

dallas symphony
Orchestra

Program Notes: Van Zwenen and Shostakovich (March 15-18)

Wednesday, February 29, 2012 in Shostak Notes

By Laurie Shulman
March 25 - 28
Jaap van Zwenen, conductor
Matthias Goerne, baritone
JOHN LUTHER ADAMS Dark Waves
SCHUBERT and STRAUSS Songs
SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 9

Program
John Luther Adams
Dark Waves

Dark Waves (2007) combines electronic sounds with acoustic instruments in a striking evocation of the sea. [Read the Program Notes >>](#)

Schubert and Strauss
Songs

All but one of these songs was originally written for voice and piano. [Read the Program Notes >>](#)

Shostakovich
Symphony No. 9

"This is the most optimistic of all the Shostakovich symphonies," van Zwenen says. [Read the Program Notes >>](#)

Buy tickets NOW for [Van Zwenen and Shostakovich >>](#)

March 15, 16, & 17, 2012 at 8:00 pm

March 18, 2012 at 2:30 pm

Jaap van Zwenen, conductor

Matthias Goerne, baritone

John Luther Adams Dark Waves for orchestra and electronic sounds

Schubert "An Silvia" D.891

Strauss "Traum durch die Dämmerung" Op.29, No.1

"Das Rosenband" Op.36, No.1

"Freundliche Vision" Op.48, No.1

Schubert "Griessengesang" D.778

Strauss "Heimliche Aufforderung" Op.27, No.3

"Ruhe, meine Seel" Op.27, No.1

Schubert "Im Abendrot" D.799

Strauss "Allerseelen" Op.10, No.8

Schubert "Tränenregen" D.795

Strauss "Morgen" Op.27, No.4

INTERMISSION

Shostakovich Symphony No.9 in E-flat, Op.70

Allegro

Moderato

Presto

Largo

Allegretto

PROGRAM NOTES

PROGRAM NOTES BY LAURIE SHULMAN, ©2012
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(Have a question or comment about these notes? Contact Laurie at: lucertola@prodigy.net)

This weekend offers us dizzying variety, with music spanning three centuries and embracing a myriad of styles and performing forces. Maestro van Zwenen opens with the newest work, by Alaska's John Luther Adams, in the first performance of his music by the DSO. Commissioned by Musica Nova for the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra, Dark Waves (2007) combines electronic sounds with acoustic instruments in a striking evocation of the sea. "His music has everything to do with nature," says van Zwenen. "Nature is a big inspiration to him."

The balance of the first half is devoted to literature we rarely hear in the Meyerston Lieder [at song] by Franz Schubert and Richard Strauss. Two of the 19th century's great masters of song interpreted by the distinguished German baritone Matthias Goerne in his DSO debut. All but one of these songs was originally written for voice and piano. Strauss orchestrated many of his own songs; several of his contemporaries arranged others. Their lush textures have secured them a niche in the concert hall.

Schubert's songs are brilliant in orchestral versions. Surprisingly, an array of composers have orchestrated the piano parts. The list is impressive: Carl Maria von Weber, Hector Berlioz, Johannes Brahms, Jacques Offenbach, Max Richter, Anton von Webern, and Benjamin Britten, among others. And why not? List helped to popularize Schubert's music by transcribing dozens of songs in arrangements and transcriptions for solo piano. Schubert himself took melodies from two of his best loved songs – "Die Forelle" and "Tod und das Mädchen" – as the themes for variation movements in his "Four Quartets and Death and the Maiden" String Quartet. Such arrangements universalize his music, introducing it to some audience members and providing a fresh "take" on familiar songs to others. "We have selected a great set of songs by the greatest Lieder composers," declares van Zwenen.

Following intermission, van Zwenen returns to the podium for Shostakovich's Symphony No.9 in E-flat, Op.70. Composed as World War II was ending, it was anticipated as a great peak of glory to Stalin and the Soviet Army in their victory over the Nazis. Instead, Shostakovich composed his most high-spirited symphony in three centuries, baffling his audiences and inciting the displeasure of the Soviet authorities.

Even so, the Ninth Symphony tends to be grouped with the "Leningrad" (1941) and the Eighth Symphony (1943) as a war trilogy. Certainly the lighter character of Shostakovich's music is incongruous with the darkness and struggle of war. "Perhaps he wrote it to get out of the war dead," suggests van Zwenen. "In my opinion, this is the most optimistic of all the Shostakovich symphonies. I hear as a release after the intensity of the Eighth Symphony. He concentrates on the woodwinds in the Ninth. The writing is very light, very crisp." With moments of raucous fun balanced by subdued, questioning passages, the Ninth is filled with superb orchestral writing. It is vintage Shostakovich, and an upbeat conclusion to this intense evening of music.

Dark Waves for orchestra and electronic sounds

John Luther Adams

Born 23 January, 1953 in Meridian, Mississippi

Currently residing in Fairbanks, Alaska

- Adams's music is closely linked to the landscape and climate of Alaska
- Dark Waves is an evocation of the sea
- The music combines full orchestra with a pre-recorded electronic 'aura'
- Listen for dense, complex texture and 'waves' of sound

John Luther Adams has been closely associated with Alaska for so many years that it is hard to imagine him moving from Meridian, Mississippi. After growing up in the New York suburbs, he attended the California Institute of the Arts, studying with James Tenney and Leonard Stein. He moved to Alaska in 1975, initially as executive director of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and pianist and principal percussionist with the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra. For the past twenty years, Adams has devoted his time primarily to composing. He has also taught at Harvard University, the Oberlin Conservatory, Bennington College and the University of Alaska/Fairbanks.

As a teenager, Adams played drums in rock bands. An early passion for Frank Zappa led him to the iconoclastic music of Edgar Varese and the dark, enigmatic scores of Morton Feldman. Adams has found his own elemental roots and inspiration in the frozen landra of Alaska and the unique climatic and geographical environment that has become his home. His compositions are sonic evocations of the deep connections between landscape and the human spirit.

The composer's note explains his process, as well as the textual complexity of his music, his title, and an extra-musical significance to Dark Waves:

In recent years I've composed in mixed media, combining electronic sounds with acoustic instruments, solos and small ensembles. But Dark Waves is the first time I've mixed electronics with the complex sonorities of the symphony orchestra.

I began with an impossible orchestra: large choirs of virtual instruments, with no musicians, no articulation and no breathing, sculpting layer upon layer into expansive waves of sound. Then I added the human element.

The musicians of the real orchestra impart depth and texture, shimmer and substance to the electronic sounds. They give the music life. Their instruments speak in different ways. They change bow directions. They breathe. They play at different speeds. They ride the waves.

Together, the orchestra and the electronics evoke a vast rolling sea. Waves of perfect Fifth intervals rise and fall, in tempo relationships of 3, 5, 7, and 7. At the central moment, these waves crest together in a tsunami of sound encompassing all twelve chromatic tones and the full range of the orchestra.

As I composed Dark Waves, I pondered the ominous events of our times: terrorism and war, intensifying storms and wildfires, the melting of the polar ice and the rising of the seas. Yet even in the presence of our deepening fears, we find ourselves immersed in the mysterious beauty of this world. And the turbulent waves we may still find the light, the wisdom and the courage we need to pass through this darkness of our own making.

Adams includes detailed performance instructions in the score, as well as guidelines for the spatial placement of the orchestra. You will notice that woodwinds are seated stage right, brass and mallet percussion stage left, and bass drum, piano, and celesta in the center.

The "aura" of electronic sounds is exactly twelve minutes long, thus the conductor must coordinate the orchestra precisely. Adams intends that the two come mingle in an expansive, sonorous texture of immense complexity. (All the string sections, for example, subdivide into three parts: sometimes the strings play as many as twenty individual parts.) Each wave of sound comprises many layers of instrumental activity. "Every sound must emerge from and recede back into the overall texture," says the composer. Musical events in Dark Waves unfold slowly, inexorably, and flowing with the mystery and majesty of the sea.

The score calls for two piccolos, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, celesta, piano, bass drum, suspended cymbal, bells, two vibraphones, a recorded "aura" of electronic sounds, and strings.

"An Silvia" D.891

Born 21 January, 1797 in Liechtenthal, Vienna, Austria

Died 19 November, 1828 in Vienna

Like Mozart, Schubert died at a tragically young age, a victim of illness, poverty, and a frustrating lack of widespread public recognition. Even more than Mozart, he had a big market for songs in the 19th century, not only concert repertoire, but also songs that amateurs could perform at home. Between 1870 (when he was 60) and 1863, Strauss composed more than two dozen Lieder. In 1885 he published his first set as Opus 10. Lieder continued to figure prominently in Strauss's output for much of his lengthy career. He had composed 90 songs before he completed his first opera, Guntram, in 1893.

In August 1887 Strauss met Pauline de Ahna, a fine soprano whom he guessed, correctly, had a bright future in opera. He began coaching her, and married her in 1894. Their romance bore rich musical fruit, for the 1890s were glorious years for Strauss as a composer, musician and scholars agree that, after he met Pauline, he had her more in mind when writing Lieder.

"Traum durch die Dämmerung" ("Dream through the Twilight," 1895) is one of Strauss's best-loved songs. The poem is by Otto Julius Bierbaum. Strauss's setting is the subject of a celebrated story. According to the composer's biographer George Marek:

[Strauss] told Karl Böhm that one day he was reading the poem of 'Traum durch die Dämmerung' and determined to set it to music. At this moment Pauline entered and told him that she wanted to go for a walk. He answered that he was working. She said he had exactly twenty minutes to complete whatever he was doing. By the time she came to fetch him, he had finished the song.

In Strauss's maturity, the time he allegedly took to compose it shrank to five minutes. Regardless, his setting is both poignant and nostalgic, and he liked it well enough to quote from it in the "Works of Peace" section of Ein Heldenleben. The gentle rondo of the accompaniment's triplets and Strauss's rich chromatic modulations make this song irresistible.

Strauss orchestrated many of his songs years after he composed them, but most originally for voice and piano. "Das Rosenband" (1897) is one of the exceptions: it was originally composed as an orchestral song. The text, by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, had already been set by Schubert in 1815. Strauss composed his "Rosenband" on 10 September, 1897, his wife and Pauline's third wedding anniversary. The ecstatic melisma on the word "Elysium" at the close of "Das Rosenband" foreshadows the glorious soprano moments in his stage works.

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"Griessengesang" D.778

Schubert

"Griessengesang" [A Song of Old Age: 1822] is a reflection of an old man sitting by the fire. He staves off loneliness through the recalled memories of happy times in his youth. Schubert communicates these two stages of life by switching between minor and major mode. These harmonic changes illustrate the dichotomy between the private arena of internalized emotion and the stillt uper of the world. Schubert's strophic setting is a text by Friedrich Rückert, from his collection Östliche Rosen [Roses from the Orient]. Rückert's theme is resignation, but not despair; the poet - or singer - has accepted his fate. The orchestration is by Brahms.

"Heimliche Aufforderung" Op.27, No.3

"Ruhe, meine Seel" Op.27, No.1

Richard Strauss

Born 11 June, 1864 in Munich, Germany

Died 8 September, 1949 in Garmisch, Germany

Richard Strauss had a lifelong love affair with the human voice. DSO patrons are probably better acquainted with Strauss's tone poems, and opera buffs are quick to sing the praises of his stage works. Some music lovers tend to overlook Strauss's Lieder. That is not the case among singers, who are passionate about Strauss's songs because they provide such wonderful vocal opportunities, and because they demonstrate such sensitivity to their texts. Unlike Schubert and Schumann, however, Strauss was not necessarily drawn to the finest literature in selecting poems to set. His taste was ecumenical, often favoring lesser known poets. The American Strauss scholar Bryan Gilliam has observed:

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In August 1887 Strauss met Pauline de Ahna, a fine soprano whom he guessed, correctly, had a bright future in opera. He began coaching her, and married her in 1894. Their romance bore rich musical fruit, for the 1890s were glorious years for Strauss as a composer, musician and scholars agree that, after he met Pauline, he had her more in mind when writing Lieder.

"Traum durch die Dämmerung" ("Dream through the Twilight," 1895) is one of Strauss's best-loved songs. The poem is by Otto Julius Bierbaum. Strauss's setting is the subject of a celebrated story. According to the composer's biographer George Marek:

[Strauss] told Karl Böhm that one day he was reading the poem of 'Traum durch die Dämmerung' and determined to set it to music. At this moment Pauline entered and told him that she wanted to go for a walk. He answered that he was working. She said he had exactly twenty minutes to complete whatever he was doing. By the time she came to fetch him, he had finished the song.

In Strauss's maturity, the time he allegedly took to compose it shrank to five minutes. Regardless, his setting is both poignant and nostalgic, and he liked it well enough to quote from it in the "Works of Peace" section of Ein Heldenleben. The gentle rondo of the accompaniment's triplets and Strauss's rich chromatic modulations make this song irresistible.

Strauss orchestrated many of his songs years after he composed them, but most originally for voice and piano. "Das Rosenband" (1897) is one of the exceptions: it was originally composed as an orchestral song. The text, by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, had already been set by Schubert in 1815. Strauss composed his "Rosenband" on 10 September, 1897, his wife and Pauline's third wedding anniversary. The ecstatic melisma on the word "Elysium" at the close of "Das Rosenband" foreshadows the glorious soprano moments in his stage works.

"Freundliche Vision" appeared as the first of five songs published in 1900 as Op. 48, and the only one of that set to employ a text by Otto Julius Bierbaum. The "friendly" vision of the title is a little white house hidden in the meadow, spotted while the singer takes a quiet walk with his beloved. Their dreamlike time together joining woodland with amour, Luscious harmonies sound even richer in this orchestration, which the composer made in 1918. Details like the pizzicato in the low strings and the piccolo emphasize the expanse of the great outdoors. The voice seems completely separate from the orchestra.

"Griessengesang" D.778

Schubert

"Griessengesang" [A Song of Old Age: 1822] is a reflection of an old man sitting by the fire. He staves off loneliness through the recalled memories of happy times in his youth. Schubert communicates these two stages of life by switching between minor and major mode. These harmonic changes illustrate the dichotomy between the private arena of internalized emotion and the stillt uper of the world. Schubert's strophic setting is a text by Friedrich Rückert, from his collection Östliche Rosen [Roses from the Orient]. Rückert's theme is resignation, but not despair; the poet - or singer - has accepted his fate. The orchestration is by Brahms.

"Heimliche Aufforderung" Op.27, No.3

"Ruhe, meine Seel" Op.27, No.1

Richard Strauss

Born 11 June, 1864 in Munich, Germany

Died 8 September, 1949 in Garmisch, Germany

Richard Strauss had a lifelong love affair with the human voice. DSO patrons are probably better acquainted with Strauss's tone poems, and opera buffs are quick to sing the praises of his stage works. Some music lovers tend to overlook Strauss's Lieder. That is not the case among singers, who are passionate about Strauss's songs because they provide such wonderful vocal opportunities, and because they demonstrate such sensitivity to their texts. Unlike Schubert and Schumann, however, Strauss was not necessarily drawn to the finest literature in selecting poems to set. His taste was ecumenical, often favoring lesser known poets. The American Strauss scholar Bryan Gilliam has observed:

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Strauss was the son of a virtuoso French horn player, and his own primary instrument was piano. Nevertheless, from his earliest compositions he favored songs. There was a big market for songs in the 19th century, not only concert repertoire, but also songs that amateurs could perform at home. Between 1870 (when he was 60) and 1863, Strauss composed more than two dozen Lieder. In 1885 he published his first set as Opus 10. Lieder continued to figure prominently in Strauss's output for much of his lengthy career. He had composed 90 songs before he completed his first opera, Guntram, in 1893.