zvezdich dances at the masquerade with a disguised woman (a baroness) who gives him her bracelet as a token of affection. Later Eugene Arbenin, the play's main character, observes that his wife Nina is missing a bracelet. Arbenin realizes that it is the very bauble that the Prince has been showing off as a trophy received from a mystery woman at the ball. Nina, in fact, had previously presented the bracelet as a gift to her friend the baroness. However, to protect the baroness's reputation, Nina now lies to her husband, saying that she lost the bracelet. Arbenin concludes wrongly that Nina is unfaithful to him and loves the Prince instead. He becomes terribly angry. The baroness eventually writes a letter explaining how she got the bracelet, proving Nina's innocence. But it comes too late; events have gotten out of hand. (Adults will likely recognize Shakespeare's "Othello" in a Russian accent, with Desdemona's handkerchief morphed into jewelry, but with a similarly tragic denouement.)

The dark side of "Masquerade" lies hidden under the cover of the glittering ballroom. Two of Khachaturian's pieces are dances played at the ball. We open with a Waltz, lively music in triple time with a strong first beat (ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three) to which a dancing couple revolves rhythmically around a circle. The composer captures the complex feelings



Dancing a Galop

of the play, hinted at by Nina's words: "How beautiful the new waltz is! ... Something between sorrow and joy gripped my heart." This emotional ambivalence typifies the Romantic Movement, of which Lermontov was a leader in Russia. Fittingly, the second piece in our Khachaturian mini-Suite is a Romance, a quietly intense song that serves as an interlude between the dances. We close with the Galop, a wildly energetic circle dance in two-beat rhythm named after the galloping of horses, that became especially popular as the final dance of a ball.

The Composer is Dead

Even experienced musicians may feel bewildered by the array of strangely shaped objects engineered from wood, metal, cane, and plastic, some strung with silver-colored wires, others covered with animal skins or artificial polymers, and sounded using human breath, fingers, hanks of horse hair, sticks or mallets, that make up the instruments of the symphony orchestra. How do 100 or so people use these weird inventions, each making its own distinctive noise, to create such a glorious combined sound?

Composer Nathaniel Stookey and children's writer Lemony Snicket (aka Daniel Handler) came up with a unique way to answer this question. The pair have shared a love of music and a mordant sense of humor since they were friends at Lowell High School in San Francisco (class of 1988). In 2006, sponsored by the San Francisco Symphony, they created "The Composer is Dead," a murder mystery performed by a narrator (The Inspector) and orchestra. They nefariously intend the piece as "a gateway drug that will lead to a lifelong



**The Inspector questions the orchestra
Illustration by Carson Ellis for "The Composer is Dead"**

addiction to classical music." Snicket's text and illustrations by Carter Ellis can be found in a book published by Harper Collins, bundled with a CD of a live performance.

To ensure that our audience does not dismiss his music as Left Coast flummery, we note that Stookey, an entirely living composer, has many ties with our state. He received a PhD in Composition from Duke University in 2003, was composer-in-residence with the North Carolina Symphony and the Ciampi Quartet, taught at UNC-Chapel Hill, and hosted a new music series for WUNC-FM radio. Nat also performed in the violin section of this very orchestra!

"The Composer is Dead" begins with the discovery of the Composer's unmoving body. The Inspector is called in to get to the bottom of the suspected murder. Realizing that "Like all people in this line of work, this Composer had many enemies lurking in the orchestra," the Inspector interrogates the musicians section by section. Each group has an alibi, albeit of varying credibility, for the night when the Composer died. Several of these involve playing dance music. For example, the Violins claim they were busy all night performing a waltz,

accompanied by the big-bodied Cellos and Basses. At the same time the brass instruments, including the French Horns (untrustworthy foreigners?) and Trombones, testify that they went to a club where they took the stage to perform a tango, "swinging and dancing until dawn." Some sections point the finger at colleagues elsewhere in the orchestra. For example, the humble Violas cast doubts on the Concertmaster, the vain leader of the First Violins who sucks up to the conductor begging for chances to play long, self-indulgent solos. The Concertmaster tries to wriggle out from the net of suspicion with the excuse, "I'd never murder someone who was giving me such an excellent opportunity to show off." Along the way, each section indeed shows off its particular talents, from the Flutes' uncanny ability to imitate birdsong, to the spirited drumming of the Percussions.

The baffled Inspector fears that he may even have a serial killer on his hands, citing a long litany of dead composers from Beethoven and Brahms to Mahler and Stravinsky, and back to Johann Sebastian Bach and his many children. Stookey cleverly stitches together snatches of appropriately dark music from many of the deceased.

So Whodunit? No spoiler alert needed here...

Star Wars Suite & Harry Potter Suite



John Williams

The invention 90 years ago of films with sound tracks created new work for composers. Aram Khachaturian was one of many who, in addition to works for orchestra or live theater, wrote fine movie scores. John Williams, now 85 years old, is the most widely recognized film composer of all time. He has received 5 Academy Awards and 50 nominations (second only to Walt Disney's lifetime total of 59), 4 Golden Globe Awards, and 23 Grammy Awards. In 2005 the American Film Institute named his music for "Star Wars" the best ever American film score.

Williams uses the instruments of the orchestra for movie sound tracks as skillfully as any composer for the concert hall. He often associates specific themes with particular characters, notably so in the original "Star Wars" score. A sound bite that always identifies a character, place or situation is called a leitmotif, a term first used in opera.

Leitmotifs help link the first six films in the "Star Wars" series, and Williams brought them back in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" (2015). Similarly, in his scores for the first three **Harry Potter** films he created a musical signature for every important character, even Harry's snowy white owl Hedwig. Throughout the Star Wars and Harry Potter movies variations on these leitmotifs foreshadow plot twists and add emotional color. Some of Williams's themes are now embedded as deeply in our cultural DNA as



Harry Potter and Hedwig

iconic examples from concert music like the DAH-DAH-DAH-Dum fate motif from Beethoven's "5th Symphony."

Listen for familiar themes and recall variations you may have heard in the movies as we close this afternoon's program with two suites drawn from John Williams's scores for the Star Wars and Harry Potter films. Baton-wielding young persons from the audience will be encouraged to assist Maestro Feldman at the podium. May the Force be with you.

Program Notes by Mark Furth, PhD ©2017

Guest conductor **Evan Feldman**, DMA, a native of Long Island, New York, frequently leads the Philharmonia when its Music Director, Donald Oehler, is away from Chapel Hill. Evan is Associate Professor of Music at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he conducts the Wind Ensemble and Symphony Band and teaches courses in conducting and music education. Evan also serves as music director of the Triangle Wind Ensemble, the Greensboro Concert Band, and the Mallarmé Youth Chamber Orchestra. On the educational front, last summer Evan launched the first MOOC (massively open online course) devoted solely to conducting and rehearsal technique. It has attracted more than 17,000 students from over 30 countries. Evan also authored the college textbook "Instrumental Music Education" (Routledge Publishing), which has been adopted widely throughout the United States.

Bass-baritone **Marc Callahan**, DMA, (Narrator) serves as Assistant Professor in the Voice section of the Department of Music at UNC-Chapel Hill. Marc received degrees from Oberlin College and the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, and also studied extensively in France. He has performed around the world, singing at opera houses including: The Royal Opera House, Santa Fe Opera, Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Théâtre du Capitole, Opéra National de Lyon, Opéra de Montpellier, Opéra Comique, Théâtre Royale de Versailles, Opéra de Marseille, Central City Opera, Dayton Opera, the Ohio Light Opera, and Opera North (UK). As an opera director Marc received critical acclaim for "jaw-dropping invention" in his production of Rameau's "Les Indes Galantes." He assisted in productions at the Royal Opera House, the Aldeburgh Festival, and the Holland Festival. Recent productions include Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" and Louis Aubert's "The Blue Forest" (National Opera Association Prize Winner 2017) at Oregon State University, where he was a Visiting Professor.

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