



NOTES ON THE MUSIC

symphony no. 3

Walter Piston was a member of the first group of American composers to make an international name for themselves and to develop a uniquely "American" style of art music. Born in 1894, he was in the same generation as other talented American composers like Roy Harris, Howard Hanson, Virgil Thomson, George Gershwin, and Aaron Copland. Unlike Gershwin and Copland,



who consciously sought to incorporate elements of the American vernacular—especially jazz—into their music, Piston took a more academic approach. "If . . . composers will increasingly strive to perfect themselves in the art of music . . ." he said, "the matter of a national school will take care of itself . . . the composer cannot afford the wild-goose chase of trying to be more American than he is." To "perfect himself in the art of music," Piston concentrated on traditional forms and was well trained in the traditional classical European teachings of counterpoint and harmony (indeed, his books *Counterpoint* and *Harmony* have become standard pedagogical resources in America). But his music nonetheless has a distinctly individual and American voice.

The 3rd symphony is dedicated to the memory of Natalie Koussevitzky and was completed in 1947 on a commission from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation. It has 4 movements, in the general framework of slow, fast, slow, fast. The music has a very classical and traditional key scheme, structure, and developmental method. But the harmony and instrumentation are fresh, and there is a wide range of expressive material, from the somber seriousness of the first movement to the wild second movement, to the joyful, perhaps even frivolous Final.

It is particularly appropriate for the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra to perform the works of Piston, as he was closely associated with Harvard throughout his life. He attended Harvard as an undergraduate, joined the faculty in 1926, and became a full professor in 1944, remaining at Harvard for many years. While on the faculty his students included such talented and influential composers as Elliot Carter and Leonard Bernstein. As composer, writer, and teacher, Walter Piston's effect on 20th century music has been profound.

Jonathan Russell

Strauss
Sibelius
Piston



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NOTES ON THE MUSIC

violin concerto

At the age of fifteen, Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) began to study the violin, and it soon became his obsession: "The violin," he wrote, "took me by storm and for the next ten years it was my dearest wish, my greatest ambition, to become a great virtuoso." This dream would never be fulfilled; he eventually realized that he had begun his studies too late to become a concert violinist. Nevertheless the violin continued to play an important role in Sibelius's life, and thus it is not surprising that the only concerto he ever wrote was for the violin.

Written in 1902-1903, this concerto was intended for the famous German violinist Willy Burmester. However, financial troubles compelled Sibelius to give the work an early premiere (February 1904) in Helsinki, with Viktor Novacek, a teacher at the Helsinki Musical Academy, playing the violin solo. The premiere was not well-received. Novacek was not a skilled enough musician meet the technical demands of this difficult work, and the work itself was severely criticized. Sibelius made many revisions, and the new version had its premiere in Berlin in October 1905, with soloist Karl Halir, and conducted by Richard Strauss. While this version was better received, it was not until the 1930's that Sibelius's concerto became as widely popular as it remains today.

The concerto's style is best described as Romantic and rhapsodic. The first movement opens with an elegiac soliloquy for the violin, accompanied by hushed orchestral violins. Although this movement is framed in the traditional sonata form, its constant shifts in tempo and mood, and the extended cadenza which replaces its "development" section, are far from conventional. This movement makes up more

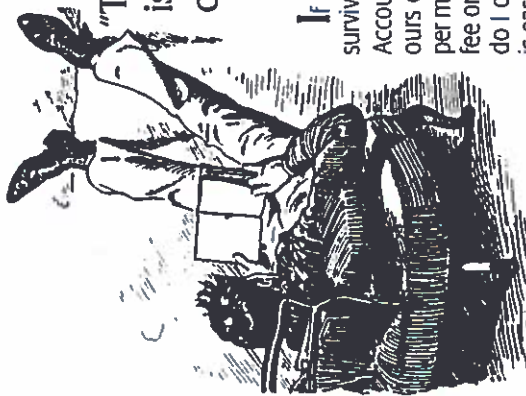
than half of the concerto, and sets the tone of the work: the violin's virtuosic and lyrical lines are set against a darkly scored orchestra, creating a feeling of man struggling against nature, a characteristically "Nordic" tone which surfaces in many of Sibelius's works. The second movement is warmer, with soloist and orchestra unified in the presentation of a meditative theme. The finale, described as a "danse macabre" by the composer, is a fantastic display of the soloist's virtuosic abilities. According to Sibelius, it is to be played "with absolute mastery. Fast, of course, but no faster than it can be played perfectly *von oben*." This concerto requires vast technical and interpretive ability from its performer. In a way, one must view it as a piece written not just for Burmester or any other maestro, but for the great violinist that Sibelius could never be. Even late in his life, he lamented the fact that he did not pursue a career as a solo violinist. A diary entry from 1915 reads: "Dreamed I was twelve years old and a virtuoso." A good performer of this concerto will invest the work with as much love and brilliance as Sibelius dreamed for himself.

Jenny Little

"The one real object of education
is to have a man in the condition
of continually asking questions."

- Bishop Mandell Creighton

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NOTES ON THE MUSIC don juan

Anyone who has heard the introduction to *Also Sprach Zarathustra*—made famous by Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: Space Odyssey* before becoming a staple of popular culture—has experienced the work of Richard Strauss. One of Germany's most versatile modern composers, Richard Strauss (who bears no relation whatsoever to Johann, "The Waltz King") was the son of a famous German horn player. It's not surprising, then, that he started musical training at the age of four and had become a successful conductor by the age of twenty-one.



For the rest of his life, Strauss coupled his conducting skills with composing. Many of his early compositions (1880-87) show strong classical and romantic influences. *Don Juan* (1888) is from the middle period (1887-1904), during which he achieved and perfected his characteristic style of orchestration through the composition of numerous "symphonic poems." Such works were self-contained explorations of musical expression, and led to innovations in harmony and instrumentation. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*) are other well-known pieces from this period. Strauss's late compositions (1904-39) consist of his operas, many of which are still very popular. The operas *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* are considered to be some of the most important works of this century.

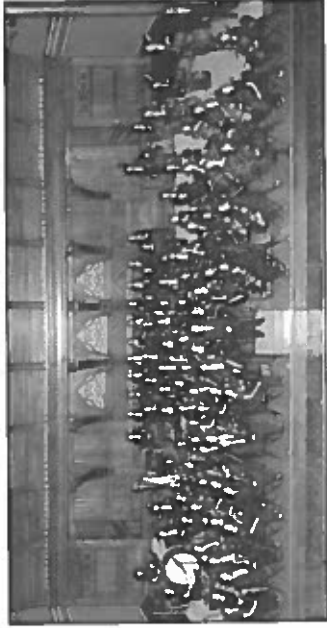
As is evident in the titles of his works, Strauss often found inspiration for his works in legends, myths, and literature. *Elektra* and

Ariadne auf Naxos both stemmed from Greek tales. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* incorporates the writings of German philosopher Nietzsche, while another symphonic poem entitled *Machbeth* has obvious ties to a certain English playwright. The origin of tonight's piece, *Don Juan*, is a hispanic legend about an unrepentant lover. The protagonist, a promiscuous troublemaker, seduces the daughter of Seville's military commander. In the ensuing duel, Don Juan kills the commander, then cynically invites the victim's funerary statue to feast with him. The statue comes to life and drags the defiant Don Juan down to hell.

Many theatrical and musical interpretations of this tale have been made. One of the most famous is *Don Giovanni*, the opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Both Mozart's opera and Strauss's symphonic poem portray the Don in a more positive light than the original legend, suggesting that perhaps Don Juan's obsessive search for the ideal woman led to his self-destruction.

Strauss's own life cannot be said to have been without controversy. He was a great admirer of Richard Wagner (a known anti-Semite) and was appointed an honorary head of the music bureau during the reign of the Third Reich. But regardless of his political ties, few can deny that his compositions, filled with excitement and musical brilliance, have been among the most important of his time.

Kit Lo



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— 191st Season, 1998-1999 —

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GUEST ARTIST

Christina B. Castelli '00 just couldn't wait to start playing the violin. At the age of three, her older sister had begun taking violin lessons, but Castelli was not content to sit and watch. "When she was practicing, I would sort of snatch the violin out of her hands," says Castelli. Since then, she has gone on to win numerous national and international competitions on both the violin and viola. Harvard audiences will hear her for the first time on March 5, when she will perform the Sibelius Violin Concerto as the winner of this year's HRO Concerto Competition . . .



International Viola Competition and received the top violin prize at the 1998 Irving M. Klein International String Competition. Her other honors include first prize in the 1998 Sphinx National Competition in violin and the 1998 ASTA National Competition in viola. Castelli was also selected as a 1996 Presidential Scholar in the Arts, which led to a performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for

the Performing Arts.

Castelli, a Dunster House resident and Chemistry concentrator, spent her first two years of college at Oberlin College, pursuing four programs of study: Biochemistry and Chemistry at the College, and Violin and Viola performance at the Conservatory . . .

Although Castelli plans on pursuing a solo career upon graduation, she says a future in medicine is a possibility as well . . . But for the immediate future, Castelli will try out life as a musician . . .

A native of Chicago, Castelli had her first solo performance with orchestra at the age of five . . . Her first major performance was when she was 13, with the Fox River Valley Symphony in Illinois. Since then, she has gone on to solo with such orchestras as the National Symphony Orchestra and the Ann Arbor Symphony, and has given recitals throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada, Europe, and Puerto Rico. She was the 1997 Grand Prize winner of the William Primrose

Castelli believes that her success in competitions, in part, comes from her lack of nerves on stage. "I just don't get nervous. To tell you the truth, I get shaky when a test is passed out in class. So I know what nervousness is like, but I don't get it when I play," she says . . .

As for the music world, Castelli believes it takes more than just good playing to succeed. "You have to be a good manager and a good politician as well. And you aren't trained in that. A lot of it is keeping a positive attitude, and trying to ensure that you will have a career later on," she says.

Castelli carries the same attitude going into a concert. "I just want to go out and enjoy myself," she remarks. No doubt, her performance with the HRO promises to be an exciting one. Of the Sibelius Concerto, she says, "I think it's one of the most fun and fantastic pieces I've played in my life."

from an article by Hoon-Jung Kim





DR. JAMES YANNATOS

conductor/composer

James Yannatos was born and educated in New York City. After attending the High School of Music and Art and the Manhattan School of Music, he pursued composition studies with Nadia Boulanger, Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud, and Paul Hindemith, as well as conducting studies with William Steinberg and Leonard Bernstein which took Yannatos to Yale University (B.M., M.M.), the University of Iowa (Ph.D.), Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals, and Paris.



His most ambitious work, *Trinity Mass* (for soloists, choir and orchestra), was premiered in Boston and New York in 1986 (Jason Robards, narrator) and was aired on National Public Radio. The work will soon be released on Compact Disc.

He has been the consultant and conductor for major orchestras in Bangkok, Thailand and a guest composer and conductor in international festivals in Leningrad. His Symphony No. 3 "Prisms" for strings was premiered in the USSR by the Lithuanian State Orchestra in 1989.

Dr. Yannatos has published four volumes of "Silly and Serious Songs" based on the words of children. He has also written music for television including Nova's "City of Coral" and Metromedia's "Assassins Among Us". He has received innumerable awards as a composer, including the Artists Foundation Award of 1988 for his *Trinity Mass*.

Dr. Yannatos has received numerous commissions for orchestral, vocal, and instrumental works which include *Cycles* (recorded by Collage), *An Overture for the Uncommon Man* (Phi Beta Kappa), *Sounds of Desolation and Joy* (Lucy Shelton), and the *Concerto for Bass and Orchestra* (Alea III and Edward Barker, principal bassist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra).

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191st Season, 1998-1999

JAMES YANNATOS, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

Pre-Concert Lecture, 7:00 P.M.
Professor Mark Devoto & Professor Emeritus Eliot Forbes

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Don Juan

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

Violin Concerto
Christina Castelli, violin

Walter Piston
(1894-1976)

Symphony No. 3
I. Andantino
II. Allegro
III. Adagio
IV. Allegro

HISTORY OF THE HRO



The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra traces its history back to the night of March 6, 1808, when six Harvard men first formed the Pierian Sodality, an organization dedicated to the consumption of brandy and cigars as well as the serenading of young ladies. Its midnight expeditions "were not confined to Cambridge, but extended to Watertown, Brookline, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Boston, etc....wherever, in short, dwelt celebrated belles." The June 29, 1840 entry in the Sodality's record book reads:

It came to pass in the reign of Simon the King, that the Pierians did meet in the tabernacle. And lo! a voice was heard saying, Let us go serenading—and they lifted up their voice as one man and they said, Let us go. And behold we went to the city of the Philistines, and did serenade their daughters, and came home about the third hour. And the fame of the Pierians did wax exceedingly great, and did reach all the places round about Cambridge.

The early Pierians had so much spirit that in the 1830s the Faculty of Harvard College publicly admonished the Sodality "for absenting themselves from Cambridge for a whole night, serenading." Administration censure was so great, in fact, that in 1832 the Pierian Sodality was reduced to one man: Henry Gassett '34. According to *Time* magazine (March 29, 1943), "He held meetings with himself in his chair, paid himself dues regularly, played his flute in solitude....and finally persuaded another flautist to join in duets. Gradually they elected other members. The Sodality played on."

The Sodality not only played on, but profoundly influenced the development of music in Cambridge and Boston over the next fifty years. The Harvard Glee Club and the Boston Symphony, for instance, both owe their existence to the early Pierians.

By the turn of the century, the Pierian Sodality could at last justly refer to itself as the Harvard University Orchestra. It had grown into a more serious musical organization and had become the largest college orchestra in America. Soon it deemed itself ready for its first

out-of-state tour, the Centennial Tour of 1908, which took the orchestra through New York state, and which was so successful that other tours quickly followed. The orchestra gradually built an international reputation and played for many distinguished audiences in this country.

It was not until November of 1936 that members of the Pierian Sodality finally descended to assist the Radcliffe Orchestra in some of its larger concerts. Joint concerts became more frequent in the late Thirties and in 1942 the Pierian suggested that the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra be formed. Since during the war years the Sodality's membership was depleted, and since the Radcliffe Orchestra lacked certain instruments, both groups benefited from the merger.

It is said that around 1950 the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra stopped making history and started making music with a degree of seriousness never before seen at the University. The orchestra continued to improve in quality and reputation as it took tours to Mexico (1962), Washington, D.C. (1966), and Canada (1972). In 1978, the HRO placed third in the Fifth Annual International Festival of Student Orchestras. The '80s saw tours of the Soviet Union (1984) and Asia (1985 and 1988). In 1992, the HRO continued its tradition of cultural exchange on its European Tour, and in 1996 the HRO went on a two week tour of Italy.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the David Chang Memorial Fund. This fund was established in 1991 by the Chang Family to support the rental and purchase of music. The David Chang Memorial Fund c/o Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, Music Building, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138