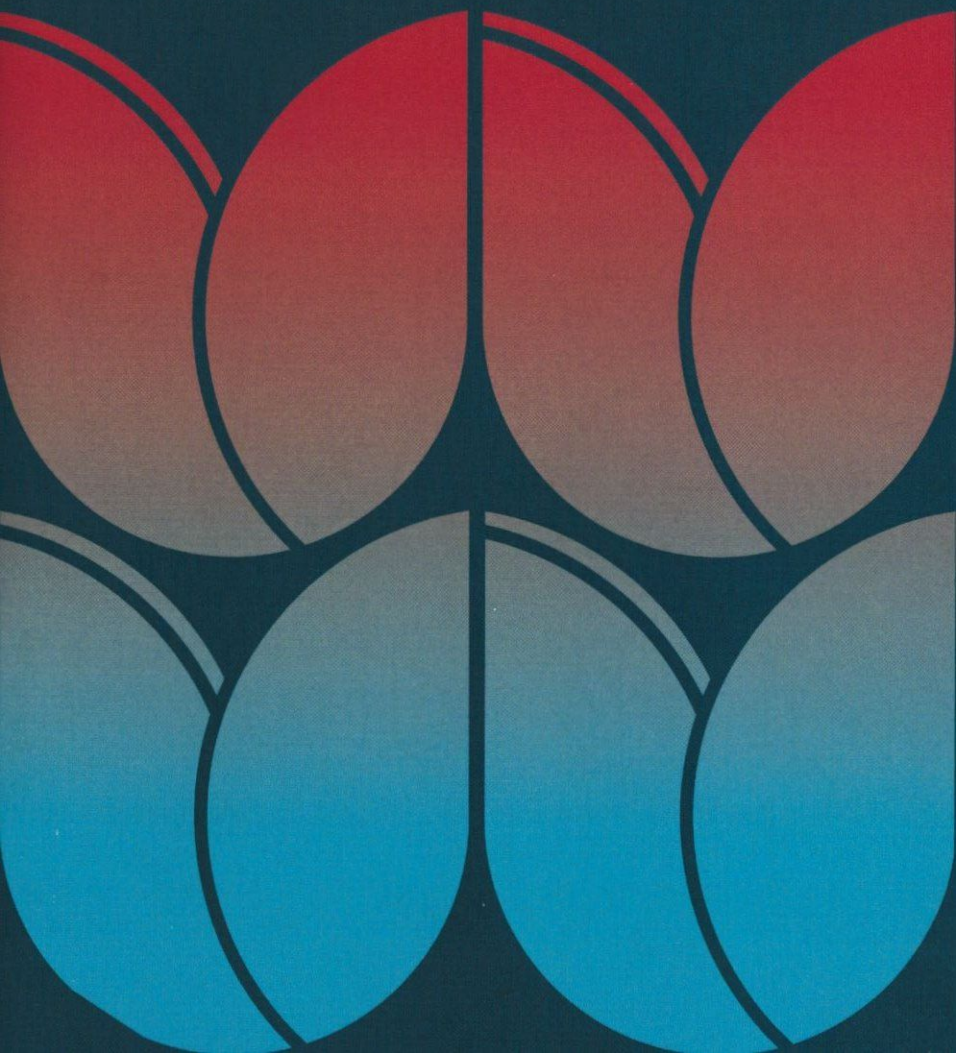


2018

BUFFALO



SUNDAY, JUNE 10

BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Lippes Concert Hall in Slee Hall, 2:30 PM

JoAnn Falletta, conductor

PROGRAM

David Felder
John Harbison
John Harbison

Six Poems from Neruda's *Alturas* (mvmts II and III)
Darkbloom: Overture for an Imagined Opera
Remembering Gatsby (Foxtrot for Orchestra)

PROGRAM NOTES

Felder, *Six poems from Neruda's Alturas*

The life of the Chilean diplomat and poet Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) was marked by literary success even before he reached the age of twenty. He was awarded the Lenin Prize for Peace in 1953 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.

Six Poems from Neruda's Alturas..., by American composer David Felder, was commissioned jointly by the New York State Council on the Arts and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. It received its first complete performance on March 16, 1993, in Buffalo. In recognition of Felder's deep interest in the symbolism of Neruda's poetry, Maestro Maximiano Valdes suggested the project in its current setting for full orchestra. Although the work was inspired by the poetry, little moment-to-moment correspondence exists between the music and the poetry.

In Neruda's poetry, a cycle of twelve poems, the first five serve as a kind of recapitulation of the various emotional and imagistic contexts of the poet's earlier work. The poet weaves together strands, images and themes such as reverence for the natural world, cyclical aspects of regeneration, irresistible death and its accompanying transience of the individual against the background of the collective vastness of time. This is continuously accompanied by a strong sense of individual isolation and alienation and a powerful feeling of loss and longing for a discovery of a greater identity.

These powerful and even disturbing images have led the composer to create a three movement work in which the first five poems with the ninth provide the primary imagistic sources. The second poem provides the backdrop for the first movement, while poems I, III, IV, and V form the basis for the extended second movement. The surreal and extraordinary ninth poem, with its highly repetitive rhythmic incantation of two interlocking metaphors per line, is the source for the third movement of the work.

As in the case of Neruda's poetry, the purely musical context is meant to suggest layers of meaning, and its syntax is correspondingly exploitive of a full range of

ambiguities and associations; an evocative atmosphere is suggested by the web of meanings encoded within these most remarkable poems. The composer has broken with the poet at the nadir of the poet's inward journey, and hopes to compose a companion work from that point of departure at a later date.

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Harbison, Darkbloom: Overture for an Imagined Opera is what persists of an opera project I chose not to continue. I am as reluctant as any artist to part with good material and... I am very fortunate to be able to collect up strands of the music in this overture.

Vivian Darkbloom is a secondary character in a famous and infamous American novel. I borrowed *Darkbloom* as a title because it effectively conjures up the mood of this overture. It serves as an emblem or anagram for the complex tragicomic spirit of the story and its author.

The overture begins with a theme, actually a weave of themes, associated with the male protagonist. Soon a long melody with simple accompaniment, allied with the young female lead, spins out until interrupted by a brief obsessive dramatic interlude, which concludes by alluding to the music of the opening.

Then comes a short balletic scene, in which two young women play tennis, interrupted by laughter, and eventually invaded by the observing, controlling presence of the man. The opening music is then, for the only time, elaborated, until replaced by the long melody, attenuated, interrupted by the obsessive outburst again, eventually dissolving into a frail epiphany.

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Harbison, Remembering Gatsby (Foxtrot for Orchestra)

Remembering Gatsby was composed for the Atlanta Symphony and is dedicated to the orchestra and its Music Director, Robert Shaw. It was completed during the summer of 1985 at Token Creek, Wisconsin.

For some years I made sketches for an opera based on Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*: after I abandoned the project I sometimes ran across musical images (in my sketchbooks) and fragrances from the novel (in my senses). A few of these were brought together in this orchestral foxtrot.

The piece, which runs about eight minutes, begins with a cantabile passage for full orchestra, a representation of Gatsby's vision of the green light on Daisy's dock. Then the foxtrot begins, first with a kind of call to order, then a twenties tune I had written for one of the party scenes, played by a concertino led by a soprano saxophone. The tune is then varied and broken into its components, leading to an altered reprise of the call to order, and an intensification of the original cantabile.

A brief coda combines some of the motives, and refers fleetingly to the telephone bell and the automobile horns, instruments of Gatsby's fate.

My father, eventually a Reformation historian, was a young show-tune composer in the twenties, and this piece may also have been a chance to see him in his tuxedo again.