

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, music director

Friday, December 7, 2007

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Abstract No. 1 for Orchestra (2007; Premiere) †

Karl Blench
(b. 1981)

Thomas Hong, conductor
(This work will be performed twice.)

*La Valse (Poème choréographique
pour Orchestre)*

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 82

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

Tempo molto moderato –

Allegro moderato (ma poco a poco stretto)

Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

Allegro molto

† Karl Blench is the recipient of the 2007 Paul and Christiane Cooper Prize in Music Composition, awarded to him for this composition. Paul Cooper was a founding faculty member of the Shepherd School and composer-in-residence of Rice University.

The reverberative acoustics of Stude Concert Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Elise Meichels,
concertmaster
ANNE AND CHARLES
DUNCAN CHAIR
Eva Liebhaber
Ying Fu
David Huntsman
Joseph Maile
Tudor Dornescu
Rachelle Hunt
Analísé Kukulhan
Heidi Amundson
Klara Wojtkowska
Brittany Henry
Mary Price
Maria Dance
Jeffrey Taylor
Glen McDaniel

Violin II

Martin Dimitrov,
principal
Ashley Malloy
Christina Wilke
Jessica Robinson
Stephanie Song
Haley Boone
Julia Frantz
Andrew Meyer
Jun Hyun Kim
Sara Johansen
Steve Koh
Hannah Dremann
Bo Xun

Viola

Pei Ling Lin,
principal
Elizabeth Charles
Emily Grossruck
Adam Matthes
Lauren Magnus
Hana Morford
Jacob Sustaita
Anthony Parce
Julia Immel
Katherine Larson
Jules Sulpico
Rainey Weber

Cello

Jennifer Humphreys,
principal
ANNETTE AND HUGH
GRAGG CHAIR
Marie-Michel Beauparlant
Semiramis Costa
Emily Hu
Gabriel Beistline
Jacob Fowler
Madeleine Kabat
Evan Leslie
Reenat Pinchas
Matthew Kufchak
Collin White
Sarah Stone
Meredith Bates
Whitney Delphos

Double Bass

Edward Botsford,
principal
Katherine Munagian
Evan Halloin
Kevin Jablonski
Charles Nilles
Marie-Claude Tardif
Kevin Brown
Edward Merritt
Nicholas Cathcart

Flute

Hilary Abigana
Catherine Branch
Henrik Heide
Leslie Richmond
Matthew Roitstein
Christina Sjoquist

Piccolo

Leslie Richmond
Matthew Roitstein

Oboe

Clara Blood
Stanley Chyi
Jayne Drummond
Kristin Kall
Erin I-Ling Tsai
Lauren Winterbottom

English Horn

Erin I-Ling Tsai

Clarinet

Amy Chung

Clarinet (cont.)

Eric Jacobs
Matthew Nelson
Jeannie Psomas
Cayce Vega

E-flat Clarinet

Matthew Nelson

Bass Clarinet

Benjamin Mitchell

Bassoon

Andrew Cuneo
Miles Maner
David Richmond
Rachael Young

Contrabassoon

David Richmond
Robert Trussell

Horn

Katharine Caliendo
MARGARET C. PACK CHAIR
Audrey Good
Pamela Harris
Danielle Kuhlmann
Elizabeth Schellhase
Julie Thayer

Trumpet

Joseph Cooper
Greg Haro
Brian Hess
Kevin Lynch
Thomas Siders
Robert Zider

Trombone

Joel Brown
Jeremy Buckler
Caitlin Hickey
Samuel Jackson

Bass Trombone

John Stanley

Tuba

Andrew Welborn

Harp

Megan Levin
Sadie Turner

Keyboard

Eugene Joubert
CHARLOTTE A. ROTHWELL
CHAIR

Timpani and Percussion

Grant Beiner
Casey Cangelosi
Craig Hauschildt
Rebecca Hook
Brian Manchen
Andrés Pichardo
Evy Pinto
Gregory Tsalikis
Adam Wolfe

Orchestra Manager and Librarian

Kaaren Fleisher

Production Manager

Kristin Johnson

Assistant Production Manager

Mandy Billings
Francis Schmidt

Library Assistants

Joshua Boulton
Gabriel Beistline
Jessica Grabbe
Emily Grossruck
Julia Immel
Evan Leslie
Sarah Ludwig
Emma Lundgren
Paul Macres
Adam Matthes
Jessica Robinson
Stephanie Song
Jacob Sustaita
Christina Wilke

Stage Assistants

Jeremy Buckler
Stanley Chyi
André Dyachenko
Evan Halloin
Pamela Harris
Emil Ivanov
Hana Morford
Charles Nilles
Evy Pinto
John Stanley
Kaoru Suzuki
Andrew Welborn

STRING SEATING CHANGES WITH EACH CONCERT.

WINDS, BRASS, PERCUSSION AND HARP LISTED ALPHABETICALLY.

PROGRAM NOTES

Abstract No. 1 for Orchestra Karl Blench

Abstract No. 1 was motivated by the study of orchestral colors and solo instrumental timbres, and is based on the idea of a bell. The first and last sounds of the piece are bell sounds, and the large-scale formal plan is based on the word "bell," with the major pitch centers being B, E, and A (the two L's become La). There are two divisions of the piece – a slow lyrical section, and a fast aggressive section. The first part explores bell sounds, various instrumental colors, and the sonorous properties of tone clusters.

The second part is a study of articulations and prominently features various types of percussion instruments. The timpani, tom-toms, and temple blocks present a melody based upon themes from the first part. Following the percussive opening, the brass enters with a three-note fanfare motive that is derived from the percussion melody. The development focuses on the opening timpani line, this time in the winds, strings, and brass. These melodic fragments lead to a recapitulation, followed by a coda.

– Note by the composer

KARL BLENCH is a doctoral student in composition at The Shepherd School of Music and is studying with Kurt Stallmann. He holds a master's degree from the Shepherd School in composition, and bachelor's degrees in theory and music education from the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Blench's primary teachers include Kurt Stallmann, Pierre Jalbert, Shih-Hui Chen, and Andrew Boysen. His music has been performed in Europe and the United States, including Carnegie Hall. Recently he finished a summer study in Germany, where he studied composition at the Freie Universität Berlin with Samuel Adler. He is the recipient of the 2007 Cooper Prize in Composition, and the winner of the Fourth Annual H. Robert Reynolds Composers Competition in 2003. Prior to coming to Texas, Mr. Blench taught in the public schools in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, played trombone in salsa and jazz bands in New England, and played occasionally with the Boston Philharmonic.

La Valse Maurice Ravel

Of the great composers of musical impressionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries two names most certainly stand out above the rest – Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. Ravel, born on March 7, 1875, was one of the most popular French composers during his lifetime, acclaimed by critics and concertgoers alike. Known especially for his brilliant orchestration, Ravel also impressed audiences with his innovative harmonies set within traditional and classical forms. He drew inspiration from Debussy, particularly in his use of modal harmony, and was also inspired by composers like Mozart and Couperin in his use of traditional forms. His predilection for ninth and eleventh chords, unresolved appoggiaturas, and church modes not only became signature features of his compositional style, but also helped define musical impressionism as an artistic movement. A primary feature of musical impressionism is a focus on creating an aura or atmosphere, as opposed to a clearly expressed story or emotion, and nowhere does this become more apparent than in Ravel's "choreographic poem" *La Valse*.

Ravel wrote *La Valse* in 1919 at the request of Sergei Diaghilev, when Europe was in the midst of cleaning up the mess left behind by the chaos of World War I. When Ravel initially conceived the work, he intended to encapsulate the lighthearted spirit of the Viennese waltz as a tribute to the music of Johann

V Strauss, Jr. Following the war, however, Europeans had become disenchanted
 E with such trivial amusements. The city of Vienna had lost its former splendor,
 A as people suffered from starvation and flu outbreaks. Nevertheless, Ravel
 D maintained the spirit of the dance by designating the piece as a "choreogra-
 E phic poem for orchestra" to accompany staged ballet. Though the piece is not
 Y usually performed today with ballet, the music itself certainly evokes dance
 D on its own. The opening of the piece is shrouded in mist, with quiet rumblings
 Jc in the double basses. Slowly more instruments enter until the violins present
 T a robust waltz tune that becomes a kind of *idée fixe* for the remainder of the
 R piece. Following this initial tune the piece then swirls through various waltz
 A episodes, each with its own unique character and orchestral color. These
 H themes re-enter in the second half of the work, although modulations and
 K varied instrumental colors give them new shape. Ravel ends the work with a
 B wild *danse macabre* that crashes to an abrupt close. The overall cyclical and
 M spinning character of the music certainly verifies Ravel's personal descrip-
 M tion of the waltz in the preface to the score:

Je "Swirling clouds afford glimpses, through rifts, of waltzing couples.
 G The clouds scatter little by little; one can distinguish an immense hall
 V with a whirling crowd. The scene grows progressively brighter. The
 M light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo. An imperial
 court, about 1855."

— Note by Michael Richardson

F
 A: **Symphony No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 82 Jean Sibelius**

C
 Je Jean Sibelius is one of the most important composers of the late nineteenth
 St and early twentieth centuries and the most renowned composer from Finland.
 H Born on December 8, 1865, in Hämeenlinna in the Russian Grand Duchy of
 Ju Finland, Sibelius was enrolled in a Finnish language school at a young age
 A in response to the growing Finnish nationalist "Fennoman" movement. His
 Ju formative education would prove to have a long-lasting impact, as he later
 Sc adopted a strong sense of romantic nationalism in his compositions. Aside
 St from overtly nationalistic works, such as his tone poem *Finlandia*, one can
 H find a strong sense of Finnish identity in Sibelius' seven symphonies. The
 Bc **Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major**, which he completed in 1915 and later re-
 Vi vised in 1916 and 1919, expresses profoundly this romantic sensibility.

Pe One particular aspect of Finnish nationalism that comes forth in the **Sym-**
 P **phony No. 5** is Sibelius' evocations of the Scandinavian landscape. The first
 El movement begins with a pastoral "horn call," a simple, four-note motif that
 Er grows to become the dominant musical material of the movement. Initially,
 Ac Sibelius had intended for the first movement to be divided into two parts, but
 Lc he uses the musical material from the horn call to combine the initial Tempo
 Hc molto moderato slow introduction with the following scherzo-like Allegro moder-
 Ja ato into one seamless unit. The second movement, Andante mosso, quasi al-
 Ar legretto, is a theme and variations, with the main theme quietly introduced by
 Ju string pizzicato and flutes. Of the three movements, however, the third move-
 Kc ment most vividly portrays Sibelius' inspirations from nature with his aptly
 Ju named "swan theme." The movement, Allegro molto, opens with a feathery
 Ra melody played tremolando on the strings, which some have suggested repre-
 sents the whirring of wings from birds taking flight. A more specific allusion
 to birds taking flight occurs when lilting horns introduce the swan theme,
 evoking the plaintive call of the swan in nature and embodying Sibelius' own
 experience of seeing sixteen swans take flight near his country home. Above

this theme the flutes and strings sing one of Sibelius' most enchanting and endearing melodies. Sibelius further develops this melody and the swan theme before their glorious recapitulation, leading finally to a powerful cadence consisting of six chords separated by silence. Regardless of Sibelius' evocations of the Finnish landscape, the beauty of the music alone certainly provides much fodder for Finnish pride and identity, both in the early twentieth century and into the present day.

– Note by Michael Richardson

BIOGRAPHY

THOMAS HONG was born in Incheon, Korea. In 1978, his family immigrated to the United States and made their residence in Philadelphia. He began his musical training at the age of fifteen on the piano and continued his musical studies at Philadelphia Biblical University, studying with Dr. Samuel Hsu. Later, he went on to earn a master's degree in choral conducting at Temple University and an artist diploma in orchestral conducting from The Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Maestro Otto-Werner Mueller.

Presently, Mr. Hong is the assistant conductor of *Orchestre National de France*, where he recently concluded a European tour with Maestro Kurt Masur and violinist Joshua Bell. He is also co-conductor of the *Campanile Orchestra* at Rice University. Previous appointments include assistant conductor of *The Curtis Opera Theatre*, visiting assistant professor at *Haverford College*, and music director of the *Delaware County Youth Orchestra* and of the *First Korean Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia*, where he served as organist and choir director for many years.

Professional orchestras that Mr. Hong has conducted in the past include *Orchestre National de France*, *Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra*, *Winnepeg Symphony Orchestra*, *Lutoslawski Philharmonic* (European debut), *Spokane Symphony* (U.S. debut) and *Orchestra Society of Philadelphia*, where he is a frequent guest conductor. In September 2008, he will begin a new position with the *Fort Worth Symphony* as their assistant conductor, where he will conduct all the educational performances as well as acting as cover conductor for the subscription performances. Mr. Hong is a student of Larry Rachleff at *The Shepherd School of Music*.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA CONCERTS

Friday, February 8, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor PROGRAM: Barber - *Symphony No. 1 in One Movement, Op. 9*; and Rachmaninoff - *Symphony No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 27*.
Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

Saturday, February 9, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor PROGRAM: Mendelssohn - *Overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Op. 21*; Villa-Lobos - *Ciranda das sete notas* (Abigail Jones Walker, bassoon soloist; Cristian Măcelaru, conductor); and Brahms - *Serenade No. 2 in A Major, Op. 16*. Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

