Sphinx Virtuosi

Music Without Borders

Tonight’s performance is expected to run 89 minutes with a 20 minute intermission.


Spaulding Auditorium’s Hamburg Steinway concert grand piano was purchased with generous gifts from Members of the Hopkins Center and Members of the Hood Museum of Art; the class of 1942, in memory of Allan Dingwall ’42; and anonymous donors.

Tue • October 9, 2018 • 7 pm
Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College
Program

Triptyque for String Orchestra ......................................................... Yasushi Akutagawa (1925–1989)
   I. Allegro
   II. Andante
   III. Presto

Life is a Dream (La vida es sueño), Op. 76 ........................................... Miguel del Águila (b. 1957)

   Annelle Gregory, solo violin; Thomas Mesa, solo cello

“Dance for a New Day” was co-commissioned by the Sphinx Organization, New World Symphony, Inc., and Carnegie Hall.

Intermission (20 minutes)

Chamber Symphony, Op. 110a ............................................................ Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)
   I. Largo
   II. Allegro molto
   III. Allegretto
   IV. Allegretto
   V. Largo

A Voice Exclaiming................................................................. Kareem Roustom (b. 1971)
   III. Dabke

The national Sphinx Virtuosi Tour is made possible with the generous support of JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Robert F. Smith with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts/Art Works and Aetna.

The Sphinx Virtuosi are exclusively represented in North America by California Artists Management (www.CalArtists.com).
2018 Sphinx Virtuosi

Violin I
Suliman Tekalli (Concertmaster)
Annelle K. Gregory (Assistant Concertmaster)
Patricia Quintero
Clayton Penrose-Whitmore

Violin II
Emilia Mettenbrink (Principal)
Alex Gonzalez
Chauntee Ross
Samuel Nebyu

Viola
Celia Hatton (Co-Principal)
Robert Switala (Co-Principal)
William Neri
Caitlin Adamson

Cello
Thomas Mesa (Principal)
Erica Snowden Rodriguez
Ryan Murphy
Caleb Jones

Double Basses
Jonathan Colbert (Principal)
Benjamin Harris

Program Notes

Music unites when words fail. By illuminating works by composers from communities searching for harmony and separated by time, distance, hardship and conflict, we seek to share our inspiration from the diverse voices that remind us of empathy and our common humanity. The program will include the newly commissioned “Dance for a New Day” by award-winning jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard, made possible in part with the support of Linda and Stuart Nelson.

Triptyque for String Orchestra
Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-1989)

Akutagawa was a 20th-century Japanese composer and conductor. In 1954, when Japan did not have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Akutagawa journeyed there illegally, to meet the composers who most inspired him: Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Kabalevsky. He presented them with his best works including “Triptyque.” Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Akira Ifukube also were formative influences on Akutagawa’s work.

Akutagawa advanced the cause of Japanese music, and with two colleagues, Toshiro Mayuzumi and Ikuma Dan, founded the Japanese composers’ group Sannin no kai, (Union of Three), whose fundamental principle was the incorporation of elements of traditional music not just of Japan, but
also of the Asian mainland. He also worked with the Japanese Federation of Composers and Japanese Society of Rights of Authors and Composers.

Akutagawa composed the delightful “Triptyque,” which means a grouping of three pictures, in 1953, at the suggestion of Kurt Wöss, an Austrian composer. Wöss presented its premiere in December 1953 at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic. Prokofiev in particular was a crucial influence on the work; Akutagawa’s turn towards local roots and other Asian musical traditions, in particular, the pentatonic tonal system, can also be heard.

In the work’s first movement, Allegro, the strings play broad melodic arcs and contrasting sequences of rhythmic cells. The movement is infused with counterpoint; one also hears a powerful mixture of otherworldly sounds and earthy rhythms, some created by beating on the wood of the instruments in a percussive style. The slow middle movement, Berceuse, begins with an ardent viola theme; later, a yearning violin sings over the lower strings’ pizzicati. “Knock the Body,” a typical Japanese rhythm, is utilized. The final movement, Presto, is very fast. Akutagawa creates the rhythm of Japanese drums used in Matsuri festivals in the main motif.

La vida es sueño (Life is a Dream), Op. 76 ...
Miguel del Aguila (b. 1957)

Three-time Grammy nominated Uruguayan-American composer and pianist Aguila is one of the most distinctive and highly regarded composers of his generation, particularly known for music that joins drama and driving rhythm with acknowledgement of his South American roots. Aguila explains about “La vida es sueño”: “As I started writing this music, words from Calderon de la Barca’s play Life is a Dream began ringing obsessively in my mind without any particular reason. After I re-read this play I realized the reason: With these words, Calderon’s main character realizes that he can no longer tell reality from dreams. A crisis has led him to this state of mind. Being myself in a somewhat similar situation at that time, I probably chose this subject matter subconsciously, out of the psychological need to deal with it. I then set out to do with music, what Calderon achieved through words: To blur and confuse the boundaries between the real and the imagined. Thus I wrote a piece in which the “real” music is often used as background merely accompanying “imagined,” “dreamed,” “remembered” and “suggested” music. The entire concert hall becomes the performance space as the musicians recite Calderon’s words as they play. The meditative thematic development gives this work an introspective, often contemplative character. Its form is derived from the text and the subject matter. Calderon’s 17th century Spain has also influenced the music: The first section is written in the Spanish Phrygian mode and is followed by a lively Jota dance that seems to be stuck on its own rhythm. In including this work in our program, we reflect on how the divisive nature of our voices today is in fact contrasted by those elements that unite all humanity, without regard to time, distance, and discord.

Dance for a New Day
Terence Blanchard (b. 1962)

A lone violin sounds a melody—at first simple, like a folk tune, and then unfurling into a lengthy and unsettling phrase. Here is the voice of frustration, a mirror to issues not easily sorted out, let alone
resolved. A cello enters, reflecting that same feeling, that same sense of heightened concern. The two form a chorus, aggressive in tone yet bending toward beauty. They sing of confusion but slowly distill order. They move together like modern dancers—frenetic, angry even, but also spinning toward hope. Soon more musicians engage: the entire orchestra, recruited into a deepening statement, at times breathless with energy but also pausing here and there to reflect. Plucked notes—two on downbeats, two on upbeats—bear echoes of distant drums, African drums, drums not of war but of wisdom. The violin and the cello return, commanding once again that which they were called to create, that which grew like all movements do, within a piece of music or a popular revolution: organically, as the sum of grand ideas and small gestures.

“It’s all about what’s going on now,” Terence Blanchard says of this piece. By that he means this moment of social and political upheaval. Through his small jazz ensembles, his genre-defying E-Collective band, his film scores and his recent opera, Blanchard has sought to address unrest and injustice through a personal musical lens and to project themes of communal compassion and elevated discourse. Here, the violin and cello reflect his own frustration, his urge to stimulate “something different, a new day,” he says. The orchestra is the larger public, moving from comprehension to commitment. This music unfolds as the moment demands: It does not relent yet seeks and finds calm.

Larry Blumenfeld

Blumenfeld has written about Terence Blanchard’s music in many contexts including The Wall Street Journal, where he is a regular contributor.

Chamber Symphony, Op. 110
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Shostakovich, music’s last great classicist, composed 15 symphonies and 15 string quartets. During World War II, which Russians call the Great Patriotic War, he suffered through the siege of Leningrad, which he memorialized in Symphony No. 7; he said that Russians would never forget or forgive Nazis’ attempts to destroy Slavic culture. On July 14, 1960, when he finished String Quartet No. 8, which is played by string orchestras as the Chamber Symphony, he dedicated it to “the memory of the victims of fascism and War.”

Although its dedication suggests a great social, historical purpose, it is also an intensely personal work filled with references to Shostakovich’s motto, the notes D, E-flat, C, and B, a sort of musical cryptogram he derived from the German designations of the notes of the scale and the German spelling of part of his name D. SCHostakovitch. Forming the opening notes of the 1st, 3rd, and 5th movements, the motto also occurs in the other movements. In this work, Shostakovich also quotes earlier compositions: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5, Piano Trio, Cello Concerto No. 1 and the opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk.

Included also are characteristic extended chromatic melodies often stretched over long sustained notes, persistent rhythmic figures sometimes powerfully hammered and sometimes repeated gently and quietly, great dynamic contrasts, and complex counterpoint, even when it appears in only two parts.

Of the five connected, closely related movements, three are Largo, very slow and broad. The Largo first movement, a quiet, contrapuntal prelude,
Program Notes continued

derives principally from the DSCH motto, and the second, Allegro molto, resembles a classical sonata-form. The third, Allegretto, a waltz-like consideration of the motto, precedes the Largo fourth movement, whose dark-toned music is almost always in the instruments’ lowest registers; it quotes the patriotic song, “Bowed by the Burden of Bondage.” The motto leads into the final Largo, where it is used fugally; musical ideas from the 1st movement are also recalled.

Dabke
Kareem Roustom (b. 1971)

An Emmy-nominated composer who has written music for film, television, the concert hall and album projects, Syrian-born Kareem Roustom grew up with the musical traditions of the Near East and trained in Western concert music and jazz. Roustom is a prominent active Arab-American composer and professor at Tufts University who has collaborated with a wide variety of artists and received numerous commissions to compose works for the Kronos Quartet, Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and others. His music has been described by the New York Times as “postmodern … music with lots of personality.” BBC Radio 3 highlighted Roustom’s music as “among the most distinctive to have emerged from the Middle East.”

Roustom has expressed his music’s purpose: “I have decided that my music must serve as a vehicle for some kind of message, be that advocating for cross-cultural understanding, compassion for the ‘other’, or to raise a fist against injustice and tyranny, or another cause that, even in a very small way, tries to make our world a little better.”

The dabke is a folk dance and a type of line dance from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, typically performed for celebrations. The leader of the dance line, called a hawaash, directs the dancers’ movements. Many variants of the dabke exist. Roustom’s is based on a six-beat rhythm called sudaasi, and is an arrangement of the third movement of his “A Voice Exclaiming,” a work for triple string quartet originally commissioned for the Kronos Quartet and Providence, Rhode Island-based Community MusicWorks.

Afa Sadykhly Dworkin

About the Artists

Sphinx Virtuosi is one of the nation’s most dynamic professional chamber orchestras. Comprised of 18 of the nation’s top Black and Latino classical soloists, these alumni of the internationally renowned Sphinx Competition come together each fall as cultural ambassadors to reach new audiences. This unique ensemble earned rave reviews from the New York Times during its highly acclaimed debut at Carnegie Hall in December 2004. Allan Kozinn described their performance as “first-rate in every way” and “the ensemble produced a more beautiful, precise and carefully shaped sound than some fully professional orchestras that come through Carnegie Hall in the course of the year.”
About the Artists continued

The Sphinx Virtuosi have returned to Carnegie Hall annually since 2006 performing to sold-out halls and earning outstanding reviews from The New York Times each year. At once a bridge between minority communities and the classical music establishment, the Sphinx Virtuosi continue to garner critical acclaim during their annual national tours to many of the leading venues around the country.

Inspired by Sphinx’s overarching mission, the Sphinx Virtuosi works to advance diversity in classical music while engaging young and new audiences through performances of varied repertoire. Masterpieces by Bach, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi and Mozart are performed alongside the more seldom presented works by composers of color, including Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, George Walker, Michael Abels, and Astor Piazzolla, among others.

Members of the Sphinx Virtuosi have performed as soloists with America’s major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. Members also hold professional orchestral positions, and several have been named Laureates of other prestigious international competitions, including the Queen Elizabeth and Yehudi Menuhin. Roster members have completed and continue to pursue their advanced studies at the nation’s top music schools, including Juilliard, Curtis, Eastman, Peabody, Harvard, and the University of Michigan.

The Sphinx Virtuosi’s first recording was released in 2011 on the White Pine label and features music of Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Gabriela Lena Frank and George Walker.

Connecting Artists to the Community

While at Dartmouth, members of Sphinx Virtuosi visited classes in Dartmouth’s music department, at the Upper Valley Music Center, and at Hanover High School. In addition to mini-performances and coaching during these visits, they also led coaching sessions with the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra and will participate in a post-performance discussion. For more information about Hop Outreach and Arts Education programs, call 603.646.2010 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach.
Upcoming Events

Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra
Filippo Ciabatti, conductor
Sat • November 10 • 8 pm
A celebration of Leonard Bernstein, featuring music he wrote and excelled at conducting.

Handel Society of Dartmouth College
Robert Duff, conductor
Tue • November 13 • 7 pm
100-voice chorus performs the Brahms Requiem, a masterwork revealing the composer’s deepest feelings about life and death, with guest soloists and full orchestra.

For tickets or more info, call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu. Share your experiences! #HopkinsCenter

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