

1-27-1994

Opening Concert

Department of Music, University of Richmond

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/all-music-programs>

 Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Department of Music, University of Richmond, "Opening Concert" (1994). *Music Department Concert Programs*. 902.
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/all-music-programs/902>

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the Music at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Music Department Concert Programs by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

1994
TUCKER-BOATWRIGHT
FESTIVAL IN MUSIC



OPENING
CONCERT

JANUARY 27, 1994
CAMP THEATER
8:15 pm

PROGRAM

KNOXVILLE: SUMMER OF 1915, Op. 24 (1947)

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

The Richmond Symphony
Carmen Pelton *soprano*
Fred Cohen *conductor*

QUARTET IN A-flat, Op. 105 (1895)

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

I. Adagio, ma non troppo. Allegro appassionata
II. Molto vivace
III. Lento e molto cantabile
IV. Allegro, non tanto

The Shanghai Quartet

intermission

KUPELWIESER WALTZ (1826)

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828) arr. Fred Cohen

The Shanghai Quartet

THE SCHUBERT BIRDS (1989)

Michael Colgrass
(b. 1932)

The Richmond Symphony
Fred Cohen *conductor*

Twentieth-Century Reflections in Music, Poetry, and the Visual Arts is the 1994 Tucker-Boatwright Festival in Music at the University of Richmond. Organized by the Department of Music, in cooperation with the Department of Art and the Marsh Art Gallery, the festival received additional support from the University's Cultural Affairs Committee. This performance is also presented with the assistance of a grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The use of cameras and/or recording devices in the performance hall is strictly prohibited.

PERSONNEL

THE SHANGHAI QUARTET

Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Richmond

Weigang Li *violin* Zheng Wang *viola*

Honggang Li *violin* James Wilson *cello*

THE RICHMOND SYMPHONY

VIOLIN I

Jonathan Mott *concertmaster*

Laura Leigh Roelofs *assistant*

concertmaster

Susan Winslow Bedell

Helen Coulson

Margie Heath

Jane Kapeller

Robert Land

Elizabeth Moore

VIOLIN II

Pamela Hentges *principal*

Catherine Hubert *assistant principal*

Jill Foster

Leonid Prymak

Yen Yu

VIOLA

Kenneth Freed *principal*

Judith Beverly *assistant principal*

Molly Sharp

Jeffrey Swaluk

Yakov Tulchinsky

CELLO

Neal Cary *principal*

William Comita *assistant principal*

Jennifer Combs

Alyssa Moquin

DOUBLE BASS

Paul A. Bedell *principal*

Rumano Solano *assistant principal*

Delbert Williams

Douglas Yarwood

FLUTE

Mary Boodell *principal*

Christine Ertell

PICCOLO

Laurie Lake

OBOE

Philip Teachey *principal*

Michael Lisicky

ENGLISH HORN

Michael Lisicky

CLARINET

David Niethamer *principal*

Marta Schworm Weldon

E-FLAT CLARINET

Marta Schworm Weldon

BASSOON

Jonathan Friedman *principal*

CONTRABASSOON

Bruce Hammel

FRENCH HORN

Alan Paterson *principal*

Adam Lesnick

TRUMPET

Rolla Durham *principal*

George Tuckwiller III

HARP

Lynne Abbey-Lee *principal*

TIMPANI

Charles Drysdale *principal*

PERCUSSION

Donald Bick *principal*

PERSONNEL MANAGER

Lynda S. Edwards

LIBRARIAN

Rebecca Scanlon

STAGE MANAGER

Jimmy Carroll

TEXT OF KNOXVILLE: SUMMER OF 1915

by James Agee

first printed in *Partisan Review* 5 (Aug-Sept, 1938)

We are talking now of summer evenings in Knoxville Tennessee in the time that I lived there so successfully disguised to myself as a child.

. . . It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of trees, of birds' hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt: a loud auto: a quiet auto: people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard, and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber. A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping; belling and starting, stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter; fainting; lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew.

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose.

Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes. . .

Parents on porches: rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.

The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, . . . with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

PROGRAM NOTES

Interviewer: Do you think romanticism is still a going concern?

Mr. Varèse: What does one mean by romanticism? Everything is romantic if a man expresses himself. I see a great deal of romanticism in Mr. Webern, whom people find so abstract.

Whamo! Edgard Varèse's answer, stated some 40 years ago, was as appropriate then as it is now. For Varèse, as well as for many of us, romanticism is in the ears and eyes of the beholder. Indeed, what does one mean by romanticism? Most people consider musical romanticism to refer to a self-contained era extending from the Classic period to the music of this century, distinguished from classicism by a tendency toward looseness of musical forms, and from modern music by its direct expression. "Romanticism" is a term used to denote an entire era, covering all composers from Schubert to Mahler. This is obviously an over-simplification of the term. Verdi was not a romantic; and while Donizetti was a romantic, this tells us little about him. It seems that the musical notion of romanticism derives from literature, but, paradoxically, there are no literary parallels for some of the basic traits that distinguish romantic music from classical music, especially the profound changes in its relation to music of the past.

A similar line of reasoning can be traced in the idea of musical realism. While we think of the music of the nineteenth century as romantic, the main current of literature and visual arts of the age was realist. Though an occasional commentator has found "realistic traits" in the music of Schubert, for example, most composers of the time held the opinion that music is a fundamentally unrealistic art, "of its nature" romantic. How do we reconcile these antithetical tendencies--romantic and realist?

During this Tucker-Boatwright Festival we will have the opportunity to explore a diverse selection of modern reactions to the Romantic era: in music, painting, and poetry, we will explore some of the various ways we hear and see the work of nineteenth-century artists, and some of the reactions of contemporary artists to these works. The music on this opening concert embarks on this theme in the beautifully Romantically-inclined work of Samuel Barber, the Bohemian flavored quartet of Antonin Dvorak, and the stream-of-consciousness reaction to a Schubert wedding waltz by Michael Colgrass.

American composer Samuel Barber wrote *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* in 1947 on commission from the American soprano Eleanor Steber. The work was first performed by Steber and the Boston Symphony under the direction of Serge Koussevitsky, who pointed to its ineffable American quality with the observation: "The very sounds of the words in *Knoxville* evoke for us a sense of childhood, of being loved and protected and part of a tradition." This tribute honors both the text and the composer. Sadly, James Agee was prevented from attending the premiere of this work because of hospitalization, an ironic twist considering his love and use of music in much of his work.

James Agee's text is a prose poem of enormous impact, pointedly local in tone but universal in message. Barber sets the text as a single-movement tone poem divided into five parts.

The String Quartet in A-flat major is the last of Dvorak's fourteen string quartets, and the last piece he wrote that does not bear a programmatic title. Dvorak began the work while still in New York, left it for eight months to work on the G-major quartet, and returned to finish the A-flat major quartet in Prague at the end of 1895. His happiness at returning to his homeland is obvious in the quartet, as he told his friend Alois Göbel: "We are all, thanks be to God, well and rejoice to be able, after three years, to spend a happy and joyous Christmas in Bohemia! How different it was for us last year in America, when we were far away in foreign parts and separated from all our children and friends! But God has been pleased to grant us this happy moment and so we all feel inexpressibly glad! I am now working very hard. I work so easily and everything goes ahead so well that I could not wish it better...." The merry and happy mood permeates the quartet in themes that are expressly and fully Czech in character.

notes by Fred Cohen

The Schubert Birds is a concerto for orchestra based on Franz Schubert's Kupelwieser Waltz, a little-known piano piece that Schubert wrote as a wedding gift for his friend Leopold Kupelwieser. Kupelwieser was a painter and a member of a special in-group of Viennese admirers who would gather privately to hear Schubert's music. Listeners will recall the term 'Schubertiad,' coined to define these gatherings. I call the work *The Schubert Birds* because I often think of Schubert as a kind of bird who spent his life singing, and who was surrounded by others who were attracted by his lyricism and sang with him. (Musicologist Maynard Solomon pointed out in a recent paper that letters exchanged between Schubert and his friends referred to "peacocks," pheasants" and "nightingales," etc., terms that he postulates were intended as a code to mask their homosexual activities. Hence, by chance, my title may have connotations that I had never intended!)

From my vantage point, Schubert has a kindred spirit in jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker. Parker, too, sang with the natural ease of a bird and was even nicknamed Bird. They both lived fast and died tragically young (Parker at 34, Schubert at 31). So, it seemed quite natural to me that the middle section of this work be in the recitative blues style of Charlie Parker, to show their affinity.

In musical form, *The Schubert Birds* is a tapestry of several dozen variations on the Kupelwieser Waltz heard two or three at a time in almost perpetual counterpoint. For example, the above-mentioned section is a bluesy duet for oboe and contrabassoon (in C major) alternating with a fast-tempo muted trumpet (in F major). These two variations are interrupted intermittently by a dream-like waltz in violins playing harmonics (in D minor) and the violas playing a chorale (in G minor). And this whole section is framed by a forcible declamatory statement in low strings and horns (in C# minor). So, five different variations are woven together here to make this one section. A straight forward lyric version of Schubert's theme appears in the cellos and violas early in the work, and Schubert's original theme is heard in orchestrated form close to the end. Some listeners might enjoy piecing together this crazy quilt of theme and variations, while others might prefer to simply stroll freely through my own fanciful concept of Schubert's subconscious world.

notes by the composer

THE ARTISTS

Possessing a voice that has been hailed as "...emotional, tender and pure-toned" (Andrew Porter, *The New Yorker*), **Carmen Pelton** has rapidly secured the respect and admiration of critics with a sound that "...already rivals almost any soprano you can think of today" (*The Guardian*, London). First heard at the Aldeburgh Festival in England, Carmen Pelton came to international attention when she assumed the role of Konstanze in *Abduction from the Seraglio* with the Scottish Opera. Additionally, Ms. Pelton has gained a recognition as a powerful singer of contemporary music, in works for the theater and twentieth-century ensembles. She was cast by Virgil Thomson in the lead role of *Mother of Us All*, which she sang in major revivals around the United States and in the national telecast at the "Kennedy Center Honors" in tribute to Mr. Thomson. She has appeared with symphonies across America and in Europe, including the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Rochester Philharmonic. She is a former student of Jan DeGaetani, and can be heard on the CRI and Word labels.

Composer and conductor **Fred Cohen** received his doctorate in music composition from Cornell University in 1987, where his principal teachers were Karel Husa and Steven Stucky. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1980, where he studied with David Cope and Gordon Mumma. His works have been commissioned and performed by organizations such as the Richmond Symphony, the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, the El Cerrito Youth Orchestra, and the Washington Singers (a professional chamber chorus directed by Paul Hill). As a conductor and artistic director, Mr. Cohen has directed orchestras and new-music ensembles since 1978. Between 1978 and 1980 he was the director of Ensemble Nova in Santa Cruz, CA. He founded the Cornell Contemporary Ensemble and directed it from

1982 to 1986, and founded CURRENTS, the professional new-music ensemble in residence at the University of Richmond, upon his appointment in 1986. Mr. Cohen is currently Associate Professor of Music at the University of Richmond.

A native of Shanghai, **Weigang Li** began violin studies with his parents at age 5 and went on to attend the Shanghai Conservatory at age 14. He came to the United States to study at the San Francisco Conservatory through an exchange program between the sister cities of San Francisco and Shanghai. He has been a soloist with the Shanghai Conservatory Orchestra, the Shanghai Symphony and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. **Honggang Li** began violin studies with his parents at the same time as his brother, Weigang. When the Beijing Conservatory reopened in 1977 after the Cultural Revolution, Mr. Li was selected to attend from a group of over five hundred applicants. Mr. Li has appeared as soloist with the Shanghai Philharmonic and the Shanghai Conservatory Orchestra. In 1987 he won a violin as a special prize given by Elisa Pegreffi of the Quartetto Italiano at an International competition in Italy. **Zheng Wang** began violin studies with his mother at age 10 and turned to the viola six years later. He was principal violist with the Nanking Opera until he entered the Shanghai Conservatory in 1981. He received his master's degree from Northern Illinois University, where he studied with Richard Young. He has been a guest artist with the Juilliard String Quartet at the Library of Congress. A native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, **James Wilson** began cello studies at age 11 and went on to graduate from the University of Michigan, where, as a student of Jeffrey Solow, he was the recipient of the music school's highest honor. He continued his studies with Stephen Kates at the Peabody Institute of Music and was twice selected as a participant in the Piatigorsky Seminar for Cellists. Mr. Wilson has appeared as soloist with the Ann Arbor Symphony and has recorded for Access Records.