

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE ■ SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
GEORGE SHANGROW, MUSIC DIRECTOR
1999-2000 SEASON

Winds, Strings & Glass

Friday, November 19, 1999 ■ 8:00 PM
Ilsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall
Benaroya Hall

William Wilde Zeitler, *glass armonica*
Orchestra Seattle
George Shangrow, *conductor*

IGOR STRAVINSKY
1882-1971

Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1920)

Justin Cole, conductor

EDWARD ELGAR
1857-1934

Serenade for Strings in e minor, Op. 20

Allegro piacevole
Larghetto
Allegretto

WILLIAM WILDE ZEITLER
*1954

Beyond the Frontier of the Known

WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

The Known
The Unknown
The Unknowable

William Wilde Zeitler, glass armonica

INTERMISSION

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN
1732-1809

Symphony No. 98 in B-flat Major

Adagio – Vivace assai
Adagio
Menuet: Allegretto – Trio
Finale: Vivace

Please disconnect signal watches, pagers and cellular telephones. Thank you.
Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM NOTES

IGOR FEDOROVICH STRAVINSKY

Symphonies of Wind Instruments

Stravinsky was born June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum (near St. Petersburg), and died April 6, 1971, in New York City. He completed the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* on November 30, 1920, and Serge Koussevitzky conducted the first performance in London on June 10, 1921. The composer revised the work in 1947. The original 1920 version is scored for 3 flutes, alto flute, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, alto clarinet, 3 bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Igor Stravinsky's 1920 work for large wind orchestra is that its dedicatee and inspiration was none other than the great French composer Claude Debussy. While the Russian responsible for *The Rite of Spring* and the French author of *La Mer* may on the surface have seemed to share little in common, they did in fact maintain a professional respect for one another, and Stravinsky was quite moved at news of Debussy's death. The harmonic language employed in the *Symphonies* is far removed from that of the French Impressionist style, but its structure does share similarities with works from Debussy's late period. Stravinsky later explained the genesis of the work and its dedication in his *Chroniques de ma vie*:

La Revue Musicale planned to devote one of its issues to the memory of Debussy and to include music written especially for the occasion by contemporaries and admirers of the great composer. I was one of those who was asked to contribute, but the composition of a page of music awoke in me the need of developing my musical thought which had been born under the impulsion of the solemn circumstances which prompted it. I began with the end. I wrote a chorale phrase which later was to terminate my *Symphonies d'instruments à vent* dedicated to Claude-Achille Debussy and I gave to the *Revue Musicale* this first fragment in a reduction for piano.

Stravinsky used the word "Symphonies" in the title not in reference to the classical symphony (an example of which concludes this evening's concert) but in its archaic sense, meaning "a sounding together." Six distinct musical ideas are used throughout, ranging from the opening "bell motive" to the above-mentioned chorale (which is not presented in full until the end of the work). Stravinsky does not develop and combine these elements so much as he displays them in stark contrast to one another. Stravinsky scholar Eric Walter White compares this effect to "a carpet woven out of differently colored threads...the final impression is one of somber brazen mathematical splendor, in which the various episodes are framed by a strange clangor as of bells." The various sections alternate between three different tempi related by a simple mathematical ratio. (The eighth note in the second tempo is one and a half times as fast as in the first, and in the third is twice as fast.)

Stravinsky revised the work slightly in 1947, but the two major changes he made are often deemed less than successful: the composer re-barred much of the piece into measures of shorter duration, making it more difficult to perform; and he replaced the alto flute and alto clarinet, which lend the work a charmingly rustic flavor, with their more common orchestral brethren. This evening Orchestra Seattle performs the original 1920 version.

— Jeff Eldridge

EDWARD WILLIAM ELGAR

Serenade for Strings in e minor, Op. 20

Elgar was born June 2, 1857, in Broadheath, Worcestershire, England, and died in Worcester February 23, 1934. The composer led a private performance of the *Serenade for Strings* with the Worcester Ladies' Orchestral Class in 1892, but the work is most likely a revision of Elgar's earlier *Three Pieces for String Orchestra* (Spring Song, Elegy and Finale), which date from 1888. The first public performance of the *Serenade* was given in Antwerp, Belgium on July 23, 1896.

Formal composition came late to Elgar. Although as a boy he was exposed to music at every turn – his father was an amateur violinist and pianist as well as a church organist – Edward received little formal training. His boyhood fascination with music, the sounds of nature, and the musical immersion resulting from living over the Elgar Bros. Music Shop inspired him to constantly sketch out musical ideas which later became the foundations for most, if not all, of his mature works.

His first "public" compositions came forth in his early thirties – the *Serenade* was composed when he was 35 and was presented to his wife, Alice, as a gift on their third wedding anniversary. The string writing in the *Serenade* is rich in texture in the grand English style. The inner parts (second violin and viola) are often divided into two or more parts allowing for a luscious harmonic language. The outer movements, with their compound-meter insistence, are really a frame for the gorgeous *Larghetto*, which, to my ears, stands as one of the most beautiful slow movements in the literature. Surely this was the true anniversary gift! The last movement, just towards the end, brings back the main tune from the first movement, taking this jewel of a work to a tender E major final chord.

— George Shangrow

WILLIAM WILDE ZEITLER

Beyond the Frontier of the Known A Symphonic Poem

William Zeitler was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1954; he currently resides in Seattle. *Beyond the Frontier of the Known*, for glass armonica and orchestra, was commissioned by George Shangrow and Orchestra Seattle for this evening's concert; this is its first performance. The work is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and trombones, tuba, timpani, finger cymbals, and strings.

If ever there were an American Renaissance man of genius rivaling da Vinci, it was Benjamin Franklin: statesman and revolutionary, Minister Plenipotentiary to France, author, successful entrepreneur, and inventor (it has been estimated that Franklin has more inventions than Edison). In 1761, while representing the grievances of the American colonies to England, Franklin heard Edmund Delaval give a performance on "musical glasses" – crystal wine glasses tuned by adding varying amounts of water to the bowl and made to sound by running a fingertip around the rim. Franklin was so enchanted with the sound that he invented a musical instrument based on that idea which simultaneously eliminated the necessity of water tuning, made it possible for the performer to play many more notes simultaneously with greater facility, and vastly reduced the size of the instrument. He named his

invention the “armonica” after the Italian word for “harmony.” The instrument became very popular in Europe, and composers of the day, including Mozart and Beethoven, wrote music for it.

For this evening’s performance, Orchestra Seattle music director George Shangrow requested that glass armonica soloist William Wilde Zeitler compose a concerto for glass armonica and orchestra. The result was, in the composer’s estimation, more of a tone poem featuring glass armonica than a proper concerto. He has provided the following explanation of its title:

The idea of dividing up the experiences of Life into the “Known,” the “Unknown,” and the “Unknowable” is evocative to me in a poetic sort of way. On the one hand there’s the solidity and confidence of the “known” – or at least what we think we know. But growth and new experience aren’t possible if you stay there – for that you have to brave the “unknown.” After all, this is where the dance of Life really occurs. Finally there’s the “unknowable,” which is what virtually all of Life is, ultimately. Perhaps there is a certain serenity to accepting that, while we strive nonetheless to go beyond the frontier of the safe and comfortable status quo.

The three movements mentioned above are played without pause. (After all, the boundaries between these three are rather ambiguous.) The first section (“The Known”) is cast largely in 6/8 time and begins with a brass fanfare, followed by the introduction of a simple rising figure in the low strings. These two elements form the melodic basis of the entire movement, in accordance with the well “known” classical style. Not being a very well “known” instrument, the armonica makes a very minor contribution to this movement; as the work progresses to the “unknowable,” the armonica takes an increasingly prominent role.

The second movement (“The Unknown”) begins with a 3/4 introduction featuring vigorous sixteenth-note passages (the “unknown” is always something of an intrusion). After a brief introductory cadenza, the armonica and flute introduce a fugue – a dance – soon joined by clarinet and solo violin. As the rest of the orchestra joins in, the development of the fugue subject becomes increasingly less conventional. Finally, the flute introduces a free improvisatory version of the fugue subject. The brasses interject with a fragment of an otherworldly chorale tune. (The chorale heralds the arrival of the “unknowable.”) These interruptions alternate with the flute’s improvisatory version of the fugue subject until the chorale wins out and is presented in full by the entire orchestra.

The final movement (“The Unknowable”) begins with arpeggiated quintuplet figures (“five” representing “humanity” in both numerology and the Cabala) accompanied by quiet, hymn-like chords in the strings (which perhaps represent the “supra-human”). Eventually, melodic material from the second movement is added using woodwinds, then the brasses, until the combined elements reach a forceful, heroic climax. One last time a solo violin – with the armonica – play their melodies against the timeless Pythagorean “music of the spheres.”

– Jeff Eldridge & William Zeitler

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN Symphony No. 98 in B flat Major

Haydn was born in Rohrau, Lower Austria on March 31, 1732, and died in Vienna on May 31, 1809. He composed his *Symphony No. 98* in early 1792 and led the first performance on March 2 of that year, in London’s Hanover-Square Concert

Rooms. The work is scored for flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani, keyboard and strings.

When Prince Nicholas Esterházy died in 1790, Joseph Haydn had been his employee for nearly 30 years. The Prince’s son and successor was willing to keep Haydn on the payroll but chose not to retain most of the musicians in Haydn’s orchestra. At this juncture, the London-based impresario and violinist Johann Peter Salomon persuaded Haydn to travel to England, and Haydn made two extended trips there (1791-1792 and 1794-1795).

Haydn had the time of his life in England. He was quite productive there, composing his last 12 symphonies for performance in London, and received considerable acclaim, including an honorary degree at Oxford. One minor annoyance was the fact that Salomon’s concert series had competition. His rival promoters had engaged the services of Haydn’s former student, Ignaz Pleyel, and claimed publicly that Haydn was too old to compose well anymore. Haydn and Pleyel remained on good terms and stayed above the fray, each making sure not to miss one of the other’s concerts. Meanwhile, it was clear to any who heard Haydn’s symphonies that he was far from too old to compose; as the concert series progressed, more and more of the audience realized that they were hearing musical history being made.

Symphony No. 98, one of the fruits of Haydn’s first London visit, has unusually long and complicated outer movements. The first is very serious, while the finale is one of Haydn’s most humorous, an amazingly long stretch of continuously witty music.

The *Adagio* introduction begins with a rising B-flat minor triad followed by a six-note answering phrase and then a “ta-da” flourish. The triad and the six-note answer are the main building blocks for the entire first movement. Like the *Adagio* introduction, the main *Allegro* portion of the movement begins with the strings in unison, but is now softer, faster, and in B-flat major, and – most importantly – features a different articulation. When the first violins explore a new direction, the six-note answer continues as accompaniment until the firsts pick it up again. Haydn often liked to shift ideas from foreground to background and vice versa; this is a wonderful example. The usual sonata-form shift to the dominant is announced with a rising F major triad, but this time with the dynamic and articulation of the beginning of the *Adagio*. The development is a contrapuntal *tour de force*, mostly in minor keys, while the substantial coda is notable for several new articulations of the main theme.

Haydn’s London audience would clearly have heard the theme of the slow movement as a near-quotation of “God Save the King,” but there is some speculation that this was in fact Haydn’s tribute to Mozart, who had died a few months before. Haydn must have had the slow movement to Mozart’s *Jupiter* Symphony in mind – even though this movement’s dramatic effects are very different from Mozart’s, Sir Donald Francis Tovey has pointed out clear parallels in some places.

The Minuet has some nice harmonic and rhythmic surprises, while its Trio section is notable for its orchestration. The woodwind parts in this Trio could be left out without losing the melody or any of the harmony – the winds do nothing but occasionally double one of the string parts. But these doublings create a delightful variety of color, especially since they sometimes are in a different octave than the doubled string part. In fact, the flute and cellos are briefly playing the same line three octaves apart.

Rather than try to explain a joke, I will not attempt much of a description of the Finale, but will only mention three points of

interest. First, in the development section, Haydn gives his friend Salomon a big thanks for bringing him to London – Salomon got some fun solos to play as concertmaster. Second, the inventiveness of this movement may well have been Haydn’s answer to those who thought he couldn’t compose any more – at several points, the audience must have been wondering “What in the world is he going to do next?” Finally, there is the issue of having a harpsichord (or pianoforte) as a sort of continuo instrument for a late 18th century symphony (Haydn conducted these London concerts from the keyboard). I can only direct the interested reader to Tovey’s brilliant essay on Symphony No. 98, where he explains how such an instrument is like the Beaver in Lewis Carroll’s *The Hunting of the Snark*.

– Fritz Klein

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GUEST ARTISTS

Soloist **William Wilde Zeitler** has been a professional musical performer and composer for over twenty years, with numerous published and commissioned works to his credit. He began piano lessons at the age of five, later studying violin, classical guitar, and organ, as well as other musical styles such as jazz. Mr. Zeitler earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in harpsichord performance from the California Institute of the Arts, is an accomplished pianist and organist, and has been the music director for several professional musical theater productions. He is also the author of *The Compleat Book of Scales*, the first complete list of all 1,489 possible scales ever compiled, for which he used a computer to determine all the possible modes, and verified the results using mathematical combinatorics. In 1995 Mr. Zeitler came across an out-of-print recording of the late Bruno Hoffman, *Music by Mozart for the Glass Armonica*, at which point he says he “simply had to play and compose for the glass armonica” himself. He eventually located master glass blower Gerhard Finkenbeiner of Waltham, Massachusetts, who blew the 44 quartz cups, and commissioned various Seattle artisans to make the rosewood and cherry cabinet. Mr. Zeitler is now one of only a handful of glass armonica players in the world, and is featured on three recordings. More information about the glass armonica may be found on Mr. Zeitler’s Web site, www.glassarmonica.com.

Guest conductor **Justin Cole** has studied conducting with Michael Morgan and Larry Rachleff and is a former member of the conducting faculty at Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He has assisted Mr. Morgan at the Oakland East Bay Symphony and is former assistant conductor of the Orchestra of the Pines. Mr. Cole earned a Bachelor of Music degree in trombone performance from the University of Arizona, where he was awarded the prestigious Presser Scholarship by the School of Music. While in Arizona he received a grant from the University to conduct a concert of 20th century works for chamber orchestra. In 1996 the noted American composer Grace Brown asked that he conduct the world premiere of her work, *To Ancient Evenings and Distant Music*. Mr. Cole has studied trombone with Tom Ervin, Gerrard Pagano, George Krem, and William Stanley, and performed with a variety of ensembles, including the Rapides Symphony Orchestra, the Tucson Jazz Orchestra, the Piney Woods Brass Quintet, the Northwest Mahler Festival, and the Corona Brass Quintet. In addition to his musical pursuits Mr. Cole is an avid outdoorsman and is currently employed by Microsoft. He has held the post of assistant conductor of Orchestra Seattle since the beginning of the 1999-2000 season. This evening marks his debut performance with the orchestra.

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