

Welcome friends to the 2018-2019 Starlight Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Competition winners concert. To sum up the entire program notes in one word.

“Wow!”

The talent in central Texas is astounding. We had 44 talented young musicians auditioning on January 12th. And, just when you think you have heard “the” winning audition, the next audition is equally amazing. We listened from 8am to 8pm at Texas State University and it was non-stop amazement for each person. Truly almost any of the performers could easily take the stage with us. We struggled to narrow it down to two. With that, it is always our pleasure to present to you the winners of our annual Young Artist Competition. Margaret Seo and Adriana Bec will be performing for you. Also on our concert are three other notable works. One is very new and enjoyed a world premiere in 2018. Kathryn Ellis’ “Five Minute Symphony” is in four contiguous movements. Another work of distinction is Sibelius’ Swan of Tuonela. This is a slow work that melds tonal colors with many instruments with harmonies that are very warm and fuzzy. The final work of the evening is an orchestral transcription of the famous organ work by Bach called Toccata and Fugue in D minor. This is a very powerful work and one of the most famous works in the organ repertoire. Directly after the concert we will present the young artists with their awards.

Five Minute Symphony, Kathryn Ellis

The Five Minute Symphony is a four-movement symphonic work that transfers themes from movement to movement. It is brief in statement, yet bold in presentation. The composer offers these notes on her work:

“This symphony may be the shortest symphony audiences will ever hear! The piece, written in 2018, follows a traditional symphony four movement form. The first movement, Allegro, in D major, is the longest movement, and introduces the thematic material in the first three chords played. That motive is then developed in bright melodic phrases. The second movement, Fugue, in the key of A, slows the tempo a bit, and is introduced by solo oboe playing the first three notes of the fugue theme twice as an intro, and then follows solo with the four measure theme. A counter theme then enters by the clarinet, while the flute and oboe repeat the theme in a higher register. After four measures the bass clarinet and bassoon enter with a second counter theme for four measures, and finally the brass and winds join the fugue and after that the full orchestra then joins in and completes the theme. The third movement, Dance, reverts to the key of D, with a meter change to represent a waltz movement, which is played by the strings and winds. There is no break in the piece when the Dance movement flows directly into the Finale, which is the shortest movement of all. The tympani and tuba enter with a forceful rhythmic motive that signals the beginning of the conclusion of the piece.”

I have invited Kathryn Ellis to join us for our concert. The composer may be in the audience!

Swan of Tuonela, Jean Sibelius

The Swan of Tuonela is a gorgeous tone poem from 1895 written by Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius. It features an English horn solo with orchestra. The English horn plays the part of a mystical swan floating through the underworld, known in Finnish mythology as Tuonela. The manuscript is lost, but it is known that this work was originally intended as a prelude to an opera. Sibelius then re-worked it to include it in a suite of four tone poems, which premiered in 1896. He revised it again in 1897 and again in 1900. It is the 1900 version that was published and widely performed today. The Swan of Tuonela uses slowly changing tonal colors and rarely employs a steady pulse. It is especially well-known among English horn players as an audition piece!

Chaconne in G minor, Tomaso Vitali

Tomaso Antonio Vitali was an Italian Baroque composer and violinist. He is known mainly for this Chaconne in G minor which was originally written for violin and continuo around 1705. There are a few different editions available, but this one is among the more played orchestral editions by Charlier. There have been questions raised about the authenticity of whether or not it was composed by Vitali since it uses a large variety of key changes and modulations which is not found in Baroque music. The signature on the manuscript is from a well-known copyist of the Baroque which offers credibility to Vitali's authenticity. At any rate, the chaconne is a form that uses the theme and variation over a harmonic orchestral line. Margaret Seo auditioned with this work and reaffirmed that her talents are beyond her years! Seo was a Starlight Symphony Orchestra Young Artist winner from two years ago.

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64, Movement III, Mendelssohn

This is a significant part of the violin solo repertoire and is without a doubt one of the most popular and one of the most performed violin concertos. This work has influenced many composers and performers alike. Mendelssohn wrote this with Ferdinand David in mind and in fact consulted him many times throughout the six-year compositional period. The work consists of three movements. Our soloist and Young Artist winner, Adriana Bec, auditioned with the third movement which we will hear tonight. Her audition was the second to last audition of the 12-hour day with 42 auditions before her. Just when we thought we had heard it all, Bec "wowed" us with her Mendelssohn. She begins the third movement with the transitional passage from the second movement which then leads to the fast-paced finale.

Tocatta and Fugue in D minor, Bach/Stokowski

This is a monumental work from Johann Sebastian Bach and a brilliant symphonic transcription by Leopold Stokowski. In the score Stokowski writes: "Of all the music of Bach this Tocatta and Fugue is among the freest in form and expression. Bach was in the habit of improvising on the organ and harpsichord, and this Tocatta probably began as an improvisation in the church of St. Thomas in Leipzig. In this lengthy, narrow, high church the thundering harmonies must have echoed long and tempestuously, for this music has a power and majesty that is cosmic. One of

its main characteristics is immense freedom of rhythm, and plasticity of melodic outline. In the sequence of harmonies it is bold and path-breaking. Its tonal architecture is irregular and asymmetric. Of all the creations of Bach this is one of the most original. Its inspiration flows unendingly. In spirit it is universal, so that it will always be contemporary and have a direct message for all."

Enjoy the concert!

David Oertel

PROGRAM

Five Minute Symphony

Kathryn Ellis

Swan of Tuonela

Jean Sibelius

Vitali, Chaconne in G minor

Tomaso Vitali

Margaret Hyun Seo, 2019 Young Artist Competition Winner

---intermission---

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64

Felix Mendelssohn

III. Allegretto non troppo

Adriana Bec, 2019 Young Artist Competition Winner

Tocatta and Fugue in D minor

J.S. Bach / Arr. Stokowski,