

BERKELEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
NOW

07/08 SEASON

A watercolor painting of a woman in traditional attire, possibly a mariachi singer, wearing a white blouse with a red and green floral pattern and a white hat with a red band. She is holding a red instrument, likely a violin or viola. The background features a bright yellow sun, a green palm tree, and a landscape with mountains and a body of water. The style is soft and painterly.

Guillermo Figueroa

CONDUCTOR

SIERRA
BERLIOZ
DVOŘÁK

Thursday, March 13, 2008
UC Berkeley Zellerbach Hall

BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2007-08 SEASON



KENT NAGANO, MUSIC DIRECTOR

GUILLERMO FIGUEROA, CONDUCTOR

JAMES A. KLEINMANN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

8:00 pm, Thursday, March 13, 2008
Zellerbach Hall

ROBERTO SIERRA

Borikén

U.S. Premiere

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Les nuits d'été (Summer Nights)

Villanelle

The Specter of the Rose

On the Lagoons: Lament

Absence

At the Cemetery: Moonlight

The Unknown Isle

Gabriela Garcia, mezzo-soprano

— INTERMISSION —

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Poco adagio

III. Scherzo. Vivace

IV. Finale. Allegro

Season Sponsors

Kathleen G. Henschel



Support for Berkeley Symphony's Music Director search is provided by
the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation,
the James C. Irvine Foundation,
and the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.

**Tonight's concert will be broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM,
Sunday, June 8, 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

Borikén

ROBERTO SIERRA (b. 1953)

Scored for 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, strings, timpani, 4 percussionists, harp, and piano. Duration ca. 10 min.

The composer has provided the following comments:

Borikén was commissioned by the Festival Casals to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Throughout the work one can hear in a passacaglia manner a motive which consists of four descending notes. This motive (also known as the *Antillean cadence*) is present in most Puerto Rican folkloric and popular songs. Since this is the germinating material for the work, I used for the title our most authentic name for the Puerto Rico: *Borikén*.

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Les nuits d'été (Summer nights), op. 7

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-69)

Born in La Côte-Saint-André, Isère, December 11, 1803; died in Paris, March 8, 1869. Scored for 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, strings, and harp. Duration ca. 31 min.

The origins and inspirations for some of the most ravishing songs in the repertory are somewhat obscure. Berlioz composed *Les nuits d'été*—originally for voice with piano—in 1840–41 following his dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette*. The date March 23, 1840 appears on a manuscript copy of

“Villanelle” and the cycle of six songs was published in the summer of 1841, but Berlioz never mentions them in his letters around this time. These are love songs of the highest Romantic order—Romantic referring to the period that saw the rise of *lied*, or *mélodie*, as the ideal genre to express the countless images of buoyant hope, insatiable longing, and heartbreak that permeated Romantic poetry. Were *Les nuits d'été* really inspired by Berlioz’s mistress, Marie Martin (stage name Recio)?

Berlioz began seeing Marie around this time and she accompanied him on his travels of 1842–43. Well aware of her limitations as a singer—she lasted only one season at the Paris Opéra—he still wrote vaguely positive reviews of several of her performances. She was the most frequent performer of “Absence,” the fourth song in the cycle, which he orchestrated specifically for her. Yet the many references to past love affairs and separations in the cycle make it difficult to link the settings too specifically with Marie. And one would almost rather attribute these gorgeous outpourings to any other inspiration, in view of his unhappiness under her tenacious, jealous hold and her insistence on performing on his concerts over his opposition.

Perhaps it was simple admiration for the poems of his friend and fellow critic Théophile Gautier that inspired Berlioz to such heights. He selected six poems from Gautier’s *La comédie de la mort* (*The comedy of death*)—two of a lighthearted nature, which he positioned first and last, and four in a more melancholy vein. The composer provided his own title, drawn from the poet’s images of night. The first song, “Villanelle,” is clearly a “daylight” song, but it sets up the happiness that will later turn to despair. Images of night appear

repeatedly in the interior songs, even though “summer nights” are not specifically mentioned. In “La spectre de la rose” the ghost of a rose returns nightly to haunt the dreams of a young woman who wore it to a ball. In “Sur les lagunes” (On the lagoons), night envelops the lamenting lover. “Au cimetière: Clair de lune” (At the cemetery: moonlight) explicitly occurs at night, but also includes lovely images of shade and sunset.

In 1843 Berlioz orchestrated “Absence” as a kind of appeasement offering to Marie, and she performed this version several times. It was not until 1856, however, that he orchestrated another of the songs, choosing “Spectre de la rose” for a February engagement with mezzo-soprano Anna Bockholtz-Falconi. Ecstatic over the performance, publisher Jakob Rieter-Biedermann asked Berlioz to orchestrate the remaining songs. The new versions were published later that year, each dedicated to a different singer who had impressed him in roles he had written. One wonders how it struck Marie (whom he had married in 1854) to learn that *her* “Absence” had been dedicated to Madeleine Nottès, his Marguerite in *Faust*. The songs have been performed countless times since and have long since been considered among Berlioz’s finest creations.

The infectious merriment of “Villanelle” owes to the simplicity of its melody and to the lightly repeated chords in the winds—an effect Berlioz had commented on in the second movement of Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony. Especially effective are the ends of the second and third verses (the first contains the same musical phrase, but without tempo fluctuations). In the second the music slows at “*et dis moi de ta voix si doux*” (and say to me in your soft voice), then resumes in a rush with “*toujours*” (always). The third verse’s lovely image of returning with strawberries picked in the woods doesn’t really warrant the slowing and speeding up, but we are happy to hear the device again.

The atmosphere changes immediately for “Spectre de la rose,” which employs

longer spun out phrases and a delicate orchestral texture of solo muted cello, paired flute and clarinet, and muted violin and viola background. The haunting images of the poem are made more poignant by Berlioz’s touches of nostalgic sweetness. Leaps are employed with tender expressiveness, and he finds just the right orchestral touches, as in the string tremolos at “*Ce léger parfum est mon âme*” (This faint perfume is my soul). He ends ingeniously in simple recitative as the poet bestows his epitaph with a kiss.

“Sur les lagunes,” the only minor-mode setting, presents a dark mood with its mournful half-step motive and repetitive accompaniment figure, which suggests the undulating of a boat on water. The grief-stricken lover cries out in a dramatic descent at the end of each verse: “*Ah, sans amour s’en aller sur la mer!*” (Ah, without love to depart on the sea!) The song ends on an unresolved harmony—at sea, as it were.

“Absence” also dwells on bereavement, that of separation, with the most exquisite lingering over the opening phrase. This phrase, which opens the refrain and therefore returns twice, is haunting in its unusual harmonization and its straining upward. The refrain also contains one of the most agonizingly beautiful peaks anywhere, leading to and attaining the word “*loin*” (far). The intervening episodes contribute to the drama by building in a chanting style, the second at a higher pitch level than the first.

Gentle pulsation characterizes the opening and closing sections of “Au cimetière,” with subtle harmonic shifts between major and minor. The middle section becomes more agitated (verses 3 and 4), and Berlioz makes a fitting response to the poet’s words about music bringing back a memory. The ending contains some gently clashing dissonances to reflect the “*chant plaintif*” (plaintive song).

Berlioz exuberantly portrays the high spirits and exoticism of the poet’s “*L’île inconnue*” (Unknown isle). We also hear undulating waves and the breeze whipping up. A hint of reflection follows the sailor’s

admission to his fair companion that the faithful shore of eternal love is little known. Anywhere else is fair game, suggests the cheerful conclusion as the wind picks up and the waves are set in motion again.

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Symphony No. 7 in D minor, B. 141, op. 70

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Born in Nelahozeves, near Kralupy, September 8, 1841; died in Prague, May 1, 1904. Scored for 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, strings, and timpani. Duration ca. 35 min.

"Now I am occupied by my new symphony for London, and wherever I go I have nothing else in mind but my work, which must be such as to make a stir in the world and God grant that it may!" wrote Dvořák to his friend Judge Rus in 1884 about his Symphony No. 7 in D minor. Dvořák had just been made an honorary member of the London Philharmonic Society and was therefore invited to compose a symphony and to conduct the first performance. Stimulated by Brahms's Third Symphony, which he had recently heard in Berlin, Dvořák had ambition for special success with this Symphony. Not only did he want to compose a work of equal stature, but he wanted Brahms's personal expectations of him to be fulfilled.

There does seem to be a special kinship between Dvořák's Seventh and Brahms's Third Symphony, just as there had been between Dvořák's Sixth and Brahms's Second. The first movements of Dvořák's Seventh and Brahms's Third both share a feeling of "six," that is, 6/8 meter in Dvořák and 6/4 in Brahms. In both, the frequent emphasis on groups of three often imparts the feeling of a fast waltz. In the last movement, Dvořák's syncopated, repeated-note horn passages remind us of similar passages

in Brahms's finale. Though Wagner is often regarded as Brahms's antithesis, his influence was all-pervasive: here Dvořák quotes the famous *Tristan* chord in the coda of the first movement and makes further references to *Tristan* in the lovely slow movement. Renowned music scholar, pianist, and composer Donald Francis Tovey wrote of this movement that the horns and clarinet "play the parts of a rustic Tristan and Isolde to a crowd of orchestral witnesses."

Dvořák completed the orchestration of the score on March 17, 1885, but so eager were the public and the orchestra to hear the new work that rehearsal on the first movement had begun before the last movement was completed. The Symphony was a great success at its first performance on April 22, 1885, at St. James Hall. Many consider this passionate, serious work Dvořák's greatest symphony, even surpassing his popular *New World* Symphony. Tovey ranked it on a par with Brahms's four symphonies and the *Great C* major Symphony of Schubert.

The Symphony opens with a brooding, energetic Allegro maestoso in traditional sonata form that sets the solemn tone for the whole work. The slow movement in F major contains a hymnlike opening (recalled at the end), poignant motives for flute, clarinet, and horn, and a particularly beautiful cello melody. The hauntingly restless Scherzo is based on the *furiant*, a Czech folk dance often adapted by Dvořák for his scherzo movements. Its marked rhythm begun by the upper strings is pitted against the soaring, chromatic melody of the lower instruments. Dvořák created striking effects by taking contrasting rhythmic patterns from folk dances and using them simultaneously instead of sequentially. The mood of tragedy returns immediately in the Finale with the first subject played by the cellos, horns, and clarinets. This Allegro again follows sonata form, with a warm second subject emerging in the cellos. It takes a triumphant turn only in the final bars, ending majestically in the major key.

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BERKELEY SYMPHONY 07 | 08 Season



Wednesday, April 2, 2008 | Laura Jackson

Susan Botti, *Translucence*
Darius Milhaud, *La Création du Monde*
Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*

8PM at UC Berkeley Zellerbach Hall

Laura Jackson, most recently with the Atlanta Symphony, closes the first part of Berkeley Symphony's Music Director search with three lyrical works inspired by ideas from myth and literature.



Berkeley Akademie Ensemble

Thursday, May 1, 2008 | Kent Nagano

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.

Under Construction

*It's like open mic night . . .
with full orchestral!*



Sunday, March 16, 7pm | Berkeley City Club

Guillermo Figueroa, conductor

Inspired by dance:

New works by David Graves, Sue-Hye Kim, and Elizabeth Lim

Sunday, March 30, 7pm | First Congregational Church of Berkeley

Laura Jackson, conductor

Inspired by spring:

New works by David Graves, Sue-Hye Kim, and Elizabeth Lim

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