# MAGIC VALLEY SYMPHONY

## 2007-08 Season

October 14, 2007

### PORTRAITS

by Daniel Bukvich (1954 - )

When the Symphony readied its contribution to the Twin Falls Centennial in 2004, Maestro Hadley turned to his friend and musical hero, Prof. Daniel Bukvich, for a fresh orchestral work celebrating our city. Bukvich had grown up already composing music in Butte, Montana, and continued as an undergraduate at Montana State University and through a master's program in composition at the University of Idaho. As soon as that degree was bestowed in 1978, he was appointed to the U of I faculty, where his ingenious compositional style had already found favor. Just when Prof. Bukvich began to redefine music as we know it is unclear.

Through the U of I connection, many Twin Falls High School student musicians and community audiences have come to enjoy the inventive Bukvich style, inspired by unusual sources. We have seen unexpected objects, such as car parts or wine goblets, treated as musical instruments, or orthodox instruments "played" in new ways. The form of his music defies the usual classifications: often multi-media, visually dramatic, or just plain quirky.

Our 2004 audience was delighted with *Portraits*. Incorporating images from the treasured Bisbee collection of early Twin Falls photos between interludes of catchy melodies and everyday sounds evoking yesteryear, Bukvich created a unique sound track for a small town on the high desert in a new century— and not just one vignette, but a montage of the objects and activities of the new town, where homesteads and primitive kitchen utensils and herky-jerky cars and even Balanced Rock have voice. Musicians and audience alike found it charming, comfortably familiar, and deserving of this reprise.

Prof. Bukvich continues on the faculty of the University of Idaho where he teaches music theory, ear training, jazz theory, and directs several ensembles. He performs frequently as a free-lance percussionist in the jazz, classical, and contemporary idioms.

## OKLAHOMA ELEGY

by Randy Earles (1952 - )

*Oklahoma Elegy* reflects the composer's reactions to news of the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995. It is dedicated to the bombing victims, their families and the heroic workers who toiled greatly in their search for survivors. The first performance was in April of 1996.

Randy Earles is a native Oklahoman who resides in Pocatello, Idaho, and serves as chair of the Music Department at Idaho State University. Dr. Earles had visited the federal building in Oklahoma City many times before moving to Idaho. The news of the bombing created much anxiety, particularly since it was some time before he could determine that none of his family or friends were among the victims.

The three sections of the work reflect the three emotional states that the composer felt after hearing news of the bombing. The first section is marked "Sorrowfully" and is in a slow tempo. The second section is marked "Angrily" and starts with an outburst from the percussion section. This section is in a fast tempo and contains angular melodies, dissonant harmonies and contrapuntal textures. After a clarinet solo, the third section begins with consonant harmonies in a slow tempo. This section is marked "Reverently", and contains group improvisation that symbolizes many voices rising harmoniously in a group prayer.

Dr. Earles adds that, "This nation has seen many more tragedies since 1995, particularly the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001. Many people have shared in the emotions that triggered the creation of this work."

November 13, 2007

## LINCOLN PORTRAIT
## FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN
by Aaron Copland (1900 - 1990)

What genius brings a Brooklyn-born son of Lithuanian/Polish Jewish immigrants to compose music that embraces the expanse of American lands and the diversity of the American people? Aaron Copland, schooled in the nationalism of late 19th century music, endeavored to define an "American sound" as indigenous and recognizable to us as Mussorgsky and Stravinsky are Russian. That Copland did it with such austerity of notation and untried harmonies only begins to describe that genius. And, without an audience clamoring for another great symphony, he was forced to find other media. Eight film scores, two operas, six ballets, countless special occasions, one Oscar, one Pulitzer Prize, one Medal of Freedom, and a long list of prestigious honors later, we had our American sound.

The America of 1942 was in crisis. Pearl Harbor had just been bombed, and the public was unified in the war effort. Conductor André Kostelanetz mobilized his art in the service of the public spirit, proposing a series of three musical portraits of American heroes, and inviting the contribution of the creator of the American sound. The assignment was to illustrate the "qualities of courage, dignity, strength, simplicity, and humor, which are so characteristic of the American people." For Copland, they settled on Abraham Lincoln, a subject admittedly daunting, but in his word, "inevitable . . . with the voice of Lincoln to help me I was ready to risk the impossible."

Copland explained his *Lincoln Portrait* in three parts. First, "I wanted to suggest something of the mysterious sense of fatality that surrounds Lincoln's personality. Also, near the end of that section, something of his gentleness and simplicity of spirit." The hauntingly beautiful Civil War song called "Springfield Mountain" is introduced by the clarinet. Then the background of the times in which Lincoln lived are sketched in the middle section. The familiar "Camptown Races" of

Stephen Foster is heard. In the climax, “Springfield Mountain” is powerfully transformed as Copland’s music frames Lincoln’s words in a call to action, a meditation on democracy, and a remembrance of those who died to protect it.

A separate spirit-lifting effort for an America at war was launched by Eugene Goossens, who intended to open each of the ten Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra concerts of the 1942-43 season with a new fanfare. Copland responded, and later wrote, "The challenge was to compose a traditional fanfare, direct and powerful, yet with a contemporary sound." To the timeless delight of audiences Copland achieved it all. He worked so slowly however, he missed the proposed premier by a full month. Fortunately, Goossens loved the work enough to reschedule to March 12, 1943, but the title remained open. Goossens had suggested “Fanfare for Soldiers” and Copland had used as working titles “Fanfare for Four Freedoms” and “Fanfare for a Solemn Occasion.” Then the new date prompted a new thought. March 15 was income tax day that year, a time it seemed to Copland, just right for honoring the taxpayer, the common man. Of the ten fanfares commissioned, no others remain in the concert repertoire.

## VARIATIONS ON AMERICA

by Charles Ives (1874 - 1954)

Not all treasures come in pretty packages. Consider the works of Charles Ives.

As the son of a town bandmaster given to experimentation in polytonality and acoustics, Ives’ musical sensibilities were stretched early and often. His talent as a musician soon became apparent, and by age 14 he had become the youngest salaried church organist in Connecticut. At the same time, his compositions were exploiting the limits of known music with the same determination today’s teenager explores the limits of his iPhone, defying musical conventions, celebrating dissonance, even composing works in two or more simultaneous keys.

While he retained a fondness for the vernacular, the traditional hymns, the camp meetings, the sentimental songs and familiar marches of his youth, Ives relished the opportunity to improvise take-offs. The theme and variation was his standard operating procedure. His church was his stage. His talent was enormous: Yankee ingenuity meets rebellious youth. Lasting success and renown might have been possible if Ives had just not kept his audiences constantly on the ragged edges of musical comfort. His father's counsel that "every dissonance doesn't have to resolve, if it doesn't happen to feel like it, any more than every horse should have to have its tail bobbed just because it's the prevailing fashion" persisted as a musical legacy. Ives came to call his unaccepting audience, "sissy ears."

*America*, called "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and considered our second national anthem, borrowed a centuries-old melody of uncertain origin well-used by British loyalists, in fact still the national anthem of the United Kingdom under the name of *God Save the Queen*. The Ives variations were first heard when he was only 17 years old, but in true Ives form new improvisations were added even during its first performance, and more new interludes followed. The composer thought little of it, calling it "but a boy's work, partly serious and partly in fun." It was nine years after the composer's death that William Schuman was commissioned by a music publishing company to arrange the *Variations on America* for their 20th anniversary. The glorious Schuman orchestration was often heard during the 1976 national bicentennial celebrations.

Ives had graduated Yale in 1898 with a poor academic record, an appetite for even more radical experimentation in music, and enough common sense to seek paying work. In time he became so successful in the insurance industry that he is called the father of estate planning. He continued to compose, refusing to copyright his work and customarily giving it away. He sought no recognition for his work and turned his back on the established world of music, a favor returned then and since.

February 29, 2008

## SYMPHONY NO. 8 in G, Op. 88

by Antonin Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

By 1889 Antonin Dvořák had established himself as a master of the Czech idiom and nationalist sentiment with his Slavonic Dances and the *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, had accepted the mentoring of the great Brahms, and had fulfilled his dream to give the world a symphony on the grand scale of the Brahms Third. His brooding *Symphony No. 7* had impressed the world and established his credentials as a symphonist; the composer and his critics called it his best. Four years later after teaching in New York, his *Symphony No. 9* would be sent home "From the New World" and greeted with lasting popularity. In between, lurking in the shadows of the best and the most popular, is no less a symphonic treasure.

The success of the seventh symphony brought financial security and lucrative commissions. Dvořák could finally afford Vysoká, a simple country home with a music room tucked away among the Bohemian forests where he felt peace and happiness. In a mere ten weeks of autumn in his quiet retreat with "my head so full of ideas . . . I can't write them down fast enough" and all those commissions waiting, he composed his most Czech symphony, the *Symphony No. 8 in G Major.*

What a sunny ramble through his beloved countryside this symphony would be is suggested in the title. Not since Haydn had a symphony in G major been published; the key was considered acceptable for folk music and songs, but a symphony? Dvořák himself promised a symphony in a new style. What he delivered was homespun and happy, an almost rhapsodic treatment of the songs of his homeland that fell short of the traditional symphonic form. The opening theme is introduced by the 'cellos but never developed in the expected form, just handed off briefly to the flutes, to return again repeatedly to the 'cellos, who with the certainty of a compass show the way along a path with surprise turns. That path leads to a dreamy *adagio* of a second movement sketch of contented village life complete with chirping birds, a babbling mountain stream, and the village band. The third movement brings not the expected *scherzo*, but a melodic and graceful waltz that grows into a rustic, cherished Czech *dumka.* Summoned by the trumpets, the ‘cellos return in the fourth movement to narrate the theme and variations form on another song from Dvořák’s Czech childhood turned inward and still, almost bittersweet, then interrupted by the rousing finale.

From the beginning, Dvořák’s critics happily overlooked the shortcomings in form, insisting that the *Symphony in G* was important not for its form, but for its spirit, proclaiming that “this symphony is not profound. . .it is a simple lyric singing of the beauty of our country.”

## MARCH from SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSES

by Paul Hindemith (1895 - 1963)

German composer, performer, educator, and theorist Paul Hindemith was influential as a prime innovator in musical modernism, if largely unloved. He was a world-class violist and played all orchestral instruments passably; he was competent composing in a variety of genres; he was a formidable pedagogue; and he was a brilliant theorist. But he never found a connection to the classical audience. Even today his works and his ideas remain largely undiscovered treasures.

Hindemith’s modernism rejected conventional harmonies. The Nazis labeled him a “cultural Bolshevist” and propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels called Hindemith an “atonal noisemaker” when his music was officially banned. Hindemith promptly fled Germany, finally finding exile in the United States and a teaching position at Yale. “It is difficult to say what today’s average listener expects from an orchestral concert. We find all types of orchestral music on the programs, from the shallowest entertainment pieces to high-tension symphonies of the confessional kind," said of his quest for audience acceptance in a 1940 lecture entitled "Observations on Contemporary Music." The connection would never be easy. His music was intellectual, cerebral, and while never atonal, Hindemith's music is highly individual. It can sound "strange," though refreshingly so.

Hindemith was at the peak of his career and still at Yale when he was asked to write a ballet based on the music of Carl Maria von Weber in collaboration with Massine. It soon became apparent that the collaboration was impossible, and the idea was abandoned. The music, however, was too good to lose; the composer transformed his ballet into the eighteen-minute *Symphonic Metamorphoses*.

The first performance was by the New York Philharmonic under Artur Rodzinski in 1943. That audience found it a witty, colorful and exuberant piece, probably the most approachable of his music for the average listener. All of the movements employ unusual rhythms, colorful orchestral effects and imaginative transformations of what are basically mundane themes, the fourth movement march from a piano duet. The whole effect is enhanced by virtuosic part-writing, which demands extraordinary playing skills of the performers. Thus, like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar, which emerges from its chrysalis as a Monarch butterfly, Weber's simple original melodies are transformed into a complex beauty. The latent potential of the raw nugget from which they began has been developed into a polished gem. To call it an audience favorite would be a stretch, but to use Hindemith's own categories, the Symphonic Metamorphosis tends more toward the "entertainment" than the "high-tension" or "confessional" end of his output.

### MIDSOMMARVAKA (Midsummer Vigil), Swedish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 19 by Hugo Alfvén (1872 - 1960)

By 1900 Hugo Alfvén had excelled at conservatory, established himself as a violinist, composed two symphonies full of pedestrian and forgettable musical thought, and earned a Jenny Lind Scholarship to travel and study at the music centers of Europe. Having fallen petulantly in love with one Maria, he returned after three years to a teaching position, but paused to compose the first of his Swedish rhapsodies, surprising and delighting the musical world with this orchestral romp, and leaving this audience to speculate whether it is autobiographical.

His genial *Midsommarvaka* (Midsummer Vigil) was unprecedented in its quotation of authentic Swedish folk melodies. But audiences found more: its bubbling high spirit is simply impossible to dislike. From the opening theme, announced by a bouncing solo clarinet, this tone poem describes the June 22 holiday, known in both Christian and pagan texts as "white nights" or "St. John's Eve" when in northern Scandinavia there is but four hours between sunset and sunrise. The holiday tradition involves building a bonfire, over which will leap eligible young women, who will peer into the flames to see the face of their beloved-to-be. Considerable ale-drinking and merrymaking are commonly involved.

The first of two Swedish melodies, quietly and then with more spirit, brings a group of young revelers to congregate in the meadow. A bassoon imitates a gawky singer, perhaps already in too high spirits, fading into a catchy melody in the strings, then becoming ever more joyous. As some of the lustier youths and their girlfriends begin some good-hearted squabbling, two sweethearts sneak off to a twilit glade, as the solo horn accompanies the romance. By and by, dawn glimmers with auroral mysteries, and the two reluctantly rejoin the festivities. Insistent brass and scrabbling strings are heard anew, signaling "party's over" in a feverish melée, punctuated by fortissimo final chords.

More than a charming episode of a summer evening, the infectious melodies captured by Hugo Alfvén have become his legacy, his one-hit wonder so familiar to today's audience, but so often the subject of the question, "What *is* the name of that tune?"

April 25, 2008

## PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 in c, Op. 18

by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 - 1943)

"Every time I hear it I go to pieces!" cooed Marilyn Monroe, succumbing to the seduction as Candy Kane in "The Seven Year Itch." "It" was the second piano concerto of Sergei Rachmaninoff, so firmly established in the popular culture of 1955 that the audience hardly needed the name. The "Rach II", a treasure chest full of evocative melodies, had found a home in the popular culture.

Consider how lucky we are to have this treasure at all. Rachmaninoff had been admired as a pianist, the last of the great composer-virtuosos in the tradition of Mozart and Chopin, but his compositions were discounted as anachronisms. His late Romantic style, Russian to the core, sounded simply old-fashioned. His first piano concerto premier in 1897 had been derided as a fiasco, greeted with nearly universal contempt, never to be published. His first symphony similarly failed, never again to be performed in his lifetime.

Rachmaninoff fell into a period of profound self-doubt, frozen in time, musically apathetic, and lacking all hope for the future. In desperation, his family helped him into the care of a Moscow psychiatrist, a pioneer clinical hypnotist and music enthusiast skilled enough to free Rachmaninoff from the debilitating force of the depression. The stated objective was "a new concerto for pianoforte." The composer recalled long hours over months of semi-conscious listening to his Dr. Dahl, calmly intoning, "you will start to compose a concerto - you will work with the greatest of ease - the composition will be of excellent quality," always the same, without interruption. (Or was it the attention of Dr. Dahl's daughter, of whom Rachmaninoff was observed to be enamored?) Rachmaninoff felt fresh musical ideas well up within, many more than needed for the new concerto. In the end, he called it a miracle, and out of overwhelming gratitude, dedicated his work to Dr. Dahl.

The concerto opens with a series of dramatic chords, tolling as bells, increasingly intense and full with promise, opening the ear and the emotions to the main theme in the mysterious expectancy of C minor, and unwrapping that treasure chest overflowing with luxuriant lyricism. In an introspective and melancholic second movement the theme passes from piano to orchestra principals in turns, fading as if near death to the solo piano. But the power of life reasserts in a final C major movement of triumph and affirmation–- the whole a memoir of the composer's own life journey.

Through it all the piano and orchestra partner in a cooperative synergy full of brilliant pianism yet free of virtuoso pretension, making the Rach II a timeless treasure of musical integrity and example revered by our generation for its honesty, in the words of the composer:

> What I try to do, when writing down my music, is to make it say simply and directly what is in my heart when I am composing. Whether there is love, or bitterness, or sadness or religion, these feelings become a part of my music and it becomes either beautiful or bitter or sad or religious.

MARK NEIWIRTH graduated from Kimberly High School in 1975, having studied for six years with his mentor, Teala Bellini in Twin Falls. He continued his training at the Hartt College of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, where he served as the teaching assistant of Dora Zaslavsky.

Mr. Neiwirth has appeared as concerto soloist forty-two times with orchestras in the region and in New York City. He was featured annually for sixteen years as soloist with the Sun Valley Summer Symphony and has served as the principal pianist in the Edgar M. Bronfman Chamber Music Series since its inception in Sun Valley. He has appeared throughout the United States as piano soloist, accompanist and chamber musician in hundreds of concerts. He was a national finalist in the National Federation of Music Clubs Young Artist Competitions in 1983 and 1985.

Columbia Artists Management represented him as a Community Concert Artist in the 1980s. He has lived in eastern Idaho for the past twenty-three years, and many of his students have gone on to pursue careers in music. He last appeared with the Magic Valley Symphony in 1997 as soloist with Thom Ritter George's *Piano Concerto No. 3*, which was composed expressly for Neiwirth.

Presently Mr. Neiwirth is an Adjunct Professor of Piano at Idaho State University and teaches a full schedule of private students in Pocatello. As President and Director of Musicians West, Inc., he produces an annual chamber music series in conjunction with the Idaho State University Department of Music, and administers the Musicians West Piano Festival and Competition in Pocatello each May.

LEROY ANDERSON (1908 - 1975), America's preeminent composer of light concert music, studied music first with his mother, a church organist. In time he earned a B.A. (summa cum laude) and M.A. in music at Harvard, but not high regard as a composer; his composition professors advised finding other work. This he did, first in linguistics, and then by inventing a musical mini-genre of Pops gems wholly unforseen to those composition professors.

During World War II, Leroy (say "Luh-ROY") Anderson's proficiency in eleven Romance and Scandinavian languages led him to serve in the Army Counter-Intelligence Corps. He attained the rank of Captain, serving as chief of the Scandinavian Desk of Military Intelligence at the Pentagon. Along the way an arrangement of Harvard songs had attracted the attention of the Boston Pops music director, Arthur Fiedler, who had encouraged more. His *Jazz Pizzicato*, the first of what became a steady stream of miniature orchestral masterworks, was premiered by the Pops, marking the beginning of a promising collaboration. Still, music remained mostly an avocation. While at the Pentagon he wrote *The Syncopated Clock*, agonizing over every note in pursuit of perfection. At the end of the war he declined an offer to become the assistant military attache in Stockholm.

Instead he continued his musical career, striving to compose in his words, “concert music with a pop quality.” There was *Sleigh Ride*, (written in a sweltering summer heat wave) and *The Typewriter* and *Belle of the Ball* and a dozen others, all brief but exquisite, crafted with the precision of brilliant-cut diamonds. While Anderson's aim was to write light concert music to be played by symphony orchestras, in 1952 one of his orchestral works captured the country's fancy. *Blue Tango*, a lilting instrumental with a sweeping melody, became the "top single" of 1952. It was at the top of the Hit Parade for 22 weeks and was played in jukeboxes and on the radio here and abroad. Anderson's own recording of it earned him a gold record, which was unprecedented for an instrumental symphonic recording.

On the centennial of his birth, we remember the life work of Leroy Anderson, and admire anew the rich treasure he left: the precious orchestral miniatures, impeccably crafted orchestrations full of humor and hummable, optimistic melodies that have defined the classical Pops genre.

*Program notes by Paula Brown Sinclair*

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