

SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

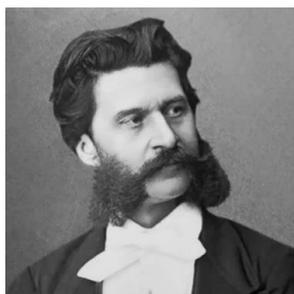
ABOUT THE MUSIC

VALLEY OF THE MOON MAY 7, 8 & 9

Program notes by Elizabeth Schwartz

JOHANN STRAUSS II

Overture to Die Fledermaus [The Bat], Opus 367



COMPOSER: born October 25, 1825, Vienna; died June 3, 1899, Vienna

WORK COMPOSED: 1874

WORLD PREMIERE: April 5, 1874, in the Theater an der Wien

INSTRUMENTATION: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, orchestra bells, snare drum, triangle and strings.

ESTIMATED DURATION: 9 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The name Strauss is synonymous with the Viennese waltz, and the combined efforts of this illustrious family made the waltz the most popular dance of all time. Headed by Johann Strauss the Elder, they included his oldest son Johann Strauss the Younger, known as “The Waltz King,” and his younger sons Josef and Eduard. The achievements of the Strausses began with Johann the Elder’s successful tours in the 1820s and 1830s with the Strauss Orchestra, performing his own waltzes throughout Europe. In 1833, a critic hailed Strauss the Elder as “the Mozart of the waltz, the Beethoven of the cotillons, the Paganini of the galop, the Rossini of the potpourri.” Thanks to the efforts of Strauss and his sons, the waltz was performed as much in the concert hall as on the dance floor.

Johann Strauss the Younger eclipsed his father and brothers to become the “The Waltz King.” His father did not want his sons to become musicians, but Johann the Younger studied violin in secret, and, like his father, performed with his own orchestra. It was only after Johann the Elder’s death in 1849 that Strauss the Younger was able to fully establish himself as a composer and conductor. Between 1860-1870, he wrote the majority of his most famous waltzes, including the *Blue Danube Waltz* and *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (1868). In 1863, he was appointed *Hofballmusikdirektor* (music director for court dances) and handed over his conducting duties of the Strauss Orchestra to his brother Josef. After 1870, Johann II turned his attention to stage music and light opera, of which *Die Fledermaus* [The Bat] is his most well-known work.

Die Fledermaus' plot centers around a lavish costume ball. In a manner reminiscent of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, numerous love triangles and mistaken identities occur at the festivities, where the title character, Eisenstein, dresses up as a bat. Eisenstein's bat costume conceals him from his wife Rosalinde and her maid Adèle, whose identities are also hidden by their costumes. All confusion is resolved the following morning, as the revelers toast to "King Champagne."

Although the audience enjoyed the comedic twists and engaging music, critics despised *Die Fledermaus*. Eduard Hanslick dismissed it as "a potpourri of waltz and polka motives," and another reviewer described Strauss' talent as "limited." Limited or not, the audience took to the opera immediately, as another reviewer observed: "One could get seasick in the orchestra stalls, as the people were swaying from side to side with the enchanting melodies."

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35



COMPOSER: born May 29, 1897, Vienna; died November 29, 1957, Hollywood

WORK COMPOSED: 1937-1945. Commissioned by violinist Bronislaw Huberman. Dedicated to Alma Mahler-Werfel (Gustav Mahler's widow).

WORLD PREMIERE: February 15, 1947. Vladimir Golschmann led the St. Louis Symphony with Jascha Heifetz as soloist.

INSTRUMENTATION: solo violin, 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, vibraphone, xylophone, celesta, harp and strings.

ESTIMATED DURATION: 24 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Erich Korngold was a man out of time. Had he been born a century earlier, his musical sensibilities would have aligned perfectly with the musical and artistic aesthetics of the Romantic period. Instead, Korngold grew up in the tumult of the early 20th century, when the Romanticism of the 19th century had been eclipsed by the horrors of World War I and the stark modernist trends of fellow Viennese composers Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern.

Korngold's prodigious compositional talent emerged early. At age 10, he performed his cantata *Gold* for Gustav Mahler, whereupon the older composer called him a genius. When Korngold was 13, just after his bar mitzvah, the Austrian Imperial Ballet staged his pantomime *The Snowman*. Rumors about the music's true author swirled around Vienna's musical circles, as some, refusing to believe a 13-year-old could create such polished work, claimed Korngold's father Julius was the actual composer. Julius, a renowned music critic, pointed out the ridiculousness of him critiquing others' music if he were in fact capable of writing music as good as his son's.

In his teens, Korngold received commissions from the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, pianist Artur Schnabel performed his Opus 2 Piano Sonata on tour, and Korngold began writing operas, completing two full-scale works by age 18. When he was 23, Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt* [The Dead City] brought him international renown; it was performed in 83 different opera houses.

By the end of 1919, in response to the unspeakable carnage and chaos wrought by the war, composers everywhere had found a new medium to express themselves: modernism. Music bristled with dissonance, unexpected rhythms, and often little that resembled a clear melody. Korngold's music, by contrast, reflected the style of an earlier, bygone era, and his unabashed Romanticism was dismissed as hopelessly out of date. Fortunately for Korngold, another forum for his lush, lyrical style simultaneously emerged: film scores. In 1933, director Max Reinhardt invited Korngold to write a score for his film adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Korngold subsequently moved to Hollywood, where he spent the next dozen years composing scores for 18 films, including his Oscar-winning music for *Anthony Adverse* (1936) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938).

While some composers and critics, then as now, regard film music as less significant than works written for the concert hall, Korngold did not. "I have never drawn a distinction between music for films and for operas or concerts," he stated, and his violin concerto bears this out. The concerto is a compilation of themes from several Korngold scores, including *Another Dawn* (1937), *Juárez* (1939), *Anthony Adverse* and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937). Korngold composed it for an old family friend, Polish violinist Bronisław Huberman. It was a running joke in the Korngold family that every time Huberman saw Korngold, he would demand, "Erich! Where's my concerto?" At dinner one evening in Korngold's house in Los Angeles, Korngold responded to Huberman's mock-serious question by going to his piano and playing the theme from *Another Dawn*. Huberman exclaimed, "That's it! That will be my concerto. Promise me you'll write it." Korngold complied, but it was Jascha Heifetz, another child prodigy, who gave the first performance. In his own program notes for the premiere, Korngold wrote, "In spite of its demand for virtuosity in the finale, the work with its many melodic and lyric episodes was contemplated rather for a Caruso of the violin than for a Paganini. It is needless to say how delighted I am to have my concerto performed by Caruso and Paganini in one person: Jascha Heifetz."

St. Louis audiences loved the concerto, but Korngold knew the gauntlet of New York critics were less likely to embrace it. Just as he expected, New York savaged it. One critic from the *New York Sun* made an offhand quip that has become indelibly attached to the concerto's narrative, whether you agree with it or not: he termed the work "more corn than gold." Such unanimous condemnation doomed the concerto to obscurity for some decades, but over time, violinists and conductors have come to see Korngold's Concerto as both technically and artistically worthwhile. Since Korngold's time, the status of film composers has also risen, thanks to the Academy Award-winning work of Bernard Herrmann (*Psycho*), John Williams (the *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Harry Potter* franchises; *Schindler's List*; *Memoirs of A Geisha*; amongst many others), Miklós Rózsa (*The Thief of Bagdad*, countless film noir classics including *Double Indemnity*, *A Double Life* and more), Ennio Morricone (many Italian spaghetti westerns, including the iconic score for *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*, *The Mission* and *Cinema Paradiso*, among many others, and, more recently, Icelandic composer Hildur Guðnadóttir, whose *From the Other Place* was featured on our March concert (she also wrote the Oscar-winning score to 2019's *Joker*). Today, performers, audiences and critics tend to make fewer arbitrary distinctions among genres. Instead, more people are embracing Duke Ellington's eloquent assessment of what makes any music worthy of our attention: "If it sounds good, it IS good."

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune [Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”] for Orchestra after Mallarmé], L. 86



COMPOSER: born August 22, 1862, St. Germain-en-Laye, France; died March 25, 1918, Paris

WORK COMPOSED: 1892-94

WORLD PREMIERE: Gustave Doret conducted the premiere at the Société Nationale de Musique in Paris on December 23, 1894.

INSTRUMENTATION: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, antique cymbals, 2 harps and strings.

ESTIMATED DURATION: 10 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

When *Prelude à l'Après-midi d'un faune* was first performed in Paris in December 1894, it sent musical shock waves around the world. Some 50 years after its premiere, the late conductor and composer Pierre Boulez wrote, “The flute of the Faun brought new breath to the art of music; what was overthrown was not so much the art of development as the very concept of form itself.”

Claude Debussy’s revolutionary music is based on the Symbolist writer Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem, “Afternoon of a Faun,” published in 1876. Both poem and music unfold without clear narrative; the kaleidoscopic nature of the text and music creates a succession of shifting moods and impressions, rather than a straightforwardly linear tale. In *Prelude à l'Après-midi d'un faune* and much of Debussy’s other music from this period, color and texture are the essential structural components of the music. When Mallarmé heard *Faune* for the first time, he exclaimed, “I was not expecting anything of this kind! This music draws out the emotion of my poem and gives it a background of warmer colors.” In *Faune*’s score, Mallarmé inscribed this verse: “Sylvan of the first breath,/If your flute were successful/In hearing all the light,/It would exhale Debussy.”

The compositional style Debussy employed in *Faune* came to be known as Impressionism, after the style of the Impressionist painters. Essentially French in its conception, Impressionistic music was seen as a direct challenge to the Germanic tradition, with its emphasis on formal structure and forward motion generated by harmonic movement.

At the premiere, the audience reacted with such overwhelming enthusiasm that conductor Gustave Doret was forced to perform an encore. Unlike the audience, critics were slower in catching on to the importance and brilliance of Debussy’s innovations. “[The Afternoon of a Faun] has a pretty sound, but there is not the least truly musical idea in it; it is no more a piece of music than the palette on which a painter has been working is a picture,” scoffed the musically conservative Camille Saint-Saëns. Saint-Saëns and other critics notwithstanding, audiences quickly made *Faune* Debussy’s most popular and best-known orchestral work, and it remains so today.

While Mallarmé’s poem is lengthy and effusive, at just under ten minutes, Debussy’s music is concise, while still effectively distilling and transforming Mallarmé’s sometimes heavy-handed imagery into subtle shades of color and texture. Mallarmé’s mythological faun is all lust and unrequited desire. He whiles away the languid torpor of a summer afternoon attempting to seduce two nymphs, and later ponders the alluring power of music. Debussy

made no attempt at a direct musical narrative; instead, he explained that the music connected “the successive scenes in which the longings and desires of the faun pass in the heat of the afternoon.” The closest Debussy comes to a specific connection with Mallarmé’s images is the famous solo flute introduction (the faun’s panpipes), which recurs periodically throughout. Debussy’s music later inspired ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, who made it into an iconic ballet in 1912, dancing the title role himself. Nijinsky’s choreography was groundbreaking, incorporating movement and gestures inspired by ancient Greek amphoras. In the ballet’s final moments, Nijinsky choreographed what may be the world’s first balletic orgasm, thrusting his hips into one of the nymph’s discarded shawls left on the ground.

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY

Valley of the Moon (World Premiere)



COMPOSER: born April 28, 1954, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

WORK COMPOSED: 2022

WORLD PREMIERE: Performed May 7, 2022, by the Santa Rosa Symphony, conducted by Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, at the Green Music Center's Weill Hall in Rohnert Park, California.

INSTRUMENTATION: Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 B-flat clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in C, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, finger cymbals, glockenspiel, large crash cymbals, large woodblock, piccolo snare drum, vibraphone, marimba, harp and strings

ESTIMATED DURATION: 30 minutes

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Multiple Grammy Award-winning composer Michael Daugherty has been praised by *The Times* (London) as “a master icon maker” with a “maverick imagination, fearless structural sense, and meticulous ear.” His orchestral music, recorded by Naxos, has received six Grammy Awards, including Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2011 for *Deus ex Machina* for Piano and Orchestra, and in 2017 for *Tales of Hemingway* for Cello and Orchestra. Recent commissions include new orchestral works for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Omaha Symphony, the Santa Rosa Symphony and a concerto for violinist Anne Akiko Meyers. The League of American Orchestras ranks Daugherty as one of the 10 most performed living American composers.

Born in 1954 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Michael Daugherty is the oldest of five brothers, all professional musicians. They grew up in a musical household, with a father who played the drums in dance bands and a mother who sang in musical theater productions. As a young man, Daugherty studied composition with many of the preeminent composers of the 20th century, including Jacob Druckman, Earle Brown, Bernard Rands and Roger Reynolds at Yale University (1980-1982), Betsy Jolas at the Paris Conservatory and Pierre Boulez at IRCAM in Paris (1979-1980) and György Ligeti in Hamburg (1982-1984). From 1980-1982, Daugherty was also an assistant to jazz arranger Gil Evans in New York.

After teaching from 1986 to 1991 at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio, Daugherty became Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he is a mentor to many of today’s most talented young composers.

Valley of the Moon for Orchestra was commissioned by the Santa Rosa Symphony, Francesco Lecce-Chong, Music Director and Conductor. The composer, who has provided his own program notes, writes:

“When visiting Santa Rosa in 2021, I spent several days driving the backroads of Sonoma County to experience the majestic redwood forests, the glorious coast of the Pacific Ocean, the Jack London State Historic Park in Glen Ellen and the coastal village of Bodega Bay where Alfred Hitchcock filmed *The Birds* (1963). This road trip became the inspiration for *Valley of the Moon*, a 30-minute musical composition in four movements:

- I. Out of the Fog
- II. Shadow of the Birds
- III. Air on the Redwoods
- IV. Call of the Wild

“In movements one and three, I create a lush and complex symphonic soundscape, exploring how music can enhance our appreciation of the natural world. 'Out of the Fog' is inspired by watching the fog slowly roll off the Pacific Ocean, as it brings much-needed moisture to valleys of agricultural fields and lush forests. 'Air on the Redwoods' is a bittersweet ballad to the giant redwood trees, nearly logged into extinction in the 20th century. These ancient trees are hundreds, even thousands, of years older than Bach's 'Air on the G String' (1731), which occasionally whispers through the branches of this movement.”

“In movements two and four, I create foreboding music warning us of the growing fragility of an endangered ecosystem. 'Shadow of the Birds' is a chilling musical homage to Hitchcock's film *The Birds*, where nature has gone amok as thousands of birds descend on Bodega Bay and relentlessly attack the residents. 'Call of the Wild' borrows a phrase from American author Jack London (1876-1916), who lived and farmed in Sonoma Valley. He was an early advocate for sustainable living to preserve the natural world. Perhaps, if we listen to the 'call,' there is still hope.”

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Elizabeth Schwartz is a writer and music historian based in the Portland area. She has been a program annotator for more than 20 years, and works with music festivals and ensembles around the country. Schwartz has also contributed to NPR's "Performance Today," (now heard on American Public Media).

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