Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony

Thursday, May 13, 2010  8 pm
Saturday, May 15, 2010  8 pm
Sunday, May 16, 2010  2:30 pm
Jones Hall

Hans Graf, conductor
*Albina Shagimuratova, soprano
Houston Symphony Chorus
  Charles Hausmann, director

Stravinsky  Symphonies of Wind Instruments (rev. 1947)
Poulenc  Gloria
  I. Gloria:  Maestoso
  II. Laudamus Te:  Très vite et joyeux
  III. Domine Deus:  Très lent et calme—
  IV. Domine Fili unigenite:  Très vite et joyeux
  V. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei:  Bien lent
  VI. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris:  Maestoso—
    Allegretto

INTERMISSION

J. Harbison  Fanfare for Foley’s

Mozart  Symphony No. 41 in C major, K.551 (Jupiter)
  I. Allegro vivace
  II. Andante cantabile
  III. Menuetto and Trio:  Allegretto
  IV. Molto Allegro

*Houston Symphony debut

SYMPHONIES OF WIND INSTRUMENTS (rev. 1947)
Igor Stravinsky
Born:  Jun 17, 1882, Oranienbaum (now Lomonosov), Russia
Died:  Apr 6, 1971, New York, New York
Work composed:  1920; revised, 1947.
Recording: Charles Dutoit conducting members of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Decca)

Instrumentation: three flutes, two oboes, English horn, three clarinets, three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba

Stravinsky and Claude Debussy formed a close personal friendship following the 1910 premiere of Stravinsky’s *The Firebird* in Paris, and the French impressionist composer’s death in 1918 deeply affected his younger Russian colleague. Stravinsky was one of 10 composers invited to write brief memorial compositions by the French scholarly journal, *La Revue Musicale*, for publication in a special issue.

He began by composing a short, austere chorale, couched in bitter, quietly grieving bitonal harmonies. After it had been published in its original keyboard version, Stravinsky continued composing, attaching short instrumental duets and trios in front of the chorale, along with fast, rhythmic dance segments, until he worked his way backward to a formative suggestion of the chorale at the beginning of the 12-minute piece.

Rather than thinking of the work as a classical symphony, he titled the piece to reflect the word’s archaic meaning: instruments (or musical tones) sounding together. In a further gesture of reverence, he avoided the warm, sweet tone of stringed instruments, limiting himself to the severe sound of woodwinds and brass.

Though not popular, the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* is one of Stravinsky’s purest, most beautiful works, saying farewell not only to Debussy, but to the primitivistic Russian folk style that launched his career. Almost immediately afterward, he leapt into the new neo-classical style of his mature career with another famed wind/brass composition, the Octet.

**SYMPHONY NO. 41 IN C MAJOR, K.551 (JUPITER)**

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Born: Jan 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

Died: Dec 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Work composed: 1788

Recording: Sir Charles Mackerras conducting the Prague Chamber Orchestra

Instrumentation: flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings

While the majestic quality of Mozart’s final three symphonies is unquestioned, little is known about the impetus that caused them to be written.

Unlike most of Mozart’s works, these visionary essays in the symphonic medium were composed with no known performance in mind. Sadly, the spring and summer of 1788 were difficult times for the debt-ridden composer, whose popularity had waned among audiences.

They were also difficult times for his potential patrons, because the financial resources of the Imperial court and nobility were depleted after a recently-concluded war with the Turks over control of Austria’s Eastern provinces. Mozart’s correspondence contains a suggestion that he intended to mount a public subscription concert for performances of these symphonies that summer, but there is no record that such an event took place.

The title, “Jupiter,” was not attached by Mozart to his C major Symphony, K.551, but was reportedly the idea of Johann Peter Salomon, the impresario who was to mastermind Joseph Haydn’s London concerts three years later, during the winter of 1791 when the sick, impoverished Mozart died. Salomon’s sobriquet is considered particularly appropriate to the triumphant quality of the symphony’s two outer movements.
There is nothing unusual about the large design of the Jupiter Symphony’s individual movements or key relationships within and among them. The first, second and fourth movements are all cast in sonata form, while the third is a standard minuet and trio. As is typical in Mozart, the martial music of the first movement is fairly rich in the number and variety of its thematic ideas.

The slow movement is one of Mozart’s most delicate creations. Its orchestration is tinted with dusky hues of muted violins, and its melody lines are constantly decorated with lacy figuration. It is at once poignant and deeply felt music. The minuet and trio are also notably gentle pieces, both built around yearning chromatic melodies. Whether consciously or not, the first four melody notes of the trio anticipate the shape of the four-note theme that dominates the finale.

The finale is celebrated for Mozart’s feat of superimposing fugal counterpoint upon a sonata movement. At various points in the movement, Mozart took themes he had presented and let them chase each other as in a fugue. In the climactic coda, he combined five different themes from the movement in various relationships to each other. This display of contrapuntal wizardry has held audiences, composers and musical scholars in awe for more than two centuries.

FANFARE FOR FOLEY’S
John Harbison
Born: Dec 20, 1938, Orange, New Jersey
Work composed: 1986
Recording: No commercial recording available
Instrumentation: four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion

American composer John Harbison was entering his high maturity when he was commissioned to write this short, solemn brass fanfare for the Houston Symphony’s salute to the Texas and Houston sesquicentennials. He was about to win the Pulitzer Prize for his cantata, The Flight into Egypt, and he was beginning to compose a series of symphonies and concertos that were to earn accolades for him throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.

Except for the addition of one trumpet and a few extra percussion instruments, Harbison’s fanfare matches the instrumentation and tonal character of Aaron Copland’s celebrated Fanfare for the Common Man, composed more than 40 years earlier. Nevertheless, it is a tricky little piece in its own right, despite the sonorous brass chorale that seems to march straightforwardly through the fanfare.

The rising series of chords and the little tailpiece that punctuates them are fitted into different sized measure-boxes as the metric pulse keeps changing throughout much of the piece. And there are little rhythmic complexities that change the length of notes just a hair, this way or that. To add to the complexity, Harbison keeps changing the speed of the piece by just a fraction, touching the brake pedals here and there to slow its pace momentarily.

When Harbison’s fanfare was composed, Foley’s was a thriving 110-year old Houston department store that has since become Macy’s. This weekend’s performances are a richly deserved memorial salute to Stewart and Hanni Orton, the store’s former president and his recently deceased widow, for their lifelong love of music and their unceasing support of the Houston Symphony.

GLORIA
Francis Poulenc
Music on religious themes occupied an increasingly important place in the last 15 years of Francis Poulenc's life, including his acclaimed opera, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and numerous sacred choral works.

The *Gloria* was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky. According to biographer Wilfrid Mellers, Poulenc rejected the Foundation’s first two requests for a symphony (saying he was not a symphonist) or an organ concerto (reminding them that he had already written one). When the Foundation ran out of special requests, he suggested this six-movement *Gloria* to honor the memory of the Koussevitzkys. He wrote the work between May and December 1959, and traveled to the United States for its premiere by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, conductor Charles Munch and soprano Adele Addison in January 1961.

Poulenc’s comments on his inspiration for the work reveal the mix of seriousness and humor that pervaded his life and music, as well as the appeal of visual stimuli in sparking his imagination. “When I wrote this piece, I had in mind those frescoes by Gozzolo where the angels stick out their tongues,” he once commented impishly. “And also some serious Benedictine monks I had once seen reveling in a game of soccer.”

The kickball image might apply to the punching chords of the work’s opening fanfare, while the perversity of Gozzolo’s angels might be represented by Poulenc’s insistence upon putting musical accents on several unaccented syllables of the opening text: “Gloria in EXcelSIS deO.” The vigorous rhythms of the first, second, fourth and sixth movements exude a sense of joyous abandon, while pleading sentiments are left to the invocations in the third and fifth movements. Both of these feature the soprano soloist, as does the closing movement. Much of the work is composed of short musical cells, whose cryptic melody, pungent harmony and rhythm are repeated or modified to form larger units. Poulenc rounds off the climactic score by briefly recalling the opening fanfare just prior to the text, “Quoniam to solus sanctus,” in the final movement.

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**GLORIA**

Francis Poulenc

Text

I. Glória in excélsis Deo  
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntátis.

II. Laudámus te, benedicimus te, adorámus te, glorificámus te,  
grátias ágimus tibi propter magnam glóriam tuam,
III. Dómine Deus, Rex cæléstis,  
Deus Pater omnipotens.

IV. Dómine Fili Unigénite, Iesu Christe,

V. Dómine Deus, Agnus Dei, Fílius Patris,  
qui tollis peccáta mundi, miserére nobis;  
qui tollis peccáta mundi, súscipe deprecationem nostram.

VI. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserére nobis.
Quóniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dóminus, tu solus Altíssimus,  
Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spíritu: in glória Dei Patris. Amen.

Translation

I. Glory to God in the highest  
and peace to his people on earth.

II. We worship you, we give you thanks  
we praise you for your glory,

III. Lord God, heavenly King,  
Almighty God and Father.

IV Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

V Lord God, Lamb of God,  
You take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;

VI You are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen
Biographies

Hans Graf, conductor
Known for his wide range of repertoire and creative programming, Hans Graf – the Houston Symphony’s 15th Music Director – is one of today’s most highly respected musicians. He began his tenure here on Opening Night of the 2001-2002 season.

Graf is a frequent guest with all the major North American orchestras. Recent guest engagements include appearances with The Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the San Francisco, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Atlanta and National symphonies and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, among others. Over the past decade, he has developed a close relationship with the Boston Symphony and appears regularly with the orchestra during the subscription season and at the Tanglewood Music Festival. He made his Carnegie Hall debut with the Houston Symphony in January 2006 and returned in March 2007 to lead the Orchestra of St. Luke’s. He and the Houston Symphony present *The Planets—An HD Odyssey* at Carnegie Hall and in locations throughout Florida this month. Internationally, Graf conducts in the foremost concert halls and music festivals of Europe, Japan and Australia.

An experienced opera conductor, Graf first conducted the Vienna State Opera in 1981 and has since led productions in Berlin, Munich, Paris and Rome, including several world premieres. Recent engagements include *Parsifal* at the Zurich Opera and *Boris Godunov* at the Opera National du Rhin in Strasbourg. Graf and the Houston Symphony have recorded Zemlinsky’s *Lyric Symphony* and Berg’s *Three Pieces from Lyric Suite* for Naxos and a disc of works by Bartok and Stravinsky for Koch International Classics. Other Graf recordings are on the EMI, Orfeo, CBC, Erato, Capriccio, JVC and BMG Arte Nova labels. His discography includes the works of Dutilleux, the complete symphonies of Mozart and Schubert, and the premiere recording of Zemlinsky’s opera *Es war einmal*.

Born in 1949 near Linz, Graf studied violin and piano as a child. He earned diplomas in piano and conducting from the Musikhochschule in Graz and continued his studies with Franco Ferrara, Sergiu Celibidache and Arvid Jansons. His international career was launched in 1979 when he was awarded first prize in the Karl Bohm Competition.

He has served as music director of the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic and Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine.

In 2002, he was awarded the Chevalier de l’ordre de la Legion d’Honneur by the French government for championing French music around the world and, in 2007, the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria. Hans and
Margarita Graf have homes in Salzburg and Houston. They have one daughter, Anna, who lives in Vienna.

**Albina Shagimuratova, soprano**

Dazzling Russian coloratura soprano Albina Shagimuratova first came to international attention as the Gold Medal winner of the 2007 International Tchaikovsky Competition. She made her European operatic debut as the Queen of the Night in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* at the Salzburg Festival in 2008.

Shagimuratova joined the Houston Grand Opera Studio in 2006 and, with that company, sang the Queen of the Night and Musetta to great acclaim. Other roles in Houston included the Sandman and Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel* in a production by puppeteer Basil Twist.

This season, she makes her Metropolitan Opera debut in Julie Taymor’s production of *Die Zauberflöte* – a role she also performs at the German Opera on the Rhine and the Bolshoi Opera. She makes her Boston Symphony debut in Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* and her New York debut as Flaminia in Haydn’s rarely-performed *Il Mondo della Luna* with Gotham Chamber Opera.

Last season, Shagimuratova sang the Queen of the Night in debuts with the German Opera in Berlin and the Los Angeles Opera. She debuted as Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Palm Beach Opera, which she reprised for her return to Houston Grand Opera.

In 2004, she became a member of the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theater. She sang Violetta in *La traviata* there, as well as the Swan in *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* and the Queen of Shemakha in *The Golden Cockerel*.

Her extensive orchestral experience includes performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini and Fauré. In 2005, she sang Mozart’s Requiem in the famed December Nights of Sviatoslav Richter in Moscow. She also performed Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and Mahler’s Eighth Symphony with the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio.

Born in Tashkent, USSR, Albina Shagimuratova began her musical studies as a pianist and attended the Music College Auhadeez in Kazan. She received a degree in vocal and opera performance from Kazan State University, and completed a doctorate, with honors, from the Moscow Conservatory.