

Oakville Symphony Program Notes

November 6 & 7, 2021 at the Oakville Centre

Featuring guest conductor Martin MacDonald and guest artist Kara Huber

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990): *Fanfare for the Common Man*

Copland was among 18 composers who were commissioned in 1942 to write patriotic fanfares. While most of them focussed on military aspects, Copland elected instead to spotlight the common man. As he said, “...it was *the common man, after all, who was doing all the dirty work in the war and the army*”. The title comes from a speech (“...the century of the common man...”) by Henry Wallace, the US Vice-President during Franklin Roosevelt’s third term in office. A variation of the fanfare was subsequently incorporated into Copland’s Third Symphony, composed at the end of the war.

Unconventionally, this fanfare begins with an aggressive call for attention by the percussion. Famous rising chords in the trumpets are then joined in turn by the horns, trombones, and tuba, all of which build to a dramatic finish. The piece is regarded by many as an American national treasure, and was described by *Leonard Bernstein* as “*the world’s leading hit tune.*”

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 -1847): Sinfonia No. 3 in E minor

I: Allegro di molto II: Andante III: Allegro

At the behest of his teacher, Mendelssohn composed 13 string symphonies during his early years, with the first six intended to reflect a classical Viennese style. Number 3 (written at age 12) is in a minor key, adding to its baroque appeal.

The whole symphony is very brief. The first movement has a short but fast introduction, repeated. The *Andante* provides relief, with a slower and more relaxed tempo. The final *Allegro* resumes the faster pace, with some delicate fingering required by the strings, as we approach a baroque style of climax.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791): Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major, K. 503

I: Allegro maestoso II: Andante III: (Allegretto)

Mozart wrote 27 piano concertos, a huge number compared to other composers such as Beethoven (5), Brahms (2), or Tchaikowski (2), for example. This one was written in 1786 in Vienna, at the height of Mozart’s career, and is the last of four set in C major. The first movement is arguably the longest in any of Mozart’s orchestral or concerto works. It, and the third movement, often migrate between the major and associated minor keys. Interestingly, the final movement was not given a tempo marking by Mozart, and the generally accepted *Allegretto* was added by his wife Constanze, who published the concerto’s score.

Paul Dukas (1865 – 1935): *Fanfare pour précéder La Péri*

Dukas was highly self-critical, and often destroyed his own compositions. *La Péri*, a one-act ballet, almost suffered this fate, but it survived to become his last published work. The fanfare was added in time for the ballet’s premiere in 1912. It imitates a tactic of Wagner’s in Bayreuth,

intended it to summon the audience, and allowing noisy patrons time to settle down.

Charles Gounod (1818 – 1893): *Petite Symphonie in B-flat major*

I: Adagio–Allegro

II: Andante cantabile (quasi adagio) attacca

III: Scherzo. Allegro moderato

IV: Finale. Allegretto

Gounod's most famous composition is his opera *Faust*, but he also wrote several instrumental pieces. This wind symphony (premiered in 1885) includes a standard Mozartian instrumentation of four pairs (oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns), but there is an additional single flute. The extra part was designed for Gounod's friend Paul Taffanel, a distinguished flutist of the time who played in leading orchestras in Paris for many years, and who championed new music for wind players, showcasing them in a concert series each year. The *Petite Symphonie* was so popular that it was presented in five successive seasons in the Taffanel concerts.

Part of the success of this piece lies with improvements to the keywork of several woodwind instruments that had recently been recently engineered by Theobald Boehm. These improvements had led to better projection and intonation, together with technical enhancements that allowed note sequences that had previously been essentially impossible.

Here Gounod reflects the style and format of earlier symphonies for full orchestra. Following Haydn, a slow introduction precedes the sonata *Allegro*. The second movement spotlights the solo flute, reminiscent of an operatic aria. The *Scherzo* features a hunting theme, and a lyrical central trio section. A brisk announcement of the final movement leads to a series of variations, and a surprisingly quiet ending.

Jordan Pal (1983 –): *On the Double: Concert Overture* (2009)

(Notes on this piece come from the composer).

On the Double is a fast and furious, adrenaline-pumping roller coaster of an overture. Running sixteenths and dashing eighth-note triplets fervidly ebb and flow through razor-edged turns of harmony and mercurial shifts in orchestral color. With moments of devastating climaxes and contrasting moments of subtle beauty, the work moves speedily and unexpectedly between various moods and characters.

Cast in a single, dramatic movement, *On the Double* was composed over a short and creatively intense period. Spiraling out from its brief and frenzied introduction, the first section surges forward. The lighter middle section, fluent and infatuated, gradually builds into a varied return of the first section. Here, the piece fervently thrusts towards the end of the work, a return of the frenetic introduction.

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