SKIDMORE
COLLEGE

The Music Department Presents

Skidmore Orchestra

Conducted by Glen Cortese

Monday, April 29th, 7:00 PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

Program

Flower Duet from "Lakmé" — Léo Delibes (1836-1891)

Jessica Byers, soprano and Maggie Besthoff, mezzo soprano

"The Red Violin" Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra — John Corigliano (b. 1938)

Michael Emery, violin

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 — Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante con moto
III. Scherzo - Allegro
IV. Allegro

Flower Duet from "Lakmé"

Lakmé is an opera in three acts by Léo Delibes to a French libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Philippe Gille. The score, written in 1881–1882, was first performed on 14 April 1883 by the Opéra Comique at the Salle Favart in Paris. Set in British India in the mid-19th century, Lakmé is based on Théodore Pavie's story "Les babouches du Brahamane" and novel Le Mariage de Loti byPierre Loti.

The opera includes the popular Flower Duet (Sous le dôme épais) for sopranos performed in Act 1 by Lakmé, the daughter of a Brahmin priest, and her servant Mallika. The opera's most famous aria is the Bell Song (L'Air des clochettes) in Act 2.

Like other French operas of the period, Lakmé captures the ambience of the Orient seen through Western eyes, which was periodically in vogue during the latter part of the nineteenth century and in line with other operatic works such as Bizet's The Pearl Fishers and Massenet's Le roi de Lahore.

The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra

The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra draws upon music I composed for the film of the same name. The film spans three centuries in the life of a magnificent but haunted violin in its travels through space and time. A story this episodic needed to be tied together with a single musical idea. For this purpose I used the Baroque device of a chaconne: a repeated pattern of chords upon which the music is built. Against the chaconne chords I juxtaposed Anna's theme, a lyrical yet intense melody representing the violin builder's doomed wife. From these elements I wove a series of virtuosic etudes for the solo violin, which followed the instrument from country to country, century to century. I composed these elements before the actual filming, because the actors needed to imitate actual performance of the music. Then, while the film itself was shot, I made - from Anna's theme, the chaconne, and the etudes - this concert work. While I scored the film just for the soloist and string orchestra (to emphasize the "stringness" of the picture), I composed this seventeen-minute concert work for violin and full orchestra. As The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra begins, diaphanous ascending string lines unveil the chaconne chords, voiced in incantatory dotted rhythms, in low winds and brass. Then solo violin and orchestra utter, and expand on, Anna's theme. Virtuosic etudes quicken the pace, lead to a rushing climax; these yield to a stratospherically high, gravely slow melody, which remembers, against slowly shifting string sonorities, Anna's romantic theme. The string chords louden, strengthen with winds and brass: then the soloist reclaims, in determined accents this time, the diaphanous string line that opened the score. The orchestra halts to launch the soloist's cadenza, impetuous and songful by turns: then the chaconne, in strings chords

rendered brittle by sharp attacks with the wood of the bow, gradually climax in a grand tutti restatement of the incantatory opening and a whirlwind coda for all.

— John Corigliano

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, op. 67
Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven's fifth symphony is the iconic work of classical music. It pervades the whole world of symbols and imagery of musical art as an evocation of a welter of ideas. In a sad way it is almost impossible to escape all of these associations extrinsic to the work itself and to focus only on Beethoven's composition. But distancing one's self from it all and listening to the symphony as if for the first time can be a joy—as this writer has found, sitting in the best seat in the house (in the back of the orchestra).

By the time that Beethoven had composed this work he was a well-respected composer in Vienna, but certainly not hailed as a genius. The first three symphonies, three piano concertos, piano sonatas, string quartets—all had bolstered his growing reputation before he finished this symphony. It took him rather a long time, almost four years, as he interrupted his work frequently to produce some significant compositions: The Razumovsky string quartets, the fourth symphony and fourth piano concerto, and the first version of his only opera, Fidelio. Beethoven was a practical man, and when a commission materialized, he shifted his work to where the money was. He finally ground out the completion of the fifth symphony and presented it on an ill-starred concert at the Theater an der Wien on December 22, 1808. It was an all-Beethoven affair, presenting the premières of not only the Fifth Symphony, but also the Sixth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, and the Choral Fantasy (a precursor to his Ninth Symphony), as well as various other compositions. The concert was four hours long and the hall was literally freezing. Moreover, Beethoven, who was conducting, had to start over in one work after a mistake derailed things. The proceedings were not helped by his awkward, grand-eloquent conducting which led to knocking over some lamps and accidentally smacking an unfortunate stagehand in the face. All of this was soon forgotten and the written record shows that Beethoven's fifth

symphony was quickly accorded general acclaim, and was on its way to immortality.

The defining characteristics of the work are well known, and focus upon rhythmic vitality, a thitherto unknown sense of drama, and imaginative structural details--but most of all, upon a stunning coherence and economy of elements. The latter is the foundation of the first movement, famous for its four-note motto beginning and the "wringing" almost to death of every musical possibility of the short idea. Forget "fate knocking at the door," this is simply a dramatic tour-de-force of musical coherence. And even if one ignores the adroit manipulation of the melodic content of the opening idea, it is astonishing how well the movement stands upon its own feet from a purely rhythmic perspective.

The second movement is an elegant set of variations on two themes. The key of the movement is Ab, and even if most of us don't have perfect pitch, it just "sounds" fresh and unexpected when the violoncellos and violas enter with one of Beethoven's most ingratiating melodies in that particular key. The second theme is a more triumphant one, in C major, another remote and refreshing key. The variations gracefully work themselves out with these contrasting themes in a movement quite different from the first.

The third movement is the traditional dance movement, here cast in Beethoven's innovative "scherzo" rhythm—the stately dance of his predecessors being sped up considerably. But it's not a rollicking good time to be had by all, here. Rather, it opens with a mysterious arpeggio in the low strings that ends shortly on some chords with enigmatic meaning. Soon this is shatteringly interrupted by the unison horns in a virile melody that seems related to the opening of the symphony. The middle of the movement, called the "trio," is usually an opportunity for contrast, and we do get it. It starts out contrapuntally with a vigorous and challenging passage for the violoncellos and double basses—it's a famous one! They snarl and shake it like a dog. Ultimately, a truncated version of the opening returns, but even softer, and here is where real magic occurs.

Beethoven "bridges" the transition into the last movement with a delicate solo passage in the first violins played over pianissimo sustained notes in the seconds and violas—the basses and timpani softly "throb." In one of the

most eerie and tension-building passages in all the literature the melody snakes up and down in a crescendo that jubilantly leads to the C major theme that resolves all previous "troubled thought." For this glorious moment Beethoven brings in three trombones, contra-bassoon, and piccolo—thitherto found only in the opera orchestra. The last movement is long, as three themes are worked over, interrupted only by the striking innovation of a brief reference to the third movement. It's as if Beethoven is saying, "OK, we win, but it may be only a brief victory." The recapitulation ensues, followed by an enormous coda—longer than any other section so far. We hear the main three themes again, only in a kind of reverse order. The long coda is needed to erase all doubt as to what prevails over the diversions and dark moods of the other three movements. Victory is ours, and the fifty or so measures of emphatic C major chords seal the finale.

— Wm. E. Runyan

Artist bios

Jessica Byers, a senior at Skidmore College and recipient of the Filene merit music scholarship, discovered her love for classical singing at a young age. During her time at Skidmore, studying under Dr. Sylvia Stoner-Hawkins, Jessica performed two principal roles with the Schenectady-Saratoga Symphony Orchestra: Adele in Johann Strauss II's Die Fledermaus (Spring 2024) and Flora in Benjamin Britten's Turn of the Screw (Fall 2022). She also played a principal role in the workshop world premiere of "Bell" (Spring 2023), and performed as a chorus member in the world premiere of "The Unhealed Wound" (Fall 2023). She is a two time winner of the ENY/NATS Art Song Festival (2023 and 2022). She also sang in a gospel choir with Josh Groban at SPAC (Summer 2022).

Maggie Besthoff is a senior Neuroscience major, Music minor, Honors Forum minor, and awardee of the Filene Fellowship. She has been studying voice for ten years through private lessons, performing in local concerts, and participating in auditioned choirs at her high school and Skidmore College as well as all-state choirs. She was one of two vocalists in the group of twenty musicians selected out of 700 to perform at the prestigious Massachusetts

Instrumental and Choir Conductors Association (MICCA) Solo and Ensemble Gold Showcase Concert. She was also selected out of musicians worldwide to attend Boston Conservatory at Berklee's Vocal Choral Intensive. Maggie was the runner-up for Skidmore College's Filene Scholarship as an incoming college freshman and was recently awarded the Filene Fellowship in her senior year for excellence in classical music. She was featured in the workshop world premiere of "Bell" by Richard Einhorn and Kathryn Walat, the premiere of "The Unhealed Wound" by Richard Danielpour and Rita Dove, and most recently played Ida in Strauss's Die Fledermaus. Maggie has also been a featured soloist in the select Vocal Chamber Ensemble and larger Skidmore Chorus every year of her college career. Additionally, she was selected to perform in multiple masterclasses with renowned guest artists and was also awarded second place in the ENY/NATS Art Song Festival in 2022. Maggie plans to combine her Neuroscience major and Music minor in her career, possibly in music therapy or mental performance coaching. She hopes to continue performing in community choirs and operas.

As Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at Skidmore College, **Michael Emery** directs the vibrant string program, working with talented students on solo, chamber music, and orchestral repertoire. Through the annual Skidmore String Festival, which he initiated in 2005, the Skidmore community has enjoyed residencies by several highly acclaimed quartets, including the Brentano, Manhattan, American, Ying, Talich, Mirò, Parker, Pacifica and Dover.

Mr. Emery blends performance with teaching to create an active musical career. He has collaborated in chamber music with many international artists, including Ruggiero Ricci, Elizabeth Pitcairn, André-Michel Schub, and Emanuel Ax, and has performed in the Sibelius, Ludwig Spohr and Paganini International Violin Competitions. He is pleased to join his colleagues Jameson Platte, cellist, and Matthew Quayle, pianist, to form the Omega Trio, which has toured internationally with piano trio repertoire as well as the Beethoven Triple Concerto.

Mr. Emery has coached and performed in several international summer music festivals including the Spoleto Festival dei 2Mondi and InterHarmony Music Festivals in Italy, Luzerne Music Center and KentMusic in New York, and Mahler Conservatory in Vienna.

He is concertmaster and frequent soloist with orchestras in New York and California, and has performed as soloist and concertmaster in Asia, as well as several major European cities.

Mr. Emery has performed in collaboration with many contemporary composers, including Gunther Schuller, Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, Ezra Laderman, Lowell Liebermann, Tommie Haglund, Richard Danielpour, and John Corigliano.

Mr. Emery earned his MM in Performance from the Manhattan School of Music as a scholarship student with Erick Friedman and Raphael Bronstein, and served as concertmaster of the Manhattan Symphony. At MSM he was selected to perform in masterclasses with Ruggiero Ricci and Henryk Szeryng, and as the violinist for the sonata class with Misha Elman's longtime collaborative pianist, Joseph Seiger.

Personnel

FLUTE/PICCOLO
Lydia Watkins
Mackenzie Wicks
Emily Gross

OBOE
Jacqualine Burk
Sue Kokernak

CLARINET
Joel Egozy
Emma Lloyd

BASSOON
Daniel Liu
Gerald Lanoue
William Safford

VIOLIN I
Marlowe Jacques
Michael Emery
Sruti Ramaswamy
Michelle Stewart
Jessica Belflower
Julia Johnson McGuigan
Aili Teittinen-Gordon
Brooke Vincent
Olev Viro

VIOLIN II
Isabella Harelick
Josh Rodriguez
Alyson Slack
Elena Mathis
Jessica Bowen

CONTRABASSOON
William Safford

HORN
Joshua Feldman
Micah Malone
Amy Baker
Patrice Malatestinic

TRUMPET
Linden Amster
Wyn Jarvinen

TROMBONE
Andrew Feldman
Emmett Leo
Amanda Middleton
Daniel Cordell
TUBA
Benjamin Lowder

TIMPANI AND PERCUSSION
James Holmes
Joshua Lucey
Arielle Lam
Greg Auffredou
Nick Tariello

Ava Albano
Marge Hickey
Betsy Kagey

VIOLA
Jack Crisan
Stephani Emery
Emmanuelle Donaldson
Jeannine D. Fancher
Adam Warner
Sue Nazzaro
Ray Bunkofske

VIOLONCELLO
Zack Barnet
Jameson Platte
Ruth Wilson
Kara Duffy
Evan Weatherwax
Maddie Sokołowski
Maxwell Plenby

CONTRABASS
Noanddi Manigat
Luke Baker
Dave Irvin
Charles Seeley