

Forgotten Sounds

featuring Euphonium Unleashed

Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

Our second concert this evening features music for the euphonium, a valved brass instrument with a resounding baritone to tenor range. This instrument is similar in shape and tone to the larger tuba and is sometimes called the tenor tuba. The first euphoniums, like the first tubas, were developed in the early nineteenth century as replacements to the various sizes of the ophicleide. The euphonium and tuba had a significant advantage over the ophicleide: these newer instruments had valves which made them easier to play than the ophicleide which only had keys for pitch control. The Weimar bandmaster Ferdinand Sommer was the first soloist on the euphonium, and also often receives credit for having developed this instrument. His euphonium, however, was more likely created by Franz Bock of Vienna who did not patent the euphonium until 1844, a year after Sommer began gaining recognition as a euphonium player. Sommer won much acclaim for the euphonium when he played it for Queen Victoria at the London Great Exhibition of 1851. There he offered two names for the instrument – the *Sommerophone* and the *Euphonion* – but it was the latter name which stuck as anglicized to “euphonium.”

Within a few years, the euphonium had become the most important low brass instrument in wind bands. Numerous Russian concert and military bands utilized it in their ensembles as did those in Germany and Great Britain. In the United States, a special kind of euphonium emerged called the double-bell euphonium which had two bells: one which carried the standard euphonium sound and another which could give the impression of a trombone. This double-bell euphonium was even mentioned in the lyrics of “Seventy-Six Trombones,” the best-remembered song from the 1957 Broadway musical *The Music Man* by Meredith Wilson.

Although the euphonium quickly established itself as a valued member of the wind band, the instrument never did find a permanent place in the symphony orchestra. In the first century after its invention, only a handful of composers were willing to make room for the euphonium in their orchestral works. Even then, these occasional appearances usually came as brief solos, specifically designed to exploit the euphonium’s novel tone color. Richard Strauss, for example, included the euphonium in his tone poems *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben (The Hero’s Life)* as did Maurice Ravel in his orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Gustav Holst also gave solo roles to the euphonium in both the *Mars* and *Jupiter* movements of his *Planets* suite. On the contrary, the largely forgotten British composer Havergal Brian assigned a more integral role to the euphonium in many of his thirty-two symphonies: in his colossal First Symphony, subtitled *The Gothic*, Brian included parts for two euphoniums and two tubas; later symphonies also made fuller use of these low brass instruments.

Many players of the euphonium – familiar with the unique beauty and timbral range of their instrument – feel that the instrument’s full potential has yet to be unleashed. Masahito Kuroda has become a great advocate for the euphonium: in



John Philip Sousa and the United States Marine Band, 1892. Euphonium and double-bell euphonium are shown on left.

addition to spectral analyses of euphonium sound samples and his exploration into the instrument's historical low brass relatives, Kuroda has also promoted music for multiple euphoniums. He has made arrangements of orchestral and chamber works for euphonium ensemble, either playing the multiple parts himself through recording technology or encouraging his talented students to join him for live performances. It is this latter approach which we encounter this evening.



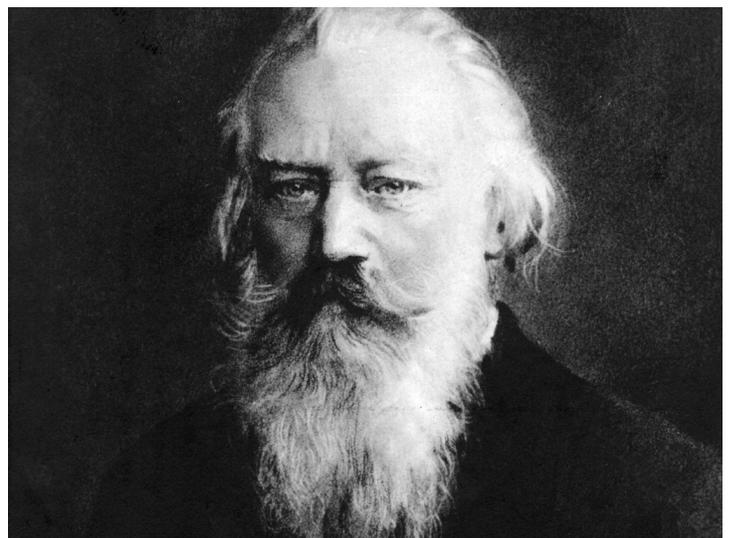
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Our concert begins with *Scherzo Caprice* by American composer **Paul Koepke (1918-2000)**. Koepke taught music theory and composition at the University of Houston, where Pauline Oliveros was one of his students, and later taught at North Carolina College. Koepke summed up his approach to teaching composition in a 1958 article, writing “Musical composition is an expression of human experience... care should be taken that the growth of a young composer’s unique style is not stunted by the overly pedantic application of narrow theoretical disciplines.” His delightful *Scherzo Caprice* has the character of an afternoon stroll through natural surroundings. It is in this way joyous and refreshing.

Next follows a selection by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)** from his *Five Divertimenti* for two clarinets and basset horn, K. 439b: namely, the *Allegro* of the second divertimento in this set as arranged by Dr. Kuroda. The term “divertimento” was typically used by Mozart and his Classical-era contemporaries to refer to a lighter piece, often played as evening entertainment. Musicologists suspect that Mozart wrote his *Five Divertimenti* for this purpose in the early 1780s, further suggesting that they could have been heard as background music at the masonic gatherings Mozart frequented. The basset horn is an instrument belonging to the clarinet family, slightly larger in size and lower in pitch than the familiar B-flat clarinet; both the clarinet and basset horn were developed in the eighteenth century and were becoming quite popular by Mozart’s day.

The aria *Caro mio ben* is a classic of eighteenth-century Italian opera and has been learned by many young vocalists as part of their training; an excerpt is even heard in the 1984 film *Amadeus*. Its text is on the subject of unrequited love: the singer pleads, “My dear beloved, believe me at least, without you my heart languishes. Your faithful one always sighs; cease, cruel one, so much punishment!” The authorship of the famous song remains uncertain, but it has long been attributed to **Giuseppe Giordani (1751-1798)**, an Italian composer whose operas were heard at La Scala in Milan and across Europe. More likely, however, *Caro mio ben* was composed by the unrelated **Tommaso Giordani (c.1730-1806)**, an Italian composer of the same era who made his career abroad in London and Dublin. Our best evidence for this conclusion is that the first edition of *Caro mio ben* states the song was performed in London at the concerts hosted by Carl Friedrich Abel in the 1780s and that it had been written by a Giordani based in London. The arrangement heard this evening is by Earl D. Irons.

The German composer **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)** was a musical antiquarian of sorts. Long before the Neo-Classical movement of the 1920s and in a much different spirit, Brahms was finding solace in older music. As a young man, he had stood opposed to the innovations of Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt; he had no time for Wagner’s “Music of the Future,” and instead wrote his First Symphony after the model of Beethoven. In the Fourth Symphony, from which we hear its second movement this evening, Brahms looks back even further to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. In January 1882, Brahms had become fixated on the last movement of Bach’s Cantata No. 150 and imagined what it might sound like as the theme for a symphony. The symphony he produced from 1884 to 1885, nevertheless, radically transforms this theme according to nineteenth-century harmonic practice before it ever enters the new work. Much of the Bachian influence is, therefore, structural rather than thematic. In



Johannes Brahms

the second movement, Brahms looks to the church modes for guidance: for example, the horn call which initiates the movement is in the Phrygian mode. Schubert, whose music Brahms was editing at the time, is also a model in this movement, his lyric beauty mirrored among other traits. The arrangement for four euphoniums is by Newell H. Long.

Our next two pieces form a pair of sorts: both revolve around comic characters who are placed in pseudo-serious situations. The subject of the first is a string puppet who is given a less than dignified funeral service in *Funeral March of a Marionette* by French composer **Charles Gounod (1818-1893)**. Inscriptions in the score tell the storyline as the puppet is broken, its troupe mourns their loss, they processes a bit, stop for refreshments, and finally return home. This short march was originally written for piano in 1872 and only recast in its more familiar orchestral form in 1878. Today the tune is best-known as the theme song to *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* where its elements of suspense as well as its antics set the tone for the British filmmaker's often absurd television program. The arrangement for euphoniums heard this evening was made by G. W. Lotzenhiser.

The next piece addresses the character of Harlequin, the trickster character from Italian *commedia dell'arte*. The work is called *Ballet Harlequins* and was created by the Russian composer **Nikolai Tcherepnin (1873-1945)**. A pupil of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Tcherepnin was one of several composers who helped orchestrate Robert Schumann's *Carnaval* for its 1910 staging by the *Ballets Russes*. Harlequin had been a character in *Carnaval* in which he had flirtingly pursued another *commedia dell'arte* character, Columbine, at a masked ball. At some point Tcherepnin decided to create his own piece in Harlequin's honor which became *Ballet Harlequins*. In the bouncy arrangement created by Harold L. Walters and published in 1957, the first euphonium carries the melody for much of the piece with the second and third euphoniums each breaking away once for their own solos.



Charles Gounod

The final composition heard this evening is by Japanese composer **Yasuhide Ito (born 1960)**. Called *Euphoniums Parfait*, this 2003 suite for four euphoniums is cast in four movements, three of which are named after desserts. The suite begins with *Fruits Parfait* followed by *Milonga di Malone*, *Ciocolate d'amore*, and *Gelato con caffe*. The second movement *Milonga* is the one which does not correspond to a real-world dessert. Instead, this movement offers a heartening tribute to Argentine tango composer, Astor Piazzolla. This movement with its tango feel is not really alone, however, as the others also exhibit their own dance flavors – from the jazzy swing of the first movement to the waltz-inflected third and the breezy fourth. Ito is known particularly for his more than ninety wind band scores; he has also composed several chamber works including one or more euphoniums as well as a concerto for solo euphonium with wind band.

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About Jackson. Jackson Harmeyer is a composer, music scholar, and advocate of music. Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Scholars' College located in Natchitoches, Louisiana in May 2013 after completing his undergraduate thesis "Learning from the Past: The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach upon the Soviet Composers." As series director of the successful Abendmusik Alexandria chamber music series from May 2014 to April 2016, Jackson played a vital role in the renewal of interest in chamber music across Central Louisiana. This interest has encouraged the creation of the annual Sugarmill Music Festival and the new series Nachtmusik von BrainSurge, both of which Jackson remains active in as concert annotator and creative consultant. He also blogs at

MusicCentral where he shares concert experiences, gives listening recommendations, posts interviews with contemporary composers, and offers insights into his own compositions. As a composer, Jackson has worked to integrate the vocabulary and grammar of modern music into pieces which are not only innovative but also engaging to the general listener. In fall 2016, Jackson began graduate studies in musicology at the University of Louisville where he has recently been awarded the Gerhard Herz Scholarship in recognition of his accomplishments. His current research interests include French spectral music and the compositions of Kaija Saariaho. He also sings with the University of Louisville Chorus and participates in the School of Music Composition Seminar. Learn more about Jackson Harmeyer, his scholarship, and his compositions at www.JacksonHarmeyer.com.