

WILLIMANTIC ORCHESTRA

David H. Vaughan, Conductor

SPRING CONCERT

3:00 P.M., Sunday, 17 April 2016

Fine Arts Instructional Center, ECSU
Willimantic

PROGRAM

Franz Liszt

Les préludes

Dmitri Kabalevsky

Concerto for Violin & Orchestra

I. Allegro molto e con brio

Kayla DeCaprio, violin

Grand Prize winner, Music Division, 2015 Juried Young Artist Competition
Sponsored by the Windham Regional Arts Council

INTERMISSION

Gabriel Fauré

Pavane

Paul Hindemith

Sinfonische Metamorphosen

- I. Allegro
- II. Turandot, Scherzo
- III. Andantino
- IV. Marsch

With today's concert, David Vaughan retires as Conductor of the Willimantic Orchestra after 25 years on the podium. The Orchestra is most grateful for his leadership, his commitment to achieving better performances, his promotion of the orchestra as a cultural asset, and his generally good humor at rehearsals.

PROGRAM NOTES

Les préludes (d'après Lamartine)

Franz Liszt (1811–86)

Liszt made his name as a prodigious piano virtuoso. In 1848 he gave up touring and settled down for ten years (as Kapellmeister for the Grand Duke of Weimar) to revise earlier works and to write new ones. Among them were thirteen *symphonic poems*, single-movement orchestral compositions advertised as musical interpretations of a descriptive or narrative programme. Liszt developed this form and promoted it as enabling composers to write symphonic music without writing symphonies (and inviting unwelcome comparisons to Beethoven).

Les préludes, Liszt's most famous symphonic poem, was premiered in 1854 with a programme supposedly inspired by a long narrative poem of the same title (1823) by Alphonse de Lamartine. A shortened version appears in the published score (1856):

What else is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown Hymn, the first and solemn note of which is intoned by Death? Love is the glowing dawn of all existence; but what is the fate where the first delights of happiness are not interrupted by some storm, the mortal blast of which dissipates its fine illusions, the fatal lightning of which consumes its altar; and where is the cruelly wounded soul which, on issuing from one of these tempests, does not endeavour to rest his recollection in the calm serenity of life in the fields? Nevertheless man hardly gives himself up for long to the enjoyment of the beneficent stillness which at first he has shared in Nature's bosom, and when 'the trumpet sounds the alarm', he hastens, to the dangerous post, whatever the war may be, which calls him to its ranks, in order at last to recover in the combat full consciousness of himself and entire possession of his energy.

Written by Liszt's mistress, this text has only a tenuous connection to Lamartine's poem. Only the quoted line appears in it, and the poem does not tell this story, though it does describe a terrifying storm at sea and a horrifying clash of armies. Since music is not language in any straightforward sense, we can hardly expect to discern the programme of a symphonic poem in its music unless we already know what it is. That is certainly the case here: *Les préludes* was originally assembled from an entirely different work to serve as its overture: Liszt's setting (1844/5) of Joseph Autran's poems *Les quatre éléments* (The four elements) for chorus and two pianos.

Concerto for Violin & Orchestra in C, Op. 48 Dimitri Kabalevsky (1904–87) Kabalevsky was a Soviet pianist, composer, and music educator, who narrowly escaped censure for 'formalism' in 1948 (as Prokofiev and Shostakovich did not) and subsequently took care to endorse and promote the party line that

Soviet music should be direct and uplifting. In the West he is honored—with composers like Zoltan Kodaly and Karl Orff—for his abiding interest in and contributions to the musical education of children, for whom he wrote a great deal of music. This concerto (1948), of which only the first movement will be performed today, is the first of three concerti—the others being *Cello Concerto No. 1 in g*, Op. 49 (1949) and *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D*, Op. 50 (1952)—“dedicated to Soviet youth” and designed to be both accessible to and challenging for young players. David Oistrakh, who thought the piece much too good to be reserved for young players, performed and recorded it in 1949.

Violinist **Kayla DeCaprio** is a home-schooled sophomore from Lebanon. She started piano lessons at age six and violin lessons when she was eight. For the past two years she has participated in the New England Music Festival Association’s Concert Festival. In 2015, she was selected for the String Honors Recital at the Hartt Community Division where she currently studies with Kevin Bishop. Kayla currently plays in a chamber group at the Hartt Community Division and in the Willimantic Orchestra. This summer she will attend *Music Adventure*, a chamber music program in Italy. Besides playing music, Kayla enjoys ice-skating and learning ASL sign language.

Pavane in f[♯], Op. 50

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

While Fauré wrote a good deal of music (including nearly a hundred songs), most fans of classical music outside of France would have trouble naming any of his compositions besides this one and the great *Requiem* (1894). The pavane is a slow processional court dance dating from the 16th century. Fauré’s wistful essay in this form—a calm interlude before the busy and noisy Hindemith piece that concludes this concert—is a set of variations on a 4-note ground (F[♯] E D C[♯]), composed in 1887 when he was dreaming about composing large-scale symphonies and operas for which he could find neither time nor inspiration. In a letter to Marguerite Baugnies, whose musical salon Fauré frequented, he laments having to travel hither and yon giving music lessons: “The only new thing I have been able to compose during this shuttlecock existence is a Pavane—elegant, assuredly, but not particularly important. . . .” {Quoted in Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré*}

Sinfonische Metamorphosen

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)

Hindemith’s father insisted that his three children receive a musical education and scrimped to enroll all of them in Frankfurt’s Hoch Conservatorium, where Paul studied violin and composition (1908–15). His investment may have spared his son the death in battle he himself suffered in 1915—called up in 1917, Paul’s service consisted largely of playing string quartets for his regimental commander—and it certainly paid off as Hindemith rose to prominence as a violist, composer, and champion of new music in the 1920s and early 30s. For the National Socialists, who assumed power in 1933, his three early (1919–21) and scandalous one-act operas marked him indelibly as a degenerate artist. Hindemith seems to have viewed Hitler as many now view Donald Trump: as

someone impossible to take seriously. He did not speak out when Jewish colleagues were dismissed from their positions at Berlin's Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, where he had taught composition since 1927. Even Goebbels' denunciation of him in December 1934—"Purely German his blood may be, but this only provides drastic confirmation of how deeply the Jewish intellectual infection has eaten into the body of our own people"—didn't sweep away his political naiveté. Only a ban on performance of his works finally led him into exile, first to Switzerland and then to America. In 1940 he accepted an appointment as professor of music at Yale University, where he happily remained until returning to Europe in 1953.

Early in 1940 choreographer Leonide Massine, with whom Hindemith had collaborated on *Nobilissime Visione* (1938), a ballet on the life of St. Francis, asked him to arrange piano duets by Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826) for a ballet (eventually titled *Vienna 1814*) set at a ball with the theme 'Virtues and Vices'. Hindemith quickly delivered a piano score for two ballet numbers based on Weber's Op. 60(4) and Op. 10(2), but Massine didn't care for it. Hindemith explained to his wife that "[my music] is too complicated for them, they wanted only an exact arrangement of the Weber-music," which he was not prepared to do: "I am not just an orchestrator. . . ." In 1943 he reworked the unused ballet music and additional Weber material into the *Symphonic transformations on themes of Carl Maria von Weber*. Its first and third movements derive from the two ballet numbers; Weber's duets Op. 60(2&7) are the source of themes used in the final movement. The second movement is an extravagant fantasy based on "a Chinese air drawn from [a book on China by Jesuit orientalist] P. du Halde" in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de la Musique* (1768) [see p. 265 of the 1779 English edition], which Weber used in his 1804 overture for Friedrich Schiller's play *Turandot* (1801).

Concerning this work, music publisher Arthur Mendel recalled in a 1976 interview that "Hindemith had told me that he was going to write a preface to it, which was going to take the form of a dialogue between two people leaving Carnegie Hall after a Stokowski performance. . . of some of his Bach transcriptions. . . which were, you know, all dressed up, modern orchestra, sort of Straussian sounds applied to Bach organ chorales. And Hindemith had no use for these. And he wanted to explain what the difference was between his taking these. . . little four-hand pieces of Weber, and dressing them up with the *Symphonic Metamorphosis*. And the upshot of the argument was going to be that this kind of transcription was okay if the transcriber put more thought into them than the composer originally had. And he maintained that he had put more thought into these pieces than Weber. Weber had tossed them off. Then for some reason he didn't get around to writing this, or he decided not to." (Quoted in Luitgard Schader's introduction to *Paul Hindemith: Sämtliche Werke*, Band II,5.)

{Notes by S. K. Lehmann}