



The Music Department presents

Skidmore Orchestra

Glen Cortese, conductor

Tuesday, March 4th, 2025, 7:00PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

Program

Pavane pour une infante défunte

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Violin Concerto, Op. 14

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*

Jeff Cheung '25, violin

Enigma Variations

Edward Elgar
(1857-1934)

- Variation I (L'istesso tempo) "C.A.E."*
- Variation II (Allegro) "H.D.S.P."*
- Variation III (Allegretto) "R.B.T."*
- Variation IV (Allegro di molto) "W.M.B."*
- Variation V (Moderato) "R.P.A."*
- Variation VI (Andantino) "Ysobel"*
- Variation VII (Presto) "Troyte"*
- Variation VIII (Allegretto) "W.N."*
- Variation IX (Adagio) "Nimrod"*
- Variation X (Intermezzo: Allegretto)*
"Dorabella"
- Variation XI (Allegro di molto) "G.R.S."*
- Variation XII (Andante) "B.G.N."*
- Variation XIII (Romanza: Moderato) "****"*
- Variation XIV (Finale: Allegro) "E.D.U."*

Program Notes

Maurice Ravel: Pavane pour une infante défunte

Pavane pour une infante défunte (Pavane for a Dead Princess) was commissioned of the 24-year-old Ravel in 1899 as a somewhat whimsical salon piece for piano and premiered in 1902 by Ricardo Vines to much acclaim. The composer was a bit bewildered by the work's popularity, but nonetheless orchestrated it in 1910 to even greater success. With the Pavane, by contrast, we see his love of older musical forms from the Renaissance, in this case a moderately paced court dance. He chose the title because he was fond of the sonority of the French words ("infante défunte") and the piece was not meant to be a funeral lament for a child. Rather, Ravel hoped to evoke the scene of a young Spanish princess delighting in this stately dance in quiet reverie, as would have been painted by Velazquez in the Spanish court. What the Pavane gives us is Ravel's gift for exquisite melody and his mastery of orchestration. Its perfectly balanced sections between strings, woodwinds and golden glowing brass create a quiescent, inner-splendor; dance-like but meditative. Ravel's cleverness with pizzicato propels the dance along with graceful but slightly shuffling feet; the harp glissandos swoop with the young dancer's lifting arms.

Program Notes by Max Derrickson

Samuel Barber: Violin Concerto, op. 14

If any composer may truly be considered our national composer, Samuel Barber should surely be in the running. Notwithstanding the adulation of Aaron Copland's populist music from the 1930s and 40s, most of the latter composer's compositions in other musical styles are not well received by the American public-too dissonant and modern! On the other hand, no major American composer of the twentieth century was a more ardent and eloquent champion of a lyrical,

accessible, yet modern idiom than Samuel Barber. His musical style is founded in the romantic traditions of the nineteenth century, whose harmonic language and formal structures were his point of departure. Unlike so many of his peers, he was not powerfully swayed by the modernism emanating from Europe after World War I, but pursued his own path.

Consistently lyrical throughout his career, it is telling that his songs constitute about two-thirds of his compositions in number. His vocal works include two major operas, *Vanessa* (1956), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966), the latter composed for the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center. He composed at least one work for almost every musical genre, and unlike most composers, he was a recognized and published composer from his student days. At the age of twenty-one his overture to *The School for Scandal* was an instant success, was forthwith published, and remains in the standard repertoire. Though his choral music and solo vocal music are concert mainstays, it is an instrumental work that is his best-known composition—the *Adagio for Strings*, championed by Toscanini when Barber was only twenty-eight years old. The vocally-inspired lyricism of that work is emblematic of all that Barber wrote, even in the most vigorous of his works. His violin concerto is innately typically of that fundamental aspect of his style, and accounts for much of its popularity.

The concerto has lived a somewhat checkered existence on its way to a solid position in the standard repertoire for solo violin. Its genesis began in 1939 when a young concerto violinist, Iso Briselli, financially supported by the great Philadelphia philanthropist, Samuel Fels, commissioned a violin concerto from Barber. Briselli was a friend of Barber and had been his classmate in the first graduating class of the famed conservatory, the Curtis Institute of Music. Barber went right to work, and by October of that year had finished the first two movements. Things started to unravel at that point. Briselli was

consulting closely with a violin coach in New York, and under the latter's Svengali-like influence, Briselli conveyed to Barber that his efforts were not sufficient for his needs. The criticisms were direct: not "gratifying for a violinist to perform," not sufficiently virtuoso enough, "childish in details," and that Briselli would be "undertaking a great risk to perform it." Briselli's coach "graciously" offered to perform a "surgical operation" to improve it. Needless to say, Barber demurred.

Things got worse when Barber finally delivered the last movement—late—in November. Briselli and the coach didn't like it at all—too lightweight for a major work, too short, and inappropriate in form. "Fix it and I'll still play the première with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra" seemed to be Briselli's attitude. It never happened. Barber stuck to his guns and by what he had composed, Briselli relinquished all rights to it, and Barber never received the second half of his commission payment. Controversy did not end at that point, however. Widespread acceptance of the concerto was slow over the years before it garnered the respect and admiration that it now receives, and during that time an unfortunate slander was associated with it. It had become received knowledge that Briselli had deemed the last movement as "unplayable," and that is why he rejected it. That bit of calumny seemed to live on for decades everywhere—from program notes to history books. However, recent archival scholarship has completely disproved it—Briselli was far too much of a virtuoso violinist for that canard to have been true, and simply didn't like the movement. But, it is a mark of the character of both Briselli and Barber that they remained lifelong friends, through it all.

And what of the concerto, itself? Even its early detractors admitted that it was a beautiful, romantic piece; Barber's lyrical style ensured that. The first movement is in a moderate tempo, with the solo violin heard from the very beginning. Elegant, meditative melodies flow in abundance, meshed into lush orchestral textures, interrupted from

time to time by more rhythmic, intense moments. Carrying it all is Barber's mastery of integrating the orchestra and various soloists within as almost equal partners with the violin soloist. The clarity of the orchestration literally "sails" his ideas aloft during the peaks of intensity. There's an almost embarrassing succession of ideas as the movement evolves. Pensive woodwind solos mark the movement's quiet conclusion.

The solo oboe spins out a pensive opening to the slow movement, followed by other solo woodwinds over the rich string texture. Finally, the solo violinist seems to just float out of the horn sonority, followed shortly by a little rhythmic interjection by the trumpets that is heard from time to time in varying contexts as a bit of punctuation throughout. And as in the first movement, Barber weaves an elegant contrapuntal texture between soloist and orchestra. Those familiar with his *Adagio for Strings* will enjoy again the composer's magical ability to weave scintillating brilliance as the web of themes climbs higher and higher in the climax of the movement. It all ends tranquilly in Barber's characteristic quietude, the solo violin sinking low into the *pianissimo* sea of strings.

The last movement is designated as in "perpetual motion"—and that it surely is, a frenetic flurry of absolutely nonstop rhythmic motion by both the soloist and the orchestra. No one is spared from the challenges of relentlessly driving ahead. It doesn't last long at all—and how could it?—for the intensity would be impossible to sustain for much longer than it lasts. The orchestration absolutely sparkles, and the onward hurdle, as all careen to the end, firmly ensconces this movement in company with some of the most impressive scherzos in all the orchestral literature.

It is difficult now to understand what all the fuss was about in the early life of this work. It has taken its place in the standard repertoire of violin concertos. What is different, perhaps, is that now we

understand more fully that great art, while most often conceived in the context of tradition, nevertheless poses its own questions, and crafts its own answers. Great composers, and that company surely includes Samuel Barber, seek their own paths, and make their own ways.

~Wm. E. Runyan

Edward Elgar: Variations on an Original Theme (“Enigma”), op. 36

Elgar's first significant, acclaimed work, the Variations, was given its première in 1899, conducted by the great Hans Richter. It was an immediate success, and garnered performances and praise in Europe—including from Richard Strauss. Not bad for a composer of modest reputation who had chiefly labored far from the bustle of London. Although he had been steadily building his reputation in provincial English cities as a well-respected composer of cantatas and the like, an orchestral work on the scale of the so-called “Enigma” Variations seemed to be without precedent. What is clear, however, is that, at the age of forty-two, he had served his apprenticeship well, and years of experience laid a solid foundation for his most famous work—especially his vaunted mastery of orchestration.

The importance of the composition and its delightful “enigma” generated an enormous interest and speculation, which has continued unabated to the present. The genesis of it is well known, for Elgar left ample record of his thoughts. Apparently, after a long day of teaching, he trudged into the house, and his wife said something to the effect that he looked like he could use a good cigar. He indulged himself, sat down at the piano and was improvising rather desultorily, when his wife, Alice, said that she liked one of the tunes, and he continued improvising little variations on the tune that reflected some aspect of the personalities of his close friends. The rest is history. On the score, over each variation, Elgar wrote either the initials of each friend, or in a few cases, a name or nickname. Who these folks are and some of

their “characteristics” limned by the composer is known, now, but that was not the enigma. The tune, itself is clear; we hear it straightway, at the beginning. It’s a simple little affair: a short motive of four notes, preceded by a rest, heard six times, half of them in reverse rhythm—a wonder of musical concision. And then follow thirteen variations, one each for thirteen friends, and a last variation about the composer, himself. So what is the “enigma?”

Elgar spoke several times of a “larger theme” that runs throughout the work, but is “not played.” Furthermore, he referred to its “dark saying,” declaring that it would remain a mystery. And why even call the work “Enigma,” in the first place? Generations have tried to solve the mystery, to no avail. All manner of tunes have been adduced as the mystery tune—including “Pop Goes the Weasel.” Elgar created a mystery and it remains a mystery, for the composer took it with him to the grave.

The short theme is heard first, with a brief contrasting section before the theme returns. The first variation (C.A.E.) follows immediately, dedicated to his beloved wife, Caroline Alice Elgar. The second variation (H.D.S.-P.) is a tribute to Hew David Steuart-Powell, an amateur musician at whose chromatic warm-ups Elgar gently poked fun. (R.B.T.) Richard Baxter Townshend follows, a send up the amateur thespian’s breaking voice, rather like an adolescent boy. After two more variations we arrive at No. 7 (“Ysolbel”), a viola student of Elgar, depicted by a solo viola playing a passage that sounds a bit like an etude for that instrument. Variations 8 and 9 refer to Troyte Griffiths, an architect who was a rather poor pianist—you can hear it—and Winifred Norbury, whose calm personality is there in the variation. A held note in a sole violin unmistakably leads into the next variation—the most beloved of them all.

“Nimrod” holds a special place in the hearts of Britons, for its magnificent grandiloquence and poignancy, and one hears it played

publically in times of great tragedy or circumstance—rather like Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* in this country. It is dedicated to Elgar’s best friend, Augustus Jaeger. Jäger, of course, is German for “hunter,” and Nimrod was the great hunter in the Old Testament.

“Dorabella” was a good friend, whose stutter is famously depicted in the little flutter in the woodwinds. Variation 11 hilariously tells the incident wherein Dan, the bulldog of friend, George Sinclair, falls down the bank of a steam, paddles along, and barks happily upon his exit from the water. “B.G.N.” was a cellist (he inspired the cello concerto), and so he gets a little cello solo, here. The mysterious “* * *” left on a sea voyage before Elgar could get permission for the dedications, so she is anonymous, here. A quotation from Mendelssohn’s “Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage,” is heard in the solo clarinet, with the timpani contributing some nautical engine noises.

Finally, the fourteenth and last variation is of Elgar, himself (“E.D.U” from his wife’s pet name for him—the German, Eduard. It is telling that in this music ostensibly about himself, he uses the material from the two variations dedicated to the persons most important in his life, his wife, “C.A.E,” and his great friend, “Nimrod.” Elgar was a complex man, but it is a certainty that his enjoyment of friendship and the love of others was central to his being, and the work perfectly illustrates that.

~Wm. E. Runyan

About the Conductor and Soloist

Glen Cortese begins his sixth season as Artistic Director of the Schenectady Symphony orchestra his twentieth season as Artistic Director of the Western New York Chamber and was just appointed Artistic Director of the Catskill Symphony Orchestra. He completed twelve successful seasons as music director of the Greeley Philharmonic and was also named music director emeritus of the Oregon Mozart Players after serving as artistic director for nine seasons. His recent guest engagements have included the Orquestra Reial Cercle Artistic (Barcelona), Symphoria (Syracuse), the Eugene Opera, Madison Lyric Stage, The Three Tenors Concert in Tirana Albania to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the independence of Kososvo, RTSH Radio Orchestra (Albania) Emerald City Opera, Opera Fort Collins, Wolftrap Opera, The Charleston Symphony, the Sapporo Festival Orchestra, the Slovak Radio Orchestra the Sofia Philharmonic, the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, the Mexico City Philharmonic, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the Paducah Symphony Orchestra, the Lafayette Symphony, the Billings Symphony, the Lyric Opera of Cleveland, and the Annapolis Symphony. He was resident conductor and artistic administrator of the Florida Philharmonic for the 2001–2002 season and completed twelve seasons at the Manhattan School of Music where he was principal conductor from 1988 to 2000. He has appeared as guest conductor both in the United States and abroad with the Symphonies of New Jersey, Florida Philharmonic, Austin, Mexico City Philharmonic, North Carolina, Colorado Springs, Bangor, Meridian, Queens, New Amsterdam, The New Orleans Philharmonic, the International Chamber Orchestra, the Belarus Sate Philharmonic, Sofia Philharmonic National Romanian Radio Orchestra, Noorhollands Philharmonisch, Orquestra Sinfonica Carlos Chavez, San Francisco Conservatory, Cleveland Institute, and the Altenburg Landeskappele Orchestra. Mr. Cortese covered as assistant conductor to the New York Philharmonic in 1990–92 for Zubin Mehta, Leonard Slatkin, Charles Dutoit, Yuri Temirkanov, Erich Leinsdorf, Zdenek

Macal and Cristof Perick. In July of 1993, he was invited by Kurt Masur to guest conduct a reading with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall.

In August of 1994, Mr. Cortese began his tenure as music director of the East-West International Symphony Orchestra in Altenburg, Germany, a position that he held for seven years. He conducted over fifty concerts and two operas in seven seasons with the orchestra, made up of advanced conservatory students from ten different nations. His work at the Manhattan School of Music included the school's debut performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and City Center as well as the MSM Orchestra's first performance on "Live from Lincoln Center". He received the honor of "Recording of the Month" in STEREOPHILE magazine for his release of Mahler's Sixth Symphony with the Manhattan School on Titanic Records. His recording of Mahler's Third Symphony with the Manhattan School was called "a remarkable achievement" in the American Record Guide.

In the opera and music theater world he has conducted *Turn of the Screw*, *Beatrice and Benedict*, *Candide*, *Little Women*, *Othello*, *West Side Story*, *Phantom*, *Les Misérables* and *My Fair Lady* in the last several seasons. In 2011 he conducted the world premiere of John Musto's new opera, "The Inspector" at the Wolftrap Opera, and his other opera credits include guest conductor with the Eugene Opera, Florida Grand Opera, New York City Opera, the Cleveland Lyric Opera, the Maryland Opera Studio, the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival Opera Theater, the Manhattan School Opera Theater, and the East West International Opera Theater. Mr. Cortese's credits in the world of dance include performances with the Connecticut Ballet, Joffrey II Ballet, the Elisa Monte Dance Company and the SUNY Purchase Dance Corps. He appeared regularly for five years as conductor for the Erick Hawkins Dance Company at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, the Joyce Theatre and on national tours. He has conducted at numerous summer festivals including Chautauqua, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, American Dance Festival, The New

York Music Institute, Sewanee Music Festival and the Brevard Music Center. He has conducted performances of large collaborative projects including chorus, orchestra and dance at Carnegie Hall, as well as having performed in virtually every major performance venue in New York. His work in education is extensive, conducting community outreach programs, educational concerts and children's videos on classical music. Mr. Cortese has conducted concerti and solo works with many renowned performers, including Ransom Wilson, Sharon Isbin, Ruth Laredo, Nathaniel Rosen, Glenn Dictrow, Silvia McNair, Mignon Dunn and Dawn Upshaw. A strong advocate of new music, he has conducted over 150 premieres and has worked in direct collaboration with composers such as Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, George Crumb, Richard Danielpour, Peter Maxwell Davies, Lukas Foss, Hans Werner Henze, and Ralph Shapey. In June of 1993 through 2000, he was the eight-time recipient of the ASCAP New and Adventurous Programming Award for his work at the Manhattan School. Mr. Cortese is also an accomplished composer and winner of numerous awards including the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a two-time winner of the Joseph E. Bearns Prize, and a CAPS Grant from the New York Council on the Arts. He is also the recipient of the Arthur Judson Foundation Award for a Young American Conductor and his discography includes recordings on the Bridge, Titanic, Newport Classics, Phoenix, Owl, CMS and Le Crepuscule du Disc labels.

Jeff Cheung is a senior from Hong Kong majoring in psychology with a Periclean Honors Forum minor. He has been playing violin since the age of 4 and is fortunate to have had exposure to various traditions, from the Suzuki method to the golden age of 20th-century violin playing. He is grateful to study under Angel Hernandez, Amanda Brin, and Michael Emery, whose musical lineage includes the venerable Erick Friedman and his teacher Jascha Heifetz—considered by many to be the greatest violinist to have ever lived.

As a chamber musician, Jeff has received coaching from members of acclaimed music groups such as Ensemble Connect as well as the Miró, Ying, and Ariel string quartets. His crowning achievement as a chamber musician was performing Smetana's string quartet with Will Fedkenheuer of the Miró Quartet.

Jeff has played in orchestras for much of his life. At Skidmore, he played in the first violin section and was appointed concertmaster for a performance during his freshman year. During the summer of 2023, he toured northern Italy as part of a professional orchestra under the baton of Gregory Buchalter from the Metropolitan Opera. The group performed in churches and venues such as the Verdi Theater, filling historic walls with choral and operatic works of Mozart and Puccini.

Playing chamber music trained Jeff's sensitivity and attentiveness while being in an orchestra cultivated discipline and understanding of tonal architecture. As someone who constantly works to refine his technique and deepen his musical fluency, Jeff wishes to connect with the audience and conclude his time at Skidmore by expressing his individuality through interpreting the Barber violin concerto - a piece adored by scores of musicians and listeners alike.

Personnel

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Elise Hinrichs
Emily Gross

OBOE

Jacqueline Burk
Vicki Tremper

CLARINET

Joel Egozy
Emma Lloyd
Jackson Paley
Jackson Turner

BASSOON

Daniel Liu
Mia Schoonover
Gerald Lanoue

HORN

Joshua Feldman
Fiona Salas
Nate Hopper
Micah Malone
Patrice Malatestinic

TRUMPET

Linden Amster
Betsy Baker

TROMBONE

Phil Pandori
Jon Kusche
Daniel Cordell

TUBA

Michael Silvagnoli

TIMPANI AND PERCUSSION

James Holmes
Arielle Lam

HARP

Elizabeth Huntley

VIOLIN I

Marlowe Jacques
Michael Emery
Sruti Ramaswamy
Michelle Stewart
Ava Albano
Heather Buchanan-Wise
Brooke Vincent
Olev Viro

VIOLIN II

Ruby Korotzer-Mariani
Josh Rodriguez
Margret Hickey
Sophia Todd
Jessica Belflower
Allison Slack
Betsy Kagey

VIOLA

Jack Crisan
Stephani Emery
Sophia Ma
Sasha Stern
Ellie Brogan
Sue Nazzaro
Adam Warner
Ray Bunkofske

VIOLONCELLO

Will Yaranton
Jameson D. Platte
Olivia Standish
Maddie Sokolowski
Callista Koon
Cathie-Jo Brun

CONTRABASS

Noanddi Manigat
Luke Baker
Jim Caiello
David Irvin

Upcoming Events

Sterne Virtuoso Series:
Westhuizen Duo
Friday, March 21, 7:30pm

Spring on a Moonlit River: An Evening
of Chinese Chamber Music
Friday, March 28, 7:30pm

Voices of Ukraine
Sunday, March 30, 3:00pm

Skidmore String Festival
w/ Sphinx Virtuosi
Saturday, April 5, 7:30pm

Skidmore String Festival w/Sphinx
Virtuosi and Skidmore Students
Sunday, April 6, 2:00pm

Senior Bass Recital: August DuClos
Friday, April 11, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Brass &
Woodwind Ensembles
Saturday, April 12, 3:00pm
in Wilson Chapel

Young Kim & Skidmore Pianists
Saturday, April 13, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Vocal Soul Collective
Tuesday, April 15, 7:00pm
in Filene Recital Hall

Senior Voice Recital:
Mary Timmons
Saturday, April 19, 1:00pm

Senior Recital: Alex Ciardullo
Saturday, April 19, 4:00pm

Senior Voice Recital:
Rhea Fitzpatrick
Saturday, April 19, 7:00pm

Senior Guitar Recital:
Rimmele Wood
Sunday, April 27, 4:00pm

Senior Recital: Arielle Lam
(Piano & Voice)
Sunday, April 27, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert
Orchestra, Chorus, String Ensemble,
Guitar Ensemble, Global Music
Showcase, Concert Band, Jazz
Ensemble, Small Jazz Combos
April 22 – April 29