

BERKELEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
NOW

07|08 SEASON

Laura Jackson

CONDUCTOR

**BOTTI
MILHAUD
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV**

Wednesday, April 2, 2008
UC Berkeley Zellerbach Hall

BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2007–08 SEASON



KENT NAGANO, MUSIC DIRECTOR

LAURA JACKSON, CONDUCTOR

JAMES A. KLEINMANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

8:00 pm, Wednesday, April 2, 2008
Zellerbach Hall

DARIUS MILHAUD

La création du monde, Op. 81

SUSAN BOTTI

The Exchange

Thomas Glenn, *tenor*

Wendy Tamis, *harp*

SUSAN BOTTI

Translucence

West Coast Premiere

— INTERMISSION —

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Scheherazade, Op. 35

- I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
- II. The Kalender Prince
- III. The Young Prince and Princess
- IV. Festival at Baghdad – the Sea

Season Sponsors

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Support for Berkeley Symphony's Music Director search is provided by
the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation,
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Presentation bouquets are graciously provided by Jutta's Flowers.

Tonight's concert will be broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM,
Sunday, September 14, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.

Berkeley Symphony is a member of the League of American Orchestras
and the Association of California Symphony Orchestras.

Program Notes

La création du monde, Op. 81

DARIUS MILHAUD (1892–1974)

Milhaud was born in Aix-en-Provence, France, and died in Geneva, Switzerland. La création du monde is scored in the style of jazz bands as an ensemble of soloists, including 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, horn, 2 trumpets, trombone, piano, large battery of percussion, 2 solo violins, saxophone (taking the viola's traditional place), cello and bass. The work was premiered in Paris by the Ballet Suédois on October 25, 1923. Duration ca. 16 min.

Often considered a folklorist, Milhaud succeeded in achieving a synthesis between popular culture and high art. Not only did he draw extensively on his native Provençal culture for his compositions, but he assimilated North and South American music—exemplified by *Le boeuf sur le toit* (*The ox of the roof*), *Kentuckiana*, *Carnaval à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, *Le bal martiniquais* (*The Martinique ball*), and tonight's selection, *La création du monde* (*The creation of the world*).

Milhaud was particularly attracted by jazz, as were many composers just after World War I. The instrumentation, the rhythms, and the melodies all appealed to him; moreover, because of his Jewish heritage, he identified with jazz, a music of another dispossessed and persecuted race.

He had first been exposed to jazz when he heard an American band playing in London. In 1922 he arrived in New York for a series of U.S. engagements and absorbed as much jazz as he could, from

the Leo Reisman band and Paul Whiteman orchestra to the bands in Harlem clubs.

Back in Paris he was asked to create a ballet for Swedish producer Rolf de Maré, in collaboration with writer Blaise Cendrars, scene designer Fernand Léger, and choreographer Jean Börlin. Two years before, Cendrars had published an anthology of black folklore, which included *Cosmogonic Legends*. From this section he fashioned the scenario of the ballet, summarized by Claude Rostand as follows:

Heaven and earth have just separated. Nzamé, Mébère and N'Kwa, the three creation deities, stand in a dramatic setting high in the mountains. They perform magic incantations, then depart. The Great Fetishes appear and create the insects and the apes. The birds of rain pass across the stage. The animals begin to form a circle which slowly turns into a dance around the inner group of birth-giving beings crowded into the middle of the scene. At each turn a new creature rushes out from the center, mingling with the dance, which he leads in his turn. The Nguids, the Imprecators, the Sorcerers, the Hypnotists, the Vampyrs and the Fetishists, male and female, join in the dance, which builds up to the point of frenzy. The deities disappear at the sound of a great tam-tam. The circle stops and opens. A monstrous leg appears, backs stretch, a hairy head is seen, two arms reach forth, two breasts stand out: it is Man, it is Woman—

Sékoumé and Mbongwé. They stand facing each other. The dance begins again, very calm. The couple is lost in a kiss, transported as if by a wave. Moon and stars begin to glow: it is the springtime of human existence.

Léger's scenery and costumes were based on primitive African art. Milhaud found here the perfect chance to employ the jazz idioms that he had been assimilating, in conjunction with traditional "art music" techniques, such as the fugue that begins after the "overture" as the curtain rises.

At the time, Milhaud's music was criticized as frivolous and more suited to the popular dance hall than the ballet theater or concert hall. However, as Milhaud wrote in his autobiography *Notes without Music*: "Ten years later the selfsame critics were discussing the philosophy of jazz and learnedly demonstrating that *La création* was the best of my works."

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The Exchange and Translucence

SUSAN BOTTI (b. 1962)

The Exchange is scored for solo tenor with harp. Duration ca. 6 min. Translucence is scored for a standard-sized orchestra, including a variety of woodwind instruments: 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo, one doubling alto flute), 2 oboes, English horn, clarinets in E-flat and B-flat, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 percussionists, timpani, harp, and strings. The percussion players perform on cymbals, tam tam, sandpaper blocks, triangle, cowbell, rattle, temple block, marimba, and glockenspiel. Translucence was commissioned by The Cleveland

Orchestra and premiered in May 2005. Duration ca. 12 min.

The composer has provided the following comments:

The concept for *Translucence* evolved from a poem, "The Exchange," by May Swenson. I originally set this poem for tenor and harp [to be performed this evening by Thomas Glenn and Wendy Tamis]. Although the song was premiered in 2003, I had not yet had the opportunity to hear it performed when I began *Translucence*. The poem remained active in my imagination . . . and was still generating inspiration:

"The Exchange" by May Swenson

*Now, my body flat, the ground
breathes. I'll be the grass.*

*Populous and mixed is mind.
Earth, take thought. My mind, be moss.*

*Field, go walking. I, a disk
will look down with seeming eye.*

*I will be time, and study to be evening.
You, world, be thought.*

*I will stand, a tree, here,
Never to know another spot.*

*Wind, be motion. Birds, be passion.
Water, invite me to your bed.*

For my commission from The Cleveland Orchestra, I wanted to create a strongly lyrical piece. The words/images of "The Exchange" and my previous musical setting of it became the materials with which I would explore the poem on a symphonic scale.

Translucence is one continuous movement, but there are two parts. The first part is an abstract exploration of certain images from the poem—a journey through which to pass before arriving at the second part, which is based on the

song itself. Some images are prominent: a murmur that builds into a complex mix of voices (“Populous and mixed is mind”), and multiple string parts with superimposed wind and brass layers, released into a kind of plea (“Earth, take thought”). This leads to a rhythmic section (“I will be time”) which is an earthly dance.

Although the song is greatly expanded—exploded is perhaps a better term—and reinterpreted, I wanted to retain its essence, its lyricism and my direct reaction to the powerful poem. The meaning of the word “translucence”—a passing of light—is expressed in different layers. Poetry is the light that inspired the music. May Swenson’s original concept of “exchange” could be the transfer of the body to nature (the poem is inscribed on her gravestone). And finally, *Translucence* is dedicated to my mother, whose name, Claire, translates as “light.”

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Scheherazade, Op. 35

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844–1908)

Scored for a standard-sized orchestra of 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, and strings, as well as a large percussion section consisting of 5 players plus a timpanist. Duration ca. 44 min.

The collection of ancient Persian-Indian-Arabian tales *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* or *A Thousand and One Nights* has fascinated children and adults for centuries. Arranged in its present format as early as 1450, probably in Cairo, the collection was first introduced to the European world in French in 1704

by Antoine Galland, whose free rendering of the oldest known manuscript of 1548 came out in twelve volumes spanning fourteen years. Many translations later appeared and the immense popularity of the work continued into the nineteenth century, when Rimsky-Korsakov was inspired to compose his symphonic suite *Scheherazade*. Written in the summer of 1888 at Nyezhgovity, Rimsky’s summer place on the shore of Lake Cheryemenyetskoye, the musical work has become almost as well known as its literary inspiration.

Rimsky-Korsakov did not initially pursue the career of a composer. He first took a position in the Russian Navy, following in the footsteps of his brother, twenty-two years his senior. He sailed aboard the clipper *Almaz* as a midshipman for two-and-a-half years, a tour that took him to England, the Baltic, the Eastern United States, Brazil, and the Mediterranean. His autobiography (published posthumously in 1908 and heavily edited by his widow) contains a wonderful travelogue of his sailing adventure: awe at the magnificence of Niagara Falls, notice of the American Civil War, tropical nights on the ocean, exotic places in and around Rio de Janeiro, and the unforgettable luminosity of the Sargasso Sea. By the end of these years, Rimsky wrote, he hardly remembered that he had ever been a musician. He had become “an officer-dilettante who sometimes enjoyed playing or listening to music.” This trip fostered the composer’s lifelong interest in foreign and exotic places. The rich panorama of orchestral colors and the “sea pictures” in *Scheherazade* owe almost as much to Rimsky’s sailing adventure as to *The Arabian Nights*.

Rimsky-Korsakov prefaced the score of *Scheherazade* with the following telescoped version of the story that frames the great collection:

The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the perfidy and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her own life by interesting him in the tales she told him through 1001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan continually put off her execution, and at last abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Scheherazade relate to him, citing the verses of poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale and story into story.

The composer at one time gave programmatic titles for the four movements of the symphonic suite, but later withdrew them because they were too definite in associating various themes with specific characters and incidents. After all, the piece takes on its own artistic life, musically connecting what were once unrelated episodes from the stories through frequent recurrences of certain thematic material. The same thematic material often serves for different literary connotations, which, as Rimsky realized, wreaks havoc on attempts to tie the music to a specific program. The Scheherazade motive, introduced by the solo violin, is the only one that holds up with regard to a program. Even the commanding opening motive that could be said to be the sultan returns later in places unlikely to relate to

the same character. Referring to the discarded programmatic headings (the sea and Sinbad’s ship, the fantastic narrative of the Prince Kalender, the Prince and the Princess, the Baghdad festival and the ship dashing against the rock with the bronze rider upon it—all of which are nevertheless retained in this evening’s concert program page), Rimsky wrote in his autobiography:

In composing *Scheherazade* I meant these hints to direct but slightly the hearer’s fancy on the path which my own fancy had traveled. . . . All I had desired was that the hearer . . . should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements.

This suite, in which almost every instrument of the orchestras is featured, along with the *Capriccio espagnol* and *Russian Easter Overture* exemplify Rimsky’s virtuosity in orchestration, which at this point, he was proud to say, had not been influenced by Wagner. They were in fact his last important purely orchestral works, after which he became almost exclusively an opera composer.

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Berkeley Akademie Ensemble

Thursday, May 1, 2008 | Kent Nagano & Stuart Canin

C.P.E. Bach, Symphony in C Major

Igor Stravinsky, *Apollon Musagète*

Wolfgang A. Mozart, “Posthorn” Serenade

8PM at First Congregational Church

The final program of Berkeley Akademie Ensemble’s debut season features violin luminary Stuart Canin leading the first half of the program from the concertmaster chair.