

Haydn's "Surprise"

Saturday, January 13 - 8 pm

William Eddins, conductor

Eric Buchmann, violin

Allene Hackleman, horn

Megan Evans, horn

Symphony Prelude, 7 pm on the Upper Circle (Third Level) Lobby with D.T. Baker & John McPherson

RESPIGHI

Gli Uccelli ("The Birds")

(20')*

Preludio

La Colomba

La Gallina

L'Usignuolo

Il Cucu

McPHERSON

Concerto for 2 Horns (*Mountain Triptych*)

(22')*

1. Sunrise

2. Rundle

3. Sunset, Night Sky

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

HAYDN

Symphony No. 94 in G Major "Surprise"

(25')*

Adagio – Vivace assai

Andante

Menuet: Allegro molto

Finale: Allegro di molto

KABALEVSKY

Violin Concerto in C Major, Op.48

(16')*

Allegro molto e con brio

Andante cantabile

Vivace giocoso

program subject to change

*indicates approximate performance duration

Gli uccelli

Ottorino Respighi

(b. Bologna, 1879 / d. Rome, 1936)

First performed: 1928 in São Paulo, Brazil

Last ESO performance: May 2015

Italian composer Ottorino Respighi studied with Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia, learning much about orchestration from him. It stood him in good stead, as many of Respighi's best-known works are his elaborate and sparkling orchestrations of much older pieces. His three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances* are probably the best known, but in 1927, he took five disparate Baroque harpsichord pieces, and fashioned them into a suite which he called *Gli uccelli* ("The Birds"). He added an element of unity to the suite by quoting from movements to come in the opening Preludio, similarly quoting from the Preludio in the suite's final movement.

The Preludio is based on a piece by Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710). The next movement, "The Dove," is an Andante believed to have been composed by French composer Jacques Gallot (1625-c.1695). The next movement, "The Hen," comes from a harpsichord work by the famous French master Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764). Next is "The Nightingale," from an anonymous English source. Last is "The Cuckoo," another work by Pasquini.

Concerto for 2 Horns (*Mountain Triptych*)

John McPherson

(b. Edmonton, 1958)

This is the World Premiere of this piece, a 2017 ESO commission

Program note by the composer:

The primary impulse behind this composition was the desire to fashion a fitting vehicle to feature my dear friends and colleagues, Allene Hackleman and Megan Evans. Their fabulous musicianship, magnificent sounds, and immaculate way they play together served as an abundant source of inspiration.

The secondary influence on this piece arose from the mighty landscape that is the Canadian Rockies. I was fortunate enough to spend three weeks at the Banff Centre last February in splendid isolation focused solely on the writing of this piece. Each morning I would watch the sun rise behind Rundle Mountain out my studio window, and each evening I would watch Venus appear above Sulphur Mountain as the sun set.

Being in a mountain valley seems to connect us directly to the bones of the Earth as well as to a massive time scale that puts our small lives and egos in radical perspective. The inexorable fathomless forces below and above silently impress upon our psyche. Thoughts become images:

1. **Sunrise:** the dark stillness melts away, the mountain glows, the valley stirs and our spirits awaken.
2. **Rundle:** some mountains appear more individual than others and we are drawn to them, what is the timeless, powerful, pressing song they sing to us?
3. **Sunset, Night Sky:** as the lapis lazuli fades to black, the clear sky gently fills with uncountable points of light, and the mountains become shadows sailing across an ocean of stars.

Fundamentally though, this piece is about Joy: the natural existential joy of being in the mountains; the profound joy of making music together; the heartfelt joy of a deep friendship; and the glorious joyousness that is the rich, resplendent, ringing sound of two horns at play.

Symphony No. 94 in G Major "Surprise"

Franz Josef Haydn

(b. Rohrau, Lower Austria, 1732 / d. Vienna, 1809)

First performed: March 23, 1792

Last ESO performance: 1980

While written about one of Haydn's most famous works, tantalizingly nicknamed, this note will contain no "spoilers" for the concert attendee unaware of the reason for this charming symphony's epithet. *Symphony No. 94* is one of the final twelve Haydn wrote which are known as the "London symphonies," written for concert seasons in England, where Haydn had been brought by impresario Johann Peter Salomon toward the end of his life. There, Haydn had extraordinary success, with each new work hailed by both audiences and critics alike.

The *G Major Symphony* was a major triumph, even among all the others. Its jocular nickname notwithstanding, the work opens with an Adagio cantabile of almost solemn ceremony. From it, the Vivace assai leaps out as if from a starter's block. G Major is a key associated in Haydn's time with the outdoors, and there is certainly a boot-stomping folk feel to the timpani's punctuations of the orchestra's triple time gaiety. Moments of a more stern nature are only fleeting, and added for contrast.

The second movement is a set of variations, an Andante in the symphony's home key. The tune of the variations is a simple one – "exaggeratedly naïve," write Richard Wigmore in *Haydn*. But that is intentional of course, the more to play up the diverse natures of the variants. An overly genteel version, for example, is followed by a darkly-hued minor-key version, while fortissimo renditions sandwich one of gossamer tenderness. The final two variations feature a loud and ceremonial presentation, rich with harmonic sophistication, followed by an almost ominous one dominated by an oboe, and rumbling timpani underneath it all.

Like many a Haydn Menuet and Trio, the third movement's main theme, in the dominant G Major, returns us to the countryside, with a Ländler-type dance in 3/4. The trio is a decidedly more sedate affair. The final movement's main theme is presented with restraint at the start, but the overall mood of rough good humour overrides even this Allegro di molto, which "arguably surpasses all his symphonic finales to date in harmonic drama, comic brio, and sheer flamboyance," adds Wigmore. Another unexpected touch is the oddly distant key the music veers off to just as things are about to wrap up, before the radiant final cadence back where it belongs.

Violin Concerto in C Major, Op.48

Dmitri Kabalevsky

(b. St. Petersburg, 1904 / d. Moscow, 1987)

First performed: 1948 in Moscow

Last ESO performance: May 2011

During the Cold War, and indeed even in the first few decades following, composers who found themselves more or less at peace with the Soviet regime were regarded by the west as somehow less deserving of serious attention. Those who fell out of favour, who were charged with the serious offense of writing music which fell under the accusation of "formalism," were seen as rebels against the Soviet authorities, and therefore as more "heroic." But perhaps time and understanding have helped the reputations of composers such as Dmitri Kabalevsky, who seemed to prosper under the Soviet regime. His music had a natural bent toward 19th century idioms and harmonies; that, coupled with his talents for music education made his natural compositional voice one that avoided the strictures directed at many of his contemporaries, such as Shostakovich.

The education aspect of his output encompasses his only *Violin Concerto*, written during a period in which he wrote several works intended to be playable by gifted young performers. Its premiere was given by an 18-year-old prodigy Igor Bezrodny. It begins with a frenzied rhythmic pattern and a persistent hemiola (a pattern in which two bars in triple time are played as if they were three bars in duple time). The pace slows briefly, but the energy is quickly restored, and the challenges to the soloist are ones of articulation and varying rhythmic patterns. The second movement is in an A-B-A form in which the violin takes the lead in the first "A" section, singing a sweetly lyrical theme over gentle pulses in the orchestra. The contrasting "B" section lifts the energy and the pace somewhat, and when the "A" section returns, the main theme is played this time by the orchestra, while the violin takes flight above it. The finale is marked both Vivace ("lively") and giocoso ("jokingly", or "jocularly"), so needless to say, it has dash to spare, beginning mischievously quietly, but soon taking off on a mad dash, which still manages to find time for a brief cadenza before the close.

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