

Livermore-Amador Symphony

Lara Webber, Music Director & Conductor
Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director Emeritus
Saturday, June 1, 2019, 8 p.m.
Bankhead Theater, Livermore



Classical Contrasts

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Lara Webber

Suite No. 2 for Chamber Orchestra

Igor Stravinsky
(1882–1971)

- I. March
- II. Waltz
- III. Polka
- IV. Galop

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Opus 58

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Rondo (Vivace)

Gwendolyn Mok, soloist

————— INTERMISSION —————

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Opus 120

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)

- I. Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft
- II. Romanze: Ziemlich langsam
- III. Scherzo: Lebhaft
- IV. Langsam – Lebhaft

*The audience and performers are invited
to enjoy cookies, cider, coffee, and sparkling wine in the lobby after the concert
at a reception hosted by the Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild.*

*Piano soloist Gwendolyn Mok will be in the lobby at intermission
and after the concert, with CDs available for purchase.*

Music Director position underwritten by the Chet and Henrietta Fankhauser Trust

Orchestra

Conductor

Lara Webber

First Violin

Kristina Anderson

Concertmaster

Juliana Zolynas

Assistant

Concertmaster

Norman Back

Feliza Bourguet

Judy Eckart

Lana Hodzic

Susan Ivie

Jackie Maruskin

Jutta Massoud

Doug Morrison

Michael Peach

Nicholas Travia

Second Violin

Ursula Goldstein

Principal

Gale Anderson

Stephanie Black

Mary Burchett

Lisa Burkhart

Jeana Ernst

Jeannie Guzis

Denise Leddon

Jacqueline McBride

Nissa Nack

Elizabeth Paik*

Leslie Stevens

Beth Wilson

Viola

Judy Beck

Principal

Lynda Alvarez

David Friburg

Audrey Horning

Sheri Schultz

Dora Scott

Brandon Tran

Cello

Peter Bedrossian

Principal

Alan Copeland

Aidan Epstein

Kate Fisher

Nathan Hunsuck

Hildi Kang

Joanne Lenigan

Paul Pappas

Joseph Swenson

String Bass

Markus Salasoo

Principal

Alan Frank

Navaz Jasavala

Aaron Plattner

Flute

Marianne Beeler

Principal

Beth Wilson

Piccolo

Beth Wilson

Oboe

Eva Langfeldt

Principal

Jeanne Brown

Clarinet

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Program Notes

Suite No. 2 for Chamber Orchestra

Igor Stravinsky

(1882–1971)

Igor Stravinsky was born near St. Petersburg, Russia, in June 1882; he died in New York in April 1971. He originally composed two sets of piano duets in 1914–1915 and 1916–1917, respectively, and orchestrated them for chamber orchestra at various times between 1917 and 1925, to form the two suites. With these pieces, Stravinsky began to leave the world of Russian popular and nationalistic music—best heard in his three early ballets—for a more international style of light music.

In the original piano-duet versions, the first set was written with “an easy left hand” and the second set “with an easy right hand.” The first three pieces of Suite No. 2—“March,” “Waltz,” and “Polka”—were intended as portraits of composers Alfredo Casella and Erik Satie and ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev, respectively. When Stravinsky visited Rome in February 1915, he took these pieces with him and during his stay invited Diaghilev to play them with him, as recorded in his *Chronicle*: “On reaching the Polka, I told him that in composing it, I had thought of him as a circus ringmaster in evening dress and top hat, cracking his whip and urging on a rider on horseback. At first he was put out, not quite knowing whether he ought to be offended or not, but we had a good laugh over it together in the end.” (Stravinsky gave a slightly different version of this story in his *Dialogues*.)

Stravinsky arranged Suite No. 2 at the request of a Paris music hall that wanted short pieces of incidental music to accompany a sketch. In his *Chronicle*, Stravinsky wrote, “Although my orchestra was more than modest, the composition as I wrote it was given only at the first few performances. When I went to see the sketch again a month later, I found that there was but little left of what I had written. Everything was completely muddled . . . , and the music itself as executed by this pitiful band had become unrecognizable. It was a good lesson....”

Piano Concerto No. 4

Ludwig van Beethoven

in G Major, Opus 58

(1770–1827)

Beethoven completed this concerto in 1806, a year of intense productivity. (Among his other works from this *annus mirabilis* are the Fourth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, the three “Razumovsky” string quartets, the third version of the “Leonore” overture, and revisions to his opera *Fidelio*.) The composer played the solo part in the work’s first public performance, which took place at a concert of his music given at the Theater an der Wien, in Vienna, on December 22, 1808. That event—whose program also included the premieres of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the concert aria “Ah, perfido!,” portions of the Mass in C, and the initial performance of the “Choral Fantasia”—proved a famous disaster. The underrehearsed orchestra was no match for the long and almost entirely new program nor for Beethoven’s idiosyncratic and temperamental conducting. Frigid temperatures in the unheated theater made matters even more difficult. Contemporary notices of the concert describe a general debacle but make no specific mention of the G major piano concerto. It cannot have scored any great success, for it was not performed again during Beethoven’s lifetime.

The work deserved a better fate. Although not as sweeping or heroic in tone as either the composer’s Third or Fifth Piano Concerto, the Fourth is every bit as beautiful and

in several respects more original. Its unorthodox opening measures and the casting of the slow movement as a dramatic dialogue were virtually unprecedented when the work appeared, and the extensions of its thematic material are accomplished with an ingenuity characteristic of Beethoven's best music.

Instead of an orchestral opening, which, until this work, had been the customary starting point for any concerto, Beethoven begins with a brief meditation by the piano alone. Its statement, growing out of a series of repeated notes, is answered at once by the orchestra. Only upon the conclusion of that phrase does Beethoven launch into the full and proper exposition of his thematic material. The first subject is built on the repeated-note figure of the soloist's opening soliloquy, but this motive yields more than just the movement's principal theme. It provides its own counterpoint, echoing in close imitation among different instruments; it is woven against the second theme, a broad, minor-key melody stated by the violins, and it forms a bridge to the re-entry of the piano.

The close weaving of piano and orchestral music that marks the first movement gives way in the second to a kind of dramatic encounter unique in Beethoven's output. The piano responds lyrically to the stern statements of the orchestra, their exchanges growing increasingly urgent and eloquent. The Romantic tradition linking this music with the mythic scene of Orpheus taming the Furies of the underworld with his song seems entirely apt. A feeling of classical tragedy prevails, and the movement ends on a note of sorrowful resignation.

The concluding rondo finds Beethoven's spirits restored. This is the most elegant of the composer's concerto finales, for although quite exuberant, it does not convey the earthy humor that generally marks his closing movements. Rather, its delights are of a more refined sort and often surprise us, as when the violas unexpectedly emerge from the orchestral texture to sing a lyrical melody based on the recurring principal theme.

Symphony No. 4

in D Minor, Opus 120

Robert Schumann

(1810–1856)

Schumann's Fourth Symphony is now widely regarded as one of his most original and inventive works. In departing radically from the Classical forms of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, it paved the way for the great late-Romantic symphonies of Brahms and Dvořák. Much of its innovation lies in the unity and cohesiveness of the work. Schumann called it a "symphony in one movement."

Virtually all the thematic material can be traced to the mysterious slow introduction, where a "generative" motive is played by the second violins and bassoons. The lively questing allegro that follows is built from a figure derived by inverting this motive and breaking it up with an octave leap. The second movement is a romance in which the symphony's slow introduction reappears as the middle section. The scherzo theme is the inversion of the generative motive but given a completely different character by the rhythm, dynamics, and orchestration. It is joined seamlessly to the final movement by a short passage of great solemnity and nobility, dominated by four horns and three trombones, with the first violins interjecting the 16th-note theme of the first movement. The final movement mirrors the first, using the same musical ideas but now in the major key, replacing the troubled uncertain mood with one of joy and triumph. Just to confound the musical analysts, Schumann introduces a closing theme that is the only one not related in any way to the generative motive.

The symphony did not immediately meet with a favorable reception. Schumann com-

pleted the first version in 1841 and gave it to his wife, Clara, as a birthday present. He called it his “Clara Symphony,” a name that is now rarely used. The first performance took place in Leipzig, with Schumann himself conducting, and was a disaster for several reasons. First, insufficient rehearsal time was devoted to the work, and the orchestral players were unfamiliar with and uncomfortable playing Schumann’s new symphonic idioms. Second, Schumann himself was a notoriously poor conductor. His introverted nature and lack of confidence in his own work prevented him from interacting well with the musicians and providing the necessary guidance. Third, some of the orchestral parts were very difficult. Disappointed, Schumann withdrew the work and didn’t return to it until 10 years later.

The premiere of a second version took place in Düsseldorf in 1853, shortly before Schumann attempted suicide and was confined to an asylum. The majority of the revision was to the orchestration. The orchestral textures were thickened, with more instruments playing each part. It was suggested by Brahms that this was to cover up the inadequacy of some of the players in the Düsseldorf orchestra. The more instruments that played a particular passage, the more likely it was that at least some of them would get it right. The second version was a success, with the eminent musicologist George Grove describing it as “a landmark in the history of the symphony.”

The failure of the first version of the symphony has been the source of heated critical debate. It became very common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to criticize Schumann’s orchestration. On the other hand, Brahms, who obtained the manuscript of the first version after Schumann’s death and published it in 1890, against the wishes of Clara Schumann, believed the original version to have been better than the revision. He wrote, “It is a real pleasure to see anything so bright and spontaneous expressed with corresponding ease and grace. Everything is so absolutely natural that you cannot imagine it in any other way—there are no harsh colors, no forced effects.”

Despite Brahms’ championing of the first version, the later version is the one that is most commonly performed, including tonight. However, the first version is now no longer considered difficult by modern professional orchestras, and a recent recording conducted by John Eliot Gardiner does seem to vindicate Brahms’ judgment of the work.

Program notes compiled by Kathy Boster from Internet sources

Edited by Eva Langfeldt

Piano Soloist Gwendolyn Mok

Born in New York City, East Bay resident Gwendolyn Mok has appeared in many of the world’s leading concert halls, including the Barbican, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, and the Hong Kong Performing Arts Center. She is frequently invited to play and record with major international orchestras, such as the London Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Beijing Symphony Orchestra, and the Residence Orchestra of the Hague.

Mok is Coordinator of Keyboard Studies at San Jose State University and maintains a busy performing and recording schedule. She began her studies at the Juilliard School of Music, completed her undergraduate work at



Yale University, and earned her doctorate in Musical Arts at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In 2016, Mok was named President's Scholar by San Jose State University, awarded to an outstanding faculty member for scholarship and research. She was also presented with the Artistic Achievement Award by San Jose State's College of Humanities and the Arts in 2008.

Mok's 2001 debut CD, with London's Philharmonia Orchestra of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, is highly acclaimed. The CD *Saint-Saëns's Africa—Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* with the London Philharmonic has been equally applauded. Solo CDs *Ravel Revealed* (Ravel's piano works), *Brahms: Late Piano Works*, and *Legacy, The Spirit of Beethoven*, were recorded on historic pianos. All three received outstanding reviews and are broadcast frequently around the world. Recently released CDs are *Poldowski Art Songs*, with soprano Angelique Zuluaga, and *EKTA Trilogy*, which features Mok as soloist on *EKTA II*, a concerto written for her by composer Brent Heisinger.

Mok appears regularly in the San Francisco Symphony Chamber Music Series and for the San Jose Chamber Society and the Sacramento Chamber Society. She collaborates often with members of the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra. A popular soloist with Symphony Silicon Valley, she co-produced and appeared in four sold-out performances of *The Gershwin Radio Hour*.

Music Director Lara Webber

Widely admired as a dynamic, creative, and engaging conductor, Lara Webber is dedicated to inspiring audiences and community engagement through the power of symphonic music. She has been praised by fellow musicians around the country for her



musical depth, genuine expression, strong personal vision, and collaborative spirit. This season marks her fifth as music director and conductor of LAS.

Webber brings a broad range of experience to the podium. She has held the positions of both assistant and associate conductor of the symphony orchestras of Baltimore and Charleston and music director of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Her guest-conducting activities have included multiple performances with the symphonies of Houston, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, Santa Barbara, and Modesto, among several others. She has served as cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra. Webber's operatic associations include posts as the assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.

Strongly committed to arts education, Webber was a conductor of the Emmy-nominated Disney's Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra. She has taught student conductors as a faculty member of the League of American Orchestra's conductor workshops and has coached youth and community orchestras. At home in Livermore, she is active in the community, bringing music to the local elementary schools, coaching chamber musicians, and advocating for the arts as an essential part of the educational curriculum and a vital part of our culture.

Webber holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied orchestral conducting with Robert Spano. She received her Master of Music degree from USC, where she studied with Daniel Lewis.

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Corrections or questions?

Please contact Judy Eckart
judy@justjudy.com

LASYO Concert on August 3

Rehearsals begin this month for the Livermore-Amador Symphony Youth Orchestra. See livermoreamadorsymphony.org/lasyo. A free public concert will be presented on Saturday August 3 at 8 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church in Livermore.

POPS Shoots for the Moon!—October 25

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the landing and walk on the moon, the 2019 Pops concert is on October 25 at 8 p.m., with ticket reservations accepted starting September 17. See livermoreamadorsymphony.org/pops for details.

Competition for Young Musicians, 2019–2020

Winners of the Competition for Young Musicians will perform with LAS in February. See livermoreamadorsymphony.org/competition. Applications are due September 8.

Gala, Family Concert, and Season Tickets for 2019–2020

LAS will perform at the Livermore Valley Performing Arts Center (LVPAC) gala on September 7 and at the LVPAC family concert on the afternoon of December 7. Our 2019–2020 season brochure is available in the lobby. Take extras if you wish. Season tickets are on sale now for *Winter Dreams* on December 7, *Angels and Demons* on February 22, *Firebird and Frederic Chiu* on April 18, and *Brilliance and Beethoven* on May 30.

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APBarnesSociety@livermoreamadorsymphony.org.

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We have years of experience, and all of our profits go to the Symphony and its activities.

Livermore-Amador Symphony is a member of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council and a resident company of the Bankhead Theater. See the Cultural Arts Calendar at www.independentnews.com.

LVPAC is a sponsor of this event.



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