Alpine Symphony

Lucas Richman, conductor
Emily Birsan, soprano
Gary Sperl, clarinet

Verdi Overture to *La forza del destino*

Schubert *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, (*The Shepherd on the Rock*)
D. 965 (Orch. Carl Reinecke)

Emily Birsan, soprano
Gary Sperl, clarinet

Verdi “Caro nome” from *Rigoletto*

“È strano!...Ah, fors’è lui...Sempre libera,” from *La traviata*

Emily Birsan, soprano

Intermission

R. Strauss *Eine Alpensinfonie* (*An Alpine Symphony*) Op. 64

This concert will air on WUOT 91.9 FM on Tuesday, December 9, 2014 at 8:00 p.m.
This concert will be rebroadcast on Monday, July 27, 2015 at 8:00 p.m.
Program Notes: Alpine Symphony

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

Overture to La forza del destino (1862)

Giuseppe Verdi was born in Roncole, Italy, on October 9 or 10, 1813, and died in Milan, Italy, on January 27, 1901. The first performance of La forza del destino took place at the Bolshoi Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, on November 10, 1862.

Instrumentation: The Overture to La forza del destino is scored for piccolo, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, bass drum and, strings.

Duration: 8 minutes

The story of Verdi’s grand opera, La forza del destino (The Force of Destiny) takes place in Spain and Italy, toward the middle of the 18th century. Don Alvaro accidentally kills the Marquis of Calatrava—the father of the woman he loves, Leonora di Vargas. Don Carlo, the Marquis’s son, searches for Don Alvaro and Leonora in order to avenge his father’s death. Don Carlo finally confronts Don Alvaro (now a priest), and challenges him to a duel. Don Alvaro mortally wounds Don Carlo, who in turn fatally stabs Leonora when she tries to comfort her brother. Don Alvaro curses the fates, but when he finally prays for forgiveness, Leonora dies in peace.

Verdi composed a Prelude for the original, 1862 version of La forza del destino that he revised into the famous Overture for the 1869 La Scala production. It is a magnificent orchestral showpiece that remains Verdi’s most popular overture in the concert hall. Typical of overtures of the time, it incorporates various melodies from the opera.

The Overture begins with the repeated ominous brass chords that serve to open Act II (Allegro). The strings play the relentless, churning destiny motif that pursues Leonora di Vargas throughout the opera. Several further melodies from the opera—often accompanied by the destiny motif—are introduced with the unerring contrast and inexorable forward motion that are hallmarks of one of the lyric theater’s greatest dramatists. A rousing coda brings The Force of Density Overture to a stunning conclusion.

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, D. 965 (1828) (orch. Carl Reinecke)

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna, Austria, on January 31, 1797, and died there on November 19, 1828. The first performance of The Shepherd on the Rock took place in Riga, Latvia, on February 10, 1830, with Anna Milder-Hauptmann, soprano.

Instrumentation: The Reinecke orchestration of Der Hirt auf dem Felsen is scored for solo soprano and clarinet, two flutes, two oboes, clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, and strings.

Duration: 11 minutes

Franz Schubert composed the song, Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (The Shepherd on the Rock) in response to a request by soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann. She asked Schubert to write music “in a variety of measures, so that several emotions can be represented...(with) a brilliant ending.”

Schubert completed The Shepherd on the Rock in October, 1828, the month before his untimely death. Schubert scored the work for solo soprano and clarinet, with piano accompaniment. These performances feature an orchestration of the piano accompaniment by German composer Carl Reinecke (1824-1910).

Text: Verses 1, 2 and 4 by Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), Verse 3, probably by Wilhelmina von Chézy (1783-1856)

Wenn auf dem höchsten Fels ich steh, 
ins tiefe Tal herniederseh,  
und singe, und singe,  
fern aus dem tiefen dunkeln Tal  
schwingt sich empor der Widerhall,  
der Widerhall der Klüfte.

When I stand on the highest rock,  
and look down into the deep valley,  
and sing, and sing,  
then from the deep dark valley,  
the echoes soar up to me,  
the echo of the chasm.

(continued)
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Je weiter meine Stimme dringt, 
je heller sie mir widerklingt 
von unten, von unten. 
Mein Liebchen wohnt so weit von mir, 
drum seh ich mich so heiß nach ihr, 
hinüber, hinüber!

In tiefem Gram verzehr' ich mich, 
mir ist die Freude hin, 
auf Erden mir die Hoffnung wach, 
ich hier so einsam bin. 
So sehend klang im Wald das Lied, 
so sehend klang es durch die Nacht, 
die Herzen es zum Himmel zieht, 
mit wunderbarer Macht.

Der Frühling will kommen, 
der Frühling, meine Freud, 
nun mach ich mich fertig, 
zum Wandern bereit. 
Je weiter meine Stimme dringt, 
je heller sie mir widerklingt.

The farther my voice travels, 
the brighter the echo sounds to me 
from below, from far below. 
My beloved lives so far from me, 
and I burn with the desire to be with her, 
over there, over there!

“Ihre Stimme”

Caro nome,” from Rigoletto (1851)

Giuseppe Verdi was born in Roncole, Italy, on October 9 or 10, 1813, and died in Milan, Italy, on January 27, 1901. The first performance of Rigoletto took place at the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Italy, on March 11, 1851.

Instrumentation: “Caro nome” is scored for soprano solo, violin solo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bassoon and strings.

Duration: 7 minutes

Gilda, daughter of the court jester, Rigoletto, has fallen in love with the poor student, Gualtier Maldè (actually, the licentious Duke of Mantua, in disguise). Alone, Gilda is lost in thoughts of her new love. Text by Francesco Maria Piave (1810-1876)

Gualtier Maldè...nome di lui sì amato, 
ti scolpisci nel core innamorato!
Caro nome che il mio cor 
esti primo palpitar, 
le delizie dell'amor 
mì dèi sempre rammentar!
Col pensier il mio desir 
a te sempre volerà, 
e fin l'ultimo mio sospir, 
caro nome, tuo sarà.
Col pensier, ecc.
Gualtier Maldè!

Gualtier Maldè...the name of he whom I love, 
you are engraved on my enamored heart!
Beloved name that 
first made my heart tremble, 
you always remind me 
of the delights of love!
My thoughts, my desires, 
always fly to you, 
and to my last breath, 
beloved name, I will be yours.
My thoughts, etc.
Gualtier Maldè!

“È strano!...Ah, fors'è lui...Sempre libera,” from La traviata (1853)

Giuseppe Verdi was born in Roncole, Italy, on October 9 or 10, 1813, and died in Milan, Italy, on January 27, 1901. The first performance of La traviata took place at the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Italy, on March 6, 1853.

Instrumentation: The scene is scored for soprano solo, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Duration: 9 minutes

(continued)
The famous Parisian courtesan, Violetta Valery, hosts a party at her home. During the party, Violetta meets Alfredo Germont, a young man who professes his undying love. Later that evening, Violetta, now alone, wonders if Alfredo’s love could be the force that changes the course of her life.

Text by Francesco Maria Piave (1810-1876)

È strano! è strano!
In core scolpiti ho quegli accenti!
Saria per me sventura un serio amore?
Null’uomo ancora t’accendeva.
O gioia ch’io non conobbi,
esser amata amando!
E sdigiarla poss’io
per l’aride follie del viver mio?

Ah, fors’è lui che l’anima,
solinga ne’ tumulti
golea sovente pingere
de’ suoi colori occulti!
Lui che modesto e vigile
all’egre soglie ascese,
e nuova febbre accese,
destandomi all’amor!
A quell’amor ch’è palpitio
dell’universo intero,
misterioso, altero,
croce e delizia al cor.

A me, fanciulla, un candido
e trepido desire
quest’effigiò dolcissimo
signor dell’avvenire,
quando ne’ cieli il raggio
di sua belta’ vedeva,
e tutta me pascea
di quel divino error.
Sentia che amore è palpito
dell’universo intero,
misterioso, altero,
croce e delizia al cor.

Follie! Follie! Delirio vano e’ questo!
Povera donna, sola, abbandonata
in questo popoloso deserto
che appellano Parigi,
che spero or più?
Che far degg’io?
Gioire,
di voluttà nei vortici
di voluttà perir! Gioir!

Sempre libera degg’io
folleggiare di gioia in gioia,
vo’ che scorra il viver mio
pei sentieri del piacer.
Nasca il giorno, o il giorno muoia,
sempre lieta ne’ ritrovi, ah,
da diletti sempre nuovi
dee volare il mio pensier.

It’s strange! It’s strange!
His words are carved into my heart!
Would true love be a misfortune for me?
No man has ever been your light.
Oh, joy that I have never known,
of loving and being loved!
Can I disdain it
for the arid follies of my life?

Ah, perhaps it is he whom my soul,
alone and troubled,
often painted
in mysterious colors!
He who, modest and vigilant,
came to the threshold of my sickroom,
and kindled a new fever in me,
awakening a new love!
Ah, such a love that gives life
to the whole universe,
mysterious, from on high,
that brings pain and delight to the heart.

When I was a child, a pure
and anxious desire
sweetly portrayed him
as the lord of my future,
when the heavens beamed
and I saw his beauty
and my whole being fed
upon that divine illusion.
Feel that love that gives life
to the whole universe,
mysterious, from on high,
that brings pain and delight to the heart.

Madness! Madness! This is a vain delirium!
Poor woman, alone, abandoned
in this populous desert
called Paris,
what more am I hoping for?
What should I do?
Rejoice,
in the vortex of luxury
I will die! Rejoice!

I will always be free
as I celebrate one joy to the next,
I want my life to run
along the paths of pleasure.
When the day is born, or dies,
may it always find me happy, ah,
with ever-new delights
to which my thoughts fly.
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Eine Alpensinfonie, Opus 64 (1915)

Richard Strauss was born in Munich, Germany, on June 11, 1864, and died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, on September 8, 1949. The first performance of An Alpine Symphony took place at the Philharmonie in Berlin, Germany, on October 28, 1915, with the composer conducting the Dresden Hofkapelle Orchestra.

Instrumentation: An Alpine Symphony is scored for two piccolos, four flutes, three oboes, English horn, heckelphone, E-flat clarinet, three clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns, four Wagner tubas, four trumpets, four trombones, two tubas, timpani (two players), two harps, celeste, organ, bass drum, cow bell, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tam tam, thunder machine, triangle, wind machine, and strings.

Duration: 47 minutes

In 1911, Richard Strauss began composition of his final orchestral tone poem, An Alpine Symphony. Other projects intervened, slowing progress. On November 1, 1914, Strauss began orchestrating the work, completing An Alpine Symphony in approximately three months’ time. Strauss worked on the tone poem while residing at his villa in Garmisch, which provided a breathtaking view of the Bavarian Alps.

The composition of An Alpine Symphony inspired some of the composer’s most memorable quotes. Strauss proclaimed: “I shall call my Alpine Symphony the Antichrist, since there is in it moral purification through one’s own strength, deliverance through labor, and worship of nature, eternal and magnificent.” In a far lighter vein, Strauss said of his efforts on An Alpine Symphony: “I wanted for once to compose just as a cow gives milk.”

The premiere of An Alpine Symphony took place at the Philharmonie in Berlin on October 28, 1915. Strauss himself conducted the Dresden Hofkapelle Orchestra. “Now at last I have learned to orchestrate,” he proclaimed at the general rehearsal.

It must be conceded that An Alpine Symphony has attracted criticism, even from those who generally admire Strauss’s music. Critics have focused upon the work’s length and occasional bombast. Conductor Erich Leinsdorf wittily summarized this view when he characterized An Alpine Symphony as: “one of the happier inventions of Strauss, except that it is too long and requires too large an orchestra to have complete unity of purpose. It is as if a speaker who had a small topic came with a huge manuscript of ten or fifteen thousand words and delivered a light after-dinner speech in stentorian tones.”

But even those who criticize An Alpine Symphony acknowledge it offers music of extraordinary grandeur, excitement, and beauty. In the hands of a sympathetic conductor and virtuoso (and very large!) orchestra capable of meeting the work’s extraordinary demands, An Alpine Symphony emerges as a thrilling sonic adventure, worthy of its majestic subject.

The twenty-four-hour adventure depicted in An Alpine Symphony consists of twenty-two sections, played without pause. The composer provided the following titles for the episodes:

Nacht (Night)
Sonnenaufgang (Sunrise)
Der Anstieg (The ascent)
Eintritt in den Wald (Entry into the forest)
Wanderung neben dem Bache (Wandering by the brook)
Am Wasserfall (At the waterfall)
Erscheinung (Apparition)
Auf blumige Wiesen (On flowering meadows)
Auf der Alm (On the alpine pasture)
Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen (Lost in the thickets and undergrowth)
Auf dem Gletscher (On the glacier)
Gefahrvolle Augenblicke (Dangerous moments)
Auf dem Gipfel (On the summit)
Vision
Nebel steigen auf (Mists rise)
Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich (The sun gradually becomes obscured)
Elegie (Elegy)
Stille vor der Sturm (Still before the storm)
Gewitter und Sturm—Abstieg (Thunder and Tempest—Descent)
Sonnenuntergang (Sunset)
Ausklang (Waning tones)
Nacht (Night)