



The Music Department presents

Skidmore Orchestra

Directed by Glen Cortese

Friday, December 6th, 2024, 7:00PM
Arthur Zankel Music Center
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

Program

Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 80

Gabriel Fauré
(1875-1924)

1. *Prelude (Quasi adagio)*
2. *Fileuse (Andantino quasi allegretto)*
3. *Sicilienne (Allegro molto moderato)*
4. *La mort de Mélisande (Molto adagio)*

Piano Concerto No. 20 in
D Minor, K. 466

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

1. *Allegro*
2. *Romanze*
3. *Rondo, Allegro assai*

Young Kim, piano

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4

Johannes Brahms
(1883-1897)

1. *Allegro non troppo*
2. *Andante Moderato*
3. *Allegro Giocosa*
4. *Allegro energico e passionato*

Program Notes

Pelléas et Mélisande Suite, op. 80

For most of the concert-going public, Fauré is associated with his well-known work, the graceful *Requiem*, and little else. While he did contribute a modicum of symphonic works to the literature, they largely met with little success, and frankly, the composer's bent was not directed to the orchestral medium. Rather, he was hugely successful as France's most respected composer of song, and made important contributions to chamber music, as well. Consequently, the incidental music that he wrote for Maeterlinck's play, *Pelléas et Mélisande* is about his only work that is commonly heard in orchestral concerts—but a fine one, it is.

Like his friend and colleague, Saint-Saëns, Fauré lived a long and productive life, which spanned major changes in European musical style—from Berlioz to Shostakovich! Born in rural France in modest circumstances, his early talent led to years of training as an organist and choir director, and this vocation he pursued for much of his early life. During his student years, Saint-Saëns became one of his teachers, and that literally changed his life, opening up prospects that otherwise would probably have been unlikely. The slightly older man served as an introduction to the “modern” music of the day—Liszt, Wagner, *et al.* Not insignificantly, for the young Fauré's education thitherto had primarily emphasized organ instruction, plainchant, and Renaissance choral music. Of almost equal importance was Fauré's entrée into Saint-Saëns' circle of influential friends, representing the highest echelon of French artists and intellectuals. Thereby—along with his distinction in winning numerous academic prizes—the door was opened for much of Fauré's later successes. Nevertheless, he had to earn a living, so he embarked upon a career as a church musician. He served in various churches around France, spending his rare free time composing. Orchestral music was obviously not his *forte*, and large-scale dramatic works offered little success for him, as well. But, he slowly gained recognition for his works—primarily songs and compositions for piano. His musical style extended the harmonic language of late Romanticism, and his graceful melodic style was a paragon of lyrical sophistication. As the decades passed, his reputation as a composer soared, and he ultimately joined the faculty of the Conservatoire, going on to serve as the director—controversially pushing the notoriously conservative institution

into modern times. By the end of his life, he was hailed as one of France's greatest musicians, and a critical player in the evolution of French music into twentieth-century musical style.

While admittedly not a symphonic composer by nature, he did enjoy writing incidental music for plays—even telling Saint-Saëns that only that genre suited his “meager talents.” The most successful attempt was, of course, the suite extracted from his music for *Pelléas et Mélisande*. He spent much time in London during the 1890s, and received a commission there for music for a performance in English translation of the play. He wrote it for small orchestra—a student did the actual orchestration, but later Fauré picked four episodes from the material, and orchestrated them for full orchestra, himself. Interestingly, for a major composer of the time—and French, at that!—he evinced little interest in orchestration and the infinite subtleties of colors and color blends that are one of the glories of the symphonic orchestra. He obviously preferred to let his rich harmonies and inimitable melodies speak untrammelled by the blandishments of the rich orchestral palette.

The story of *Pelléas et Mélisande* is a typical love story from traditional literature in its predictable and inevitable tragedy. Debussy achieved great success with his opera on the subject, and Sibelius, Schoenberg, and others were attracted to it, as well. The first movement (“Prélude”) of Fauré’s suite sets the general tone of the drama, with his smooth, sinuous, undulating textures suggestive of the many important references to water in this metaphor-laden play. The rather surprising intrusion of the bucolic solo horn near the end is often explained as symbolic of a lover’s discovery of *Mélisande* in the forest. The second movement (“Fileuse”)—featuring a solo oboe—is a traditional “spinning song,” depicting *Mélisande* at the spinning wheel, perhaps dreaming of a lover (there are two). The third movement (“Sicilienne”) is cast in the traditional *siciliano* dotted rhythm, and although in a minor key, accompanies one of the rare happy moments of the doomed couple.

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Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466

Mozart is largely responsible for the creation of the modern piano concerto, composing them primarily for himself to support his career as a performer. His spending habits consistently placed him in financial difficulties, and since he usually desperately needed to concertize, concertos were a natural solution. He composed about two dozen of them, starting about 1767. Although his operas exceed his piano concertos in musical genius, and historical significance, no other genre of his is so consistently high in quality and maturity.

While the concerto—employing a variety of solo instruments, or groups of solo instruments—had been a staple of concerts for over a hundred years by Mozart’s time, it was the advent of the piano by the late eighteenth century that enabled the genre to reach its highest expressive possibilities. Only the sonority and tonal weight of the piano really provides for an equal partner to the orchestra, and thus a foundation for the dramatic interplay between solo and accompaniment that is basic to the genre. Mozart’s contribution, other than his consummate musical genius, of course, was to “beef up” the rôle of the orchestra from one of simple accompaniment to that of co-protagonist in the musical drama. He also established a clear succession of sections in the form of the first movement. But, history aside, the relevant fact is that the piano concerto was the medium of the composer’s strongest and most personal expression—they all manifestly spring directly from his deepest feelings. He wrote most them for himself, to support his family—as he was often penurious, the need was frequent. His compositional facility in the genre is well known—he often performed them at the première with no written out solo part, with the ink on the orchestral parts hardly dry.

This concerto is one of only two that are in minor keys (this being the first) and was composed in 1785 during a remarkable period during which he wrote eleven piano concertos in two years! This work is a dark and wondrous one, and is surely among those compositions that later inspired commentators to speak of Mozart’s “romanticism.” Labels are tricky, but it’s clear that the work’s chiaroscuro nature plays a significant rôle in that perception. Moreover, two of his greatest works, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* would appear during the next two years, and their mastery and unparallel sense of drama are cut from the same cloth as this concerto. It seems to me that especially the shadowy profundity of *Don Giovanni* is presaged here.

The first movement, as usual, is a meaty one. The syncopated, pulsing strings set a mood right out of Italian opera, setting the stage for the solo part as a melancholy rumination that even in the second idea—usual brighter in mood—still seems a bit somber. After the piano cadenza, the movement rather just fades away. The following slow movement is a “romanza,” a term that Mozart used only a few times. Here in the second movement, the ambiguity of the term seems clearer in Mozart’s mind, for here we encounter musical beauty and lyricism at the fullness of the composer’s powers. The dominating mood and idea are interrupted twice for the necessary contrast: the first is couched in the same lyrical tone as the main idea. But after a return of the latter, the second contrasting section is a heavy weight diversion of menacing, tumultuous thoughts far removed from the world of tranquility of the beginning. It’s in the key of G minor—a special key for the composer, and one that he consistently reserved for his most *serioso* moments, so be warned. It’s a substantial exploration of an alternative world from that of the first, but finally a brief modulation returns us home, ending quietly.

The last movement opens vigorously, with a “rocketing” rising arpeggio as the identifier, and its constant return guides us through this serious, driving affair. To be sure, there are some contrasting lighter moments, but they don’t detain us long in this catapulting, serious drive to the end. The last statement of the main idea punches right into the piano cadenza. And then . . . a happy little tune surprisingly quickly takes us to the finish line, banishing all of the “storm and stress” through which Mozart has taken us. After all is said and done, it’s easy to see why Beethoven admired and performed this composition.

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Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, op. 98

“This is a chosen one.” Robert Schumann so characterized Johannes Brahms in his famous article that introduced the young Brahms to the public. Little did he know! Brahms went on to become the last great successor of the artistic mantle of musical Classicism that led from Joseph Haydn, through Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. That’s taking the rather narrow view, of course, for there were others that followed who revered the classical attributes of restraint, balance, clarity of form, elegance, and general equipoise that characterized the collective features that came to be known as

classical style. And they stand in clear contrast to the sweeping trends and excesses of musical Romanticism that came to dominate European music until the cataclysm of World War I.

Simply put, the composers of the nineteenth century after Beethoven tended to divide themselves into two groups. The progressives were true “Romantics,” and were greatly influenced by the extra-musical ideas that were the subjects of contemporary literature, poetry, and painting, among others. They devised new genres, such as the tone poems of Smetana and Liszt, the music dramas of Wagner, and the characteristic piano pieces of Chopin. Much of this music, to use a phrase still common among seekers of meaning in music, was about “something”—meaning something familiar to human experience. Liszt and Wagner, *et al*, while respecting the music of the past, saw no future in continuing that tradition.

Others, Brahms most significantly, still adhered strongly to the style of Beethoven that focused on the purely musical. He and other conservatively minded musicians held that the traditional forms of sonata, concerto, and symphony had not nearly exhausted their viability, and that music should continue to speak in an integrated language that referred to itself, alone, and certainly not to extra-musical ideas. So, he and his ilk continued to write “pure,” or “abstract” music, like sonatas and symphonies (a so-called symphony is just a sonata for orchestra). Today, most of those who compose, perform, and listen to art music see no contradiction at all in valuing both broad aesthetic viewpoints—so we enjoy the best of both worlds. The example of Beethoven’s music loomed overwhelming for Brahms, and he waited for decades to essay his first symphony, completing it in 1876, when he was forty-three years old. It has long since taken its place at the center of the orchestra’s repertoire.

Well, it didn’t take Brahms nearly so long to write his second symphony as it did the first, and the mood of that work is a strong contrast to that of the mighty seriousness of the first. This sunny work followed shortly in 1877, but then a hiatus occurred while Brahms devoted himself to other masterpieces, including the *Academic Festival Overture* and the monumental second piano concerto. He returned to the symphonic genre and finished the third symphony in 1883. It is the shortest of the four symphonies, and in many respects the most straightforward in musical and psychological content. Finally, in 1885, there appeared the epic and beloved fourth symphony.

This is a work in which astounding technical proficiency, intellectual seriousness of purpose, and general musical craftsmanship are woven together in a seamless exploration of tragedy. But certainly not the dark, abject, personal tragedy found, say in works of someone like Tchaikovsky. His was, rather, that of a deep, reflective rumination over the fate of all mankind as might be undertaken by a great philosopher or poet. Brahms was a wise, highly educated man, who took pleasure in the quotidian ordinary beauties of human existence, but who nevertheless understood the need to reflect upon the greater picture of our lives. And his music eloquently mirrors those considerations.

The main theme of this last, great symphony begins right off with an impressive “drooping” idea, whose breathless quality is engendered by the rests after each two-note pair. This inimitable idea informs almost every bar of the movement and teaches us that Brahms is not a “classicist” simply because he used the forms of folks like Beethoven and Mozart, but because of his astounding skill—like them—to develop great things from simple ideas: think of the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth. A fanfare-like figure (of great importance throughout much of the movement) takes us to the second theme, a broad and expansive one heard in the violoncellos and horns. Soon, it is transformed into a thumping affair that to this writer has always sounded like a powerful Brahmsian tango, if nothing else—you’ll hear it! The movement relentlessly proceeds, a masterpiece of musical skill that uses almost every technique in the book, and is ample evidence of Brahms’ deep study and understanding of the different musical styles of the past: Josquin, Palestrina, Bach—the whole lot. No composer before him literally knew so much about the musical styles of the past and how to integrate them into a new contemporary language.

The second movement opens with a powerful statement by the unison horns, the general sound of which suggests some ancient procession or ritual, and in fact, the harmony that Brahms employs offers some vague suggestion of an ancient Church mode—yet again evidence of his deep awareness of the usefulness of the past. Clarinets, accompanied by *pizzicato* strings, take up the theme, as the solemn procession plods on. Gorgeous string scoring leads to the second idea, which the composer typically presents to us in an ingenious variety of guises, but always without empty “padding.” The main theme ends it as it began, leaving us wondering exactly what world we have visited.

A vigorous *scherzo* follows—right in the tradition of Beethoven. It’s a driven fury of a movement, fulfilling the traditional requirement at this point

of a “dance-like” movement. However, it’s not in the traditional three-beat time, but in a hammering two-beat affair, in which the composer makes rare use of the triangle; it’s so prominent—and startling, one might say, for a composer with Brahms’ conservative reputation—that some pundits once considered it “abused” in this romping movement.

The last movement is unique—literally. Nothing more aptly illustrates Brahms’ skill at infusing new—dare I say, “romantic”—life into an old technique than this, the last movement of his last symphony. It was, and still is, most unusual to craft a symphonic movement around the Baroque device of passacaglia (Brahms called it a chaconne). The technique simply takes a bass line (or sequence of harmonies) and repeats it multiple times, each with a new variation crafted above, around, or under it. Bach, Purcell and other composers of the seventeen and eighteen hundreds used the trick commonly, but certainly not the “modern” composers of the 1880s. Here, Brahms takes an eight-measure melody—one note to a bar, slightly altered—that seems to have its origin in a Bach cantata. It’s heard boldly pronounced right from the beginning, and thereafter ensue thirty-four magical variations and a coda that have no real parallel in symphonic music. Using the same musical imagination so thoroughly put to work earlier in his *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Brahms crafts every kind of musical garb for the simple theme. There are light moments, dark ones; dancing rhythms and solemn chorales; and colorful orchestration of almost every type that highlights every instrument in the orchestra. It’s a virtuoso demonstration of why Brahms stands in the highest ranks of composers—beauty, profundity, and technique wedded together seamlessly.

Today, it is astounding to reflect that many of Brahms’ contemporaries—respected men, all—roundly condemned him for a lack of imagination, and just about any other virtue of great musical composition. Today, we understand him, and revere his music as having no superiors in those qualities. The world is a better place for his efforts; his critics were wrong.

His Viennese public knew better—in one of his very last public appearances before his death, the audience gave him a roaring ovation after every movement of his last symphony.

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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 Adventuresome 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.

Pianist **Young Kim**, a Steinway Artist, has performed internationally as a soloist in recitals and with orchestras, in addition to appearing numerous times as a chamber musician. A native of South Korea, Kim performed in major concert venues in Korea including the Seoul Arts Center. In Russia, she appeared as a soloist with the Saint Petersburg State Capella Symphony Orchestra. Since moving to the Capital District of NY in 2000, she appeared as a soloist with Schenectady Symphony Orchestra and Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra several times and performed solos and chamber music actively in the area.

Dr. Kim has been frequently invited to present lectures, recitals, and piano master classes in colleges and universities in Asia, Europe and in the US. Most recently, she was invited to perform and present piano master classes at the University of Szeged in Hungary, University of Seoul, and Kookmin University in Seoul, Korea.

In October 2019, Dr. Kim was inducted into the Steinway & Sons Teacher Hall of Fame, a prestigious designation recognizing the work of most committed and passionate piano educators. This was the very first year the award was given, and she was one of 43 teachers selected from the United States and Canada. Further highlighting her excellence as an educator, Dr. Kim was the recipient of the 2016 Thomas A. Manion Distinguished Faculty Award at the College of Saint Rose, where she was a Professor of Piano from 2002-2021. She was an active performer and one of the founding members of the Saint Rose Camerata, a faculty chamber ensemble.

This is Dr. Kim's 4th year teaching at Skidmore. She initiated a concert series, 'Young Kim and Skidmore Pianists' and has been performing with her students annually. The 4th concert is scheduled on April 13, 2025, with an All-Ravel program to celebrate the composer's 150th birthday. She is a member of SALT (Share, Affirm, Lift, and Tell) quintet, along with four singers, and has been performing several world-premieres of micro-operas and solo piano pieces since last year. SALT's Mosaic of Mothers concerts aim to understand and embrace the complexities of women's lives, ensuring that their histories continue to inspire future generations.

She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Minnesota (tutelage under Lydia Artymiw), an Artist Diploma from Yale University (Peter Frankl), a Master of Music from The Juilliard School (Josef Raieff), and her Bachelor of Music from Seoul National

University (Kye Sook Suh). Dr. Kim is currently a Senior Artist-in-Residence at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Personnel

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Elise Hinrichs
Katrina Adler
Emily Gross

OBOE

Jacqueline Burk
Eli Huttman

CLARINET

Joel Egozy
Emma Lloyd

BASSOON

Daniel Liu
Gerald Lanoue
William Safford

HORN

Joshua Feldman
Fiona Salas
Nate Hopper
Micah Malone
Patrice Malatestinic
Amy Baker

TRUMPET

Linden Amster
Betsy Baker

HARP

Elizabeth Huntley

VIOLIN I

Rebecca Merber
Michael Emery
Sruti Ramaswamy
Michelle Stewart
Aili Teittinen-Gordon
Brooke Vincent
Kari Flowers
Ava Albano
Maki Matsuoka
Olev Viro

VIOLIN II

Zach DeGennaro
Josh Rodriguez
Margaret Hickey
Elena Mathis
Jessica Bowen
Sophia Todd
Anika Scherer
Chloe Filipo
Betsy Kagey
Caroline Smith

VIOLA

Jack Crisan
Sophia Ma
Stephani Emery

TROMBONE

Andrew Feldman
Emmett Leo
Amanda Middleton
Daniel Cordell

**TIMPANI AND
PERCUSSION**

James Holmes
Arielle Lam

VIOLONCELLO

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

Sasha Stern

Sue Nazzaro
Adam Warner
Portia Zwicker
Ray Bunkofske

CONTRABASS

Noanddi Manigat
Luke Baker
Jim Caiello
Matthew Barron

Upcoming Events

Skidmore in Concert:
Global Music Showcase
Saturday, December 7, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Concert Band
Sunday, December 8, 1:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Guitar Ensemble
Tuesday, December 10, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Big Band +
Cuban Music Ensemble
Wednesday, December 11, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
Small Jazz Ensembles + Guitar
Sunday, December 8, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:
String Ensembles
Monday, December 9, 7:00pm