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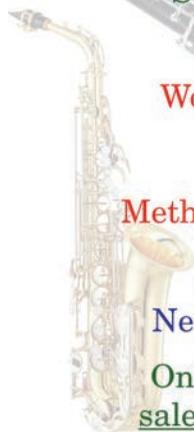
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- Jonathan Khuner • 1980–1992
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SeCoNd SeaSoN CoNCerT

Sunday, November 21, 2021, 3:00 PM

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church

114 Montecito Avenue, Oakland

Concerto for 3 trumpets, 2 oboes and timpani, Op. 54:3 Georg Philipp Telemann 1681-1767

Intrada. Adagio. Grave

Allegro

Largo

Vivace

John Maga, Brett Klein, Sue Leonardi – Trumpet

Terri Knight, Barbara Hodgkinson – Oboe

John Gilbert – Timpani

Four Songs, Op. 27

Richard Strauss
1864-1949

Raeeka Shehabi-Yaghami, Soprano soloist

1. Ruhe meine Seele
2. Cécilie
3. Heimliche Aufforderung
4. Morgen!

☞ Intermission ☜

In the South (a lasso), Op. 50

Edward Elgar
1857-1934

Next CoNCerT

Our next concert will be on **Sunday, January 30, 2022.**

We will perform Claude Debussy's *La Mer*

The winner of the Khuner Young Soloist Concerto Competition

Check our website for information and details of our 2021-22 Season:

www.PrometheusSymphony.org

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Eric Hansen

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Craig Kronman
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Betty Rosen

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Jennifer Ziebarth,
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Concerto Competition—Fabulous Duo Performs January 30, 2022

An array of amazingly talented young musicians turned out for the Khuner Young Artist Concerto Competition auditions in October, when we reopened our venerable competition for its 32nd season.

And the winner is? Well, one wasn't enough. Valerie Breshears (age 12) and Starla Breshears (her 13-year-old sister) won for their stunning rendition of *Brahms Double Concerto for Violin and Cello*, which you can hear on January 30th. Very young but already very accomplished. See their bios on the Concerto Competition page of our website.

Our auditioners, all 18 or younger, were among the best we've had since the Competition was started back in 1989. Most play violin, cello, woodwind or brass instruments, but this year we also had a xylophonist. The rich music resources of the Bay Area provide extraordinary opportunities for talented youth. Selecting the winners was difficult! We hope the auditioners whom we couldn't select will try again next year. Often our winners have tried more than once before they won the competition. Auditioning is an important part of aspiring musicians' education, preparing them to apply for music schools and orchestra positions. Our Music Director, Eric Hansen, ensures they have a positive audition experience.



Check our website for information and details of our 2021-22 Season:

www.PrometheusSymphony.org

PROGRAM NOTES

Georg Philipp Telemann: Concerto for 3 Trumpets, 2 Oboes & Timpani (1740)



In 1716, a son was born at long last to the Holy Roman emperor, Charles VI. It was cause for jubilation throughout the Empire, as the arrival of an heir meant avoiding a succession crisis and imminent war to see which of Europe's many inbred and half-mad Habsburg princes would take up Charles's crown. It was the sort of event that required celebration in the best fashion of the 18th century: with a serenata, an allegorical cantata that highlights the broad themes appropriate to a given occasion.

For the serenata celebrating the birth of Charles's heir Leopold, the city of Frankfurt turned to its resident Kapellmeister, one of the world's greatest living composers at the time. Georg Philipp Telemann, then at the height of his powers, was freshly wed to his second wife and basking in the esteem of his city and of the international music community. For this occasion, Telemann composed the lengthy serenata *Deutschland grünt und blüht im Friede* (Germany, verdant and blossoming in peace). The Concerto we hear today is but one part of this celebratory work, an excerpt so well received that Telemann later published it separately as a standalone work. And it's easy to hear why!

Simply put, the *Concerto* is a fun piece of music, its beginning positively bursting at the seams with expressions of pomp and joy at the birth of a new prince and the prospects of peace and prosperity that birth implies. About a minute in, you'll hear a triplet from the trumpet that is so perfectly crafted to the three syllables of "Le-o-pold!" that it will take all of your restraint to resist triumphantly calling out the young heir's name in that moment, as the audience might well have done in 1716. (I have been asked by the orchestra director, however, to encourage you to employ a measure of restraint during the concert.)

But a concerto cannot just have a trumpet yelling "Leopold!" for ten minutes. Telemann, who composed over one hundred concerti for variously exotic combinations of solo instruments over his career, takes care to break up the moments of trumpeting exaltation with areas dominated by the voice of solo oboes, thus contrasting moments of dexterous frolicking with passages of profound beauty and introspection.

Altogether, the blasts of the triumphant trumpets, and the skips and sighs of the oboes propel the listener through this brief piece that expresses so well the joyous hopes of its moment in time. Sure, Leopold died a few months later, and the crisis over Charles's lack of an heir would propel first Europe and then much of the world into a series of devastating wars that caused untold misery, while within fifteen years, Telemann, for his part, would be financially ruined at the hands of his second wife, who was not only routinely unfaithful but had an unmanageable gambling addiction. But let's put all of that aside for now, and return with Telemann to this one sparkling moment in time when everything was going to be All Right.

~ Dale DeBakcsy

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Richard Strauss: Four Songs Opus 27 (1894)



In 1887, Richard Strauss met a voice student by the name of Pauline de Ahna. Brash, lively, and outspoken, her presence was a bracing tonic that broke up the monotony of Strauss's job as third conductor at the Bavarian State Opera. With Ludwig II of Bavaria's death in 1886, lavish funding for grand-scale opera soon experienced a similar demise. Consequently, rather than conducting the magnificent Wagnerian operas he had hoped for, Strauss found himself conducting unsatisfying smaller scale works.

A way out of his workaday conductorial misery came in 1889, when Weimar offered Strauss a position as Kapellmeister to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. Strauss jumped at the opportunity and took with him to Weimar the spirited Pauline de Ahna as his music student. Success followed upon success in Weimar, as Strauss's tone poems *Don Juan* (1889) and *Death and Transfiguration* (1890) catapulted him to international acclaim. It was not long before the Bayreuther Festspiele, Richard Wagner's shrine to his own legacy, requested that Strauss come and conduct a Wagnerian opera in its hallowed halls. In 1894, he did just that, conducting *Tannhauser* with Pauline in the role of Elisabeth. A few months later, he and Pauline were married.

The *Four Songs* we hear today were Strauss's wedding present to Pauline, written in the full flush of romantic, creative, and professional happiness that accompanied Strauss throughout the 1890s. Three of the four songs fall readily into the category of what one might expect someone to write for one's lover on the eve of marriage. *Cäcilie*, set to a poem written by Heinrich Hart for his own wife, expresses a lover's deep and unspeakable rapture for his beloved. Strauss set these affections to a full battery of Wagnerian orchestral motions, a pent-up churning of longing and desire. *Heimliche Aufforderung* is, essentially, the late 19th century's version of Marvin Gaye's *Let's Get It On*, with its evocation of excessive drinking, making out vigorously in a garden, and waiting impatiently for the concealing darkness of night to arrive to get into some real trouble. By contrast, *Morgen!*, arguably the most well-known song of the cycle, is a gently drifting hymn to the still eternity of happiness experienced by two people, newly in love, looking into each other's eyes under a vast and sympathetic sky.

Which leaves us with the cycle's first song, *Ruhe, meine Seele*, with its introspective text set in tones far more haunting and somber than the other three. The lyrics focus on the passions and pain in life, and a plea for peace and tranquility—for a descent into a state of blissful forgetfulness, escaping the toil and hardship of everyday existence. Strauss did not in fact orchestrate the piece until 1948, shortly after writing his autumnal *Four Last Songs*. Mournful and melancholy, *Ruhe*, seems at first not to fit with the other three pieces in their celebration of romantic rapture, and that is precisely why it is so powerful. Here we hear Richard telling Pauline that there will be moments of rapture, but also moments of pain, and that through both, he will be there, to provide what peace and support he can. It is a lovely moment of mature honesty that grounds all the flights of romantic fancy and lustful ardor which follow. Taken together these four songs are a powerful statement of promise, hope, and love.

~ Dale DeBakcsy

Prometheus Symphony Orchestra—A Story of Community Music Making...

Prometheus Symphony Orchestra welcomes you back for our 57th Season. Our second concert of the season is blessed with the glorious voice of *Raeeka Shehabi-Yaghmi*. Our remarkable oboes and trumpets (all Prometheus members) will delight you with Telemann's baroque classic *Concerto for 3 Trumpets, 2 Oboes and Timpani*. And then we will introduce you to a rich composition by Edward Elgar.

On October 2, we reopened for our first concert since January of 2020. The joy Prometheus members felt getting together after the pandemic closure was matched only by the pleasure of performing for our dedicated audience. Applause never sounded so sweet!

Mark your calendars for our Sunday January 30th concert, to hear the amazingly talented winners of our *Khuner Young Artist Concerto Competition*. We hope pandemic protocols will be eased by then so we can welcome everyone. Watch the website www.PrometheusSymphony.org for updates about location and admission. Better yet, sign up for email notices by using the "Mailing List" tab on any page of our website.

Since 1965, Prometheus has drawn on the wealth of excellent amateur and semi-professional musicians in the Bay Area. Read our inspiring story on the History page of the website. Whether former professional musicians or life-long amateur players, our members share a passion for great symphonic music. It is the members of our all-volunteer ensemble who perform the myriad of duties required to produce a five-concert season (we have no paid staff).

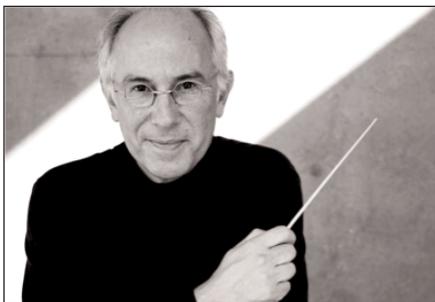
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ABOUT OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

Eric Hansen is currently Music Director and Conductor of the Prometheus Symphony Orchestra, a position he has held since 1997. A Bay Area native born into a musical family, Mr. Hansen has performed professionally (violin & trumpet) since the age of 15. At age 16 he was soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, playing the Violin Concerto in G minor by Max Bruch. His father, Robert Hansen was a member and conductor of the Golden Gate Park Band over a period of 50 years, and his mother, Geraldine, taught piano to generations of students.



Music study continued at UC Berkeley, where he served as concertmaster of the University Symphony Orchestra, and studied conducting with Michael Senturia. Upon graduation he received the prestigious Eisner prize for Outstanding Music Graduate. Mr. Hansen received his Master's in Instrumental Conducting at the University of Michigan as a teaching fellow, studying under Gustav Meier. Additional conducting study with Daniel Lewis, Dennis deCoteau, Herbert Blomstedt, and Jon Robertson followed.

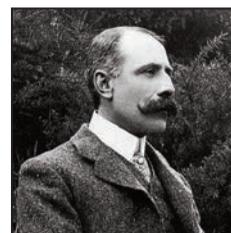
With a particular interest in new music and composition, he has worked with, and conducted works by, such composers as Christopher Rouse, Gian Carlo Menotti, Peter Maxwell Davies, Gregory Ballard, Robert Hughes, Ross Bauer, Frank LaRocca, Douglas Johnson, and Ron McFarland. Mr. Hansen has premiered new works with the Oakland Ballet, the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, Composers, Inc., the Empyrean Ensemble, and New Music at Berkeley. He has conducted the California Symphony Orchestra, the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the Kensington Symphony Orchestra, the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, the Redding Symphony, the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Redlands Symphony.

Enjoying work in a wide variety of musical styles, Mr. Hansen has also been the conductor for the Grammy Award-winning jazz singer, Ms. Diane Schuur. He has recorded with the Skywalker Symphony at Lucas Recording Studios as well as at Phantasy Studios and the Record Plant. In addition, he has been a guest conductor at the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival in Alaska, inaugurating a Klezmer Ensemble, for which he also composed and arranged the music.

Mr. Hansen has appeared as a conductor and clinician with numerous pre-professional and educational ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. In 2000 he toured Prague, Vienna, and Budapest as conductor with the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, leading the group to win the prestigious "City of Vienna" prize for chamber orchestra. Other performances include the California All-State Honor String Orchestra, the California Orchestra Director's Association All-State Honor Orchestra, and the Utah All-State Honor Orchestra. He has conducted the UC Berkeley Symphony, the San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra, the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, the San Domenico Chamber Orchestra, the Oakland Youth Orchestra, and the Young People's Symphony Orchestra.

A passionate music educator, he was a Music Lecturer at California State University East Bay for 23 years as well as lecturer on violin and viola at the University of California, Berkeley, and guest lecturer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Mr. Hansen continues to teach violin, viola, trumpet, and conducting privately from his Bay Area studio.

Edward Elgar: In The South, Opus 50 (1904)



After decades of struggling professionally, British composer Edward Elgar was in a good place in his life when he and his wife took a vacation to Italy in 1903. In 1899, his Enigma Variations had caught the popular fancy and, suddenly, after forty-two years of not caring one way or the other, the public began positively demanding more music from this Elgar fellow. The trip to Alassio in 1903 was meant to give Elgar the recuperation and mental space needed to begin composing a symphony for an upcoming Covent Garden music festival devoted to his works. No less a person than the King of England was scheduled to attend.

As is often the case with composers who absolutely, positively must get to work on one particular project, Elgar soon found a reason to begin composing something entirely different. On an excursion through the Vale of Andora, Elgar's fancy was struck by the vibrant contrast between the area's grand Roman history and its present pastoral tranquility. Inspiration struck, and, according to Elgar, the music for an overture sprung ready-made into his head.

In the South is a celebration of the Italian countryside, both in its present and historical forms, and it feels very much akin to the great tone poems Richard Strauss had begun writing a decade earlier. Elgar, however, declined to call it a tone poem, saying that there was no narrative thread linking the musical events. Rather, it was more akin to a parade of images and impressions evoked by the modern Italian landscape and Italy's glorious past. It begins with a theme representing the exuberance of an individual experiencing the freedom and joys of an Italian vacation. This theme had actually been composed some years earlier, when Elgar had written it as a musical depiction of a friend's bulldog, rambunctiously self-satisfied after a good fight.

Whether it is a bulldog triumphant in battle or a traveler luxuriating in the open wonders of the Mediterranean, this theme shows Elgar at his most lively, and it will return towards the end of the piece. There follows a theme of more pastoral coloring, likely representative of a tranquil shepherd tending to his charges, before the orchestra assembles in force for a grand martial assault in the key of A-flat minor. This is the Roman Empire in all of its terrifying power and glory, grinding nations to submission under its might, its power, and majesty still manifest in a towering aqueduct that Elgar beheld during his Italian wanderings.

The Empire in its power makes way, roughly halfway through our piece, for the arrival of the solo viola, which delivers *In the South's* most famous musical moment, a "canto popolare" which contemporaries assumed must have been taken from a traditional Italian melody but which was in fact of the composer's own invention. This theme thoroughly bewitches the orchestra, with different sections taking it in turn to embrace and evolve until the recapitulation of the overture's earlier themes leads to the bracing arrival of the finale.

Performed on the third day of the 1904 Elgar festival, *In the South* was well received by the public, with the canto popolare in particular selling well in solo piano and violin-piano duo renditions. Slightly less-well-received was a further attempt to paste a poem by Percy Shelley on top of the canto's famous melody. Though critically applauded, *In the South* has historically been underperformed by professional orchestras being deemed too long to serve as an orchestral introductory piece yet too short to be a musical evening's main attraction. We think, however, it is just right as the delectable center of this afternoon's musical sandwich, and hope you agree.

~ Dale DeBakcsy

r aeeka Shehabi-Yaghmi, Soprano soloist



Persian soprano r aeeka Shehabi-Yaghmai possesses a unique fusion of versatility, strength, and sensitivity in her singing and stage presence—a combination that is earning her the acclaim of audiences and critics alike. Characterized as “entrancing,” she has been described as volcanic and compassionate, visually enticing, instinctual, and totally committed.

Making her foray into the lyric soprano repertoire, her roles have included Cio-Cio San (*Madama Butterfly*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Violetta (*La Traviata*), as well as over 20 roles she sang as a mezzo-soprano.

Ms. Shehabi-Yaghmai has performed with San Francisco Opera Center, North Bay Opera, West Bay Opera, West Coast Opera, Livermore Opera, Oakland Opera Theatre, Mendocino Music Festival, Festival del Sol, Ensemble Parallèle, Orchestra Nova, the Redwood Symphony, Oakland East Bay Symphony, and Center Stage Opera, and in solo appearance at Lincoln Theater in Napa.

An interpreter of Persian folksongs and melodies, she founded the Persian Melody Project in 2007 and has songs with Oakland East Bay Symphony, Redwood Symphony, and in orchestral concerts in Southern California, San Francisco, and New York City.

Ms. Shehabi-Yaghmai was a semifinalist in the New York Lyric Opera Competition and was a finalist in the prestigious San Francisco-based Merola audition, after which she was hired as resident artist with the San Francisco Opera Center. An avid supporter of young artist education, she established the Taneen Opera Summer Opera Workshop in San Francisco in 2005 to train aspiring beginning opera singers.

She previously appeared with the Prometheus Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and Wagner’s Prelude and Libestod from Tristan and Isolde.

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ORCHESTRA MEMBER PROFILE

Jessie Moravek, Principal Viola



It was a little like Goldilocks: the cello was tooooo big, the violin was toooooo squeaky but the viola was juuust right! .

When Jessie was 8 years old and wanted to play a string instrument, her mom instituted that Goldilocks rule and Jessie became the proud player of a viola. “I loved it!” She played in the elementary school orchestra in Saint Charles, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago. And when she had to switch schools, viola, and the orchestra were her constants. Unlike many violists, the viola was her first instrument. “I can play violin, but I really play viola.”

And then in fifth grade, Jessie started to play....French horn! Bet you didn’t see that coming. She took it up because the kids in band seemed to be having so much fun. By high school, she was playing viola in orchestra, the French horn in concert band and the mellophone in marching band! All we can say, is wow. (The mellophone is a three-valved brass instrument usually pitched in the key of F or E^b. It’s used in marching bands in place of French horns because the bell faces forward rather than the back-facing French horn.)

Jessie continued this trio of instruments and orchestras and bands through college at Northwestern University. And then moved to Lancaster, England for a Masters degree. Where she played English fiddle music on her viola at pubs with the old English guys. She just played the violin music an octave down. There may have been a pint involved.

Now at UC Berkeley working on a PhD in Environmental Science (with a specialty in rivers and freshwater ecology), Jessie says that playing viola relaxes her brain. “Music uses my brain differently; I’m usually analytical and scientific. Music is a different process that I really like.”

She found Prometheus after a pandemic-forced hiatus from playing with a group. “Prometheus is a nice balance between having fun and also playing new, challenging, and interesting pieces.” What will happen when she completes her PhD?

“Well don’t worry, this is a loooong program. You’ve got me for at least three more years.” We couldn’t be happier!

~ Joyce Vollmer



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