

The Pierian Foundation and  
the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

James Yannatos, director



June 5, 2002

4:00 pm

Lowell Lecture Hall

## WHAT IS THE PIERIAN FOUNDATION ANYWAY?

The original members of the present-day Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra were a loose organization of Harvard musicians who called themselves the Pierian Sodality and who first assembled in 1808 to serenade young ladies in nearby towns like Brookline and Watertown. This was long before there was a Radcliffe College, or they would not have had to go so far afield to find eligible damsels.

The word Pierian comes from the place-name, Pieria (accent on the second syllable), a province in Northern Greece, where the Muses were reputed to hang out. The Muses were, of course, the nine divine ladies believed to inspire those devoted to the arts – especially poetry and music, which derives its name from them. Imbibing the waters from a certain spring or fountain somewhere in Pieria was believed to be inspirational for the artistically creative; hence, the frequent references to it in English verse and song. The poet Michael Drayton, for example, referred to Ben Jonson, as one “who had drunk deep of the Pierian spring.” Later, however, Alexander Pope, in “An Essay on Criticism” cautioned:

“A little learning is a dang’rous thing;  
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring.”

The word Sodality is also somewhat obscure: it comes from the Latin word for companion. So, a sodality is a group of friendly associates – in this case of musical revelers, it would seem. Eventually, the Pierian Sodality turned into a full fledged orchestra, the Harvard University Orchestra, as it was called at the turn of the century, now known as the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra.

The word Pierian, however, has been retained by a small group of enthusiastic supporters of the orchestra who dropped the word sodality a few years ago in favor of the more modern term “foundation.” The Pierian Foundation is made up of music-lovers connected in one way or another with Harvard (many are alums of the HRO) who get together several times a year, usually before HRO concerts, and who enjoy meeting and supporting current orchestral members. Neither the Pierian Foundation nor the HRO do any serenading any more, but, mindful of the distinguished and uniquely ancient history of this group, both organizations look forward to celebrating their 200th birthday in 2008.

## SUPPORT THE ORCHESTRA

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the HRO through the Harvard Pierian Foundation, a non-profit 501c3 organization whose sole mission is to advise and support the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. Please include your name as you would like it to appear in published listings of contributors and mailing address. Also, we would love to know if you are an alumnus of the HRO (please share instrument and year) or of Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges (please list graduating year). We can also accept gifts of securities. Contact President J. Woodland Hastings for more information (hastings@fas.harvard.edu or 617-495-3714).

Please send donations to:  
Harvard Pierian Foundation  
P.O. Box 380386  
Cambridge, MA 02238-0386

Please make checks payable to the Harvard Pierian Foundation.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
THE HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA,  
PLEASE VISIT THE HRO WEBSITE AT:  
[WWW.HCS.HARVARD.EDU/~HRO/](http://WWW.HCS.HARVARD.EDU/~HRO/)**

# THE HARVARD PIERIAN FOUNDATION, INC.

"To advise and support the Pierian Sodality of 1808-Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra"

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# 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. The July 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 listed 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 Gasset '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 also profoundly influenced the development of music in Cambridge and Boston over the next fifty years. The Harvard Glee Club and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, for example, both owe their existence to the early Pierians.

By the turn of the 19th 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 condescended to assist the Radcliffe Orchestra in some of their concerts. Joint concerts became more frequent in the late Thirties, and in 1942, the Pierians suggested that the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra be formed. Since the Sodality's membership was depleted during the war years, 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 and '90s saw tours of the former Soviet Union (1984), Asia (1985 and 1988), Europe (1992), Italy (1996), and Brazil (2000).

## 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 and studies with Philip Bezanon, Nadia Boulanger, Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud, and Paul Hindemith, as well as conducting studies with William Steinberg and Leonard Bernstein. This musical journey took Yannatos to Yale University (B.M., M.M.), the University of Iowa (Ph.D.), Aspen and Tanglewood Music Festivals, and Paris.

He has been music director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra since 1964 and has led that group on tours to Europe, the former Soviet Union, South America, and Asia. He has appeared as guest conductor/composer at the Aspen, Banff, Tanglewood, Chautauqua, and Saratoga Festivals, and with the Boston Pops, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Baltimore, and San Antonio Symphonies, and with the Sverdlovsk, Leningrad, Cleveland, and American Symphony Chamber Orchestras. He also has been the co-director of the New England Composer's Orchestra.

Yannatos has received commissions for orchestral, vocal, and instrumental works, which include *Cycles* (recorded by Collage), *Times and Dances: A New England Overture* (Phi Beta Kappa), *Sounds of Desolation and Joy* (Lucy Shelton), *Concerto for Bass and Orchestra* (Alea III and Edwin Barker, Principal Bassist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra); *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra* (Mendelssohn String Quartet with the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra on CD by Albany records); and *Suite for Solo Horn* (Erik Ruske on CD by Albany Records). His most ambitious work, *Trinity Mass* (for soloists, chorus, and orchestra), was premiered in Boston and New York in 1986 with the HRO and Harvard choral groups, with actor Jason Robards as narrator, and was aired on National Public Radio. His *Symphony No. 3: Prisms for strings*, (with the HRO on CD by Albany Records) and *Symphony No. 5: Sons et Lumiere* were premiered in the former USSR by the Lithuanian State Orchestra and the Leningrad Chamber Orchestra in 1990 and 1992.

His *Piano Concerto* was premiered in 1994 by the Florida West Coast Symphony with William Doppmann, piano and the HRO (Albany Records). He conducted the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra in his *Concerto for Bass and Orchestra* in 1995, and the American Symphony Chamber Orchestra in his *Symphony No. 3: Prisms* in 1995.

Additional performances include his *Symphony No. 4 (Tiananmen Square)* performed in Prague, Czech Republic in 1992 (Albany Records); *Duo* for violin and piano performed at the Kennedy Center in 1992; *Piano Concerto* in 1994 at Sanders Theatre; *Haïkè Cycle* in Athens, Greece and Harvard University in 1995 and 1998; *Onata Lux* at Sanders Theatre and concerts in England in 1995 and York in 1998; *Piano Trio* in 1995 and 1998 in Boston; *Percussion Concerto* in 1997 at New England Conservatory; and *Symphony No. 5: Sons et Lumiere* in 1999 at Sanders Theatre.

Yannatos has published music for children including for volumes of "Silly and Serious Songs" based on the words of children; *Amazing Grace* (a choral drama), Harvard University in 1999; and *Cantata: Creation Sings its Own Song*, Boston University in 1999. He has also written music for television, including Nova's *City of Coral*, Metromedia's *Assassins Among Us*, and two operas.

Dr. Yannatos has received innumerable awards as a composer, including the Artists Foundation Award of 1988 for his *Trinity Mass*, available on CD by Albany Records.

## HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

Informal Alumni Concert  
Wednesday, June 5, 2002, 4:00 PM  
Lowell Lecture Hall, Harvard University



The musical program will consist of a selection of the following songs, depending on the number of instruments we have for each piece:

Beethoven	<i>Symphony No. 8</i>
Mozart	<i>Symphony No. 35</i>
Mozart	<i>Symphony No. 40</i>
Mozart	<i>Serenade No. 9</i>
Bach	<i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 1</i>
Bach	<i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 3</i>
Hayden	<i>Symphony No. 8</i>

A reception, sponsored by the Pierian Foundation, will follow the concert.