

Department of Music Presents

# MUSIC

*The Universal Connection*

## COLLEGE YOUTH SYMPHONY

*Christiana Fortune-Reader, conductor*

**Studley Theatre**

*Sunday, December 11*

*4 p.m.*

# COLLEGE YOUTH SYMPHONY

## *Program*

*Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1*  
*I. Balletto: "Il Conte Orlando"*  
*II. Gagliarda*  
*III. Villanella*  
*IV. Passo mezzo e mascherada*

*Ottorino Respighi*  
*(1879-1936)*

*"Notturmo" from String Quartet No. 2*

*Alexander Borodin*  
*(1833-1887)*

*Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551 "Jupiter"*  
*I. Allegro vivace*  
*IV. Molto allegro*

*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*  
*(1756-1791)*

# *Performers*

## ***Violin 1***

Coltrane Fracalossi-Lail  
Juliana Freiberg  
Saskia Kamerling  
Nicola Kelly  
Martin Moehn Aguayo  
Melody Posner  
Hailey Shepheard  
Asacia Walker

## ***Violin 2***

Caity Hysick  
Isabella Iacona  
Kaydi McInerney  
Eric Person  
Alexandra Tommasulo  
Amanda Weisberg  
Tiffany Wong

## ***Viola***

Gabriella Bleakley  
Jessica Kessler  
Colleen Mullaney  
William Ortiz  
Raven Pizarro  
Josie Rose  
Bryce Swiader  
Enmanuel Zambrano  
Julia Zieminski

## ***Cello***

Sarah Berry  
Abigail Denticco  
Centauri Jacobsen  
Sion Kikuchi  
Nicole Nelson

## ***Bass***

Jack Salzman  
Sarah Taxter

## ***Flute***

Amy Bartholomew  
Carolina Dickens

## ***Oboe***

John Cossentino  
Joël Evans

## ***Clarinet***

Ken Dreyfak  
Matthew Miller

## ***Bassoon***

John Herbert

## *Performers*

### ***French Horn***

Emma Carver  
Linda Lawrence  
Jack Levy  
Helen Musumeci

### ***Trumpet***

John Herbert  
Vincent Santini  
Donovan Swartz

### ***Trombone***

Cecilia Reyes  
Emma Strudwick

### ***Piano***

Kate Bobae Jang

# *Program Notes*

## *Ottorino Respighi's Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1*

Ottorino Respighi had two sides to his musical personality. The first embraced the modern world: developing his unique voice, finding technicolor sounds. The second was pulled backwards in time: poring over music from bygone eras. These two sides were not necessarily at odds. When Respighi transcribed and arranged dozens of 16th- to 18th-century works, he made them speak his own language, repainting intimate textures with vivid modern colors.

Though not strictly born in the 1880s (1879), Respighi belonged to a group of composers known as the *generazione dell'ottanta* (The 80s Generation), who strived to assert, as they saw it, a renewed musical expression of authentically Italian musical culture. It was a conservative stance in terms of both musical approach and nationalism, but it resulted in Respighi and colleagues recovering unjustly neglected treasures from their Italian heritage.

While the intent may have been conservative, Respighi's approach to what we now call 'early music' was notably liberal by our standards, marked as much by nostalgia and irony as erudition. Orchestration is much too weak a term to do justice to the process of subtle "re-composition" to which Respighi subjected his chosen originals.

In his thirties, Respighi was drawn to collections of 16th- and 17th-century lute works in particular. The lute, in its heyday, was prized for a quiet, delicate sound. Hearing a lute performance was like eavesdropping on a private conversation. Respighi made three suites for string orchestra from these lute works, calling them *Ancient Airs and Dances*. They were written in the style of Baroque dances but from the perspective of the 20th century. They maintain the clarity of the lute pieces that he borrowed from Renaissance composers, known and unknown, including Simone Molinaro and Vincenzo Galilei (the father of Galileo). The style of each movement echoes its origin, whether in song (*villanelle*) or dance (*balletto*, *gagliarda*, and *passo mezzo*). Balancing his preference for expressive orchestration with his Renaissance source material, he opts for a small ensemble with brilliant timbres.

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These pieces show Respighi's intense interest in and love of early music, as well as his brilliant abilities as an orchestrator. He found a way not only to give tribute to the legacies of great early composers through these transcriptions, but as stated by annotator Julia Bömers: "...early music became a source of musical renewal and self-discovery for him."

### *Alexander Borodin's "Notturmo" from the String Quartet No. 2*

Alexander Borodin was, like many of his now famous Russian composer friends, a composer by avocation; he had a day job. Borodin pursued a distinguished career as a physician and chemist first while composing only when he could in his truly precious spare time. Generally, it would require years for Borodin to finish a work yet he succeeded in writing some astonishing music of great originality and influence including two symphonies, tone poems such as *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, the opera *Prince Igor* featuring the now famous "Polovetsian Dances," and a handful of chamber works including the equally beloved *String Quartet No. 2* in D Major.

This last work was, unlike the others, written in a rapid flush of activity lasting only a few months during a summer vacation. The quartet was well-received during Borodin's life but managed to "cross-over" into the mega-popular realm when at least two of its themes were used as part of the 1953 musical *Kismet*. Robert Wright and George Forrest used several of Borodin's compositions whose lyrical and exotic musical "orientalisms" accompanied a story set in Persia during the period from the *Arabian Nights*. Two songs in particular, "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" and "This is My Beloved" are based directly on themes from the second and third movements respectively of Borodin's quartet. His fresh nationalistic use of Asian folk music, rhythm, color and chromaticism brought his music to the attention of many composers especially the young Debussy who, as a Frenchman, had an equal interest in abandoning Teutonic conventions and vocabulary for a "new", polyglot European culture. With his contemporary Tchaikovsky, Borodin laid a significant cornerstone in nascent tradition of Russian chamber music specifically for the time-honored string quartet.

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While the Russian nationalist composers of Borodin's close circle known as the "The Mighty Five" might eschew the "empty formalism" of the musical fare from the Viennese drawing rooms in favor of Asian color, rhythm and folklore, Borodin was an eclectic dilettante, an analytical chemist, a scholar and a teacher. He knew and cherished the tradition of the string quartet. Borodin was surely in the vanguard with his studied awareness of Beethoven's late quartets: for most listeners in 1881, this music was still held somewhat at arm's length, a mysterious, puzzling netherworld that had yet to be conquered by the larger world. Both of Borodin's quartets show outstanding craftsmanship from a gifted composer placed in a unique historical position to add an elegant, new perfume to European chamber music while advancing the continuity and self-awareness of a, now, international tradition.

The String Quartet No. 2 was dedicated to his wife Ekaterina Protopova. Some scholars, such as Borodin's biographer Serge Dianin, suggest that the quartet was a 20th anniversary gift and that it has a program evoking the couple's first meeting in Heidelberg. Of its four movements, the third movement "Notturmo" is the most famous. Borodin wrote the string quartet quickly in 1881 while staying at the estate of his friend, the minor composer Nikolai Lodyzhensky, which was located in Zhitovo, southeast of Moscow.

The slow movement Notturmo is an entire musical narrative of its own as the cello and violin explore a tale of lovers complete with opening soliloquy, loving entreaty, an elegant dance, a tragic conflict and a sublime duet aria for the denouement. While the lovely theme appears wholesale in Kismet, only the string quartet contains the ravishing middle section rising to a peak of dazzling contrapuntal writing second only to Mozart in luminous grandeur. Only the string quartet offers this exquisite instrumental texture.

The main theme of the third movement is perhaps the most famous in the quartet. An agitated middle section interrupts this theme's otherwise peaceful mood. The main theme is restated after the middle section in canon (first cello and the first violin, then two violins).

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## *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K.551 "Jupiter"*

### **THE BACKSTORY**

Mozart's biography contains such an amazing procession of experiences and achievements that it reads almost like an 18th century novel. The story of his final three symphonies occupies a full chapter of this life-as-novel—unfortunately, one that falls not terribly far from its end. More than two centuries after they were written, these works—the Symphonies No. 39 in E-flat major; No. 40 in G minor; and No. 41 in C major (Jupiter)—continue to stand at the summit of the symphonic repertory, where they keep company with a small and supremely select group of fellow-masterpieces by the A-list of composers.

Almost incredibly, all three were produced in the space of about nine weeks, in the summer of 1788: he began his Symphony No. 39 around the beginning of June, not quite a month after Don Giovanni was granted a lukewarm reception at its Vienna premiere, and went on to complete the succeeding symphonies on July 25 and August 10. Each is a very full-scale work, comprising the standard four movements of the late-Classical symphony. Twelve movements in nine weeks would mean that, on the average, Mozart expended five days and a few hours on the composition of each movement. That doesn't factor in that he was writing other pieces at the same time, giving piano lessons, tending a sick wife, enduring the death of a six-month-old daughter, entertaining friends, moving to a new apartment, and pestering his fellow freemason Michael Puchberg for financial loans.

Mozart, of course, had no idea that these would be his last symphonies. He undoubtedly had every expectation of living well into the 19th century; and although that is not what happened, at least he had another three and a half years in which he might well have written further symphonies. Since he didn't, these three works stand as the summa of his achievement in symphonic music, and in their strikingly different characters we glimpse not only a drawing together of strands of development that had enriched his orchestral music to that point but also hints of what the future might have held.



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## **THE MUSIC**

In the Symphony No. 41, Mozart seems intent on showing off his sheer brilliance as a composer. Its emotional range is wide indeed, prefiguring the vast expressive canvas that would emerge in the symphonies of Beethoven. In performance, one may be struck by how this work, though filled with incident, unrolls with a luxurious stride, at least until its finale. Certainly compared to its predecessor, the edgy, nervous Symphony No. 40 in G minor, this final symphony seems in no great hurry even when its music is moving quickly.

The first movement bears a fast tempo marking, *Allegro vivace*; but its opening phrases are stately, their rhythms emphatic and their harmonic motion firmly anchored in the home key. Revelation stands on every ensuing page. One can only marvel at how this opening music takes on strikingly different characters when it recurs—for example, in the passage in the middle of the exposition where the opening “emphatic theme” is rendered by just first and second violins, playing softly in octaves beneath a chuckling filigree of scales from the flute and oboe (with a bit of support from the bassoons). Near the exposition’s end Mozart injects the last of numerous themes to populate this movement, a lighthearted, skipping tune (self-borrowed from his concert aria “Un bacio di mano”) that, for all its simplicity, reveals a brilliant touch of orchestration. The first two measures are for strings alone: first and second violins playing the melody in octaves, cellos accompanying with simple arpeggios, violas and double basses plucking pizzicatos on the opening beat of each measure. As this continues, the two oboes enter to sustain a “pedal tone” on the note D (the dominant note in this passage), and then solo bassoon adds its voice to the violins’ line, which means that the melody is sounding in three different octaves at once. It’s this kind of detail that makes music great. The development arrives via an unembellished harmonic step from C to E-flat. The orchestra at first carries over the same idea in its orchestration, but it quickly gives this up as the development launches into an imaginative harmonic exploration that includes impressive touches of counterpoint.

The finale (*Molto allegro*) is a marvel even by Mozartian standards. It may remind listeners of Mozart’s opera *Le nozze di Figaro* in its propulsive

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exuberance as well as the slyness with which it reveals its surprises. Mozart begins by stating a four-note motif that composers had obsessed over for generations, a motif doled out in simple whole-notes, one per measure. In fact, he has already stated it, in the Trio of the Menuetto, where we are not likely to have paid much attention to it. Now it holds pride of place, at first on its own, then in counterpoint with itself. Other themes make their entrances one by one—not extended melodies so much as fleeting motifs, yet Mozart gives them all enough play to lend them familiarity. In the movement’s development section he juxtaposes several in counterpoint, and he works in a passage in which woodwinds intone descending chromatic lines, densely harmonized, recalling related contours in the first and second movements.

But he withholds the most astonishing surprise until the coda: a breathtaking display of counterpoint—five melodies sounding against one another, worked out so any of them can fall at any pitch level within the orchestral texture. It all passes quickly, leaving a listener amazed but bereft of the possibility of pondering what is happening while it is going on. In her monograph on this symphony, Elaine Sisman wrote: “The mass of simultaneously writhing fragments, at all rhythmic levels and in all instruments, with the relentless background of the four whole-notes, cannot be taken in. It reveals vistas of contrapuntal infinity. The coda thus creates a cognitive exhaustion born of sheer magnitude. It makes vivid the mathematical sublime.” That climax may be viewed as looking both backward, to the sort of contrapuntal virtuosity we associate with Bach and Handel, and forward, to the dramatic power of fugue as demonstrated in many of the greatest compositions of Beethoven.

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