

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Violin I

Paul Navratil,
Concertmaster
Gillian Arnott
Maureen Davis
Elizabeth Hong
Barbara Horn
Hyun-Soo Kim
Saeko Russell
Jake Wrubel

Violin II

Kay Berris
Cheryl Bayline
Susan Cutlip
Amanda Fish
Michael Geigert
Scott Lehmann
Jennie Macione
Mary Lou Morrison
Dianne Tewksbury

Viola

Ryan Deguzis
Cheryl Chase
Barbara Gibson
Barbara Glenister
Alison Palm
Don Shankweiler

Cello

Sondra Boyer
Katherine Arzt
Cathleen Hammel
John Lenard
David Olson
Alex Renner
Aramis Ruiz
Elizabeth Zambrano

Bass

Liz Davis-Porter
Scott Chaurette
Max Phillips
Charles Seivard
Fred Wengrzynek

Flute

Lauren Bonavitacola
Joan D'Auria

Oboe

Althea Madigan
Helen Zincavage

Clarinet

Rick Bennett
Shannon Copeland

Bassoon

Peggy Church
Bill Clark

Horn

Virginia Eurich
David Hiscox
Beth Pratt
Kurt Scimone

Trumpet

Sam Eurich
Bob Lemons
Ed Pitkin

Trombone

Brendon Foley
Joshua Lucenti
Kevin Tracy

Timpani

Mallory Bagwell

WILLIMANTIC ORCHESTRA

David H. Vaughan, Conductor

SPRING CONCERT

7:00 P.M., Saturday, 24 April 2010

Shafer Auditorium, ECSU, Willimantic

PROGRAM

Christoph Gluck Overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* (rev. Wagner)

Camille Saint-Saëns *Cello Concerto No. 1 in a*

David Olson, Cello

Allegro ma non troppo – Allegretto con moto – Tempo 1

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms *Symphony No. 1 in c*

I. Un poco sostenuto – Allegro

II. Andante sostenuto

III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso

IV. Adagio – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)

Born in Bohemia to a line of foresters, Gluck pursued quite a different career path, achieving renown in his lifetime as Europe's foremost composer of operas (some 45 of them). Details of his musical training are sketchy, but he seems to have been introduced to music in school as a child—music educators take note! The libretto of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, composed in 1774 for the Paris Opera, is based on Jean Racine's reworking (1674) of Euripides' drama (c. 408 BCE). According to legend, the goddess Artemis, annoyed with Agamemnon for some reason, checks the winds that would permit the Greek fleet to sail from Aulis to Troy, demanding the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to release them. After agonizing over this dilemma, Agamemnon sends for Iphigenia on the pretext that she is to marry Achilles. Achilles' anger over being used in this stratagem threatens to break up the Greek alliance. Realizing what is at stake, Iphigenia overcomes her dismay and agrees to the sacrifice. In Euripides' play, Artemis unaccountably substitutes a deer for Iphigenia as the sword comes down, spiriting her off to the island of Tauris (where, alas, more trials await); in Gluck's opera, Artemis quixotically decides to forget the whole thing and shows up to preside at the marriage of Iphigenia and Achilles.

In 1847, Richard Wagner revised and re-orchestrated Gluck's opera, supplying a concert ending for its overture; it is this version that is played today. Wagner hears the theme of the slow introduction as a 'motive of appeal from anguish of the heart', which is swept aside by a majestic 'motive of power and imperious demand' (strings and bassoons) that announces the following allegro section. Here, according to him, two other motives—'grace and maidenly tenderness' (flutes and violins), 'sorrow and agonizing pity' (violins and oboe)—vie with the power motive. In Wagner's coda, appeal is again set against power.

Cello Concerto in a, Op. 33 Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)

Born in Paris, Saint-Saëns was introduced to the piano as a toddler by his great aunt. It was soon apparent that he had extraordinary musical gifts: an account of his contribution—at age 4!—to a drawing-room performance of a Beethoven sonata for violin and piano speaks of his "surprising musical instinct and aptitude. . . for seizing, with perfect accuracy and a refined touch, on everything that is impressive in the melody, rhythm and harmony." He would become a virtuoso pianist and organist, and a composer who—if not in the same class as Mozart, whom he revered—turned out accomplished works in every musical genre.

Throughout his life, Saint-Saëns was something of a contrarian, defending musical quality (as he saw it) from musical fashion. Early on, he championed the music of Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner as a breath of fresh air in the stuffy atmosphere of French music; later, he would organize the Société Nationale de Musique to promote music by French composers as an antidote to the Wagner-worship then in vogue. He took an unfashionable interest in the music of the past, scorning the popular view that it had been superceded by recent developments. Commenting on impressionism in music (Debussy, *et al.*), he wrote: "For me, music is an art that has its laws, its grammar, its syntax, things which are disregarded in a world where it is sought only to conjure up impressions, to create ambiances and 'atmospheres.'" Atonalism was even worse: "the man who

abandons all keys and piles up dissonances which he neither introduces nor concludes. . . grunts his way through music as a pig through a flower garden." (*Ecole Buissonnière*, 1913)

Along with the *Cello Sonata in c* (Op. 32), this concerto was written in 1872, just after the death of Saint-Saëns' great-aunt. It comprises a "single movement in three sections: an exposition and development, an allegretto, and a finale which recapitulates the opening theme but substitutes new material for the second subject. . . . The allegretto. . . is a delicate minuet on muted staccato strings that suggests a ghostly evocation of an eighteenth century drawing room . . . with the composer commenting across the years in the form of a counter-theme by the soloist. If Saint-Saëns was here thinking of his beloved great-aunt and the oft-recounted days of her youth, it is a touchingly dainty tribute to her memory." (Steven Stubb, *Saint-Saëns: a critical biography*)

Cellist **David Olson** appears today as the winner of the Windham Regional Arts Council's 2009 Young Artist Competition. He began studying violin at age 3, switching to cello with Tom Calabro at the Community School of the Arts five years later after hearing him play the instrument at a string quartet concert. He currently studies with Eric Dahlin of the Hartford Symphony. David has participated in school music festivals since grade 6, and was principal cellist at the 2009 Eastern Regional and All-State Festivals. He currently plays in the E.O. Smith High School Honors Quartet, Chamber Orchestra and Youth Orchestra, as well as the Connecticut Youth Symphony, with which he will perform the Saint-Saëns concerto in May. David hopes to pursue a career as a cellist.

Symphony No. 1 in c, Op. 68

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

This, the first of Brahms' four symphonies, was completed in 1876, rather late in his career (compared with earlier composers) and only after such large-scale works as *Piano Concerto No. 1* (1856), *Serenade in D* (1859), and *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (1869). By this time, Brahms had in fact made several failed attempts to write a symphony. The problem was Beethoven: as he remarked to a friend in 1871, "I shall never compose a symphony! You have no idea how it feels to one of us when he continually hears behind him such a giant!" It didn't help that well-meaning friends like Robert Schumann had anointed him Beethoven's successor.

The allegro portion of the first movement was written in 1862, but Brahms did not resume work on the symphony until 1874, when he wrote the finale, finishing up with the middle movements in 1876. Even then, Brahms was reluctant to release it. He arranged for trial performances in out-of-the-way places—its premiere was in Karlsruhe—and continued to make revisions before publication in 1877. Critical reception was mixed, but Brahms took enough encouragement from it to write the whole of his second symphony in the following year.

While it now seems silly to judge this work as deserving (or not) the title 'Tenth Symphony', as did some of Brahms' contemporaries, there are certainly aspects of it that recall Beethoven's symphonies. It is in the same minor key (and similarly shifts to major in the finale) as the Fifth, and its first movement allegro is built from insistent triplets in a way that recalls the famous da-da-da-dah figure of that work. And as in the Ninth, the finale's minor-key introduction leads to a majestic melody in the major key.

{Notes by S. K. Lehmann}