

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, music director

ROBERT ATHERHOLT, oboe

Thursday, April 16, 2009

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Iconography (2009, Premiere)

Richard Lavenda
(b. 1955)

*Concerto in A Minor for Oboe
and String Orchestra*

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

Rondo Pastorale (Allegro moderato)

Minuet and Musette (Allegro moderato)

Finale - Scherzo (Presto)

Robert Atherholt, soloist

INTERMISSION

Serenade for Strings in E Major, Op. 22

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Moderato

Tempo di Valse

Vivace

Larghetto

Finale (Allegro vivace)

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 CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Sarah Ludwig,
concertmaster
Yennifer Correia
Kaoru Suzuki
Heidi Amundson
Eric Siu
Analísé Kukelhan
Tudor Dornescu

Violin II

SoJin Kim,
principal
Hannah Dremann
Mary Jeppson
Joanna Park
Creston Herron
Hye-Youn Lee

Viola

Hillary Schoap,
principal
Molly Gebrian
Nicholas Mauro
Julia Immel
Lynsey Anderson

Cello

Meta Weiss,
principal
Meredith Bates
Jacob Fowler
Cara Cheung
Keith Thomas

Double Bass

Edward Botsford,
principal
Annabella Leslie
Evan Halloin

Flute

Garrett Hudson
Henry Williford

Oboe

Clara Blood
Shane Wedel

Clarinet

Eric Jacobs
Jared Hawkins

Bassoon

David Richmond
Briana Lehman

Horn

Elizabeth Schellhase
Matthew Muehl-Miller

Trumpet

Brian Hess

Trombone

Benjamin Zilber

Piano

Jannie LeRoux

Percussion

Robert Garza
Rebecca Hook
Andrés Pichardo

Orchestra Manager and Librarian

Kaaren Fleisher

Production Manager

Megan Manning

Assistant Production Manager

Mandy Billings
Francis Schmidt

SEATINGS CHANGE WITH EACH CONCERT.

PROGRAM NOTES

Iconography Richard Lavenda

To try to explain the title: one of the standard meanings of the word “iconography” is “a set of specified or traditional symbolic forms associated with the subject or theme of a stylized work of art.” Well, that isn’t very helpful, at least not for this piece. In music, however, an icon is a motive or some combination of sounds that recurs throughout a piece without being changed. Icons are easy to recognize because they don’t really sound too different each time they appear. In this piece, the various melodic and harmonic materials are repeated, recombined, and reorchestrated, but they aren’t radically transformed and they aren’t shy – they’re quite easy to hear. So after I had completed composing it and was trying to come up with a name, **Iconography** made sense to me. Any reference to an unwelcome visitor to Houston in September of 2008 is purely unintentional...

Iconography was written for my friend Larry Rachleff and the students of the Shepherd School Chamber Orchestra. The talent and energy of both conductor and players were much in my mind as I composed it. Knowing them as I do, and having heard them play as often as I have, I wanted to write something that would show off their many abilities. Therefore, the piece includes both raucous, highly charged tutti passages and sensitive solos for a variety of instruments. It contrasts sections of dramatic power with sections of calm lyricism. Sometimes it is rhythmically complex, other times rather the opposite. As in all orchestral music, instrumental color in its many forms is the primary concern.

— Note by the composer

Richard Lavenda is currently Professor of Composition and Theory and Director of Graduate Studies at The Shepherd School of Music.

Concerto in A Minor for Oboe Ralph Vaughan Williams and String Orchestra

Ralph Vaughan Williams is one of the most important English composers of the twentieth century. He was born on October 12, 1872, in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, as the youngest of three children, into a family with a distinguished tradition of lawyers. He was also, interestingly, the great-grand nephew of Charles Darwin. As a child he received his first musical instructions from his aunt, and by the time he reached preparatory school he could play the violin, piano, and organ. He switched from violin to viola while attending Charterhouse School from 1887 to 1890, and he later attended the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition under Hubert Parry, and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1897, he studied composition with Max Bruch in Berlin, and in 1908 he studied with Maurice Ravel in Paris. In the early years of the twentieth century he became exposed to English folk song, and he decided to turn to his country's native folk song roots for musical inspiration. He shared these ideals with Gustav Holst, whom he met at the Royal College of Music in 1895, and with whom he subsequently carried on a close friendship.

A folk element is evident in his **Concerto in A Minor for Oboe and String Orchestra**. Vaughan Williams wrote the work in 1944 for oboist Leon Goossens. The first performance was scheduled for July 5, 1944, but due to German air bombings it had to be moved to Liverpool on September 30, 1944. The first movement, *Rondo Pastorale*, opens with sparse harmony in thirds in the strings, followed by a pastoral and plaintive melody presented by the oboe. The strings and the oboe move sinuously together, forming a tightly-knit and organic ensemble, in which the sound of the oboe seems to emerge from the strings, and vice versa. The folk element supersedes the pastoral when in the middle section the oboe introduces a lilting melody accompanied by short string pizzicato, interrupting the lush and flowing sound of the previous section. The lush strings return, however, in a grand restatement of the opening theme. The music wanders dreamily before the oboe provides a high and piercing statement of the opening theme, which brings the movement to a close shortly thereafter. As in the middle section of the first movement, the second movement, *Minuet and Musette*, opens with a staccato melody in the oboe accompanied by string pizzicato. Both the strings and the oboe return to the theme throughout the movement, with a constant inter-

play between legato and staccato articulations. The third movement, Finale, opens in a whirlwind, but this frenzy later dispels to reveal a sweetly pastoral and richly legato melody. But as with the previous two movements, there is a constant interplay between the two extremes of expression that makes this work both sophisticatedly restrained and rustically wild.

— Note by Michael Richardson

Serenade for Strings in E Major, Op. 22 Antonin Dvořák

Antonin Dvořák was and continues to be one of the most celebrated Czech composers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was born on September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, then part of the Austrian Empire, but now in the Czech Republic, and his romantic style of composition reflects the musical sentiments of his native Bohemian culture. Although he is known widely today for his brilliant orchestral works like his *New World Symphony*, his *Cello Concerto in B Minor*, and his *Slavonic Dances*, he was also a master of chamber music. His *String Quartet No. 12 in F Major, Op. 96*, nicknamed the "American String Quartet," certainly stands out in this regard. He extended his expertise in both larger and smaller forms to the string orchestra, when he wrote his *Serenade for Strings in E Major, Op. 22*, in 1875. Dvořák allegedly managed to complete the piece in less than two weeks, and the work received its premiere on December 10, 1876, in Prague. To this day, the work remains one of his most popular.

The first movement, Moderato, features a beautifully lyrical theme played in canon, followed by a rhapsodic middle section. As with the majority of the movements in this work, the opening A material returns for an overarching ABA structure. In the second movement, Tempo di Valse, Dvořák depicts an elegant Bohemian waltz, while in the third movement, Scherzo - Vivace, the composer contrasts a lively opening character with yearning pathos in the middle trio section. The Larghetto is pure calm and simplicity with canonic interplay between low and high strings, echoing Dvořák's canonic writing in the first movement. This calm is briefly interrupted by a staccato middle section, but the movement then glides effortlessly back to its previous canonic interplay and expressions of peace and tranquility. In contrast, the final movement, Finale: Allegro vivace, is brisk and assertive in demeanor. The opening theme of the first movement reappears towards the end of the final movement, providing cyclic unity to the work. But the following coda returns listeners to the briskness of the movement's opening, and it is in a fresh and lively spirit that Dvořák brings this elegant and charming work to a close.

— Note by Michael Richardson

BIOGRAPHY

ROBERT ATHERHOLT has been principal oboist of the Houston Symphony for twenty-five years. His numerous solo appearances and festival residencies have earned him the acclaim of audiences and critics worldwide.

Mr. Atherholt received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Juilliard School of Music, where he studied with the distinguished oboist, Robert Bloom. Only two years after his graduation, he had already achieved his first position as principal oboist, with the New Jersey Symphony. He soon

moved on to the Opera Orchestra of New York, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He has also served as principal of the Santa Fe Opera Company, as guest principal with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Haitink and with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and as acting principal oboist on the Boston Symphony's European tour 2000 with Seiji Ojawa conducting. While holding his present position with the Houston Symphony, to which he was appointed in 1984, he has established himself not only as a leader in that orchestra's distinguished woodwind section, but as a soloist as well, performing numerous concertos with the Houston Symphony, including the Mozart concerto and the world premiere of Schumann/Picker's **Romances and Interludes**. Both of these were later recorded with this orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach. In the summer season he is principal oboist of the Sun Valley Summer Symphony and the Grand Teton Music Festival.

Mr. Atherholt has appeared as a soloist not only with the Houston Symphony, but also around the world. He performed with Spain's Orquestra Sinfonica del Principado de Asturias Oviedo in 1999 and in Japan's Pacific Music Festival in 1995. He has toured Japan and Europe as a member of the Houston Symphony Chamber Players and recorded Schoenberg's **Woodwind Quintet, Op. 26**, with that group. As a chamber musician, he appears regularly with Da Camera of Houston and has performed at Marlboro, the Pacific Music Festival, Ravinia, Caramoor, Orcas Island, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

He is on the faculty of The Shepherd School of Music as Professor of Oboe. He conducts guest clinics at various festivals and universities across the country, including the National Orchestra Institute, the New World Symphony, and The International Festival-Institute at Round Top. His students hold positions in orchestras and universities throughout North America and South America, and in Switzerland and Israel.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA CONCERT

Friday, April 17, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PROGRAM: Brahms - **Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15** (Mi-Jong Lee, soloist; Cristian Măcelaru, conductor); and Stravinsky - **The Rite of Spring**.
Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.



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