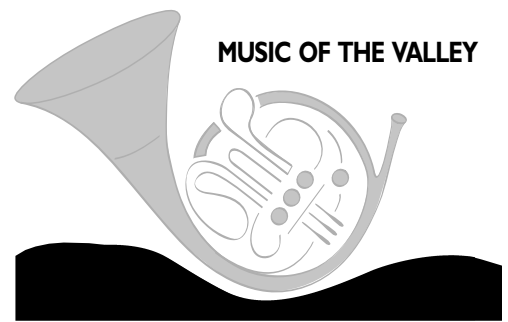


Livermore-Amador Symphony

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director & Conductor

March 26, 2011, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



Brahms's 4th and Joe Bonfiglio

The Wasps: Aristophanic Suite (1909)

1. Overture, Allegro vivace
2. Entr'acte, Molto moderato
3. March Past of the Kitchen Utensils
4. Entr'acte, Andante
5. Ballet and Final Tableau

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872–1958)

Clarinet Concerto (1948)

Slowly and expressively
Cadenza
Rather fast

Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

Joe Bonfiglio, clarinet

Goodbye

in memory of Benny Goodman

Gordon Jenkins
(1910–1984)
(arr. Bill Douglas)

Joe Bonfiglio, clarinet

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor Opus 98 (1884–1885)

Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Allegro giocoso
Allegro energico e passionato

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

CONDUCTOR

Arthur P. Barnes

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Robert Williams

FIRST VIOLIN

Anthony Doheny

Concertmaster

Norman Back

Phillida Cheminais

Jo Ann Cox

Judy Eckart

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VIOLA

Judy Beck

Principal

Frances Fischer

Chair

Audrey Horning

Goetz Leonhardt

Laura Gilliard Miller

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Hildi Kang

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Aaron Urton

Dave Walter

STRING BASS

Robert Cooper

Principal

Alan Frank

Ray Hoobler

Nick James

Patricia Lay

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PICCOLO

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OBOE

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TRUMPET

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***The Wasps:* Aristophanic Suite**

**Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872–1958)**

The great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams virtually defined the English symphonic music of the 20th century; his music reflects a profound English sensibility. He was born in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, where his father, the Rev. Arthur Vaughan Williams, was rector. Following his father's death, in 1875, he was taken by his mother, Margaret Susan Wedgwood, the great-granddaughter of the potter Josiah Wedgwood, to live with her family at Leith Hill Place, the Wedgwood family home in the North Downs. Amazingly, he was also related to the Darwins, Charles Darwin being a great-uncle. Ralph (pronounced *rafe*) was therefore born into the privileged intellectual upper middle class but never took it for granted and worked tirelessly all his life for the democratic and egalitarian ideals he believed in.

In 1904 he discovered English folk songs and joined the English Folk-Song Society. This form of music was fast becoming extinct, owing to the increase of literacy and printed music in rural areas. Vaughan Williams collected many songs himself and edited them to ensure their place in the English musical repertoire. He also incorporated some into his music, being fascinated by the beauty of the music and its anonymous history in the working lives of ordinary people.

Once Vaughan Williams had tapped into his country's rich vein of folk songs and the magnificent heritage of its Tudor-era music, he began developing a personal style, something that had previously eluded him. The warmth, spirituality, and humor of these sources played a significant role in many of his subsequent compositions.

In 1908, already in his mid-30s, Vaughan Williams spent three months in Paris studying orchestral technique under Ravel. Up until then, he had composed little apart from a few songs prompted by his interest in collecting English folk songs, and a couple of orchestral pieces (both subsequently revised). At the time, though, he was wrestling with his exceedingly ambitious First Symphony. Maybe this precipitated his retreat to Paris, feeling, as he did, that his "sound" was too impenetrable and lackluster and anxious to "acquire a little French polish."

Soon afterward (1909), he was invited to write incidental music for a Cambridge University production of Aristophanes' caustic satire on the Athenian judiciary, *The Wasps*. This, effectively his first venture into incidental music (for plays, radio, and films), contains astonishingly accomplished orchestral writing in which the obvious influence of Ravel is married to a rotund, expansive, thoroughly English humor.

Ravel recalled that Vaughan Williams was "the only one of my pupils who does not write my music." Well, neither did the ruggedly individualistic Vaughan William make any concessions to ancient Greece: The overture, the best-known part of the suite, shares with the rest of the *Aristophanic Suite* a flavor as far removed from ancient Greece as Down Ampney is from Athens.

The overture contains one little formal conundrum. Emerging from the menacing buzzing of the Athenian judiciary, the perky first subject is quintessentially "Olde English," leading smoothly into a vigorously fluid second subject—or does it? This could just as easily be a folk-song-like "verse and chorus." Some brief, waspish first-time bars let us enjoy the "puzzle" all over again. The perky tune relaxes for a long central episode on a seductive subject. What sounds like a return to the beginning of the piece brings in a brief development of the first tune, neatly varied from perky to skipping,

and involving a broad countermelody. The music boils up into a varied reprise of the first subject, and the third reappears in counterpoint with the perky tune before coming to an invigorating close.

The first "Entr'acte" is droll and mocking. It is followed by "March Past of the Kitchen Utensils," a scene in which a pot, a cheese-grater, a pestle, a brazier, and a water bowl testify against a dog accused of stealing some cheese and not sharing it. The second "Entr'acte" is ceremonial in nature and just a little pompous. The "Ballet and Final Tableau" is a jolly, rambunctious conclusion to this wonderful work. The whole suite is jam-packed with tunes that sound like English folk songs and dances but are entirely original to Vaughan Williams. It is no wonder that this suite is a great favorite of audiences though unfortunately not often performed in its entirety.

Clarinet Concerto

**Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)**

As Vaughan Williams took every opportunity to make British folk music the source for his compositional inspiration, so did Aaron Copland embrace the American heartland for his own compositional voice. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Copland became the quintessential American composer, crafting a style that is at once gentle and flamboyantly patriotic. The composer produced numerous works in this genre: three ballets (*Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, *Appalachian Spring*), an opera (*The Tender Land*), film scores (*Of Mice and Men*, *The Red Pony*, *The Heiress*), the stirring "Lincoln Portrait," the monumental Third Symphony (which incorporated the wartime "Fanfare for the Common Man"), and numerous short works. The Clarinet Concerto (along with the Third Symphony) is an example of an abstract score from Copland's Americana phase.

The jazz clarinetist and band leader Benny Goodman was a pivotal figure in 20th-century American music. Popularly known as the "king of swing," Goodman was an incredibly talented musician with awesome technique and brilliant command of his instrument. He was equally at home playing Mozart and von Weber concertos, chamber music, or big-band jazz standards. In his classical mode, Goodman worked with the greatest conductors of his day (Toscanini, Munch, Ormandy, Bernstein) as well as the legendary Budapest String Quartet. Some of the most important composers of the 20th century composed original works for Goodman, including Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, Leonard Bernstein, Morton Gould, and Copland.

Goodman commissioned Copland to write the concerto in 1947. While on tour in South America, Copland worked on a detailed first draft of the score. By late 1948, he had completed and orchestrated the concerto. Goodman hesitated in scheduling the premiere, concerned that his instrumental technique was not up to the virtuosic demands of Copland's piece. After some small revisions (mainly in the second movement), Goodman gave the first performance on November 6, 1950, in a national radio broadcast with the NBC Symphony conducted by Fritz Reiner. The first public performance was given on November 28, 1950, by Ralph McLane with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy.

The score is in two movements connected by a lengthy cadenza. The first, marked "slowly and expressively," is a gentle pastorale that recalls the serene, contemplative mood of the Grover's Corners theme from Copland's score for the film version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. This quiet rumination leads to a flashy cadenza—a supreme test of the solo instrumentalist's dexterity—which launches the rondo-finale. Copland freely channels

jazz and Latin American pop elements in this rhythmically vital, complex web of thematic strands. Since he was scoring this work for chamber orchestra, Copland achieves a percussive effect by having the bass players slap their instruments. The score concludes with a striking clarinet glissando.

Goodbye

Gordon Jenkins (1910–1984)

Gordon Jenkins started as a jack-of-all-musical-trades for a St. Louis radio station in the early 1930s—playing, conducting, arranging. He was hired by bandleader Isham Jones, who encouraged him to develop a tight, smooth ensemble sound that was very much in the “sweet” style of swing. By his mid-20s, Jenkins had become one of the leading arrangers of the day, working with Benny Goodman and ultimately writing such swing standards as “Goodbye,” which Goodman used for his closing theme and will serve as tonight’s “In memoriam” to the great clarinetist.

Jenkins moved to Hollywood and worked for Paramount Pictures for six years beginning in 1938 and then appeared with singer Dick Haymes on his radio series for nearly four years. Soon after joining Haymes, he also signed with Decca Records and began recording under his own name with a string orchestra and vocal chorus. Jenkins had several Top 10 hits in the late 1940s, including “My Foolish Heart,” “Maybe You’ll Be There,” “Bewitched,” and “Don’t Cry, Joe.” In 1948 he wrote and recorded a rather innovative piece, “Manhattan Tower,” that combined mood music, original songs, spoken narration, dialogue, and sound effects to tell the story of an ambitious young man making good in New York City business and society.

Jenkins followed up with what may become his best-remembered work, his collaboration with Frank Sinatra on one of Sinatra’s milestone Capitol albums of the late 1950s, *When No One Cares*. It is a deeply morose album, and Jenkins’ arrangements greatly enhance the somber mood. Jenkins went on to record several more albums with Sinatra in the 1960s after Sinatra founded Reprise Records, including one of his best-sellers, *The September of My Years*.

Prevailing styles left Jenkins behind by the late 1960s. Other than from stalwart supporters such as Sinatra, there were few calls for his lush approach.

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor Opus 98

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Brahms’ symphonies came into the world in complementary pairs. After the turbulent darkness-to-light drama of the First Symphony (completed 1876), Brahms was soon working on its successor (1877), which begins serenely and—however somber some of the vistas opened up along the way—ends in almost riotous good humor. The Third Symphony (1883) is based on a musical motto, F–A–F, standing for the German words “frei aber froh” (“free but happy”), an idea that is put to the test as the work progresses but that does seem at least partially vindicated at the close. Once again, the Third was hardly finished when the Fourth Symphony was beginning to take shape. Work took a little longer this time, and the score wasn’t completed until the summer of 1885. But once again the contrast in character is striking.

That might help explain why some of Brahms’ closest musical friends found the Fourth Symphony so difficult to grasp at first. The conductor Hans von Bülow’s initial report to his concert agent

was tight-lipped: “Brahms’ Fourth, E minor, seems to be difficult, very.” After having heard a preliminary play-through on two pianos, Brahms’ critical ally Eduard Hanslick admitted that “All through I felt I was being thrashed by two terribly clever men.” Brahms himself seems to have been uneasy about its potential reception. Writing to von Bülow from the Austrian Alpine resort of Mürz-zuschlag, Brahms wondered—only half jokingly—if the weather hadn’t had a negative effect on the music: “I’m afraid it takes after the climate in these parts—the cherries don’t get ripe here; you wouldn’t eat them!” The sour cherries image also turned up in a letter to another close confidante, Elizabeth von Herzogenberg: “In this region, the cherries do not grow ripe and sweet to the taste—if you don’t like the thing, don’t hesitate to say so.”

The Fourth is Brahms’ most intellectually taut and ingenious symphony. The first movement opens directly with the deceptively simple first subject. In this movement, Brahms reverses the usual characteristics of the first and second subjects, the first being lyrical and the second, announced by cellos and horns, being strong and masculine in character. A further unusual feature is that there is no repeat.

The development section is much concerned with the harmonic changes inherent in the first subject’s ninth bar and also the elaboration of the triplet fanfare and the mysterious passage of held chords above rising string figures first heard near the end of the exposition. The coda begins with a majestic restatement of the opening theme by cellos, double basses, and horns, answered in canon by the rest of the orchestra, and the music grows in intensity and power until the thrilling close.

The beautiful slow movement opens in the horns as if in C major, but the key of E major is established when the theme passes to clarinets over a steady pizzicato bass. The spacious second theme, in the cellos, is one of the loveliest and most expressive tunes Brahms ever composed. This is followed by the extrovert third movement, which is a true symphonic scherzo in all but name, enlivened by the use of piccolo and triangle.

The symphony then progresses to the mighty finale, a pas-sacaglia with an eight-note theme taken from the last chorus of Bach’s Cantata No. 150. Some years before, von Bülow had said to Brahms that Bach could not build up the necessary climax on this church cantata theme with voices alone, and Brahms, agreeing, said that a symphonic movement could be written on it if the theme were given a slight chromatic alteration.

The 30 variations on this short recurring bass melody, or *ground bass*, are one of the wonders of musical architecture and form a single mighty arch. Gone are the frivolous piccolo and triangle, and in their place, for the first time in this symphony, are the solemn voices of the trombones, and with drum rolls and pizzicato chords, the theme descends into the bass. The ensuing variations are grouped into three sections, the first rhythmic and with strong contrasts, the second beginning with a wonderful flute solo. Exquisite woodwind exchanges, a solemn trombone passage, and fierce subversion of the theme are just some of the landmarks of this colossal movement.

The Fourth Symphony is certainly somber, but not, in the final analysis, tragic. It fights to win and ultimately succeeds. Hanslick summed it up in his review of the first performance, in 1884: “It is like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back.”

Program notes compiled by Jeff Pelletier

Program booklet edited by Eva Langfeldt

JOE BONFIGLIO

Clarinet Soloist



Clarinetist Joe Bonfiglio holds a bachelor's degree from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree from the Juilliard School. He has taught on the faculties of the Peabody Preparatory School in Baltimore and the University of California, Santa Barbara. In addition to his many live performances, he can be heard on two CD's with the chamber ensemble "Departure" and on the film score to the Showtime movie *Fat Rose and Squeaky*.

NEXT CONCERT

MAY 14, 2011

HOLST'S PLANETS AND DALE WOLFORD

Holst: The Planets

Rachmaninoff: Vocalise
and

Villa-Lobos: Fantasia for Saxophone

Dale Wolford, soprano saxophone

Suppé: *Poet and Peasant Overture*

2011-2012 COMPETITION FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS

Sunday, October 2, 2011: Recordings Due

Sunday, October 23, 2011: Competition

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