

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, conductor

Sunday, February 8, 1998

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Overture to *Ludwig van Beethoven*
"The Creatures of Prometheus" (1770-1827)

Gli Uccelli (The Birds) *Ottorino Respighi*
(1879-1936)
Preludio. Allegro moderato
La Colomba (The Dove) Andante espressivo
La Gallina (The Hen) Allegro vivace
L'Usignuolo (The Nightingale) Andante mosso
Il Cuccù (The Cuckoo) Allegro

Scott O'Neil, conductor

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 *Ludwig van Beethoven*
in B-flat Major, Op. 60
Adagio. Allegro vivace
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

In consideration of the performers and members of the audience, please check audible paging devices with the ushers and silence audible timepieces. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Tomasz Golka,
concertmaster
Melinda Graves
Gabrielle Stebbins
Jennifer Thompson
Gregory Ewer
Jonathan Swartz
Maria Sampen

Violin II

Barbara Downie,
principal
Zachary Carrettin
Anne Huter
Fia Mancini
David Fuller
Jocelyn Adelman
Martha Walvoord

Viola

Jonah Sirota,
principal
Anna Bach-y-Rita
Chloë Kline
Alexis Bacon
David Filner

Cello

Katherine Schultz,
principal

Cello (cont.)

Gregory Beaver
Robert Howard
Erin Breene
Hikaru Tamaki

Double Bass

Sandor Ostlund,
principal
Antoine Plante
Kjetil Laukholm

Flute

Christina Jennings
Caroline Kung
Emily Perryman
Merrie Siegel

Piccolo

Emily Perryman

Oboe

Margo Carlson
Julie Gramolini
Jared Hauser

Clarinet

Carrie Budelman
Sharon Koh
Molly Mayfield

Bassoon

Shawn Jones
Damian Montaña
Amy Yang

Horn

Kristina Crago
Austin Hitchcock
Kimberly Penrod
Carey Potts
Martina Snell

Trumpet

David Dash
Jens Larsen
Brian Seitz

Harp

Anastasia Jellison

Celeste

Jason Bednarz

Timpani

Trent Petrunia
Scott Pollard

Orchestra Manager

Martin Merritt

WINDS, BRASS, AND PERCUSSION LISTED ALPHABETICALLY.

STRING SEATING CHANGES WITH EACH CONCERT.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA EVENTS

Friday, March 20, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor; *Alastair Willis* and *Scott O'Neil*, guest conductors
PROGRAM: *John Cornelius - Ezekiel's Wheel* (1995) (Premiere); *Kodály - "Háry János" Suite*; *Rachmaninoff - Isle of the Dead*; and *Ravel - "Daphnis and Chloé" Suite No. 2*. Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

March 27, 29, 31, and April 2, 7:30 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA
and the SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA present *Albert Herring*
by *Benjamin Britten* (*Debra Dickinson*, director; *Thomas Jaber*, conductor).
Wortham Opera Theatre at Alice Pratt Brown Hall.
Admission (general seating): \$10/\$8. For advance tickets, call 713-527-4933.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus" . . . Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven was a novice at writing for the stage when he began composing the music for the ballet **The Creatures of Prometheus** in 1800. His orchestral output to date included but one symphony and three piano concertos. Often disregarded in historical studies of Beethoven, the **Overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus"** (his first overture) nonetheless became a model of classical form that was emulated by later composers well into the Romantic era.

However, the Romantic notion of an overture did not exist in Beethoven's time. Works such as Brahms' **Tragic and Academic Festival Overtures** are concert pieces specifically designed to evoke mood or drama in the abstract. Beethoven's **Prometheus**, like his later overtures, was intended to be purely functional as an opener for an opera, play, or in this case, a ballet.

Why Beethoven was chosen to compose this music remains somewhat of a mystery. The choreographic and dramatic details of the ballet have since been lost, and the score itself was for years only available in a piano version. What is known about the origins of **Prometheus** is that Salvatore Vigano, the gifted ballet master, had returned to Vienna in 1799 after a celebrated tour of Europe. Determined to create a ballet to compliment the Empress Maria Theresia, he chose **The Men of Prometheus** as the subject for his new work. The story involves statues crafted by Prometheus which were then led by him to the Parnassus. Upon hearing the music of Apollo, the statues developed reasoning, feeling, and appreciation of the beauties of nature, drama, and dance. Certain historians have surmised that since Beethoven had dedicated his recent **Septet to the Empress**, Vigano felt that Beethoven was a natural choice as his composer. That Beethoven had yet to write a single note of theater music was apparently of little concern.

The similarities between the overture and Beethoven's First Symphony are readily apparent from the opening bars. Both works open not with tonic harmonies, but with the secondary dominant seventh of the subdominant (V7/IV). However, the boldness of the detached chords of the overture are in contrast to the crafty introduction of the symphony.

The main allegro is essentially a classical sonata form without a development section. The *perpetuum mobile*, or perpetual motion of the initial theme in the first violins resembles the finale of the other Beethoven work on tonight's program, his Fourth Symphony. The second theme, more tender and songlike, is stated in the dominant key by the flutes and then the clarinets. A grand crescendo, utilizing secondary themes, concludes the exposition. A regular recapitulation immediately follows, with the tonality this time firmly rooted in the tonic C major. Constructed mostly from the first theme, the coda ends with a series of powerful tonic chords.

Gli Uccelli (The Birds) Ottorino Respighi

Respighi achieved great success with his 1917, 1923, and 1931 suites **Antiche Danze et Arie (Old Dances and Airs)**, in which he preserved the crisp, clear sound of seventeenth-century lute music in his modern, classicizing orchestral arrangements. This accomplishment probably inspired him to undertake a similar task, except this time the source material would be mostly keyboard music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. **Gli Uccelli** is the result of his efforts, a five-section programmatic suite comprised of a Prelude and four unrelated episodes (except for the recurrence of the Prelude at the end).

The Prelude, although based loosely on a work of Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710), serves to preview the themes heard in the subsequent sections.

"*The Dove*" features the traditional solo voice of the oboe. Here Respighi musically portrays the conventional notion that the dove is sweet and gentle. It uses music originally composed by Jacques de Gallot (died in 1685).

"*The Hen*" is based on one of the most widely-known works of the great French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764). The first violins seem to cluck around as the double-reeds fashion musical figures designed to portray an active, whimsical bird. As the hen struts about aggressively, the rooster makes its presence known near the end.

"*The Nightingale*," based on an anonymous English composition of the seventeenth century, was actually Respighi's second attempt at portraying this creature. In *The Pines of Rome*, composed three years earlier, he had called for a phonograph recording of the nightingale's song in the instrumentation. In keeping with the neo-classical nature of *Gli Uccelli*, the woodwinds serve to depict the nightingale as the strings sway idyllically underneath.

The final section, "*The Cuckoo*," was inspired by another work of Pasquini. Respighi's mastery is evident in this section, as the orchestral material is mostly based on the two-note motive of a third. One can almost hear the word "cuckoo" in the repeated utterances of this "crazy" bird. What is perhaps more impressive is that Respighi recalls the music of the *Prelude*, which one realizes (at least in retrospect) was based on "*The Cuckoo*." In any event, the work closes with a broad restatement of that original *Prelude*.

***Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60* Ludwig van Beethoven**

Beethoven had already commenced work on a new symphony in C minor when he traveled to Silesie (today Opava in the Czech Republic) in the autumn of 1806. The occasion for his sojourn was the performance of his *Second Symphony* at the home of Count Oppersdorff, who was passionate about music and maintained a private orchestra at his palace. Traveling with Beethoven were his patrons and friends Prince Karl and Princess Christiane Lichnowsky.

Upon his arrival, Count Oppersdorff offered a commission to Beethoven for a new symphony, one in the style of his *Second Symphony*. In order to be able to respond to other engagements and to satisfy the wishes of the Count, Beethoven interrupted the composition of what was to be the *Fifth Symphony* so he could write the *Symphony in B-flat*. Incidentally, the visit ended badly, with Prince Lichnowsky and Beethoven getting into such a heated dispute, that had Count Oppersdorff not intervened and stopped the fight, Beethoven would have smashed a chair on the prince's head. Despite angrily trudging back to Vienna, Beethoven managed to compose the symphony.

Found between the groundbreaking *Eroica* and the extraordinarily famous *Fifth*, the *Fourth Symphony* is often disregarded as somewhat inconsequential in historical records and analyses of Beethoven's works. Yet this symphony is significant, for it dispels the Romantic notion that Beethoven was always a tortured composer who revised his works endlessly until each was a profound exclamation on mankind. While this was mostly true, the *Fourth Symphony* was an exception: it was composed with little revision in a few short weeks in the autumn of 1806, and it was written on commission for the express purpose of pleasing his wealthy patron. In this respect his compositional process resembled Haydn and Mozart, who almost always wrote quickly on commission. The musical style is reminiscent of those earlier composers as well; it is generally more melodic and the phrasing is more regular than some of Beethoven's other symphonies.

With the exception of the meditative *adagio* introduction, the first movement is a joyful array of pleasing, if unremarkable themes. What is most notable about this movement are the mysterious and tonally ambiguous timpani rolls that occur in connection with an unorthodox approach to the recapitulation. After two such appearances the timpani ceases playing while the strings softly take up fragments of the main theme. When the timpani does return, its role is more clearly defined. The force of tonality possessed by this sustained B-flat pedal becomes greater as the roll continues for some twenty-three bars during a prolonged crescendo, after which the recapitulation is finally affirmed fortissimo by the full orchestra. Hector Berlioz, himself no stranger to the extra-musical depictions of music, described it thusly: "It might be compared to a river, the peaceful waters of which suddenly disappear and only emerge from their subterranean bed to form a furious and foaming waterfall."

The second movement, an *adagio*, is in sonata-rondo form. The two principal themes (the first stated by the violins, the second by the clarinets) are accompanied by warm supplementary themes and motives. They participate in an outpouring of lyricism that is sometimes intense and other times reserved. The slow tempo serves the music well, as the joy and the tenderness is nobly expressed throughout the movement.

Consisting mostly of phrases in duple rhythm, the witty scherzo has a certain flair which comes from the clever syncopation. The melodic outlines are crisp and sharp as the normal metric accent is often displaced. The trio, in contrast, is quite calm and rhythmically ordinary, and the songlike nature of the section can be attributed to the legato phrasings in the woodwinds.

In the first theme of the finale we recognize the *perpetuum mobile* that was characteristic of the Overture to *Prometheus*. After a brilliant flurry of sixteenth notes, the oboe states the principal lyrical theme, accompanied by a triplet figure in the clarinet and half-note chords in the strings. The movement proceeds in the usual sonata-form fashion, with the climax occurring midway through the coda, immediately preceding a fermata. A crescendo leading upwards from the basses takes the music to a series of fermatas, after which Beethoven ends the work with a punctuating tutti finish.

— Notes by Philip Rothman

BIOGRAPHY

SCOTT O'NEIL is in his third year as a graduate conducting student of Larry Rachleff at The Shepherd School of Music. He previously attended the Oberlin Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music where he was the Assistant Conductor and Program Coordinator of Ensembles. He has also served as Assistant Conductor of the Northern Ohio Youth Orchestra, the Oberlin Community Singers, and the Candlewood Theater (Danbury, Conn.).

