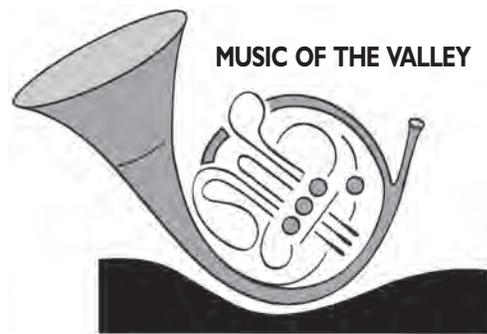


Livermore-Amador Symphony

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director & Conductor

March 24, 2012, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



Home from NY: Laura Hamilton

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Arthur P. Barnes, LAS conductor and music director,
and Peter Curzon, LAS percussionist and music committee member

Overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*
(1862)

Richard Wagner
(1813–1883)

Violin Concerto in E Minor
Opus 64 (1844)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)

Laura Hamilton, soloist

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 6 in D Major
Opus 60, B. 112 (1880)

Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

- I. Allegro non tanto
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo (furiant)—presto
- IV. Finale—allegro con spirito

This concert is dedicated to Marion and Arnold Clark.

CONDUCTOR
Arthur P. Barnes

**ASSISTANT
CONDUCTOR**
Robert Williams

FIRST VIOLIN
Sherry Lewis
Concertmaster

Norman Back
JoAnn Cox
Judy Eckart
Nancy Ly*
Julie Mae
Jackie Maruskin
Jutta Massoud
Doug Morrison
Gianni Song
Tristen Thalhuber*
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Nan Davies

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Eva Langfeldt
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CLARINET
Lesley Watson
Kathy Boster

BASSOON
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HORN
Christine-Ann
Immesoete
Jim Hartman
Bryan Waugh
Robert Williams

TRUMPET
Michael Portnoff
Brian Maddox

TROMBONE
Diane Schildbach
Charles Smith

BASS TROMBONE
Mark Hil

TUBA
Betsy Hausburg

TIMPANI
April Nissen

PERCUSSION
Peter Curzon
Paul Kasameyer

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Anne Les

* High-school
student player

Overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1862)

**Richard Wagner
(1813–1883)**

Over the centuries, the function of the overture to an opera, a musical, or a purely instrumental work has undergone many changes. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, overtures were often written as abstract instrumental pieces without any particular programmatic, thematic, or dramatic relevance to the musical ideas and narrative to follow—a kind of one-size-fits-all device used primarily to marshal audience attention. With the operas of Gluck and later the “program overture” of the early Romantics, most notably Carl Maria von Weber, we hear a distinct change in the overture’s function. Despite Richard Wagner’s admiration of Weber and the latter composer’s significant influence on him, Wagner disapproved of this new convention of foreshadowing scenes and thematic material from the operatic plot in the overture. In an essay disparaging the practice, he refers to the loosely connected themes of the program overture as a “theatrical desire to please” suggesting “cheap showmanship” and making a composer’s music “break up into pieces.” For Wagner, the chief function of an overture was “to use the proper and independent means of music” to “lead the central idea at the heart of the drama to a conclusion that would correspond, with a sense of presentiment, to the resolution of the action on stage.” Wagner does, however, make frequent concessions to the inclusion of important thematic material throughout his overtures.

The overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, composed in 1862, is an excellent example of this, with its traditional sonata form and fully developed themes. It is a somewhat odd curiosity, though, that Wagner chose to refer to the opening as a *Vorspiel*, or prelude, a designation usually reserved for his more revolutionary reforms, but this seemingly anachronistic usage has its own relevance to the plot: *Die Meistersinger* is, after all, about the reconciliation of old art with the new. It opens with the sturdy theme of the *Meistersinger* (master singers), followed by the theme representing Walther’s wooing of Eva. The first-scene motive of Eva and Walther’s mutual longing serves as a modulating bridge to the second theme, the second strain of Walther’s “prize song.” This theme merges into another drawn from Walther’s “trial song” in Act I and is extended by the “spring” motive. All three main themes are then combined in a masterly display of contrapuntal skill and brilliant orchestral technique, with the “brotherhood of art” theme leading to the “banner” motive alone and, finally, to a mighty climax on the master singers’ theme.

**Violin Concerto in E Minor
Opus 64 (1844)**

**Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)**

Felix Mendelssohn was a child of privilege. He was born into one of the most prominent families in Hamburg. The family later settled in Berlin, where the Mendelssohn home was a gathering place for the most-distinguished intellectuals and artists of the day. Young Felix was tutored

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at home by his parents in his early years and later by a group of notable specialists in philosophy, history, literature, painting, and music. He reaped the benefits of travels with his family, during which he had the opportunity to meet and perform for luminaries all over Europe. His most famous friendship was with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whom he visited on five different occasions. Mendelssohn’s first composition—a piano piece—was completed at age 11. In his early teens, he was composing concertos, large-scale choral works, and light operas. By the time he reached the ripe old age of 17, he was approaching his “maturity” as a composer. Those early works reflected the strong influence of Bach and Mozart, whose musical works provided the basis for Mendelssohn’s compositional studies.

Mendelssohn was blessed with the gift of a sunny nature; a keen mind; great perseverance; and a deep love of poetry, literature, nature, and the visual arts. His artistic spirit was abundantly nourished by this wealth of inspiring influences. Whereas we honor Felix Mendelssohn as one of our greatest composers, he was also highly renowned as a symphonic conductor. His activities in Leipzig as conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra from 1835 to 1840 are described in *Grove’s Dictionary of Music* as having been “regarded overwhelmingly as the most far-reaching achievement of his life.” He worked to improve the artistic level of the orchestra and to advance the social position of its members. One of Mendelssohn’s passions was his revival of many of the greatest works of Bach and Handel, bringing these masterpieces to the concert stage after they had lain in obscurity for nearly a century.

In June 1838, Mendelssohn wrote to his friend and concertmaster, the violinist Ferdinand David, “I should like to write a violin concerto for you this winter. The beginning of one in E minor runs constantly through my thoughts, giving me no peace.” David encouraged Mendelssohn to create a work that would fully expose his (David’s) virtuosic abilities. Mendelssohn was averse to the idea of creating a “showy” piece—an approach he detested in some earlier nineteenth-century violin concertos. Therefore, the completion of the violin concerto was delayed for six years, as Mendelssohn deliberated over the problem while fulfilling a host of other commitments. Throughout his work on the violin concerto, Mendelssohn consulted with David on matters of violin technique in order to create a solo part that “could be executed with the greatest of delicacy.”

Music annotator Louis Biancolli summarized the character of this work of Mendelssohn’s maturity, completed only two years before the composer’s death at the age of 38: “In classical poise, melodic suavity, and refined romantic feeling, it is an epitome of his style . . . Finesse, cultivated taste, and an unerring sense of the appropriate were among his chief attributes.”

**Symphony No. 6 in D Major
Opus 60, B. 112 (1880)**

**Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)**

Antonín Dvořák's last symphony—Symphony No. 9 (“From the New World”)—has been so captivating to audiences for more than a century that it has, quite unfairly, overshadowed his other fine symphonic achievements. Take, for instance, his wonderful Sixth Symphony, which most musicians and scholars would deem an even greater work than the “New World” but which is not performed nearly as frequently as it deserves. It has everything necessary to make it a symphonic favorite: compelling and dramatic first and last movements, a ravishingly gorgeous slow movement, and a lively dancing scherzo that is among Dvořák's most exhilarating expressions of his Czech heritage. Add to that a raft of superb melodies and orchestral scoring of remarkable beauty and subtlety. Perhaps the only thing the Sixth is missing is a catchy nickname!

Although he was nearing his 40th birthday, Dvořák was still not a household name in musical circles when he wrote this symphony, in 1880. Brahms had discovered him in the mid-1870s and was vigorously promoting his music with his publisher and others in the Viennese musical establishment. He was with Dvořák in November 1879 when the Vienna Philharmonic performed Dvořák's Third Slavonic Dance to enthusiastic acclaim. The conductor, Hans Richter, was so impressed that he asked Dvořák to write a new symphony for the Philharmonic's 1880–81 season, and, naturally, Dvořák was delighted to meet this request. In less than two months in the late summer and fall of 1880, he composed his Sixth and hurried to Vienna to show it to Brahms and Richter, who were both enthusiastic.

But after Dvořák was back in Prague, Richter began sending him apologetic letters, postponing the premiere of the Sixth over and over. His excuses (overwork and family illnesses) were to hide his embarrassment that the Philharmonic musicians—living up to their snooty reputation—had refused to play works by an “unknown” Czech composer two seasons in a row. (Bohemia was at the time a lowly backwater of the Austrian Empire.) Frustrated, Dvořák quickly made arrangements for the Sixth to be premiered in Prague on March 25, 1881. When the Viennese finally heard the Sixth, in 1883, Dvořák was no longer an unknown Czech musician. Performances of this work under Richter's baton in London and elsewhere in Europe had already cemented his international reputation.

Scholars find in Dvořák's Sixth hints of Brahms' Second Symphony (written just two years earlier), but it is actually quite original, as evidenced in the opening of its sonata-form first movement. Flutes and oboes shyly and gradually state its main theme, and the violins fill out its melodic shape. An energetic interlude is required to ultimately bring out this theme's proud character in the full orchestra. There follows a leisurely transition to the second theme, heard in blended cellos and horns. Then the solo oboe introduces a third theme, initially blithe and bucolic but then growing into an impressive orchestral statement.

The quiet passage in the middle development section, as the strings remain suspended above while the winds whisper the start of the first theme, is beautiful and mysterious. Finally Dvořák uses a dramatic ascending march in the strings to fashion an exciting return to D major and his opening music. And that powerful upward motion in the strings returns later in the movement's dazzling close.

In the arresting slow movement, the violins present one of Dvořák's loveliest melodies. This melody weaves through most of this long movement, appearing mostly in fragments in various instruments. A short dramatic outburst keeps the music from lulling the listener. In the closing coda, listen for the delicate impact of soft drumbeats.

The vivacious Scherzo, based on the Czech *furiant* dance, plays exciting rhythmic games of two versus three beats within its 3/4 time signature. Its joyous forward propulsion is interrupted for a short time by a gentle pastoral trio section led by high woodwinds. Dvořák never wrote a more infectious movement.

The finale begins with soft, scurrying music in the strings that—as in the first movement—takes a while to blossom; finally the full orchestra majestically proclaims it as the principal theme. And Dvořák has more captivating melodies ready, particularly a bouncy dancelike tune first heard in clarinet and violas that the development section transforms into a lively *fugato*. In the symphony's final moments, Dvořák brings together racing strings, a grandly stretched-out recapitulation of his theme, and a brass chorale to build a close of undeniable power.

Program notes compiled by Jeff Pelletier and Eva Langfeldt

Program booklet edited by Eva Langfeldt

**2012–2013 COMPETITION
FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS**

October 7, 2012: Recordings due
October 28, 2012: Competition

**NEXT CONCERT
MAY 12, 2012**

GUEST MAESTRO: LARA WEBBER



Beethoven: Symphony No. 1

De Falla: El Sombrero de Tres Picos
(The Three-Cornered Hat)

Franck: Symphony in D Minor

SOLOIST LAURA HAMILTON

Laura Hamilton is principal associate concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. During her more than twenty years with the Metropolitan in New York City, she has led hundreds of performances with many distinguished conductors. She has been concertmaster for live international video transmissions from the Met, including *Salome*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Nixon in China*; she has been leader in summer concerts in Central Park and Prospect Park and for scores of live radio broadcasts. Also with the Met, she has toured extensively within the United States



and in Europe and Asia and participated in multiple operatic and symphonic recordings with Deutsche Grammophon and Sony Classical.

Previously a member of the Chicago Symphony, Hamilton appeared with that orchestra as concerto soloist with Sir Georg Solti at the podium. She trained at the Moscow Conservatory of Music in the then Soviet Union with Oleh Krysa and with Raphael Bronstein and Burton Kaplan at the Manhattan School of Music, where she was the Nathan Milstein Scholarship recipient. In the field of chamber music, Hamilton has performed at the Marlboro, Tanglewood, Manchester, and Bard Music Festivals; in summer festivals in Norway and Greece; and in the Met chamber ensemble series at Carnegie Hall with James Levine and colleagues. Her solo recital debut was at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1981, where she returned in 2006 for a recital with pianist Warren Jones; she has maintained an active presence in that repertoire as her schedule allows. She has served as guest concertmaster for the Seattle Symphony, the American Symphony Orchestra, the Welsh National Opera, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the Adelaide Symphony in Australia. During summers, she has been concertmaster for the New Hampshire Music Festival, the Waterloo Festival, and the Berkshire Opera. She was featured in *Musical America* magazine as a Young Artist of 1986 and has received numerous awards and competition prizes.

A resident of Livermore during the 1970s, Hamilton graduated from Granada High School—as valedictorian. Her early training was with local teachers Marion Clark and Robert Jacobson, and Daniel Kobialka of the San Francisco Symphony. Hamilton was a winner of the LAS 1976–1977 Competition for Young Musicians. She also performed with LAS in 1983, when she returned to play the Tchaikovsky violin concerto.

Hamilton's violin was made in 1732 by Carlo Tononi of Venice, Italy. She makes her home in New Jersey with her husband, cellist Lanny Paykin, and their three daughters.

DEDICATION ARNOLD AND MARION CLARK

Arnold and Marion Clark were charter members of the Livermore-Amador Symphony, and the first auditions for players were held at the Clarks' house! They did volunteer work for LAS in addition to playing in the orchestra for more than forty seasons (primarily violin and viola, and Arnold also played cello). In 2002, they were named MVPs (Most Valuable Players) by the Association of California Symphony Orchestras. For many, very effective, years, they hosted chamber music ensembles weekly in their home and aided and coached young string players almost daily in the Livermore schools.



Marion and Arnold Clark had a deep love of music, and they made a difference within their home community of Livermore in the education of youth and the quality of life for adults.

Arnold Clark died in November 2009, and Marion Clark, his spouse of fifty years, died in January 2011. Their positive influence—as musicians and role models—continues. This concert is dedicated to them.

For more information, see livamsymph.org/clarks

GRANTS and MATCHING GIFTS

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