

# A Night of Popular Favorites

Notes by Jackson Harmeyer, Series Director

This evening the Young Artists Chamber Orchestra of Alexandria returns to Abendmusik Alexandria. Under the direction of John De Chiaro, these twenty young string musicians amazed Abendmusik audiences last fall when they performed a series of demanding classical pieces at November's "Young People's Concert."

Tonight this ensemble changes gears, however, to play a different sort of program with music drawn from two of Broadway's grandest musicals, one of Hollywood's highest-grossing movies, and even a popular song. For the players, this music has been no less demanding than their November program was, but for you – our audience – we expect that most all of this great music will already be familiar. Nevertheless, here is some historical background about the music selected for this evening's program.

We begin with music from *West Side Story*. Drawing on the talents of many of America's leading artistic entrepreneurs, this 1957 musical features the exciting music of Leonard Bernstein, the hilarious lyrics of a young Stephen Sondheim, the stunning choreography of Jerome Robbins, and the all-too-necessary patronage of co-producer Hal Prince. *West Side Story* is a modern retelling of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and is set on the streets of New York City where two rival gangs – the all-white "Jets" and the band of recent Puerto Rican immigrants who call themselves "the Sharks" – battle for dominance. When a former Jet named Tony and Maria – the reluctant fiancée of a Shark – fall in love, the gang warfare becomes even more heated, and ultimately fatal. *West Side Story* was a major popular success, especially after its 1961 film adaptation. Listeners will quickly recognize familiar tunes like "Maria," "Cool," and "America" in this evening's *West Side Story Suite*.

*Sweet Moment* is a piece by composer Alan Lee Silva. Praised for his smooth, flowing music, Silva has written for clients as diverse as *Sesame Street* and the heavy metal group KISS, Disney Cruise Lines and The Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra. He has also written a contemporary jazz piece called *The Flight* which was a favorite on San Francisco radio stations. With his wife and two daughters, Silva lives in Culver City, California. Published by Carl Fischer Music in 2007, *Sweet Moment* is exactly as its name implies: a brief, delicate piece for string orchestra set in verse-refrain form.

*Pirates of the Caribbean* has been one of the highest-grossing film series of the past fifteen years since the release of the first film *The Curse of the Black Pearl* in 2003. Three sequels have already followed, and a fourth is planned for 2017. Meanwhile, Hans Zimmer who has contributed most of the familiar music from the *Pirates* scores is regarded as one of the leading composers in the film industry today. He has also scored the recent *Dark Knight Trilogy* of Batman films, *Gladiator*, *Inception*, and – although the well-known songs of *The Lion King* were written by Elton John and Tim Rice – Zimmer was the one who composed the accompanying score. At the time of *The Black Pearl*, Zimmer was busy with another score, and only reluctantly accepted the last-minute request after the original composer dropped-out due to artistic disagreements with the director. Zimmer immediately recruited his friend and fellow composer Klaus Badelt to assist with *The Black Pearl*. Zimmer has said "Klaus is a wonderful composer, but I couldn't help myself from writing many of the tunes, and then I sort of orchestrated the way those tunes would sound." It is these same tunes that Zimmer would continue to develop in the *Pirates* sequels and which are heard on this evening's program.

"Aubrey" is a popular song written by David Gates of the 1970s soft rock group known as Bread. Gates apparently wrote this song after watching the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* starring Audrey Hepburn. For his new song, Gates modified the star's name to "Aubrey" and his lyrics describe a short-lived romance that was so perfect that the singer fears it will taint all other relationships he will ever experience. Gates sang on the original recording released with Bread in 1972 on their album *Guitar Man*. As a single, "Aubrey" lasted 11 weeks on the *Billboard Hot 100* where it peaked at #15. On this evening's program, "Aubrey" will be heard in an arrangement made by John De Chiaro himself.

*The Phantom of the Opera* has been one of the greatest triumphs for the eminent British composer and producer of musicals Andrew Lloyd Webber. Based on a novel by French author Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera* tells the story of soprano Christine Daaé and her mysterious, disfigured admirer who claims to be her musical inspiration – her "Angel of Music." Before it is all over, his supposedly innocent intentions are revealed to be much darker. *The Phantom of the Opera* premiered in London's West End theatre district in 1986, and opened on Broadway in 1988. For today's youth, it seems like the music of *Phantom* is perhaps even better-known than the hit songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber's other major musicals – songs like "Memory" from *Cats*, "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" from *Evita*, and "I Don't Know How to Love Him" from *Jesus Christ Superstar*. On the other hand, from *The Phantom of the Opera*

comes such familiar songs as “All I Ask of You” and “The Music of the Night.” These selections and others will be heard in this evening’s *Phantom of the Opera Suite*.

The final piece on this evening’s program is *Perseus*, a work by composer Soon Hee Newbold. Born in Korea and adopted as an infant by the Newbold family of Maryland, Mrs. Newbold has enjoyed a dual career as a musician and film actress. Like *Perseus*, the majority of her compositions have been for student orchestras. *Perseus* is one of the more difficult student pieces she has written, however. There is one section in particular that shifts into a new meter with each measure, and throughout there are fierce rhythmic thrusts. Named after the hero from Greek mythology who slayed Medusa, *Perseus* retells this story of the hero’s battle with the fierce snake-haired monster who was capable of turning others to stone with a single glance. This exciting composition fully captures the suspense of Perseus’ battle with this terrifying foe.

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