

CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

THE JACK WOLGIN
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

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Sunday, February 7, 2010

Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center

Robert Spano, *conductor*

Jennifer Montone, *horn*

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

PENDERECKI

Horn Concerto (“Winterreise”)

INTERMISSION

BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat Major (“Romantische”)

Bewegt, nicht zu schnell

Andante, quasi Allegretto

Scherzo, Bewegt

Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

Photographic and recording equipment may not be used in Verizon Hall.

PROGRAM NOTES

Ralph Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*

Born in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, October 12, 1872

Died in London, August 26, 1958

Artists who contribute most to the future of art are often those who have learned to revere the past, and benefit from its legacy. Alongside Vaughan Williams’ deep devotion to English folk music was a passionate interest in great masters—and especially English masters—of previous centuries. The sixteenth-century English composer Thomas Tallis (c. 1505–85) was a gentleman in Henry VIII’s and Elizabeth I’s royal chapel, a revolutionary and innovative composer who in 1567 composed a set of choral pieces illustrating the modes for the Archbishop of Canterbury’s *Metrical Psalter*. While editing the *English Hymnal* in 1906, Vaughan Williams became intimate with the third of these, “Why Fumeth in Fight,” which in the hymnal is set to Addison’s text “When, rising from the bed of death.” Some time later, in 1910, the composer revisited this tune, writing what would become not only his first major orchestral work, but also one of his most significant works in any genre.

The *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, with elements both of variation and fantasy, is a sort of free rumination on the original tune, each reiteration heightening and intensifying the mood. Scored for solo string quartet and double string orchestra—an idea possibly borrowed from Elgar’s Introduction and Allegro (1905)—it presents three themes before setting off on five episodic variants of these themes. The Tallis theme is only suggested at the outset, *pizzicato* in low strings; later it arrives in splendor, in Tallis’s own nine-voice scoring. After a series of sonorous climaxes the work concludes with a final restatement of the subjects.

In 1995 the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and conductor André Previn recorded the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* for release on EMI Classics.

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Krzysztof Penderecki: Concerto for Horn and Orchestra (“Winterreise”)

Born in Debica, Poland, November 23, 1933

Living in Crakow

Krzysztof Penderecki has embodied the offbeat musical trends of our time as well as any living composer. Born in Debica outside Crakow in 1933, he followed the European avant-garde before developing an eclectic mixture that involved re-explorations of tradition—and helped pave the way, perhaps, for the neo-Romantic movement in the ’70s and ’80s. Penderecki (pen-de-RET-skee) came of age in Poland at a time of relative artistic liberalization. But while composers like Boulez, Stockhausen, Nono, Berio, and others explored idioms of almost impenetrable density (both of musical texture and of idea), Penderecki and his colleagues Lutoslawski and Górecki used simpler, more direct materials and means. Works like the *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, the *St. Luke Passion*, the operas *The Devils of Loudon* and *Paradise Lost*, and the two symphonies assured him a position among the most brilliant innovators of the twentieth century.

As early as the mid-’70s Penderecki had begun to feel a pull back toward traditional tonal procedures. Later he spoke of the orthodox “dictatorship” of the European avant-garde, and how the oppressive nature of their dogma led him to move toward what might be called “neo-accessibility”—a sort of reconciliation, perhaps, of his avant-garde persona with his

Romantic/traditional side. Audiences found themselves ready to grasp works like the Violin Concerto written for Isaac Stern (1977) or the Cello Concerto No. 2 for Mstislav Rostropovich (1988). In addition to works that tackled big subjects with massive forces (*Utrenja or the Entombment of Christ*) and commemorated big events (the twelve-hundredth anniversary of the Salzburg Cathedral, the three-thousandth anniversary of Jerusalem), throughout his career Penderecki also worked in conventional genres. At age seventy-six he continues to compose prolifically, often conducting his own works. His music has had a wide reach, not just in concert halls and on opera stages but in major motion pictures, as well.

Among his instrumental works are nearly two dozen *concertante* works with one or more soloists, which have consistently been some of the most frequently performed concertos by a living composer. He has written several concertos for woodwind instruments, but the Horn Concerto became his first for a member of the brass family. The twenty-five-minute concerto received its premiere in Bremen on May 5, 2008, with Radovan Vlatkovic as soloist and the composer conducting the Bremen Philharmonic Orchestra. The composer made light revisions to the work in 2009.

The subtitle “Winterreise,” though clearly an allusion to Schubert’s song-cycle of the same title, need not be read as suggesting some dark journey of the soul, writes musicologist Eva Pinter in a program note published at one of the early performances. “The title refers more to the work’s inception: Penderecki composed the concerto in the winter of 2007–08, during a period in which he was traveling a great deal.” Yet the title also suggests a sort of artistic journey, since the composer was indeed traversing new ground in writing a concerto for solo horn.

The concerto is cast in two movements, one slow and one fast. The Lento assai: Passacaglia opens with gentle string textures, and the soloist engages in musical conversation with three offstage horns. A solo cadenza (Allegro moderato) leads into the second movement (Vivace), which the composer has said is a *rondo da caccia*, calling to mind a hunt. Interspersed are two Adagio passages with sustained, cantabile solos, as well as cadenza-like passages. The soloist is then permitted one final, cheerful display of virtuosity before the concerto comes to a close.

Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major (“Romantische”)

Born in Ansfelden, Austria, September 4, 1824

Died in Vienna, October 11, 1896

Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers had their “Wagner moment,” that aha! experience when they felt the inexorable tug of that composer’s innovations in drama, harmony, and orchestration. Anton Bruckner’s moment came in 1862, when he heard *Tannhäuser* in Linz for the first time; its effect on him was immediate and profound. His subsequent acquaintance with Wagner’s other operas set him off on an almost spiritual quest, composing eleven symphonies (including two without numbers) that some have seen as an attempt to bring Wagner to the symphony.

Bruckner’s training up to that point had been fairly conventional. Born in rural Upper Austria, he was perhaps the last of major Austro-Germanic composers who received their training in the manner of the ancients: He was a choirboy at the cathedral at St. Florian, where he learned strict counterpoint and figured bass, and he studied organ with the St. Florian choirmaster. His first career was as church organist and schoolmaster; eventually he devoted himself to intensive

study of composition in Vienna and Linz under master teachers. But it was not until his exposure to Wagner’s music that his compositional craft became fired with a new sense of purpose.

By the time he completed the first version of his Fourth Symphony in 1874, he was gradually becoming an established part of Viennese musical life. He had moved to the city in 1868 from Linz, where he had made initial attempts at the symphonic form. Initial reception of his early symphonies in Vienna was cool. The Vienna Philharmonic rejected the First outright, and upon playing through the Second pronounced it unplayable. The Third was initially rejected, then finally performed in 1877 amidst boos and hisses and, finally, a mass exodus. Bruckner persevered, partly out of piety. “Out of thousands, God gave talent to me. One day I will have to give an account of myself. How would the Father in Heaven judge me, if I followed others and not Him?”

But Bruckner was plagued with self-doubt, and he listened to the advice of well-meaning friends too often; as a result, several of the symphonies exist in more than one version. In the case of the Fourth, however, the substantial reworking of the piece that the composer undertook in 1878–80 was the basis for a definitive version. A final revision in 1886 was essentially a touch-up of this 1880 edition and is performed this evening.

The first movement (Bewegt, nicht zu schnell—With agitation, but not too quickly) contains the quintessential Bruckner opening: an almost inaudible string tremolo, from which the theme arises as if emerging from a void, as Beethoven had famously done in his Ninth Symphony, and Mahler would later emulate. The opening dotted figure in the first horn establishes a broad, expansive mood

The Andante quasi allegretto presents a lyrical subject in the cellos derived from the horn-call of the opening movement.

The Scherzo (Bewegt), propulsive and lively, is an orchestral showpiece of enormous appeal, with hunt-like horn calls in a galloping triplet rhythm. It is set off with a gentle Trio.

The finale (Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell) begins mysteriously in B-flat minor, then works its way through a dizzying succession of keys and themes. The main key of E-flat major arrives at the last moment, just in time for a powerful reiteration of opening horn call.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Robert Spano, conductor

Curtis alumnus Robert Spano is among the most innovative and imaginative conductors of his generation. Now in his eighth season as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, he has enriched its repertoire and elevated it to greater prominence. He has conducted the major orchestras of North America, including those in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Abroad he has led the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra;

Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala (Milan); Czech, New Japan, and Oslo philharmonics; Berlin Radio Sinfonie Orchestra; and the City of Birmingham, BBC Scottish, and BBC symphony orchestras, among others. Mr. Spano has appeared with the opera companies of Chicago and Houston, as well as at the Santa Fe Opera, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and Welsh National Opera.

In celebration of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra’s sixty-fifth anniversary season and his ongoing commitment to nurture and

champion new works, Mr. Spano leads that orchestra in five world premieres—three of which are ASO commissions—by Dejan Lazic, Angel Lam, Wynton Marsalis, Jennifer Higdon, and Michael Gandolfi. In May 2009, Mr. Spano received an honorary doctorate in music from Emory University, for his groundbreaking initiatives and commitment to the advancement of music.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's discography includes music of David Del Tredici, Christopher Theofanidis, Higdon, and Gandolfi, as well as Sibelius's *Kullervo*, Brahms's *Requiem*, a recently released live recording of *La Bohème*, and the Grammy Award-winning recordings of Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* and Berlioz's *Requiem*. Mr. Spano and the ASO also recorded the music of Osvaldo Golijov for Deutsche Grammophon: one disc featuring the composer's *Three Songs* and *Oceana* and one of the chamber opera *Ainadamar*, which received two Grammy Awards.

In addition to his Atlanta Symphony Orchestra engagements during the 2009–2010 season, Mr. Spano leads the Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Seattle, Saint Louis, and Toronto, BBC, and City of Birmingham symphony orchestras, giving the U.K. premiere of Jukka Tiensuu's *False Memories*. He participates in the Aspen Music Festival and conducts Verdi's *Otello* at the Cincinnati Opera.

Jennifer Montone, horn

Jennifer Montone joined the Philadelphia Orchestra as principal horn in September 2006. She is on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School. She was the principal horn of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra from 2003 to 2006 and the associate principal horn of the Dallas Symphony from 2000 to 2003. While in Dallas, she was an adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University. Ms. Montone

has also been a faculty performer at the Aspen Music Festival and School for the past six summers. Named the Paxman Young Horn Player of the Year in London in 1996, she has since won many solo competitions and awards throughout the United States and was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2006.

Ms. Montone has performed as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra; Saint Louis, Dallas, and National symphony orchestras; Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia; and Bellingham Festival Orchestra, among others. In October 2008, she made her New York City recital debut in the Weill Concert Hall at Carnegie Hall. She will perform the Penderecki Horn Concerto again this spring in a concert and recording session with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Montone has performed and toured with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. She is also a regular artist at the Bay Chamber Concerts, La Jolla Summerfest, and Santa Fe Chamber, Marlboro, and Spoleto, Italy Chamber music festivals.

A graduate of the Juilliard School, where she studied with Julie Landsman, Ms. Montone enjoys contributing interviews and articles to books and magazines devoted to brass performance and performs frequently as a featured artist at International Horn Society Workshops and International Women's Brass Conferences. She has performed with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, with whom she was third horn while still studying at Juilliard. Ms. Montone, a native of northern Virginia, began her intensive musical training in the National Symphony, studying with Edwin Thayer, and as a fellow in the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra.