

BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA



FISHER
CENTER

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023
SOSNOFF THEATER

Bard

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BARD COLLEGE

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the adjoining Montgomery Place estate, Bard's campus consists of nearly 1,000 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; graduate degrees in 13 programs; eight early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 162-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal education. The undergraduate program at the main campus in the Hudson Valley has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit bard.edu.

Bard College Conservatory of Music

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Presents

BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

Leon Botstein, *music director*

Concertpiece (Konzertstück) for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86

Robert Schumann (1810–56)

Erik Ralske, Javier Gándara, Hugo Valverde, and Barbara Jöstlein Currie, *horns*

Death and Transfiguration (Tod und Verklärung), Op. 24

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Intermission

A London Symphony (Symphony No. 2)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

I. Lento – Allegro risoluto

II. Lento

III. Scherzo (Nocturne): Allegro vivace

IV. Finale: Andante con moto – Maestoso alla marcia – Allegro – Lento – Epilogue

Sosnoff Theater

Fisher Center for the Performing Arts

Bard College

Saturday, March 11, 2023

8 pm

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Concertpiece (Konzertstück) for Four Horns and Orchestra, Op. 86 (1849)

Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony (Germany), 1810

Died in Endenich, near Bonn, Prussia (Germany), 1856

The horn as we know it today, with valves to facilitate the playing of every note of the chromatic scale, was developed in the early 19th century. Although it is popularly known as the “French” horn, it was first patented in Germany. Robert Schumann was one of the earliest champions of the newfangled instrument. In 1849, he wrote what became the first two great classics of modern horn literature: the *Adagio and Allegro* for horn and piano, and the *Concertpiece (Konzertstück) for Four Horns and Orchestra*.

The technical difficulties of the *Konzertstück* are so enormous that, after the 1850 premiere, the work was not performed again for an entire century. Its three movements (fast-slow-fast) are played without pause. In all three, Schumann demanded the utmost of the four horn players. He made full use of the notes that had been newly added to the instrument's range; he gave the soloists the fanfare-type material commonly associated with the horn, but also plenty of lyrical melodies. Schumann considered this work to be one of the best he had ever written.

The opening movement is festive and jubilant. The second bears the title “Romanze” (Romance)—a designation also found in the slow movement of the Fourth Symphony, which seems no coincidence given the great resemblance in mood and character. In this second movement, the horns “sing” what sounds like an intimate Romantic part-song without words. The finale is playful and rambunctious, with an expressive and song-like middle section. One fast-moving episode echoes the scherzo of the Second Symphony, while the lyrical part is reminiscent of the second movement of the Piano Quintet (second subject). With the recapitulation of the first section, the music becomes increasingly exuberant to the end.

Death and Transfiguration (Tod und Verklärung), Op. 24 (1888–89)

Richard Strauss

Born in Munich, Germany, 1864

Died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany, 1949

Nothing could have been more “modern” in the music of the 1880s and 1890s than the symphonic poem, that bold attempt to create drama without words and to test music's expressive powers to the fullest. Pioneered by Franz Liszt from the 1850s onward, the new genre found a practitioner of genius in the young Richard Strauss. In

a series of orchestral works that established him as one of the leading avant-gardists of the day, Strauss did not hesitate to tackle the most complex literary and philosophical topics possible in his music. Although some have continued to maintain that music is incapable of handling such topics, Strauss showed that the program could make a real difference in the way the music was shaped. Works that sound like *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, or *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) would be unthinkable without programmatic thinking. There may be traces of classical forms in each of these works, but “Symphonies in C major” (or any other key) they certainly are not—their unique musical features simply could not exist without the ideas reflected in their titles.

Strauss ended his magnificent series of tone poems with *Ein Heldenleben* (*A Hero's Life*) in 1898, but in a sense, all his symphonic poems are “heroes' lives.” The youthful and reckless, yet at the same time profoundly world-weary, Don Juan; Till Eulenspiegel, who pays for his mischief-making with his life; Don Quixote, who loses his battle against the windmills—they all have one thing in common: each confronts the entire world all by himself, to be defeated in the physical sense but to triumph in spirit.

The same can be said of the unnamed but certainly exceptional dying artist in Strauss's third tone poem, *Death and Transfiguration*. (It was preceded by *Aus Italien* and *Don Juan*, while *Macbeth*, begun earlier than *Death and Transfiguration*, was only completed later.) Here Strauss dispensed with literary sources altogether; instead, he created an original conception that received its literary formulation from Strauss's friend and erstwhile mentor, Alexander Ritter, *after* the music had already been written. The work's underlying idea is explained in a letter written by Strauss in 1894:

It was six years ago that it occurred to me to present in the form of a tone poem the dying hours of a man who had striven towards the highest idealistic aims, maybe indeed those of an artist. The sick man lies in bed, asleep, with heavy irregular breathing; friendly dreams conjure a smile on the features of the deeply suffering man; he wakes up; he is once more racked with horrible agonies; his limbs shake with fever—as the attack passes and the pains leave off, his thoughts wander through his past life; his childhood passes before him, the time of his youth with its strivings and passions and then, as the pains already begin to return, there appears to him the fruit of his life's path, the conception, the ideal which he has sought to realize, to present artistically, but which he has not been able to complete, since it is not for man to be able to accomplish such things. The hour of death approaches, the soul leaves the body in order to find gloriously achieved in everlasting space those things which could not be fulfilled here below.

It is an ambitious program, and it is certainly remarkable that a young man—barely 25 years old—should have had such a highly developed image of death and dying. What is even more astonishing is the unerring instinct with which Strauss realized his concept. Melodic material, orchestration, and musical form are all uniquely suited to express that concept. For no matter what the “anti-expressivists” say, Strauss undoubtedly did full justice to his subject here.

The stages of the hero's last hours, as Strauss described them in his letter, are somewhat analogous to the phases of anger, denial, and acceptance found in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's famous (and, of course, much later) book on dying. After some introductory measures (“Largo”) in which the strings' rhythmic figure seems to imitate an irregular heartbeat, the woodwinds, accompanied by the harp, intone a melody of unspeakable sadness. The woodwinds are followed by the main lyrical idea of the work, which is based on a descending scale and played by a solo violin. In the ensuing “Allegro molto agitato,” violent suffering erupts; as Norman Del Mar writes in his three-volume study of Strauss's life and music, “the ill man can be heard writhing in agony.” The lyrical melody then returns, this time played by the flute, evoking peaceful memories. But the theme soon becomes agitated again to express both past and present turmoil; as in *Don Juan*, Strauss endows the traditional formal device of recapitulation with intense, dramatic meaning. A sweeping new idea, the “transfiguration” theme appears in this section. After all the other themes—those associated with turmoil, memories, and irregular heartbeat—have been revisited and left behind, the “transfiguration” theme takes over completely to give the piece its radiant and justly celebrated ending.

According to the often-repeated story, when Richard Strauss lay dying in 1949 (exactly 60 years after writing this work), he said to his daughter-in-law: “Funny thing, Alice, dying is just the way I composed it in *Death and Transfiguration*.” Strauss had, in fact, set to music the “white light” that many people have mentioned when speaking of near-death experiences. If he had done nothing else in life, this in itself would have been enough to make him immortal.

A London Symphony (Symphony No. 2), 1913

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England, 1872

Died in Hanover Terrace, London, England, 1958

How can a whole city be set to music? Ottorino Respighi provided one kind of answer in his spectacular set of three tone poems about Rome. Ralph Vaughan Williams, a few years older than Respighi and of an entirely different artistic temperament, took another approach. First of all, he wanted to observe traditional symphonic form as

inherited from Beethoven and the Romantics—in fact, at age 40, he was just getting ready to tackle that form for the first time. (His Symphony No. 1, the “Sea Symphony,” was a choral work, essentially a large cantata on poems by Walt Whitman.) Second, he had no intentions of being as specific about programmatic detail as his Italian colleague.

Vaughan Williams took considerable pains to discourage his listeners from viewing *A London Symphony* as program music. He knew well that the work “must stand or fall as ‘absolute’ music,” as indeed all program music must, since no program can possibly make up for any shortcomings in the musical structure. Still, the imprint of “London Town” cannot be denied in this symphony, given that we can hear the chimes of Big Ben as well as the cry of a street merchant.

What did London as a city mean to Vaughan Williams, a native of Gloucestershire who moved to the capital after attending Cambridge University? To quote a felicitous phrase from musicologist Wilfrid Mellers, Vaughan Williams was a “double man,” deeply immersed in the Christian tradition and yet a self-described agnostic, looking into the future while spiritually most at home in the past. The “city,” to his way of thinking, was the antithesis of the “country”; it represented culture as opposed to nature, bustling activity as opposed to rural peace and tranquility. And the composer, in a sense, was drawn to both. London, therefore, was both a real place and a metaphor for Vaughan Williams who, in his 45-minute symphony completed in 1913, combined descriptive realism and philosophical meditation.

This dichotomy is evident in the work from the very start: the slow introduction to the first movement may evoke the awakening of the city at dawn, or something more than that. The famous notes of the Westminster chimes, played by the harp, are followed by a sudden dramatic eruption at the beginning of the “Allegro risoluto.” With its intense chromaticism, this music clearly spells turmoil, though it is soon dissolved (if not *resolved*) in a folk-like second subject. These two opposites remain present for the entire movement, complemented by several additional themes. A brief lyrical episode for solo strings and harp stands out as an island of quiet bliss in the midst of all this activity. Both the “turmoil” music and the folk dance return, and although the ending is replete with jubilant brass fanfares, enough chromatic notes remain to make the conclusion somewhat ambiguous.

The second movement is one of those perfect idylls that are universally acknowledged as quintessential Vaughan Williams. A first theme for English horn, in the style of a folk ballad, is followed in due course by a lyrical viola solo, complemented by a clarinet theme in which Frank Howes, in his still-valuable 1954 book on the composer, recognized the “street-cry of the lavender vendor” from Westminster and Kensington. The entire movement suggests a retreat to some peaceful corner; there is only a single brief *fortissimo* outburst before the music resumes its serene, inward-looking character.

The third-movement scherzo has “Nocturne” as its subtitle: an odd combination of terms since, as Howes noted, “most scherzos are quick and most nocturnes are slow.” Here, then, is an evocation of London by night. It is quite a bustling scene, with a profusion of lively melodies; the *fugato* techniques used create the impression of the themes chasing one another. In the central trio section, Vaughan Williams imitates the sound of a barrel organ playing a popular tune. Howes commented:

The coming of the radio has largely eliminated the barrel organ and other pavement music from the London streets. Or it may be the police. But in any case the Londoner hears less of this kind of thing today than he did before Europe went to war.

The finale brings us back to the internal conflicts of the “double man,” as a solemn prologue and a pensive epilogue enclose some music of great turbulence and complexity. It all begins as a march, but then the chromatic turmoil of the first movement reappears. There are also passing allusions to the lyricism of the second movement. Close to the end, Big Ben sounds again on the harp, signaling that it is time to reconcile all these contradictory emotions. That is exactly what happens in the concluding “Andante sostenuto,” which ends with a rising violin figure strongly reminiscent of *The Lark Ascending* (written in 1914, one year after the symphony).

Vaughan Williams himself suggested that the peaceful resignation of this ending had a parallel in the following passage from H. G. Wells’s novel *Tono-Bungay*:

Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire, the old prides and the old devotions, glide abeam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass—pass. The river passes. London passes. England passes.

A few months after the premiere of *A London Symphony*, World War I broke out, and the world was never the same again. The man who had given Vaughan Williams the idea of writing a symphony—his young disciple George Butterworth—was killed in the Battle of the Somme. The symphony was published in 1920 with a dedication *in memoriam* Butterworth, which may be taken as a symbol for all that was lost when “Europe went to war.”

Peter Laki, *Visiting Associate Professor of Music*
February 2023

BIOGRAPHIES

In addition to serving as music director of the Bard Conservatory Orchestra, **Leon Botstein** is music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO), founder and music director of The Orchestra Now (TÔN), artistic codirector of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, and conductor laureate of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003 to 2011. He has been guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, London Philharmonic, Taipei Symphony, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, and Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela, among others.

Recordings include a Grammy-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra, an acclaimed recording of Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* with ASO, and recordings with the London Philharmonic, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and TÔN, among others. He is editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton), *Jefferson's Children* (Doubleday), *Judentum und Modernität* (Böhlau), and *Von Beethoven zu Berg* (Zsolnay). Honors include Harvard University's Centennial Award; the American Academy of Arts and Letters award; and Cross of Honor, First Class, from the government of Austria, for his contributions to music. Other distinctions include the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music, Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, and Carnegie Foundation's Academic Leadership Award. In 2011, he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

Javier Gándara, horn, has been a member of the Met Opera Orchestra since 1999. He began his professional career at age 16, when he won a position in the Puerto Rico Symphony while attending high school at La Escuela Libre de Música in San Juan. Javier later graduated from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Ranier De Intinis. He has held positions with the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Orquesta de Euskadi, and the Oregon Symphony. He is faculty at the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard Pre-College Division, and a regular guest faculty member at the Puerto Rico Conservatory.

Barbara Jöstlein Currie, horn, joined the Met Orchestra in 1998 as assistant horn. A year later, she won the 4th horn position, which she has held since then. Growing up in Chicago and studying with former Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians Phil Farkas and Nancy Fako, she left for New York to study with former Met principal horn, Julie Landsman, at The Juilliard School on a full scholarship. During her studies, she took a year off to play third and associate horn with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra in Israel. She has performed frequently at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and with the San Diego Symphony during the summer. Along with teaching at the Bard Conservatory, she also teaches at Manhattan School of Music's Precollege program, and has given master classes at many universities such as Colburn and Cincinnati Conservatory, as well as in Japan. Barbara is active in the recording industry, playing on movies such as *True Grit* and *Contagion*, and with musicians such as Tony Bennett and Sting, and has also recorded soundtracks in Los Angeles.

Erik Ralske, horn, has been principal horn of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since the 2010–2011 season. Prior to joining the Met, he was a member of the New York Philharmonic for 17 seasons. Ralske has always been in demand for solo and master-class appearances, not only throughout North America, but also in Asia, Europe, and South America. In recent years, he has played solo recitals in New York, Los Angeles, Kansas, Tokyo (at the invitation of the Japan Horn Society), Taipei, and Kaohsiung. During the same period, he led master classes at Juilliard, Showa University (Tokyo), Columbus State University, Dohai University (Taipei), University of Western Michigan, and University of Kansas. Mr. Ralske has been a featured artist at renowned summer music festivals in Aspen, La Jolla, Bridgehampton, Vancouver, Seattle, and Lake Tahoe. He is on the faculty of The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and Mannes College of Music.

Hugo Valverde, horn, enjoys an active career as an orchestral and solo musician, and as an educator in the United States and his native Costa Rica as a French horn player. He has served as second horn with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 2017, and performed with the Costa Rican National Symphony Orchestra, Classical Tahoe Festival Orchestra, The Strings Music Festival Brass Ensemble in Colorado, Orchestra of the Americas, Pacific Music Festival in Japan, New York City Ballet, and The Philadelphia Orchestra, among others. During the pandemic he created the “Lockdown Warmups” project, which provided free online masterclasses and coaching with symphony orchestra musicians for young Latin American horn players. Valverde studied at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Lynn University Conservatory of Music, and the National Music Institute in San José, Costa Rica. He is a member of the horn faculty at the Bard Conservatory and at the Juilliard Pre-College Division.

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¹ Schumann, *Concertpiece*
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² Strauss, *Death and Transfiguration*

³ Vaughan Williams, *A London*

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Jardena Gertler-Jaffe VAP '21,

Audience and Member Services

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Supervisor

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Christopher H. Gibbs, *Artistic Director*

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Daniel Grimley, *Scholar in Residence 2023*

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Byron Adams

Leon Botstein

Christopher H. Gibbs

Daniel Grimley

Richard Wilson

Irene Zedlacher

James Bagwell, *Director of Choruses*

Joshua Winograde, *Vocal Casting*

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC PROGRAM FACULTY

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Adele Anthony
Shmuel Ashkenasi*
Luosha Fang
Yi-Wen Jiang
Ani Kavafian*
Erica Kiesewetter
Honggang Li
Weigang Li
Daniel Phillips
Todd Phillips
Gil Shaham
Arnold Steinhardt*
Mira Wang
Carmit Zori

Viola

Molly Carr
Luosha Fang
Marka Gustavsson
Brian Hong
Honggang Li
Melissa Reardon

Cello

Raman Ramakrishnan
Peter Wiley

Bass

Jeremy McCoy
Leigh Mesh

Bassoon

Marc Goldberg

Clarinet

David Krakauer
Pascual Martínez-Forteza
Anthony McGill

Composition

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Da Capo Chamber Players
Missy Mazzoli
Jessie Montgomery
James Sizemore, *Film*
Joan Tower
George Tsontakis

Flute

Nadine Asin*
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Harp

Sara Cutler

Horn

Barbara Jöstlein-Currie
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Julia Pilant
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Oboe

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Alexandra Knoll
Ryan Roberts

Percussion

Eric Cha-Beach
Jason Haaheim
Garry Kvistad, *Advisor*
Jason Treuting
Jan Williams, *Advisor*

Piano

Benjamin Hochman*
Blair McMillen
Gilles Vonsattel
Terrence Wilson
Shai Wosner

Trombone

Demian Austin
Sasha Romero
Nicholas Schwartz
Weston Sprott

Trumpet

Edward Carroll

Tuba

Derek Fenstermacher
Marcus Rojas

Voice

Stephanie Blythe
Teresa Buchholz
Richard Cox
Lucy Fitz Gibbon
Ilka LoMonaco
Rufus Müller
Erika Switzer
David Sytkowski

Alexander Technique

Alex Farkas

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Raymond Erickson
Marka Gustavsson
Keisuke Ikuma
Blair McMillen
Raman Ramakrishnan
Melissa Reardon

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Leon Botstein, *Codirector*
Kyle Gann
Christopher H. Gibbs
Peter Laki
Zachary Schwartzman
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Richard Cox
Elaine Fitz Gibbon
Lucy Fitz Gibbon
Kayo Iwama, *Associate Director*
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Peter Laki
Xinyan Li
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Orchestral Studies

Leon Botstein
Erica Kiesewetter

Baroque Ensemble

Renée Anne Louprette

Collaborative Piano Fellowship

Erika Switzer, *Director*

US-China Music Institute

Jindong Cai, *Director*
Chen Tao, *Dizi, Chinese Ensemble*
Chen Yan, *Erhu*
Robert Culp, *History*
Yazhi Guo, *Suona*
Patricia Karetzky, *History*
Xinyan Li, *Chinese Music History*
Xu Yang, *Ruan*
Li-hua Ying, *Chinese*
Mingmei Yip, *Chinese Music History*
Hingyan Zhang, *Pipa*
Zhao Jiazhen, *Guqin*

*master classes

**BARD CONSERVATORY
PRESENTS**

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**Sosnoff Theater, Fisher Center
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Students and faculty perform works by contemporary composers.

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A two-day program of chamber music performances by
Conservatory students and faculty

**Performance Space, Bitó Conservatory Building
Friday, April 21, 2023 from 6 to 9 pm and
Saturday, April 22, 2023 from 11 am to 8 pm**

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**Performance Space, Bitó Conservatory Building
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