

~ The Apollo Ensemble Presents ~

A concert featuring the music of Mozart,
Mendelssohn, and Sibelius



The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Elias Miller, Conductor

Saturday, 17 August 2019 at 8:00 PM
Boston Latvian Lutheran Church
58 Irving St, Brookline, MA

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Violin I

Carlo Mauricio (Concertmaster)
Dorisiya Yosifova
Meghan Titzer
Dekel Luban

Violin II

Leonardo Espinosa (Principal)
Toshi Motoyama
Stan Mah
Regina Cheung

Viola

Arjun Mudan (Principal)
Ken Allen
Veronica Koven-Matasy
Noah Li

Cello

Max Ellsworth (Principal)
Stephanie Wingfield
Nolan Peard
Iverson Eliopoulos

Bass

Jessi Eisdorfer (Principal)
Martha Davis

Key:

- ω – First in *Hebrides Overture*
- ψ – First in *Valse Triste*
- δ – First in *Posthorn Serenade*
- β – Posthorn Solo

Flute

Michael Tabak^{ωδ}
Joanne Wheeler^ψ

Oboe

Matt Mitcheltree^δ
Corey Sweeney^ω

Clarinet

Abby Loutzenhisler^ω
Steve Umans^ψ

Bassoon

Shu Satoh^δ
Michael Meehan^ω

Horn

Jimmy Zhou^{ψδ}
Angela Chi^ω

Trumpet

Patrick Sanguineti^{ωψβ}
Don Mitchell

Timpani

Jeremy Lang^{ωψδ}

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~ Program ~

The Hebrides, Overture (Fingal's Cave)

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809 - 1847)

Valse Triste

Jean Sibelius

(1865 - 1957)

Serenade No. 9 in D Major K. 320, "Posthorn"

W.A. Mozart

1. Adagio maestoso, Allegro con spirito
2. Minuetto & Trio
3. Concertante: Andante grazioso
4. Rondeau: Allegro ma non troppo
5. Andantino
6. Minuetto
 - a. Trio I
 - b. Trio II
7. Finale: Presto

(1756 -1791)

~ Notes ~

Mendelssohn:

On the coast of Staffa, an uninhabited island in Scotland's Inner Hebrides, lies Fingal's Cave, a basalt sea cave famous for its hexagonally jointed mineral columns. The cave's stunning geometric formations have mesmerized generations of explorers, artists, and other visitors. Felix Mendelssohn was no exception, and when he visited the site on a trip to the British Isles in 1829, he found himself moved to write a piece that would evoke the cave's majestic beauty.

Mendelssohn set *The Hebrides* in a somewhat standard sonata form with an abbreviated recapitulation and an extended coda. The music begins with languid, descending melodic gestures in the low strings and bassoons in B minor. A melody rises, and the low strings take on a series of undulating sixteenth notes, perhaps symbolizing the rolling waves off the Scottish coast. After a transition featuring beautiful wind melodies overlaid contrapuntally atop the descending motives in the low strings, the cellos and bassoons state a gorgeous second theme in the key of the relative major. The drama builds until the overture's development begins with a brief brass fanfare. During this section, we hear the opening motives transformed into more militaristic-sounding material and displayed in a variety of sequential passages. The retransition features whirring sixteenth note scales in the strings and culminates in an intense chromatic ascent for the full orchestra. Finally, the overture's opening music returns in a brief recapitulation. The clarinet performs the second theme in the key of E major. By the time the music returns to B minor, the coda has already begun with a brief fugato. It is during the coda that the music achieves its most dramatic form, rivaling that of any piece in the repertoire for climactic intensity.

Mendelssohn completed his first draft of the overture in 1830, calling it "The Lonely Island." At age 21, he had already written several of his more famous works (including his overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and his *String Octet*). *The Hebrides* thus

represented the second of Mendelssohn's concert overtures – overtures not intended to precede staged works. Unhappy with the work, he continued to edit it until 1832, creating several versions and changing the overture's name to "The Hebrides" in the process. While Mendelssohn was definitely inspired by Fingal's Cave, it was most likely a publisher who added "Fingal's Cave" as a subtitle. Mendelssohn dedicated the work to King Frederick William IV of Prussia (then the Crown Prince of Prussia). While there were earlier performances of the work, Mendelssohn himself conducted the premiere of the piece in its final version in Berlin in 1833. It is this version that we will perform today.

Sibelius:

In 1903, famed Finnish writer Arvid Järnefelt finished his play *Kuomela* ("Death") and asked his brother-in-law, Jean Sibelius, if he would provide some incidental music for the work. Sibelius obliged and wrote six pieces for the production including *Tempo di valse lente* – *Poco risoluto*. Sibelius revised this piece the following year and renamed it *Valse Triste*. As a concert piece, the work proved to be an immediate success with audiences, and it remains one of Sibelius' most famous works.

Kuomela is a grim story of two deaths. Unlike many of Järnefelt's other works, which represent a form of Russian realism, the play contains more than a touch of expressionism and magic. As the play opens, we meet Paavali, a young boy, and his sickly mother. While Paavali's mother sleeps, she dreams of music and dancers. She tries to join in with the dancing, but Death knocks on the door and enters. Taking the form of Paavali's late father, Death disperses the spectral dancers and claims Paavali's mother's soul. Death does not return until the end of the third and final act. This time it comes for Paavali, taking the form of his mother. Death stands by holding a scythe as Paavali's house burns to the ground with him inside of it. It is the dance music of Paavali's mother's dream, the play's first moment of incidental music, for which Sibelius composed *Valse Triste*.

Mozart:

During the 18th century, it was quite common for composers to write various Serenades, Divertimentos, and Cassations, using these titles somewhat interchangeably. The works typically featured a series of upbeat movements for orchestra including some dance-forms and some movements for soloists. There's no doubt, however, that Mozart's "Posthorn" Serenade is a significantly more substantial work than the average serenade. In full, the piece clocks in around 45 minutes, and, while most of its movements are set in major keys, it includes a dark and dramatic andantino in D minor. The work opens with a full-scale sonata form followed by a brief minuet and trio. Next, two movements, the concertante and rondeau, showcase the orchestra's wind instruments. Following the andantino, the second minuet contains solos for two unusual instruments. A piccolo, an instrument used only extremely rarely in orchestral music at this time, plays the solo line in this minuet's first trio section, while the famous "posthorn" takes up an extensive solo in the second trio. The posthorn was the instrument that 18th and 19th century mail coach drivers played to alert various towns to the arrival of the post. While posthorns were not uniform, they were generally brass instruments with circular shapes. Today, this solo is most often performed on trumpet or cornet, and it will be performed today on trumpet.

While the exact occasion for which Mozart wrote this serenade remains unknown, it is likely that the work was commissioned for a graduation ceremony. After all, Mozart completed the work on August 3rd in 1779 and referred to it as a "Finalmusik." At this time, there existed at the Salzburg University a tradition that involved graduating students commissioning compositions in early August while they were completing their final exams. They would then present the new works for their favorite teachers and the Archbishop. While Franz Peter Niemetschek, an earlier biographer of Mozart, claimed that work was composed to celebrate the Archbishop's feast day, most scholars today agree with the former explanation.

~ Biographical Notes ~

Conductor:

Elias Miller has established a reputation as one of Boston's leading young conductors and orchestra builders. As music co-director of the Harvard Early Music Society from 2016 until 2019 (alongside renowned keyboardist and early music scholar Christopher Grills), Miller conducted a series of critically acclaimed operatic productions in the Boston area including performances of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the Boston premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Alcide al Birio* in collaboration with the Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, the North American premiere of Telemann's 1745 *Johannespassion*, a production that featured famed countertenor Charles Humphries and earned Miller an enthusiastic preview in the *Boston Globe*, and, most recently, the North American premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Sanctus Petrus et Sancta Maria Magdalena*.

Miller cofounded the Apollo Ensemble of Boston with flutist Michael Tabak in May of 2018, and this is Miller's fifth concert to date with the new orchestra. Miller's other conducting highlights from the past year include appearances with the University of Michigan's University Philharmonia and Campus Philharmonia orchestras, the Ann Arbor Camerata, and the Weston Wind Quintet & Friends as well as an independent opera production at the University of Michigan during which Miller conducted two staged performances of William Grant Still's *Minette Fontaine*. Other ensembles he has conducted in the past include the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra Chamber Players, the Chromos Collaborative Orchestra, the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players, and Harvard College Opera. He has also served as the assistant conductor of the Boston Chamber Symphony.

Originally a cellist, Miller graduated from Harvard University summa cum laude in 2016 after transferring there from the New England Conservatory/Tufts University Dual Degree Program. He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in orchestral conducting at the University of Michigan where he studies with Kenneth Kiesler. Miller's past

conducting teachers include his father, David Alan Miller, conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra, and Federico Cortese, conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. Outside of conducting, Miller performs actively as a collaborative pianist, accompanying singers and instrumentalists on a variety of lessons, masterclasses, and recitals.

Cofounder:

Michael Tabak studied flute, theory, and ensemble at the Juilliard School of Music Preparatory Division where he was rated “Exceptional” by the woodwind faculty jury and was principal flute and soloist multiple times with the orchestra. He has been principal flute of orchestras including the National High School Symphony at Interlochen, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Fine Arts Symphony, the Boston Chamber Symphony, and others. An avid chamber musician, he is a founding member of the Weston Wind Quintet, the Atrium Winds, and the Aujourd’hui Ensemble. He has displayed a talent for assembling orchestras and chamber groups from scratch. While in high school, he organized and was flutist of the Long Island Wind Quintet, whose oboist became principal oboe of the Munich Philharmonic and whose clarinetist became principal clarinet of the Atlanta Symphony. He recruited the members of the Boston Chamber Symphony from its inception in 2012 through 2016, and often expands his chamber music groups to play pieces for larger ensembles. Live recordings of many of those concerts are available, free of charge, at soundcloud.com/wwq/ sets.

~ A Note of Thanks ~

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