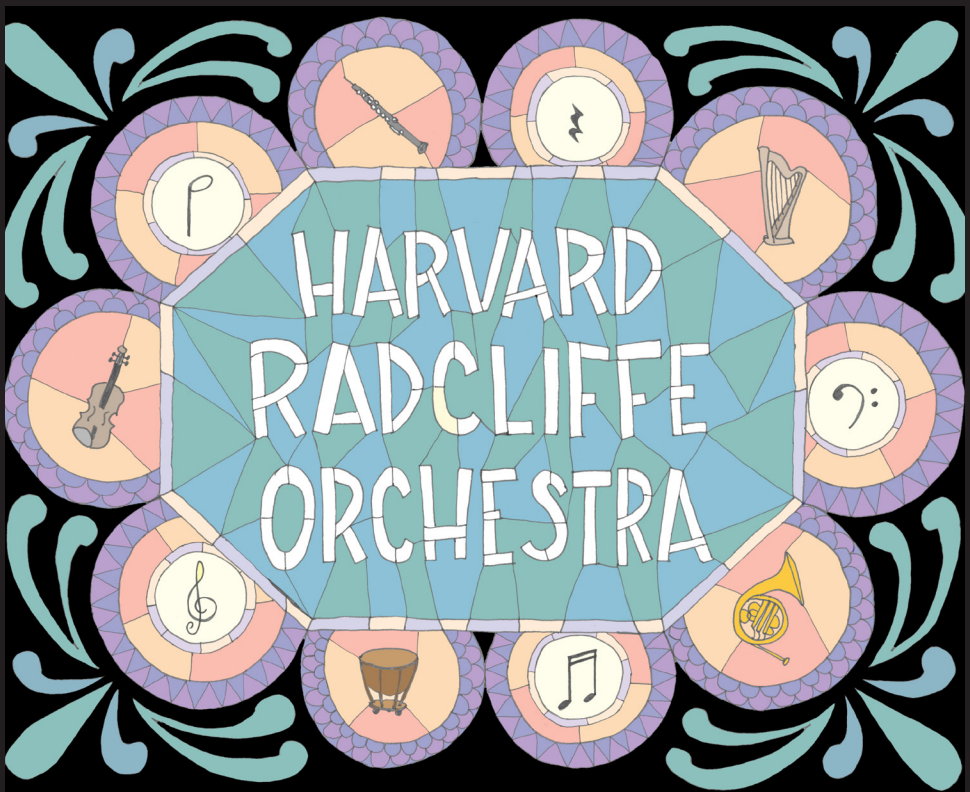

{ Federico Cortese - Conductor }

STRAUSS
Death and Transfiguration

LIGETI
Concert Romanesc

SIBELIUS
Symphony No. 5

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History of the HRO

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra (HRO) is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States. It 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 to the serenading of young ladies. Its midnight expeditions were not confined to Cambridge, but rather extended to Watertown, Brookline, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Boston – in short, whevedwelt celebrated belles. Among the Sodality's other activities included the serenading of then Harvard College President John Kirkland in 1819. According to a June 29, 1840 entry in the Sodality's record book, the group's late-night music-making antics earned them fame that "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 a March 29, 1943 issue of *Time* magazine, Gassett 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. It seemed the Sodality was in danger of disappearing. Gradually, however, other members were elected, and the Sodality played on. The Sodality not only persisted, but also profoundly influenced the development of music in Cambridge and Boston over the next fifty years. In 1837, Sodality alumni formed the Harvard Musical Association with an aim to foster music at the college. The Harvard Glee Club and the Boston Symphony Orchestra both owe their existence to the early Pierians.

As a musical organization, the Pierians were also interested in performance. In 1860, shortly after Harvard President James Walker made Harvard the first institution to add music as a regular subject of study in the curriculum, the Pierian Sodality was given permission to "hire a hall and give a public concert, on condition that no tickets be sold."[1] Thus began the performing career of the Pierians. They began to give regular concerts, and rehearsed to prepare for them. Eventually, the orchestra's performances garnered enough attention to be reported in the *New York Times*, which wrote in 1891: "The Pierian Sodality is especially strong this year…containing some of the best musical talent of the university."[2]

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 serious musical organization and had become the largest college orchestra in America. It deemed itself ready for its first out-of-state tour, the Centennial Tour of 1908. This took the orchestra through New York state, and was so successful that other tours quickly followed. In 1921, the Sodality toured New York City, Providence, and even played in Washington's National Theater for First Ladies Mrs. Warren Harding and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge.[3] The orchestra gradually built an international reputation and played for many distinguished audiences in the country.

It was not until November 1936 that members of the Pierian Sodality finally condescended to assist the Radcliffe Orchestra in some of its larger 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 years of World War II, and since the Radcliffe Orchestra lacked certain instruments, both groups benefited from the merger. Thus the men and women of Harvard and Radcliffe united in their music-making efforts, and the HRO as it is today was born.

It is said that around 1950, HRO 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). It performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall and, in 1978, placed third in the Fifth Annual International Festival of Student Orchestras. The 1980s and 1990s saw tours of the Soviet Union (1984), Asia (1985 and 1988), Europe (1992), and Italy (1996). Most recently, HRO conducted successful tours of Brazil in 2000, Canada in 2004, and South Korea in 2008.

[1] Samuel Eliot Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard: 1636-1936 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), p.295.

[2] "News From Harvard," The New York Times, Dec. 16 1891.

[3] "Harvard Orchestra on Tour," The New York Times, Dec. 19 1921.

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202nd Season, 2009-2010

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concertmaster (Ligeti)
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Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

202nd Season, 2009-2010

Federico Cortese, Music Director

Friday, 16 April 2010, 8:00 p.m.
Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

Program

György Ligeti (1923-2006)

Concert Românesc (1952)

I. Andantino
II. Allegro vivace
III. Adagio ma non troppo
IV. Molto vivace

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Tod und Verklärung, Op. 24 (1888-89)

~Intermission~

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82 (1919)

I. Tempo molto moderato
II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto
III. Allegro molto

Federico Cortese

Conductor

From the moment of his debut in September 1998, stepping in at short notice to conduct Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in place of an ailing Seiji Ozawa, Federico Cortese's work as Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was widely praised. Serving in that position from 1998-2003, Mr. Cortese led the BSO several times in Symphony Hall and at Tanglewood. His conducting of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at Symphony Hall was particularly heralded. Additionally, he has served as Music Director of the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras since 1999 and is currently Music Director of the New England String Ensemble and Associate Conductor of the Asian Youth Orchestra. Other appointments have included Music Coordinator (in lieu of Music Director) and Associate Conductor of the Spoleto Festival in Italy, Assistant Conductor to Daniele Gatti at the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and Assistant Conductor to Robert Spano at the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

Mr. Cortese has conducted operatic and symphonic engagements throughout the United States, Australia and Europe. Recent engagements in the US include, among many others, conducting the Dallas and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras, San Antonio and New World Symphonies, and the Louisville Orchestra; as well as many operatic productions including Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Boston Lyric Opera, Puccini's *La bohème* with Opera Theater of St. Louis as well as at the Yale Opera program, and Previn's *Streetcar Named Desire* with the Washington National Opera. In Europe, his opera experience includes conducting productions of Verdi's *Il trovatore* in Parma, Italy as part of the Verdi Centennial Festival; Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Spoleto Festival in Italy; Niccolò Piccinni's *La bella verità* at the Teatro Comunale, Firenze, with the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; and a new production of Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte* with the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki. Recent successes include guest conducting Britain's Opera North, BBC-Scottish Symphony, Slovenian Philharmonic, Oslo and Zagreb Philharmonics, and Göttingen Symphony Orchestra, to name just a few.

In Australia, he has conducted the Sydney and Tasmanian Symphonys, Australian Youth Orchestra, West Australia Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Orchestras, and a production of *Madama Butterfly* for Opera Australia in Melbourne.

Mr. Cortese studied composition and conducting at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome and at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna. In addition, he has been a conducting fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. In 2009, he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Harvard music department. In addition to music, Mr. Cortese studied literature, humanities and law, earning a law degree from La Sapienza University in Rome.

Notes on the Music

Ligeti - Concert Românesc

In 1951, while enjoying a reprieve from the growingly ominous atmosphere of Hungarian politics, György Ligeti composed the *Concert Românesc*. The Rákóczy Castle in northeast Hungary at that time offered shelter for artists with difficult situations; Ligeti was one of its residents. Perhaps aware that these would be the last years he was to spend in his home country (the flight from Hungary to Vienna would in fact occur in 1956), he was enveloped by childhood memories during his stay. The son of a banker and amateur violinist, Ligeti grew up in Dicsőszentmárton, Transylvania. However, Hungary fell to Hitler's Reich in 1940, and by 1944, the 21-year-old Ligeti was sent to labor camps of the dangerous variety—including one that was a munitions dump behind the front lines of the Russian advance. October of that same year saw his escape; after a brief detainment by the Russians, he was able to stumble his way home on foot. But by the war's end, Ligeti lost his father and brother: both had died in concentration camps.

Before his home was overturned by years under Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Ligeti's native Transylvania played host to a slew of vivid musical memories. Two were particularly distinctive as he worked on the *Concert Românesc* at Rákóczy Castle: the first, when a wild band of local musicians burst into the family courtyard, wearing fantastical animal masks and blearing lively folk tunes on violins and bagpipes; and another time, when three-year-old Ligeti heard the eerie calls of an alpine horn in the Carpathian Mountains. Haunted by these childhood memories and at odds with the communist regime, Ligeti invoked the folk music of his homeland as the core spirit of the *Concert Românesc*.

The piece is comprised of four movements, meant to be heard as pairs of slow-fast episodes, in the form of the Hungarian *verbunkos* or *csárdás*. It opens with a contemplative *Andantino*, shyly introduced by the strings, followed by melancholy modal harmonies and open fifths in the woodwinds. In the lively second movement, *Allegro vivace*, the piccolo and clarinet both carry cheerful melodies that echo the folk violins he heard as a boy. For the following *Adagio*, Ligeti instructs the French horn to use natural tuning (without valves) to mimic the unique sound of the alpine horn. This movement is full of sad horn calls and plaintive English horn melodies in natural harmonic minor before fading away in the eerie spirals of woodwind passages. The closing movement, *Molto vivace*, begins with muted trumpets and a snare drum shot; it is where the heavily syncopated, dance-like Gypsy elements of central European folk music find their most vibrant expression.

The *Concert Românesc*, like many of Ligeti's works, suffered under the rule of the Soviets: it was banned after a single rehearsal in Budapest, and it did not receive a public performance until 1971. Furthermore, in later years, the composer was to achieve recognition for his modern textual pieces, such as *Apparitions* and *Atmosphères* (which was featured in *2001: A Space Odyssey*), rather than the works composed in Hungary prior to 1956. But the *Concert Românesc* is nonetheless lovely in its own right: it offers us a glimpse into the vibrant, eerie world of Ligeti's childhood—and the unusual scales, microtonality, and rhythmic irregularity found in the piece demonstrate a candid, unstylized understanding of native central European folk music traditions.

—MengRuo Yang '12

Notes on the Music
Strauss - Tod und Verklärung

Tod und Verklärung ("Death and Transfiguration") is Richard Strauss' third tone poem and was completed in 1889 when Strauss was only 25 years old. The piece focuses on an artist drawing his last breaths as he waits for death – an unusual and rather morbid topic for a composer so young. Alexander Ritter, a close friend who introduced Strauss to the genre of tone poems through Liszt's pieces, wrote an accompanying poem by the same name, after Strauss' work was completed.

The inspiration for the piece is revealed in a letter composed by Strauss five years before the ultimate completion. Strauss states:

"It was six years ago when the idea came to me to write a tone poem describing the last hours of a man who had striven for the highest ideals, presumably an artist. The sick man lies in his bed breathing heavily and irregularly in his sleep. Friendly dreams bring a smile to his face; his sleep grows lighter; he awakens. Fearful pains once more begin to torture him, fever shakes his body. When the attack is over and the pain recedes, he recalls his past life; his childhood passes before his eyes; his youth with its strivings and passions; and then, when the pain returns, there appears to him the goal of his life's journey — the idea, the ideal which he attempted to embody in his art, but which he was unable to perfect because such perfection could be achieved by no man. The fatal hour arrives. The soul leaves his body, to discover in the eternal cosmos the magnificent realization of the ideal which could not be fulfilled here below."

Divided into four distinct parts, Strauss follows his blueprint with formulaic exactitude. He begins with a man on his deathbed, his life flickering and his heartbeat faltering, depicted by an uneven repeating figure in the strings and percussion. The man valiantly fights death to the last, but is offered no clemency. His life begins to flash before his eyes, illuminating the triumphs of his youth. The opening "heartbeat" returns as the flashback fades away, and the man confronts death, only to be struck down by what Ritter describes as the "final iron-hammer blow" from the brass. Only after his death is he given the desired transfiguration into the next world.

Composed in loose sonata form, Strauss makes use of different motifs to convey recurring emotions. The irregular heartbeat is immediately recognizable, but there are various others depicting the protagonist's painful breathing and general suffering. The contrasting motif of transfiguration appears throughout the piece as prophetic foreshadowing, and the conclusion of the piece demonstrates a varied orchestration featuring, among other instruments, the gong and bells.

Despite his young age when composing this piece, Strauss' depiction of death is uncannily accurate. Years later, on his own deathbed, he is reputed to have said to his daughter-in-law, "It's a funny thing, Alice, dying is just the way I composed it in *Death and Transfiguration*." His deathbed reflections on the aptness of his own work are widely shared, and exemplify his musical maturity and enormous compositional talents.

— James Winter '11

Notes on the Music

Sibelius - Symphony no. 5

"Not everyone can be an 'innovating genius,' " Sibelius once wrote in his diary. "As a personality and an apparition from the woods you will have your small, modest place." Evidently Sibelius did not realize his potential at the time, for he was to become Finland's foremost national figure. Born in 1865, Sibelius felt a strong connection to his homeland's folklore and natural setting. His early symphonic drama *Kullervo* (1891-2) sets the epic poem *Kalevala* to music, recounting Finnish legends in musical rhythm and tone. The Finnish people quickly appropriated Sibelius' Second Symphony (1901-2) to be a symbol of the national liberation movement, pointing Sibelius on a path to being regarded as an important regional composer.

Both in his lifetime (1865-1957) and today, many critics accuse Sibelius of being a "kitsch" composer. This, however, overlooks his significant musical innovations, most apparent when he blurs the lines between the musical genres of symphony, fantasy, and tone poetry. Notable pieces such as the *Karelia Suite* and *Finlandia* demonstrate Sibelius' mastery of the tone poem, in which structure and direction arise spontaneously from song-like melodies and poetic interludes. His early symphonies adopt the careful textures and orchestral colors typical of the tone poem, but remain constrained by the thematic and organizational layout of sonata form. A diary entry from May 8, 1912, however, signals his departure from even a modest compliance with traditional symphonic structure: "I intend to let the musical thoughts and their development determine their own form in my soul." With these thoughts in mind he embarked on the project of the Fifth Symphony.

The tone of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony starkly contrasts with the pessimism of his Fourth Symphony, which he composed following several bouts of throat cancer. The Fifth is instead characterized by joyous themes and reaches its climax at a moment near the end of the finale, where the majestic return to E-flat major for the conclusion implies the euphoric feeling of being completely aware of nature. This moment gives a final shape to the themes that are recycled throughout the symphony and transformed at each fresh appearance. Such treatment of thematic material and modification to the traditional symphonic structure is characteristic of Sibelius, demonstrating his willingness to blend ideas from tone poems into other genres.

Another startling departure from traditional symphonic structure appears in the difference between the 1915 and 1916 versions of the Fifth Symphony. In 1915 the symphony was organized into four distinct movements, but by 1916 Sibelius had fused the second movement to the end of the slow first movement through a climactic bridge that resolves with a suddenly faster tempo and eventually settles into the quick second movement. The final revision of 1919 conserves this fused form. It is also clear from the thematic material that the Fifth Symphony is an overlap of the tone poem and symphonic genres. In particular, Sibelius connected themes in the finale with the majesty of migratory swans circling his home at Ainola. A reference to "that swan hymn beyond compare" in a letter he received suggests the moving theme carried first by the horns in the middle movement, echoed by the basses, and later

Notes on the Music
Sibelius - Symphony no. 5

developed in the final movement. Yet again Sibelius draws inspiration from the natural world and remains true to his self-identification as an "apparition from the woods."

Many of the innovative features of the Fifth Symphony, especially the mixing of genres and departure from traditional forms, are further developed in Sibelius' later works and beyond. The tone poem *Tapiola* and the fused movements of his Seventh Symphony show the continued evolution of Sibelius' style, while the Fifth Symphony has also inspired other notable musicians, ranging from William Walton to John Coltrane. Both of these composers recognized Sibelius' skill in challenging tradition, which marks the Fifth Symphony as a masterpiece that continues to engage audiences today.

— Hanna Retallack '12

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Brahms - Violin Concerto in D
Stephan Jackiw '07, violin
Tchaikovsky - Symphony No. 4

November 3, 2006
Hsueh-Yung Shen '73 - Encounters (Ballade 2) **Premiere**
Prokofiev - Suite No. 2 from Romeo and Juliet
Tchaikovsky - Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique"

March 2, 2007
Smetana - Moldau
Aaron Kuan '09, assistant conductor
Barber - Violin Concerto
Ariel Jeong '07, violin
Stravinsky - Firebird Suite

May 4, 2007
with the Holden Choirs
Mahler - Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection"

Look for these recordings and more on our website, www.hcs.harvard.edu/hro!

Other recordings featuring James Yannatos (conductor emeritus) and the HRO are available at Tower Records and Albany Records (www.albanyrecords.com).

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, Paine Music Building, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.

The Pierian Foundation announces the recent publication of a history of the HRO

For the Joy of It

detailing the two-hundred-year evolution of the orchestra from its founding in 1808 by six music enthusiasts to a full symphonic orchestra that has toured and performed in many venues around the world. This 76-page volume combines history with anecdotes and includes many illustrations.
Copies can be obtained by contacting cbslywotzky@yahoo.com

The Pierian Sodality in 1871

Sanders Theatre Information

Sanders Theatre at Memorial Hall is managed by the Office for the Arts at Harvard. All inquiries should be addressed to:
Memorial Hall/Lowell Hall Complex
45 Quincy Street, Room 027
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617.496.4595, Fax: 617.495.2420

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Available at the Harvard Box Office web site: www.fas.harvard.edu/~tickets

SMOKING

There is no smoking allowed in Memorial Hall.

RESTROOMS/PUBLIC TELEPHONES

Located on the Lower Level

PARKING

There is no parking at Sanders Theatre.
Free parking for Sanders Theatre events is available at the Broadway Garage, corner of Broadway and Felton Streets, from one hour pre-performance to one hour post-performance. For some student events, patrons will be asked to park at 38 Oxford Street.

LOST AND FOUND

Call 617.496.4595 or visit the Administrative Offices, Memorial Hall room 027. Memorial Hall and Harvard University are not responsible for lost or stolen property.

LATECOMERS

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the management.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

Use of cameras and audio and video recording equipment is prohibited. Film and tape will be confiscated.

ACCESS FOR PATRONS WITH DISABILITIES

Wheelchair accessible seating is available through the Harvard Box Office by telephone at 617.496.2222, TTY 617.495.1642, or in person. Sanders Theatre is equipped with Assistive Listening Devices, which are available at the Box Office, one-half hour before performance time.
For information about parking for disabled patrons, call Marie Trottier, University Disability Coordinator, at .617.495.1859, TTY 617.495.4801, Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm. Please call at least two business days in advance.

THE HARVARD BOX OFFICE

Ticketing Sanders Theatre events and more.
Phone: 617.496.2222; TTY: 617.495.1642
Advance Sales:
Holyoke Center Arcade, Harvard Square
1350 Massachusetts Avenue
Open everyday 12 noon to 6pm. Closed Mondays, some holidays and has limited summer hours.
Pre-Performance Sales:
Sanders Theatre at Memorial Hall
Open on performance days only, at 12 noon for matinees and 5pm for evening performances.
Open until one-half hour after curtain.

USHERING

To inquire about ushering opportunities, contact the Production Office at 617.495.5595.