

THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING



Symphony Orchestra

The 2021-22 season: Joy and Reflection

Opening Night!

**Music by Beethoven, Ravel, Johann Strauss,
Handel, and Mascagni**

*Katrina Zook,
mezzo-soprano soloist*

Thursday, October 7, 2021

7:30 p.m.

Buchanan Center Concert Hall

The University of Wyoming Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Michael Griffith, Music Director

October 7, 2021: First concert of the 2021-2022 season

Dr. Katrina Zook, mezzo-soprano soloist

Die Fledermaus Overture (1874)

Johann Strauss, Jr.
(b. 1825, Vienna, Austria; d. 1899, Vienna)

Die Fledermaus is one of the very few operettas regularly performed by the world's major opera companies. It's funny, sentimental, calls for a skilled comic actor as Frosch, the jailer (who doesn't sing), and has some of the most wonderful light music ever written. It premiered in April of 1874 at the *Theater an der Wien* in Vienna, and had its first New York production only a few months later. There are numerous film versions. I've even seen two different productions at the Metropolitan Opera. The next time the Met offers it as an HD performance, I highly recommend you go to a Laramie movie theater to see it.

The overture uses numerous melodies from the operetta, including a truly great waltz. Remember, Johann Strauss is most famous as a waltz composer, including the apotheosis of this dance, *The Blue Danube Waltz*. The overture is one of few examples of "light" music that is also a staple of the symphonic repertoire.

Recommended recording: Carlos Kleiber leading the Vienna Philharmonic from their 1989 New Year's concert. Perfection!

Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (1913)

Maurice Ravel
(b. 1875, Ciboure, France; d. 1937, Paris)

- I. Soupir (Sigh)
- II. Placet futile (Futile petition)
- III. Surgi de la croupe et du bond (Rising up from its bulge and stem)

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) was an important French poet, influential not only in the literary world but in the visual arts and music as well. His *L'après-midi d'un faune* (*The Afternoon of a Faun*) inspired Debussy's revolutionary *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* in 1894, and both Debussy and Ravel set Mallarmé's words to song.

Setting the French language to music presents challenges. Ravel wrote. "I consider Mallarmé not only the greatest French poet, but also the "only" one, since he has made the French language poetic, which was not intended for poetry. The others...have dealt with the rules and limits of a very precise and formal genre. Mallarmé exorcised this language, as a magician that he was. He liberated winged thoughts, unconscious daydreams, from their prison."

The three poems were dedicated to composer friends of Ravel. *Soupir* was dedicated to Igor Stravinsky, *Placet futile* to Florent Schmitt, and *Surgi de la croupe et du bond* to Erik Satie.

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1. Sigh

My soul rises towards your brow o calm sister, where there lies dreaming
An autumn strewn with russet freckles,
And towards the restless sky of your angelic eye,
As in a melancholy garden,
A white fountain faithfully sighs towards the Azure!
Towards the compassionate azure of pale and pure October,
Which mirrors its infinite languor in the great pools
And, on the stagnant water where the tawny agony
Of the leaves stirs in the wind and digs a cold furrow,
Lets the yellow sun drag itself out in a long ray.

2. Futile Petition

Princess! in envying the fate of a Hebe,
Who appears on this cup at the kiss of your lips,
I use up my ardor, but my modest station is only that of abbé
And I won't even appear nude on the Sévres porcelain.

Since I am not your bewhiskered lapdog,
Nor lozenge, nor rouge, nor affected games,
And since I know that you look on me with indifferent eyesy
Blonde whose divine hairdressers are goldsmiths!

Appoint me ... you whose many raspberried laughs
Are gathered into flocks of docile lambs,
Nibbling at all vows and bleating deliriously,

Appoint me ... in order that Love, with a fan as his wings,
May paint me fingering a flute and lulling this sheepfold,
Princess, appoint me shepherd of your smiles.

3. Rising up from its bulge and stem

Rising up from its bulge and stem
of fragile glassware
- with no flowers to crown its bitter vigil -
the vase's neglected neck stops short.

I do believe the mouths
of my mother and her lover
never drank from the same love-cup
(I, sylph of this cold ceiling).

The vase untouched by any drink
except eternal widowhood
is dying yet never consents

- oh naïve funereal kiss! -
to breathe out anything that might herald
a rose in the darkness.

Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890)

Pietro Mascagni
(b. 1863, Livorno, Italy; d. 1945, Rome)

The tragic opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* takes place in a Sicilian village on Easter Sunday. A young peasant, Turridu, has seduced the beautiful Santuzza, then abandoned her, taking up with the married Lola instead. Santuzza begs Turiddu to return, and when he spurns her on the steps of the village church, she tells Lola's husband about Turiddu and Lola.

At this point we hear this Intermezzo, played with the curtain up before an empty stage. The melody is a hymn heard earlier from the church, starting calmly and gently, then growing in passion and intensity, foreshadowing the inevitable tragedy when Alfio (Lola's husband) and Turridu fight.

Two Arias

George Frideric Handel
(b. Halle, Germany, 1685; d. London 1759)

I. "Verdi prati" from *Alcina* (1735)

Alcina is an opera of illusion: a seductive sorceress, men turned into animals or statues, and an island not nearly as beautiful as it appears. In this aria, Ruggiero sings of the ephemeral nature of such a land, and perhaps of the ephemeral nature of love itself.

Green meadows, pleasant woods,
You will lose your beauty,
Pretty flowers, flowing waters,
your beauty will quickly change.
Green meadows, pleasant woods,
You will lose your beauty.
And when the beloved vision will fade,
everything will change
into the former horrid appearance.

II. "Cangiò d'aspetto il crudo fato" from *Admeto* (1726)

Alcina is partially based on Euripides' *Alcestis*. The Greek hero Hercules visits King Admeto of Thessaly, who is on his deathbed. Admeto's wife, Alceste, sacrifices herself to save her husband, fulfilling a pact offered by a statue of Apollo. Once Admeto has recovered – and before he learns of his wife's death – he sings this aria.

How changed life's vision of cruel fate.
In my chest, I am already reborn.
All is peace!

I no longer feel pain and torment,
My heart returns to joy.

Intermission

Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21 (1800)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(born 1770, Bonn, Germany; died 1827, Vienna)

- I. Adagio molto; Allegro con brio (Very slow, then fast with brilliance)
- II. Andante cantabile con moto (Moderate slow, in a singing manner with motion)
- III. Allegro molto e vivace (Very fast and lively)
- IV. Adagio; Allegro molto e vivace (Slow, then very fast and lively)

What comes to mind when you think of Beethoven? The incredible power of the Fifth? The depth of the Ninth? The grandeur of the Emperor Concerto? The heroism of Fidelio? The irony of the world's greatest composer going deaf?

All are true, of course. But there's a lighter side to him as well. And this first symphony, which he started when he was 25, shows it perfectly. The first and last movements fly by in C major brilliance. Instead of a profound or lyrical slow movement, he chose an elegant 3-4 theme, almost a minuet like his teacher Haydn might have used in a minuet-and-trio 3rd movement. So what does Beethoven do for a 3rd movement? Yes, 3-4 time, but it's fast, faster, fastest, a *scherzo* movement instead.

Still, there are elements of the revolutionary composer to come. Powerfully loud *fortissimo* moments interrupt the light brilliance, often hammered with *sforzando* attacks. The winds and kettledrums have a more prominent role than Haydn or Mozart might have assigned them. The second movement has staggered entrances more similar to a Bach fugue than a symphony. Not all the harmonies are traditional. Theory geeks know it starts with a V⁷ of IV chord, and that in the 4th movement, the second theme takes its own good time finally returning to the tonic key. To our 21st-Century ears, none of these are surprising. In 1800, trust me, they were.

Recommended recording: the Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by George Szell. The clarity and perfect uniformity of Szell/Cleveland still reign supreme decades after it was released.

Dr. Katrina Zook is Professor of Voice, and recently appointed Chair of the Department of Music. She is currently in her 23rd year on the UW faculty. A mezzo-soprano, operatic credits include leading roles in *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Albert Herring*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Recent performances include works with the Laramie Civic Chorus, the Wyoming Symphony, the Cheyenne Symphony, the Larimer Chorale with the Colorado Chamber Orchestra, and chamber music recitals with faculty colleagues. Dr. Zook is a recipient of the Extraordinary Merit in Teaching Award, a Top-Prof Award, an Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award, two PIE Awards (Promoting Intellectual Engagement), and the Seibold Professorship, a year-long sabbatical award during which she studied anatomy and physiology of the voice and observed pedagogy courses and vocology lab work at institutions around the country. Along with colleagues Dr. David L. Jones and Dr. Holly Dalrymple, she is co-founder of the interdisciplinary UW Vocology Lab housed in the Buchanan Center for the Performing Arts. Dr. Zook holds performance degrees from the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, the University of California-Santa Barbara, and the Eastman School of Music.

Looking ahead: the next UWSO concert is November 18: "Salute the Heroes," with Katherine Smith, French horn soloist and Paul Phillips, guest conductor. To see all the Music Department's upcoming events, go to http://www.uwyo.edu/music/upcoming_performances/.

The University of Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, October 2021

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The University of Wyoming Symphony Orchestra operates under the auspices of the Department of Music, Dr. Katrina Zook, Chair, and in the larger realm, within the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Camellia Okpodu, Dean. We thank them for their continued support. With the generous sponsorship of the Symphony Association, we are a member of the Collegiate Division of the League of American Orchestras.

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