

LIVERMORE AMADOR
SYMPHONY

Lara Webber
Music Director & Conductor
Arthur P. Barnes
Music Director Emeritus
Saturday, April 23, 2022, 8 p.m.
Bankhead Theater, Livermore

Vibrant Voices

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Lara Webber

Prayer for the Ukraine (2014)
from Maidan—2014

Valentin Silvestrov
(b. 1937)
arr. Eduard Resatsch

Poems of Emily Dickinson (1970)
Nature, the Gentlest Mother
There Came a Wind Like a Bugle
The World Feels Dusty
Heart, We Will Forget Him!
Going to Heaven!
The Chariot

Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

Heidi Moss Erickson, soprano soloist

Lincoln Portrait (1942)

Faith Alpher, narrator

Copland

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3 (1907)
in C Major, Opus 52

Jean Sibelius
(1865–1957)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto
- III. Moderato – Allegro ma non tanto

**The Sibelius performance is dedicated to
longtime Guild member and extraordinary Symphony supporter
Maudie Kuenning.**

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

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requires all musicians and guest artists to be fully vaccinated.**

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plus rehearsal and performance-venue health policies.**

Program Notes

Prayer for the Ukraine from Maidan—2014

Valentin Silvestrov
(b. 1937)
arr. Eduard Resatsch

Valentin Silvestrov, born in 1937 in Kyiv, USSR, is described as a postmodern composer, even though he uses traditional techniques and harmonies.

Living in the communist Soviet Union, Silvestrov created compositions in the mid-1960s that challenged the Soviet aesthetic norms, so he was put under a set of restrictions. He protested at an official gathering in Kyiv in 1970 and consequently was expelled from the Ukrainian Union of Composers. He was allowed to rejoin the Union, albeit three years later, and the result of his expulsion started to show in his compositions, which shifted from “noisy” to quiet, intimate, and meditative. This change in style enabled Silvestrov to remain under the radar. With the independence of Ukraine in 1991, he returned to composing music that was more openly religious and political in nature.

During protests against Russian political pressure on Ukraine in 2013 and 2014, Silvestrov repeatedly went to demonstrations in Maidan Square in Kyiv. He wrote numerous hymns, elegies, prayers, and requiem movements manifesting his faith in the roots of Ukrainian culture. Later he grouped these choruses into four cycles, of which the present “Prayer for the Ukraine” is a part.

Silvestrov, Ukraine’s best-known living composer, is a musical spokesman for his country during Russia’s war against Ukraine. And like millions of other Ukrainians, he is a refugee: Over three days in early March, he and his daughter and granddaughter made their way by bus from their home in Kyiv to Lviv, and from there across Poland to Berlin, where he is now sheltering. His grandson stayed behind to volunteer in defending Ukraine. “We’re more or less OK,” Silvestrov said to Peter Schmelz of the *New York Times* in late March. But he said that he remains in shock about the war. “I don’t know how we lived to see this,” he added.

Poems of Emily Dickinson

Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

The poems of Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) that Aaron Copland set to music in 1949–1950 are quite extraordinary. Written in the first person, they speak directly and without artifice, resembling a personal diary, and one gets a very strong sense of the woman behind the words. She became a recluse in her 30s, maintaining friendships largely through correspondence. She talked to visitors only through closed doors, to avoid face-to-face contact. She did not wish to publish during her lifetime, but nowadays her work is well recognized in the American poetry canon. Copland spent months researching her life and even visited the room where she had spent so many solitary hours. One can see why he chose these particular poems (from the 1,800 she had written): “Nature, the Gentlest Mother,” “There Came a Wind Like a Bugle,” “The World Feels Dusty,” “Heart, We Will Forget Him!” “Going to Heaven,” and “The Chariot,” as they have wide appeal and also reveal her gentle sense of humor.

At the time Copland composed the songs, he had already consciously altered his style from modernist to a more accessible vernacular, one that would appeal to a wider audience. He originally set twelve songs for soprano with piano accompaniment; a recording was made in 1950 and 1952 with Copland accompanying mezzo-soprano Martha Lipton. This original setting is intimate, but his later orchestration of eight songs (six of which are being performed at our concert) was imaginative and adds another dimension to the songs, although it becomes more difficult to hear all the texts. One feels that Dickinson herself is singing, such is the power of her words and the adroit way Copland’s music enhances them. Early in his musical career, he spent three years studying composition with the great Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and he claimed he conceived his aesthetic of clarity and simplicity from her as well as developing eclectic tastes. Clarity is very evident in these wonderful songs.

Lincoln Portrait

Copland

When commissioned by conductor André Kostelanetz during World War II to compose a portrait of an eminent American to express the “magnificent spirit of our country,” Aaron Copland selected Walt Whitman as his subject. When Kostelanetz persuaded him that a political figure of world stature would be better suited to the patriotic purpose, Copland settled on Lincoln.

In 1942, the year of “Lincoln Portrait,” Copland had already turned the corner from his path of neoclassical abstraction onto what became a highway of Americana, filled with works in which folk materials were freely used and adapted. By no means content only to appropriate traditional tunes, Copland blended them with a full complement of original music that marvelously counterfeited the genuine article, and the combined ingredients had jaunty, irregular rhythms; spiky dissonances; and simple triadic harmonies, intimate and/or grand orchestral textures—and gallons of spirit.

“Lincoln Portrait” was premiered by Kostelanetz and the Cincinnati Symphony on May 14, 1942. A radio broadcast with Carl Sandburg as narrator came shortly thereafter. The following was written by Copland for the first Boston Symphony performance in 1943:

“I worked with musical materials of my own with the exception of two songs of the period: the famous ‘Camptown Races’ which, when used by Lincoln supporters during his Presidential campaign of 1860, was sung to the words ‘We’re bound to work all night, bound to work all day. I’ll bet my money on the Lincoln hoss....,’ and a ballad that was first published in 1840 under the title ‘The Pesky Sarpent,’ but it is better known today as ‘Springfield Mountain.’ In neither case is the treatment a literal one.

“The composition is roughly divided into three main sections. In the opening section I wanted to suggest something of the mysterious sense of fatality that surrounds Lincoln’s personality. Also, near the end of that section, something of his gentleness and simplicity of spirit. The quick middle section briefly sketches in the background of the times he lived. This merges into the concluding section where my sole purpose was to draw a simple but impressive frame about the words of Lincoln himself.”

Symphony No. 3

in C Major, Opus 52

Jean Sibelius

(1865–1957)

If Sibelius’s first two symphonies can be broadly classified as belonging to “national Romanticism,” the Third seems to evade any such categorization. It clearly is a work of transition. Most commentators have observed in it a tendency toward a kind of “classicism.” It probably is the first movement, with its clear-cut formal design and effortless grace of orchestration, that is responsible for this view. The second movement, which recycles a simple theme in the manner of a folk song, does not conflict with the impression left behind by the first. The third movement, on the other hand, does not seem to fit into this picture. It is utterly problematic in form and leaves many questions unanswered.

Sibelius first referred to this work in correspondence from September 1904, though the ideas that ended up in the Third Symphony are from a time prior to that. He worked on several compositions simultaneously, each being at a different phase in its development. When the most active phase of the Third Symphony was at hand, he had finished “Pohjola’s Daughter” and left unfinished two other projects, “Luonnotar” and *Marjatta*. It seems that there is a connection between these abandoned projects and the Third Symphony. The religious content of the *Marjatta* oratorio seems reflected in the symphony, and the choral-like material of the second movement stems from the “Luonnotar” project. Passages featuring a hymn or a chorale are exceptionally numerous in the Third Symphony and can be found in all three movements. Hidden programmatic reasons may lie behind the fact that the Third Symphony has only three movements. Possibly the movements spiritually correspond to the birth, funeral, and resurrection of Christ in the *Marjatta* libretto. Real work on this composition began late in 1906, and the first performance took place under the composer’s baton in Helsinki on September 25, 1907.

Program notes compiled or written by Kathy Boster from Internet sources

Edited by Eva Langfeldt

Soprano Soloist Heidi Moss Erickson

Heidi Moss Erickson has performed with Opera Parallèle, Oakland Symphony, Livermore Valley Opera, and more, including with LAS in June 2016 and as Blanche in Opera San Jose's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* last year. She is a champion of new music and has collaborated with Jake Heggie; Daron Hagen; Gilda Lyons; Luciano Chessa; Gordon Getty; and other composers, including her husband, Kurt Erickson. This July in San Francisco as a part of the tenth anniversary series of LIEDER ALIVE!, she will premiere a new song set by Tarik O'Regan, accompanied by John Parr of Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Moss Erickson holds bachelor's degrees from Oberlin College (where she and Lara Webber met) in voice and biology and a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. Following a decade in scientific research, she embarked on a full-time performing career. In 2007 she was stricken with a severe version of Bell's palsy that left the right side of her face partially paralyzed. This disability has inspired her to learn more about the relationship between vocal physiology and facial musculature as she teaches voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



photo: Marc Olivier LeBlanc

Narrator Faith Alpher

Faith Alpher is a writer, actress, inspirational speaker, and comedian, and she's a DJ on local radio station KKIQ. A Livermore resident originally from Teaneck, New Jersey, she holds a master's degree in communication and has inspired people around the world through her comedy. She is known for her quick wit, high energy, and ability to connect with others emotionally and has worked with a variety of corporations and celebrities, including Hasbro: Toys & Games, the Wayans Brothers, and the Oprah Winfrey Network.



Alpher starred in the 2007 documentary film *Comedy Ain't for the Money*, hosted by Will Durst. She wrote and starred in the 2017 video and stage show *Black Girl. Funny World*. Last September, she performed her fourth show at the Bankhead: *Got Faith?* is a one-woman autobiographical documentary-styled comedy she wrote about humor, hate, race, and grace.



Music Director Lara Webber

Lara Webber is dedicated to inspiring audiences and community engagement through the power of symphonic music. She has been praised by fellow musicians for her musical depth, genuine expression, strong personal vision, and collaborative spirit. Now in her eighth season as music director and conductor of LAS, she has brought music to Tri-Valley elementary schools, coached chamber musicians, and advocated for the arts.

Webber holds degrees in music from Oberlin and USC and 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. She is music director of the Palo Alto Philharmonic. Her guest-conducting activities have included multiple performances with the symphonies of Houston, Pittsburgh, Santa Barbara, and Modesto, among others. She has served as cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra and was a conductor of the Emmy-nominated Disney's Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra. Her operatic associations include posts as assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.

Emily Dickinson Poems

Nature, the Gentlest Mother

Nature

the gentlest mother is,
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest
or the waywardest,—
Her admonition mild
In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.
How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon,—
Her household,
her assembly;
And when the sun
goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.
When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light
her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,
With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger
on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

There Came a Wind Like a Bugle

There came a wind
like a bugle;
It quivered through
the grass,
And a green chill upon
the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the windows and
the doors
As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric
moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of
panting trees,
And fences fled away,
And rivers where
the houses ran
Those looked that lived—
that Day—

The bell within the
steeple wild
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

The World Feels Dusty

The World—feels Dusty
When We stop to Die—
We want the Dew—then—
Honors—taste dry—
Flags—vex a Dying face
But the least Fan
Stirred by a friend's Hand—
Cools—like the Rain
Mine be the Ministry
When thy Thirst comes—
And Hybla Balms—
Dews of Thessaly, to fetch—

Heart, We Will Forget Him!

Heart, we will forget him!
You and I, tonight!
You may forget the warmth
he gave,
I will forget the light.
When you have done,
pray tell me,
That I my thoughts
may dim;
Haste! lest while you're
lagging.
I may remember him!

Going to Heaven!

Going to Heaven!
I don't know when—
Pray do not ask me how!
Indeed I'm too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to Heaven!
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home
at night
Unto the Shepherd's arm!
Perhaps you're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first
Save just a little space
for me
Close to the two I lost—
The smallest "Robe"
will fit me
And just a bit of "Crown"—
For you know we do not
mind our dress

When we are going home—
I'm glad I don't believe it
For it would stop my
breath—
And I'd like to look
a little more
At such a curious Earth!
I'm glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty Autumn
afternoon
I left them in the ground.

The Chariot

Because I could not stop
for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but
just ourselves
And Immortality.
We slowly drove,
he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor,
and my leisure too,
For his civility.
We passed the school
where children played,
Their lessons scarcely
done;
We passed the fields of
gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.
We paused before a house
that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely
visible.
The cornice but a mound.
Since then 'tis centuries;
but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised
the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

Abraham Lincoln Quotations in "Lincoln Portrait" are from:

Annual message to Congress
December 1, 1862
Lincoln-Douglas debates
October 15, 1858
Speech fragment
August 1, 1858
Gettysburg Address
November 19, 1863

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Corrections or questions?

Please contact Judy Eckart: judy@justjudy.com

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