

# The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

James Yannatos, *Music Director*



Sanders Theatre  
Harvard University  
December 11, 1987  
Eight o'clock

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James Yannatos, *Music Director*

Carl Maria von Weber  
(1786–1826)

## *Overture to Oberon*

*Adagio sostenuto–Allegro con fuoco*

Roy Harris  
(1898–1979)

## *Symphony No. 3 in One Movement*

Claude Debussy  
(1862–1918)

## *Nocturnes*

*I. Nuages*

*II. Fêtes*

—*Intermission*—

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770–1827)

## *Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36*

*I. Adagio–Allegro con brio*

*II. Larghetto*

*III. Scherzo–Allegro*

*IV. Allegro molto*

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Eight o'clock

Sanders Theatre, Harvard University

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## Program Notes

Carl Maria von Weber (b. Eutin, Oldenburg (Germany), 1786; d. London, England, 1826)  
*Overture to Oberon (1826)*

*The Overture to Oberon was part of an opera of the same name. The work represents the last overture of von Weber, who died shortly after conducting it in its world premiere in 1826.*

Von Weber came from a very musical family and was profoundly affected by the two family avocations: music and theater. His father, a cousin of Mozart's wife, was a respected and renowned double bass player, as well as the director of a travelling stage troupe. Carl's first music lessons were taught by his stepbrother, a student of Joseph Haydn. In his youth, Von Weber quickly became interested in opera and showed great promise in this genre at an early age. In 1813, he became director of the opera house in Prague and became one of the first conductors outside of Vienna to perform Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Three years later, he was appointed to direct the newly-founded Dresden Opera.

In 1821, von Weber gained worldwide acclaim with the Berlin performance of his opera *Der Freischütz*. This work ranked as one of the first German important romantic operas and strongly influenced the development of this art in Germany. Unfortunately, Weber's next opera, *Euryanthe*, was a failure. In 1826, the composer was invited to write and conduct an English opera for Covent Garden. Suffering from tuberculosis, he nonetheless made the trip to London and conducted the premiere and 11 additional performances. The exertion proved too much for von Weber however, and he died in London only weeks after his arrival.

*Oberon* was loosely based on two Shakespeare plays: *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The story was based on other Germanic and English myths as well. The overture opens with a French horn call—an act symbolic of Oberon's magic horn which caused all who heard it to dance. Not surprisingly, the muted *Adagio sostenuto* gives way to a spirited *Allegro con fuoco* which evokes images of a spritely dance. French horn calls remain a predominant feature of this overture and the entire opera, which was filled with enchanting descriptions of elves, fairies, and nature. Despite *Oberon's* delightful content, only the *Overture* has become a part of standard orchestral repertoire.

Claude Debussy (b. 1862, Germain-en-Laye; d. 1918, Paris)  
*Nocturnes (ca. 1900)*

*The Nocturnes were probably started in 1892 as a set of piano pieces called Trois scènes au crépuscule, although they were not completed until about 1899, and did not come out in score until about 1900. Since then, they have become standard repertoire. The final movement is frequently omitted (as it is here today) because it calls for a chorus in addition to an orchestra.*

While there was little music in Debussy's upbringing, he started studying piano at an early age. After Debussy's father was imprisoned for revolutionary activities after the fall of Napoleon III, his piano teacher convinced him (Debussy) to attend the *Paris Conservatoire* in 1872. Although he was a very good pianist, Debussy's chance at a solo career was destroyed when he failed his piano exams in 1878 and again in 1879. Instead he took up the pen and, under the guidance of Guiraud, began to compose. In 1883 Debussy took second place in the esteemed *Prix de Rome*, and the following year he won it with the cantata *L'enfant prodigue*.

The first prize required that Debussy go to Rome, but, disliking that city, he returned to Paris after the minimum two-year period. Upon his return he began a liaison with Gabrielle Dupont, with whom he lived in penury for the next nine years. In 1894 he

jilted Gabrielle and was engaged to Thérèse Roger but he later ended that as well. In 1897 Dupont attempted suicide, which "threw Debussy into despair," but he was still able to marry Lily Texier, one of Dupont's close friends, two years later. In 1903 Debussy "befriended" Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker, and an amateur singer. In June of 1904 he left Texier and moved into an apartment (bought with Bardac's money) with Bardac, where he stayed for the rest of his life. In October Texier, still his wife, attempted suicide, and many of Debussy's friends broke relations with him. One year later he and Bardac had a daughter (Claude-Emma), and on January 20, 1908 they were married.

Unfortunately Bardac's uncle, and legal guardian disapproved of her relations with Debussy, and disinherited her, which left Debussy and Bardac without money. Debussy now had to tour Europe playing his own compositions in order to raise money. Good fortune once again shined on Debussy's life when he was appointed to the advisory board of the *Paris Conservatoire* in 1909. His opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* was at this time receiving a very warm welcome in England, which also brought in money. The next year he received several large commissions, and in 1914 he took his last trip abroad. He had an immense creative burst from this time until his death in 1918.

The *Nocturnes* probably began as the piano piece *Trois scènes au crépuscule* during 1892, when the famous *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* was also being composed. The *Nocturnes* were completed in 1899, when Debussy was marrying Lily Texier. In the first movement, *Nuages*, the strings are unusually predominant for Debussy, something more than a background for the chromatic English horn line. This movement is composed of many varied textures, and opens with two-part counterpoint doubled at the octave. Throughout this opening section there is an interesting blend of arco and pizzicato in the strings. The central section is built on a pentatonic tune which probably arose from the use of the black keys on the piano in the *Trois scènes*. The orchestration is very sparse in this section, as opposed to the end where it fills out again.

One of the most interesting things in the next movement, *Fêtes*, is the use of the brass section as a French brass band, marching in and out throughout the movement. The movement opens with a fast scale passage that comes back elsewhere in the movement. This is followed by a staccato section in the winds in shifting five- and three-meter. After this the brass band enters in full and the woodwinds take up the brass's tune. Then the opening tempo and a variation of the opening scale tune return, only to be cut off by the staccato section. The fury builds until the oboe enters with a lamenting, very slow variation on the opening scales. This slower tempo is taken up by other instruments for a while until the basses and tambourine return to the fast tempo and drive onto the end.

Roy Harris (b. 1898, Oklahoma, d. 1979, California)  
*Symphony No. 3 in One Movement (1938)*

*The Third Symphony was commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky for the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1937. It was completed in the fall of 1938 and was given its first performance in February 1939.*

Roy Harris was born in a log cabin in Lincoln County, Oklahoma on Lincoln's Birthday. At age six he and his family moved to the San Gabriel Valley in California where he started to play clarinet and piano in addition to football and baseball. Unlike many other composers, Harris did not start composing until he was twenty-four. In the meantime he turned his hand to many different occupations—arming and driving a milk truck, to name two. He also played in wind bands throughout his early life. As he got older he became a member of an exclusive society which would meet to have long, philosophical discussions about music.

When it came time to go to college, the young Harris won a scholarship to the University of California at Berkeley and began studies of theory and composition there with Arthur Farwell. In 1922 he started to compose, but it was not until he was twenty-eight that

he gained recognition with the composition of the orchestral *Andante*, which won a contest. The winning piece was to be performed by the Rochester Symphony under Howard Hanson. Hanson liked the piece so much that he also performed it in New York City later that year.

After the success of the *Andante*, Aaron Copland met Harris and convinced him to go to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger, who had been Copland's teacher. Harris won two Guggenheim Fellowships and promptly left for Paris. While there, Harris seemed determined not to learn anything from Boulanger, and pursued his studies with a ferocious independence. These studies were comprised mostly of close analysis of the works of early composers like Palestrina and Josquin, although Harris also showed an interest in the string quartets of Beethoven, elements of which appear frequently in his works.

Around 1930 Harris returned to the United States to continue his studies of the past at the Library of Congress. It was at this point in Harris's life that Serge Koussevitzky entered, calling for "a great symphony from the West." Koussevitzky commissioned the First Symphony, and later the Third and Fifth Symphonies as well. This commission and the premiere of the work gained Harris great recognition, and was appointed to a post at the Julliard School of Music, and at the Westminster Choir School in Princeton (1934-38).

The Third Symphony is typical of Harris's works in its use of open fourths and fifths as harmony and long spans which are monodic, as well as the use of modes and misplacing of accented beats within a fixed meter. Harris himself has divided the symphony up as follows:

Section I. TRAGIC--low string sonorities

Section II. LYRIC--strings, horns, woodwinds

Section III. PASTORAL--woodwinds with a polytonal string background

Section IV. FUGUE--dramatic

A. Brass and percussion predomination

B. Canonic development of materials from Section II constituting background for further development of fugue

C. Brass climax, rhythmic motif derived from fugue subject

Section V. DRAMATIC--tragic

A. Restatement of violin theme of Section I; tutti strings in canon with tutti woodwinds against brass and percussion developing rhythmic motif from Section IV

B. Coda--development of materials from Sections I and II over pedal timpani

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Ludwig van Beethoven (b. 1770, Bonn, Germany; d. 1827 Vienna, Austria)  
*Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36 (1802)*

*This Symphony was composed in 1802, when Beethoven was thirty-two years old and before his writing of his controversial Heiligenstadt Testament. It was first performed on April 5, 1803 in a concert which also premiered his Third (C Minor) Piano Concerto.*

Ludwig von Beethoven was born into a German-Flemish family that had lived in Germany only for two generations. His father, Johann van Beethoven, was a chorister of the elector of Cologne. Young Ludwig demonstrated immense musical talent early on and his father intended him to become a musical prodigy. Already by the age of ten he was studying with the renowned court organist Christopher Neefe, and in 1784, at the age of fourteen, he became the assistant court organist to the elector of Cologne. In 1787, Beethoven met Mozart in Vienna who praised his piano playing but had little time to pursue any further artistic contacts. For five more years, Beethoven remained in Bonn to take care of his family which had recently experienced a series of tragic circumstances; in 1787 his mother died, a year later, his sister, and furthermore, his father had become a penniless alcoholic. After this period, Beethoven's fortunes took a turn for the better.

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In 1792, the new and enlightened elector of Cologne, Maximilian Franz, sponsored a second trip to Vienna for the young composer. He was to reside there the rest of his life. While in Vienna, Beethoven made many friends in the nobility and their patronage helped support his lifestyle and musical endeavors. The composer also attracted many pupils and became quite a celebrity in the capital of the Hapsburgs.

In 1798 Beethoven began to suffer from increasing deafness—a gradual process that profoundly affected his psychological outlook. He gave his first public performance in 1800, where he also premiered his First (C-Major) Symphony. His incidental music for *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (The Creations of Prometheus) was also met with great acclaim. In 1802, Beethoven, aware of his growing deafness and increased physical complications that were syphilitic in nature, wrote the *Heiligenstadt Testament*—a controversial document which bemoaned the cruelties that had been inflicted upon him and the difficulties he had suffered. Despite this melancholic behavior, his patrons continued to support him and in 1803, his Second (D Major) Symphony was performed in Vienna.

The Second Symphony was composed before his *Heiligenstadt Document* and was written in a very classical style. The opening measures of the *Adagio molto* feature a descending scale by the oboe. This motif is repeated at the opening of the *Allegro con brio*, only this time it is contrasted by rising scales played by the clarinets. All the while, the strings are engaged in an intricate fugue-like pattern which continues throughout the duration of the movement. The *Larghetto* movement is a sanguinary one and contrasts greatly with the desperately sad *Marcia funebre* of his Third (Eroica) Symphony in E Flat, written only two years later. The *Scherzo* is a traditional variation of the “musical joke” and the various themes are traded off between the strings the wood winds. The final movement is a rousing classical section reminiscent of the later symphonies of Mozart and Haydn, but with an individuality that is distinctly Beethoven’s.

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Since James Yannatos became the music director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra in 1964, he has brought great success and renown to the Orchestra through his enthusiastic introduction of "contemporary" works by Bartok, Stravinsky, Scheonberg, and Schuller, and by bringing pieces of the established repertoire to life.

Born in the Bronx, New York City, in 1929, Dr. Yannatos majored in music at Yale and received his Ph. D. from the University of Iowa. He studied conducting with Leonard Bernstein and William Steinberg, and composition with Nadia Boulanger, Paul Hindemith, Luigi Dallapiccola, and Darius Milhaud. He has appeared as guest conductor of the Boston Pops, the Winnipeg, Edmonton, and San Antonio Symphony Orchestras, and as conductor-composer at the Aspen, Tanglewood, Saratoga, Chautauqua, and Banff festivals.

Yannatos' commissions include *Cycles* (recorded by Collage), *Sounds of Desolation and Joy* for soprano Lucy Shelton, and *An Overture for the Uncommon Man* for Phi Beta Kappa. His works, performed in the United States, Canada, and Europe, may be heard on Sonory Recordings.

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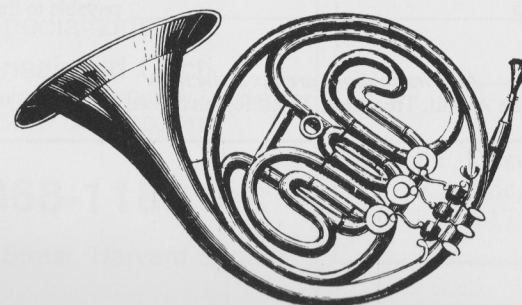
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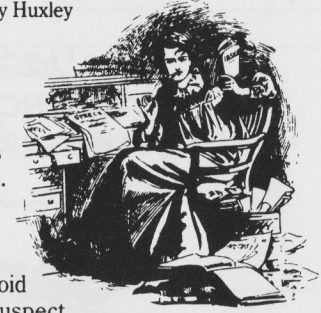
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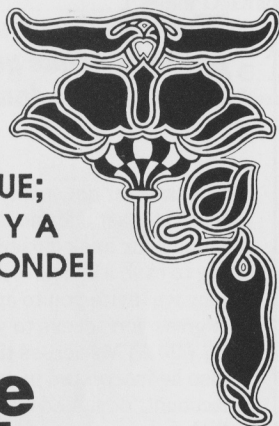
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