

Bach Festival Society

O F W I N T E R P A R K

JOHN V. SINCLAIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Saturday, October 23 at 7:30pm

Sunday, October 24 at 3:00pm

Knowles Memorial Chapel

Program

Fairy Tale

Daniel Crozier

Symphony for Amelia

Jaron Lanier (1960–)

Janette Zilioli, soprano

Intermission

Symphony No. 9

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Janette Zilioli, soprano

Margaret Gawrysiak, mezzo-soprano

Keith Bolves, tenor

Won Cho, bass

Fairy Tale

Fairy Tale was completed in 2002 for the Annapolis Youth Symphony Orchestra, David Ik Sung Choo, music director. It is very much in keeping with my recent compositional exploration of the narrative, story-telling power of music. It was a strong interest in opera that led my purely instrumental music in this direction. The music of the great operatic literature, it seems, reaches well beyond the function of simply enhancing a drama on stage. Our perception is that this music can somehow “become” the story that it tells, effectively taking it over, and expressing the drama in its own terms with a heightened sense of dramatic sweep and a good deal of emotional specificity. It is the music that essentially controls our experience as we are drawn into the dramatic world of a fine opera.

While it may be problematical to speak of abstract orchestral music in such terms, music that exists apart from any explicit program or extra-musical reference does, I believe, have the capacity to carry on an independent sort of narrative, expressed using its own particular kind of syntax. In this spirit, *Fairy Tale* strives to create what might be called virtual, rather than concrete, narrative. We might even refer to it, after Mendelssohn, as “an opera scene without words” whose personae appear as musical ideas. As in other forms of drama, interest comes as a result of the way these characters relate to one another in the context of an overall plot, the way they may be transformed by the sometimes intense nature of their interaction, and the larger intensity curve that emerges as part of the process.

Fairy Tale commences with a pair of fanfares, the first in the woodwinds and the second in the brass, that set the scene. There is a sense that the drama proper begins with the next idea, an expansive melody in the strings that eventually heralds the piece’s first climax. A plaintive, fragmented melody, initially stated by the oboe, moves the drama in a more mysterious direction. These are the characters, and it is their subsequent interaction that makes the piece.

Which tale is told here? It seems less entertaining to know this for sure than it is to imagine. The imagination was where the magic of these stories sprang up for us when we first knew them, and it is there that, given a little nostalgia and inspiration, we may rekindle their magic later on. *Fairy Tale* was originally conceived as the third movement of a three-movement symphony, but thus far has only been performed as an independent piece as it appears here.

Daniel Crozier, D.M.A.
Associate Professor of Theory and Composition
Rollins College

Symphony for Amelia

Amelia Lanier was an astonishing figure, though we don't know much for sure about her. Some scholars think she was the Dark Lady Shakespeare wrote of in his Sonnets. There's a small contingent, needless to say, itching for a fight in order to argue she actually wrote Shakespeare's plays. Some think William Byrd set her poetry to music. Many think she came from a Jewish Moroccan family, via the Venetian Ghetto, into Shakespeare's world.

What we do know for sure is that she was the first woman to declare herself a poet of the English language and that she expressed a feminist sentiment at a time when that was an act of extraordinary bravado and futurism. We also know that a lineage of great musicians and poets count her as an ancestor. Quincy Jones never fails to address me as "cousin" and tell me about the latest Laniers he has discovered, for instance. His mother was a Lanier from Barbados, where one of Amelia's descendants moved.

As per our routine, I always remind Q that I'm actually only a virtual Lanier. My father changed his name, choosing "Lanier" in honor of another of Amelia's descendants, Sidney Lanier. Sidney was a great 19th-century American poet, a philosopher who wrote a book on the synesthesia of poetry and music, and a prominent musician. He founded many of the orchestras of the American South and was celebrated as a flautist.

My father changed his name in part because he was a writer looking for an effective pen name and in part out of fear of anti-Semitism. So if Amelia's family really was Jewish, converting in order to be able to work in England, my father's name change was ill-advised.

Could I possibly be a real Lanier? A picture of Amelia survives, and we see that she had hair like mine, that just wants to dread. A woodcut of her brothers shows them in a room strewn with instruments, including cornettos and lutes, and I know I would have felt at home with them. It's possible.

Thinking about the period in London when Amelia was writing her poems, one of course thinks of her friend Shakespeare, but for me William Byrd is an equally captivating figure. My composer friends often carry around a few compositions in their hearts as the spiritual core of the Western tradition. These are pieces that seem to transcend the human condition and speak to a reality beyond words and time.

For me, Beethoven's *C# Minor string quartet, op. 131* is on the list, for instance, along with Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. At the very heart of the Western tradition, however, garlanded in tranquility, sits William Byrd's motet on *Ave Verum Corpus*. I have met a great many other composers who feel the same way.

It just isn't fair that we have no record of contact between Shakespeare and Byrd. But it seems Amelia knew them both. What went on? The imagination burns.

My setting of Amelia's words is aggressively modern and would probably sound strange to her, but it does reflect some elements of her musical world. In particular, a canon appears near the end that reflects some ideas from Byrd's motets. In one sense the piece is conservative in that it's notated in a constant 4/4 rhythm throughout and is centered approximately on a single tonal center, but it is also quite wild in places. It exhibits traces of Scriabin, Gershwin, the American minimalist tradition, and a great many other things.

I was thinking of the mercurial trajectory linking Amelia to me, with its ambiguities of descent, unpredictable musical diversions, great migrations, and unwitting reunions across centuries—and this is the music that came out.

Jaron Lanier
Composer

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*

Various people who were at the premiere of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125*, tell the same story. In Vienna on May 7, 1824, aging, ill, and deaf, the composer conducted his new work. The performance was ill-prepared and sloppy, but by then Beethoven was as adored and revered as he is today. At the last chord stopped sounding the audience rose to their feet, cheering and applauding, but the conductor kept conducting. One of the soloists gently plucked the conductor's sleeve and turned him toward the enthusiastic and excited crowd so he could see his success. The pathos of the scene becomes even more pitiful when one realizes the singers were ecstatically extolling Joy.

The climax of the symphony and the object of the preceding three movements is a choral setting of Friedrich Schiller's poem "An die Freude," ("Ode To Joy"), a poem well-known since its publication in 1785. Even without the famous fourth movement, this symphony makes a powerful statement. The first movement, turbulent and dark, conveys a horrific terror, made even more startling by a return of the crashing thunder of the original minor theme at the end in an even more terrorizing major. The second movement scherzo starts with a crash of timpani, followed by light strings like rain, leading into a swirling gigue-like melody; the contrasting theme seems more sweet and flowing. An elegiac feeling suffuses the continuous variations of the third, the slow movement.

One of the more familiar pieces of all classical music, the Ninth Symphony is used to mark significant political events. In 1989 the Tiananmen Square protesters used the symphony as their soundtrack, the music pouring out of loudspeakers. And later that year, when the Berlin Wall fell, Leonard Bernstein celebrated freedom by leading an orchestra of musicians from east and west in a rousing performance of the symphony. We cheer when we hear it, declaring the joy of brotherhood. Nothing has changed since the premiere over 180 years ago.

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