

Livermore-Amador Symphony

Lara Webber, Music Director & Conductor
Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director Emeritus
Saturday, February 18, 2017, 8 p.m.
Bankhead Theater, Livermore



Inspirational Journeys

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Lara Webber

blue cathedral

Jennifer Higdon
(b. 1962)

Violin Concerto in D Minor
Opus 47—1st movement

Jean Sibelius
(1865–1957)

Felix Yu-Shuan Shen, soloist

————— **INTERMISSION** —————

with entertainment in the lobby by Element 116

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major
Opus 15—1st movement

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

Sehyun (Eunice) Lee, soloist

Symphonic Dances
Opus 64

Edvard Grieg
(1843–1907)

- Dance No. 1 G Major Allegro moderato e marcato
- Dance No. 2 A Major Allegretto grazioso
- Dance No. 3 D Major Allegro giocoso
- Dance No. 4 A Minor Andante - Allegro risoluto

*The audience and performers are invited
to enjoy cookies, cider, coffee, and sparkling wine in the lobby after the concert
at a reception hosted by the Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild.*

Orchestra

Conductor

Lara Webber

First Violin

Kristina Anderson

Concertmaster

Juliana Zolynas

Assistant

Concertmaster

Norman Back

Feliza Bourguet

JoAnn Cox

Judy Eckart

Susan Ivie

Jackie Maruskin

Jutta Massoud

Doug Morrison

Marianne Walck

Anthony Westrope*

Second Violin

Ursula Goldstein

Principal

Anne Anaya

Gale Anderson

Mary Burchett

Lisa Burkhart

Jeana Ernst

Jeannie Guzik

Denise Leddon

Jacqueline McBride

Beth Wilson

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Nick James

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Alan Frank

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Nan Davies

Beth Wilson

Piccolo

Nan Davies

Oboe

Elizabeth Henderson

Principal

Jeanne Brown

English Horn

Jeanne Brown

E-flat Clarinet

Kathy Boster

B-flat Clarinet

Lesley Watson

Principal

Kathy Boster

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April Nissen

Percussion

April Nissen

Principal

Tom Dreiman

Divesh Karamchandani

John Lonergan

Piano

Todd Evans

Celesta

Todd Evans

Harp**

Anna Lorenz

Librarians

Audrey Horning

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Anne Les

* High school student

** The Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild is underwriting the cost of providing a harp player at LAS concerts during the 2016–2017 season.

Program Notes

blue cathedral

Jennifer Higdon

(b. 1962)

Blue...like the sky. Where all possibilities soar. Cathedrals...a place of thought, growth, spiritual expression...serving as a symbolic doorway into and out of this world. Blue represents all potential and the progression of journeys. Cathedrals represent a place of beginnings, endings, solitude, fellowship, contemplation, knowledge and growth. As I was writing this piece, I found myself imagining a journey through a glass cathedral in the sky. Because the walls would be transparent, I saw the image of clouds and blueness permeating from the outside of this church. In my mind's eye the listener would enter from the back of the sanctuary, floating along the corridor amongst giant crystal pillars, moving in a contemplative stance. The stained glass windows' figures would start moving with song, singing a heavenly music. The listener would float down the aisle, slowly moving upward at first and then progressing at a quicker pace, rising towards an immense ceiling which would open to the sky...as this journey progressed, the speed of the traveler would increase, rushing forward and upward. I wanted to create the sensation of contemplation and quiet peace at the beginning, moving towards the feeling of celebration and ecstatic expansion of the soul, all the while singing along with that heavenly music.

These were my thoughts when the Curtis Institute of Music commissioned me to write a work to commemorate its 75th anniversary. Curtis is a house of knowledge—a place to reach towards that beautiful expression of the soul which comes through music. I began writing this piece at a unique juncture in my life and found myself pondering the question of what makes a life. The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make in our lives, crossing paths with so many individuals singularly and collectively, learning and growing each step of the way. This piece represents the expression of the individual and the group...our inner travels and the places our souls carry us, the lessons we learn, and the growth we experience. In tribute to my brother, I feature solos for the clarinet (the instrument he played) and the flute (the instrument I play). Because I am the older sibling, it is the flute that appears first in this dialogue. At the end of the work, the two instruments continue their dialogue, but it is the flute that drops out and the clarinet that continues on in the upward progressing journey.

This is a story that commemorates living and passing through places of knowledge and of sharing and of that song called life.

This work was commissioned and premiered in 2000 by the Curtis Institute of Music.

Jennifer Higdon

Violin Concerto in D Minor

Opus 47 — 1st movement

Jean Sibelius

(1865–1957)

Jean Sibelius perhaps conceived his violin concerto as a gift to his younger self, who had been so wrought with disappointment. As a teen, he had dreamed of being a violin virtuoso and had practiced diligently toward that lofty goal. Sadly, he got a late start in his studies on the instrument, and although he was accomplished, he just didn't possess the technical dexterity or intestinal fortitude required of a master violinist. He was crushed upon his reluctant admission that it was not meant to be:

My tragedy was that I wanted to be a celebrated violinist at any price. From the age of fifteen, I played my violin for ten years, practicing from morning to night. I hated pen and ink and, unfortunately, preferred an elegant violin bow. My preference for the violin lasted quite long, and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent performer too late.

Most of his main works were written for orchestra. Sibelius wrote only one concerto, and that was for the instrument he loved so dearly.

The violin concerto's composition and premiere took a turbulent path filled with delays and disasters. Sibelius originally had planned to dedicate the work to the esteemed German violinist Willy Burmester, who had agreed to premiere it in Berlin. Sibelius then decided he wanted the premiere to be in Helsinki, as he was Finland's preeminent nationalist composer and it was more financially beneficial for him. Interestingly, Sibelius chose to schedule the premiere when Burmester was unavailable: November 1904, with Sibelius conducting and a new soloist, Victor Nováček. The premiere was nothing short of a disaster, with a trifecta of issues: an inexperienced soloist, his inability to prepare properly because the concerto was not finished in a timely manner, and the resultant work's being one of the most virtuosic concertos ever written. The failed outcome is not surprising. Sibelius withdrew the work and spent the next year revising it, with the new version premiered in Berlin in October 1905 (again when Burmester was unavailable). Sibelius asked Karel Halíř to be the soloist for the revamped concerto, with Richard Strauss as the conductor. Burmester was so incensed that he vowed to never play the concerto, making him no longer a suitable candidate for the work's dedication. (Sibelius settled on a dedication of his new work to young prodigy Franz von Vecsey, age 12.)

Sibelius does not rely on the traditional orchestra and soloist prototypes in this concerto. There is hardly any musical conversation between the two forces, unlike in most Romantic works for violin and orchestra. The orchestra and soloist rarely share melodic material, and although there are some splendid moments for the orchestra, one never forgets that this work is first and foremost a vehicle for the violin soloist. Sibelius' biographer Erik Tawaststjerna wrote, "The Concerto is distinctly Nordic in its overwhelming sense of nostalgia. The orchestra does not wallow in rich colors, but in the sonorous half lights of autumn and winter; only on rare occasions does the horizon brighten and glow."

Sibelius uses a modification of the traditional sonata form in the first movement,

presented tonight. He dispenses with the long orchestral introduction and instead has the violin enter almost immediately with the first theme. The exposition contains three main themes instead of the standard two, and where the development section should be, Sibelius instead inserts a virtuosic cadenza based on the haunting opening theme. This is followed by a recapitulation that does anything but merely repeat the exposition—it continues to develop and expand the themes, making them much different than their initial statements. The recapitulation leads into the fiery ending coda.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major

Opus 15—1st movement

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Beethoven wrote his piano concerto in C major during 1796 and 1797, soon after he had taken up permanent residence in Vienna. At the time, he was already recognized as one of the greatest pianists in Vienna and was seeking to advance his reputation by touring throughout Europe. The concerto was one of several works he wrote for himself, and he gave the first performance in Prague in 1798. It was the first of his piano concerti to be published but the third one he wrote. He had composed a concerto in E-flat major at the age of 13, of which only the piano part has survived, and had completed a version of his second concerto in B-flat major as early as 1785. The C major concerto, while showing a distinct influence of Mozart and Haydn, particularly in terms of form and instrumentation, contains strikingly original touches of color and drama, such as emphasized notes played off the beat and unusual shifts of key, which give it a character very typical of Beethoven.

Beethoven, who was highly self-critical, believed that neither the first nor second piano concerto was among his best compositions. Compared to his other works of the same period, such as the six string quartets and the first symphony, it has attracted little attention from the critics. Nevertheless, the work is one of great poise, elegance, and subtlety and stands high in the canon of his achievement. It represents an important landmark in his development as a composer. It was his longest and grandest work written for orchestra before the first symphony, and in it he explores some new and brilliant orchestral effects, particularly in the string parts. Compared to contemporary concertos, it is a long work (depending on the cadenza, it can take 40 minutes).

The first movement, which we hear tonight, is in sonata form and opens with a simple march-like theme that starts tentatively but gradually gains strength and confidence. The contrasting second theme, introduced by an inner voice in the second violins, is much more lyrical and is based on a beautiful flowing melody. The exposition ends with another march-like section, returning to the opening idea with great confidence and grandeur. The entry of the piano is a masterpiece of understatement. The soloist plays a new idea, quietly and unassumingly. This new idea is elaborated briefly before the orchestra rudely interrupts with the opening theme, and the repeat of the exposition proceeds with the soloist in virtuosic dialogue with the orchestra. The short development section contains a wonderfully

mysterious series of pianissimo descending scales played by the soloist. Both the repeat of the exposition and the recapitulation contain many other highly effective developmental ideas, extending the length of the movement and foreshadowing the techniques of Beethoven's later works. Beethoven wrote out three possible cadenzas, of differing length and difficulty, for the movement.

Symphonic Dances

Opus 64

Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

Edvard Grieg is probably the most famous Norwegian composer, although for most audiences, his fame rests on only a few works: his spectacular Piano Concerto in A Minor (which LAS will play in May), the concert suites drawn from the incidental music he wrote for Ibsen's drama *Peer Gynt*, and his *Norwegian Dances*. Although he produced a large number of piano and chamber works, there are few purely orchestral examples. He never wrote any orchestral work on a truly symphonic scale: He later withdrew his only symphony, an immature youthful effort. His finest and most beautiful works are generally considered to be his songs.

Grieg came from a musically oriented family, although none were primarily professional musicians. His mother was an accomplished pianist who was in great demand to give concerts in their native city, Bergen, but she did not tour professionally. His father was the British consul in Bergen and a fine amateur musician. Young Edvard was eased gradually into music, neither forced by exploitative parents nor hindered in his desires. He left Norway to study at Leipzig Conservatory, mainly as a pianist.

As a composer, he first admired Mozart but later fell in love with the German Romantic style of Robert Schumann, and this is reflected in his earliest compositions. However, at age 22, he was introduced to the Norwegian folk idiom by Rikard Nordraak, who hoped to found a Norwegian nationalist school of music. Although Nordraak himself never made any mark as a composer, he profoundly influenced his friend's musical orientation. From that point forward, Grieg drew heavily on Norwegian folk music for inspiration and musical materials.

The *Symphonic Dances*—nearly his last orchestral work and probably his orchestral masterpiece—are unjustifiably neglected in the repertory. The melodic materials are drawn mostly from Norwegian folk dances and peasant songs, but they are cast in a highly Romantic, German symphonic style. Most of Grieg's trademarks are evident: simple materials, made meaningful by their coloristic treatment. For example, the opening oboe melody of the slow movement is stated above a single, static unchanging chord until the very last measure. It doesn't matter—the beautiful simplicity, combined with the subtle shadings of the orchestral background, leave the audience with a feeling of lyric respite from the tensions of life.

Although the general feeling of the work is pastoral, it still has its dramatic moments for contrast. The frenzied, whirling final dance gradually builds tension and intensity. Grieg's frequent use of simple melodies (and simple settings for them) emphasizes solo playing, especially by the woodwinds. However, he gives

all the sections of the orchestra their opportunity to shine, and these dances are a perfect showpiece of his orchestral achievement.

*program notes compiled by Kathy Boster from Internet sources
edited by Eva Langfeldt*

Composer of ‘blue cathedral’—Jennifer Higdon

Jennifer Higdon is a major figure in contemporary classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto* and a 2010 Grammy for her *Percussion Concerto*.

Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and “blue cathedral” is one of America’s most performed contemporary orchestral works, with more than 600 performances worldwide since its premiere, in 2000. Her works have been recorded on nearly 50 CDs.

Higdon’s most current project was an opera based on the best-selling novel *Cold Mountain*, by Charles Frazier. It was co-commissioned by Santa Fe Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and Minnesota Opera in collaboration with North Carolina Opera. Higdon recently won the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere.



photo: J. Henry Fair

She holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in Composition Studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

Winners of the 2016–2017 Competition for Young Musicians

Felix Yu-Shuan Shen—Violin

Felix Yu-Shuan Shen, age 14, was born in New York and grew up in Taiwan. He began his violin study at age 5 under Yi-Tang Chang and Sheng Huang Tu. In 2014, his family moved to Dublin, California, and he started studying with Kai-Li Cheng. This was followed by a year of self-teaching. Recently, Felix began studying with Imant Airea.

Felix has won a number of competition prizes. He was first-prize winner of the Old Hsinchu City Music Competition (2010), the Seidof International Music Competition (2011), the Taipei Capital City International Music Competition (2012), the National Musical Competition of Baroque (2012), and the Student Music Compe-

tition Hsinchu City (2013). He was top prize winner of the International Violin and Piano Competition of Vienna (2013), the National Student Music Competition of Taiwan (2014), and the United States Open Music Competition (2015).



Felix's first concert solo was performed just months after he began his violin study. From 2007 to 2010, he was a concert soloist at government events in Taiwan. In 2012 and 2014 he was appointed concert soloist for NEHS (National Experimental High School), and from 2012 to 2014 he was concert soloist for the Zhubei Philharmonic Institute. Since 2014, he has participated in recitals for MTAC (Music Teachers' Association of California) and Jou Music Institute. His orchestral experience includes the string orchestra of NEHS; other school orchestras; and Orchestra Gradus ad Parnassum, where he is concertmaster.

A freshman at Dublin High School, Felix is the son of Yu-Min Shen and Chen-Yu Wang. He is a skilled Rubik's Cube solver, has collected many varieties, and has developed procedures for quick solutions. He has a great interest in math, loves computer science, and has written his own games. Felix is also an active member of his school's robotics team and Gavel Club. Currently studying French, he is fluent in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English. Felix looks forward to a career as both a violinist and an engineer.

Sehyun (Eunice) Lee—Piano

Sehyun (Eunice) Lee has studied piano for more than eight years and is currently under the tutelage of Mihee Lee. In 2015, she was selected as a winner of the Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra's annual concerto competition and performed as a soloist with the orchestra. She has received awards multiple times at the U.S. Open Music Competition in both solo and duet categories. In 2016, she received the recognition of "California Arts Scholar" for her completion of the music program for piano performance at the California Institute of the Arts. She also received honorable mention for piano performance from the San Ramon Valley Student Recognition Project in 2016.



In addition to piano, Eunice enjoys playing the violin. She began playing in orchestras at the age of 7 and eventually served as co-concertmaster of the Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra. She particularly likes chamber music. In 2015, she was invited to play in the Menuhin Chamber Music Seminar at San Francisco State. She also likes to read and write. In 2014, she was selected to participate in

the creative writing program at the California State Summer School for the Arts. A senior at Dougherty Valley High School, 17-year-old Eunice, daughter of Ho-Jeong Kim and Jong-Pil Lee, is known as an ardent animal-lover, an outspoken supporter of minority rights, and an avid food enthusiast. She loves long walks, horror films, and exploring the city with her friends. In college, she plans to continue pursuing her passions in writing, music, and political science. Eunice says that she hopes to experience life in the most fulfilling way she can.

Element 116

Element 116 is a band composed of mainly middle school students from several Livermore-area schools. Under the lead of director Matt Finders, a renowned jazz musician and composer who grew up in Livermore, the band plays a mix of jazz, Latin, rock, and swing. The band is named after Livermore's own chemical element, Livermorium.

Competition for Young Musicians, 2017–2018

The 45th Competition for Young Musicians of the Livermore-Amador Symphony Association will take place in October. The winners will perform as soloists with the Symphony on February 24, 2018, and will receive a cash award.

The annual competition is open to instrumentalists and vocalists who reside or attend school in Livermore, Pleasanton, Sunol, Dublin, or San Ramon. Students are eligible through grade 12. If not enrolled in high school, the maximum age is 17.

See livermoreamadorsymphony.org/competition for more information. If you have any questions, you may phone the competition coordinator, JoAnn Cox, at 925.447.1947.

Youth Orchestra

LASYO is the Livermore-Amador Symphony Youth Orchestra, a summer orchestra established by the Symphony Association. It is open to musicians ages 11 (or in 6th grade) through 21.

For 2017, LASYO offers a four-week session with rehearsals Tuesday and Thursday evenings for three hours each with both conductors, Göran Berg and Don Adkins, culminating in a public concert at the end of the session on July 22 at the First Presbyterian Church in Livermore.

Repertoire this year will include Arensky's *Variations on a Theme by Tchaikovsky* plus pieces by Beethoven, Prokofiev, Piazzolla, and Shostakovich.

See livermoreamadorsymphony.org/lasyo for more information and a link to the registration form. Registration forms for summer 2017 are due by May 15.

Betsy Hausburg — vdt.director@gmail.com — is the program coordinator.

We Invite You to Join the A.P. Barnes Society

Members of the A.P. Barnes Society are dedicated supporters of the Livermore-Amador Symphony who have included the symphony in their estate plans. You can help us to:

- Sustain the artistic growth of the symphony
- Provide access and enrichment to young people
- Strengthen the financial foundation of our symphony

For more information, contact APBarnesSociety@livermoreamadorsymphony.org.

If you have already included LAS in your estate plans, we would love to hear from you. All information is confidential.

Estate Sales That Benefit the Symphony

Symphony Guild volunteers have years of experience managing estate sales. We meet in your home to evaluate items and offer advice. We prepare a contract. Once the contract is signed and a sale date set, we sort, price, and market your items, from knickknacks to furniture to cars; we have pricing expertise in many areas. Your sale items may be tax deductible because the Livermore-Amador Symphony Association is a nonprofit organization.

We are aware that this may be a sensitive time for you and your family. Our intent is to make the sale preparation and follow-up as well as the sale itself go smoothly and successfully. While running your sale, we keep the security of your home and goods in mind.

Call Nancy McKenzie, 925.294.8657; Marie Ruzicka, 925.447.5521; or Adela Cook, 925.216.7280. All proceeds go to the Livermore-Amador Symphony.

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The Livermore-Amador Symphony Association gratefully acknowledges funding support from:

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Next Concert: Transfigurations—April 8, 2017

Schubert: *Rosamunde* Overture

Strauss: *Death and Transfiguration*

Wagner: *Lohengrin* Prelude to Act I

Tchaikovsky: *Swan Lake* Suite

Matilda Hofman, guest conductor

Join the symphony and guest conductor Matilda Hofman for an evening of magic and transformation on Saturday April 8. Wagner's ethereal prelude to *Lohengrin* and Tchaikovsky's hauntingly beautiful *Swan Lake* are connected by themes of sorcery, redemption, forbidden questions, and swan transformations. The *Rosamunde* overture is quintessential Schubert and involves the transformation of a poor shepherdess into a queen. Strauss's early tone poem *Death and Transfiguration* is preoccupied with late Romantic obsessions of the individual who, struggling with the world, is finally redeemed.

Music director of the Diablo Symphony, Matilda Hofman has a busy schedule in California and abroad. She works regularly with Empyrean Ensemble, the Early Music Ensemble at Davis, and the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. She studied at Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Eastman School of Music and was a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and school.



Livermore-Amador Symphony is a member of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council and a resident company of the Bankhead Theater.



See the Cultural Arts Calendar at www.independentnews.com.



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www.livermoreamadorsymphony.org

