Symphony Parnassus

STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Preben Antonsen

"Arthur Machen's Childhood"
World Premiere

Grace Williams

Trumpet Concerto
Mark Inouye, soloist

Shostakovich

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor

3 P.M. SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2019

S.F. CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

2018-19 SEASON PROGRAM 4

About Symphony Parnassus

"The best of the Bay Area's community musicians" —Michael Tilson Thomas

Longtime San Francisco residents may remember Symphony Parnassus's ancestor, the Doctors' Symphony, which began in 1965 when a few doctors' chamber groups coalesced for the first time into an orchestra. Lyn Giovanniello, a recent member of our string bass section, was drafted by the Doctors' Symphony to be their first conductor. The group met regularly and presented concerts at what was then UC Hospital through the 1970s. Almost a decade after that organization folded, biophysics graduate student and amateur cellist Jonathan Davis re-established it as the more community-oriented UCSF Orchestra. He obtained funding from UCSF and started giving concerts in the UCSF Gym in 1989. Davis was able to tap an enthusiastic, supportive pool of both amateur and professional musicians from the faculty, staff and student body of UCSF as well as the local community. The UCSF Orchestra quickly grew, attracted large audiences, and earned a reputation for outstanding performances.

After six years at the orchestra's helm, Jonathan Davis moved to Boston to pursue his career, and Jeremy Swerling was named music director. Two years later, the orchestra elected Stephen Paulson as its third music director. After being cut from UCSF's budget in 1999, the orchestra was reorganized as a nonprofit entity with the name Symphony Parnassus, to honor its roots in San Francisco's Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Symphony Parnassus continues to attract top musical talent from the local community. In addition to members of the UCSF community, the orchestra now includes corporate executives, IT specialists, engineers, scientists and educators, as well as music students and professionals.

Over the years, Symphony Parnassus has collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianist Robin Sutherland, violist Geraldine Walther, oboist William Bennett and sopranos Lisa Vroman and Hope Briggs. Ballet legend Rudolph Nureyev made his West Coast conducting debut with our orchestra. Famed jazz saxophonist and composer John Handy premiered his *Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra* with us. With its focus on local soloists, composers and visual artists, Symphony Parnassus continues to play a unique and vital role in the Bay Area's arts community.

For further information or questions, please contact us at:

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Program

3 p.m. Sunday, June 9, 2019

San Francisco Conservatory of Music
50 Oak Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Stephen Paulson, conductor

PREBEN ANTONSEN (b. 1991)

Arthur Machen's Childhood (2018)

15 minutes

GRACE WILLIAMS (1906–1977)

Trumpet Concerto (1963)

I. Andante con moto
II. Poco lento (Passacaglia)
III. Allegro con brio

Mark Inouye, soloist

14 minutes

— Intermission — 20 minutes

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 54 (1939)

I. Largo
II. Allegro
III. Presto

30 minutes

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices prior to the performance.

Musicians

Violin I
Vivian Ling,
Concertmaster
Katie Belleville,
Associate Concertmaster
Andrea Booth
Jessica Greer
Helene Grotans
Courtney Onodera
Mitchell Perilla

Violin II
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Principal
Jonathan Eldridge,
Associate Principal
Nina Bai
Jan Rhoades

Viola
Paula Karolak,
Principal
Tom Bodenheimer,
Associate Principal
Nick Blanchard
Michael Cook
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Donna Lim
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Cello
Jennifer Mathers,
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Naoko Maruko,
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Flute / Piccolo
Darcy Mironov,
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Jenna Mauro
Winslow Taub

Oboe
Steve Kim,
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Meave Cox
Wentao Jiang

English Horn
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Contrabassoon
Susan Dias

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Robin Varga

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Harp
Michael Steadman

Music Director

Stephen Paulson has been the music director of Symphony Parnassus since 1998. Devoted to creating the best possible experience for both players and audience, he has led the ensemble through a wide variety of repertoire, drawing on the classical canon as well as new compositions. A student of George Cleve, Paulson has appeared as a guest conductor with members of the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony and the New World Symphony.

Paulson joined the San Francisco Symphony as principal bassoonist in 1977. Since his 1978 solo debut, he has been a frequent soloist with the symphony, performing with conductors such as Kurt Masur, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christopher Hogwood and Helmuth Rilling. In 1995, he was one of four SFS musicians invited by Sir Georg Solti to perform with the World Orchestra for Peace, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2009, he was invited to be a mentor and participant in the world's first YouTube Symphony Orchestra Summit at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is also featured in the documentary series *Keeping Score,* created by Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony.

In 2011, Symphony Parnassus performed Paulson's own *Bassoon Concerto* with soloist Steven Dibner, SFS associate principal bassoonist.

Paulson has been a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1978 and has given master classes at schools around the world, including the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. He has taught and performed at many summer festivals, including Aspen, the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Music at Kirkwood and Music in the Vineyards.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Paulson studied bassoon with K. David Van Hoesen and Mordechai Rechtman and composition with Samuel Adler. From 1970 to 1977, he served as co-principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Prior to that, he was principal bassoonist with the Rochester Philharmonic from 1968 to 1970.

Guest Artist

Mark J. Inouye is one of a very select group of trumpeters equally at home in the worlds of jazz and classical music. Currently he is the principal trumpeter of the San Francisco Symphony, but has also held principal positions with the Houston and Charleston Symphonies. He has performed as a guest principal trumpet with the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony. As a soloist, he appeared with the Tanglewood Wind Ensemble under Seiji Ozawa in volumes 3 and 4 of the video production *Marsalis on Music,* performing the *Carnival of Venice Variations* and the Hummel Trumpet Concerto. He performed the Haydn and Tomasi Concertos with the New World Symphony and the Tartini Violin Concerto, arranged for trumpet, with the Houston Symphony. He has also appeared with the San Francisco Symphony as a soloist on numerous occasions, performing Bach's Cantata No. 51, Copland's *Quiet City,* the Haydn Trumpet Concerto, and the west coast premiere of Vassily Brandt's *Concertpiece No. 2* with orchestra. An active composer, Inouye has premiered two of his jazz compositions, *Find the Cheese* and *The Bull Behind the Horns - Jazz Suite,* on the San Francisco Symphony's Chamber Music Series; both of which are featured on his debut album *The Trumpet & The Bull.*

In addition to his appearances on the San Francisco Symphony's chamber music series, Inouye has toured internationally with the Empire Brass and Toccatas & Flourishes, an acclaimed organ and trumpet duo.

After attending The University of California at Davis as a civil engineer, Inouye transferred and graduated from the Juilliard School, where he was a founding member of the Juilliard Jazz Sextet at Lincoln Center. He has also appeared as a guest artist at the Playboy Jazz Festival and with The Who at Carnegie Hall.

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PREBEN ANTONSEN

Arthur Machen's Childhood (2018)

Preben Antonsen (b. 1991) composed today's opening piece, *Arthur Machen's Childhood,* between June and December of last year, on commission from Symphony Parnassus. The work is based on a passage from the opening pages of the novel *The Hill of Dreams* by Welsh fantasy and horror writer Arthur Machen (1863-1947). Published in 1907, but written at least eight years previous, the novel describes scenes and personal impressions from the childhood and youth of Lucien Taylor, its main character. The novel is autobiographical: its story of a boy who is drawn to mysteries and adventures off the beaten path closely resembles Machen's own youthful ramblings through the Monmouthshire countryside, with its ruins and artifacts of Celtic, Roman and medieval times. Regarded as one of Machen's masterpieces, *The Hill of Dreams* begins with the line "There was a glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened." Four paragraphs later appears the passage on which Antonsen based his composition:

On this summit oaks had grown, queer stunted-looking trees with twisted and contorted trunks, and writhing branches; and these now stood out black against the lighted sky. And then the air changed once more; the flush increased, and a spot like blood appeared in the pond by the gate, and all the clouds were touched with fiery spots and dapples of flame; here and there it looked as if awful furnace doors were being opened.

The wind blew wildly, and it came up through the woods with a noise like a scream, and a great oak by the roadside ground its boughs together with a dismal grating jar. As the red gained in the sky, the earth and all upon it glowed, even the grey winter fields and the bare hillsides crimsoned, the waterpools were cisterns of molten brass, and the very road glittered. He was wonder-struck, almost aghast, before the scarlet magic of the afterglow. The old Roman fort was invested with fire; flames from heaven were smitten about its walls, and above there was a dark floating cloud, like fume of smoke, and every haggard writhing tree showed as black as midnight against the black of the furnace.

When he got home he heard his mother's voice calling: "Here's Lucian at last. Mary, Master Lucian has come, you can get the tea ready." He told a long tale of his adventures, and felt somewhat mortified when his father seemed perfectly acquainted with the whole course of the lane, and knew the names of the wild woods through which he had passed in awe.

"You must have gone by the Darren, I suppose" – that was all he said. "Yes, I noticed the sunset; we shall have some stormy weather. I don't expect to see many in church tomorrow."

Antonsen's piece begins in turmoil. The music is jagged and volatile, with dense chords in the strings, spiky solos and ominous burbles down low. As this dies down, we hear an eerie trio of piccolos winding their way upward, flying in close tandem like mating moths, ascending out of sight. Two muted trumpets and harp intone a furtive, melancholy theme. A brief Adagio with dense curtains of sound, first in the strings, then in deep, dark piano chords with metal percussion, brings the first section to a close.

Arthur Machen, circa 1905

After a short pause, a low brass chorale depicting the "furnace doors" of the sunset brings sudden warmth; its building-block chords reach into high trumpet lines. The ensuing string and wind sonorities are thick but forward-moving, accumulating momentum. The piano again interrupts, with a wild variation on the furnace doors theme. The strings try to outdo the piano, quickening here and there into running eighth notes, interspersed with brass chorale chords and building to a brief minor-key climax. Piano and strings intone brighter sounds, with underlying major-key harmonies finally coming to the fore. Given Antonsen's complex chordal language, this music with its glowing major chords comes as clear sunlight. But it is soon cut short: a nasty percussion hit shatters the musical texture to shards. These quickly congeal and build, led by four rising trumpet lines marked *very menacing,* to a terrifying climax. In its aftermath, a series of dying chords descends to a low drone, which serves as underpinning for a new melody in a Celtic-sounding minor mode. Purer and sadder than anything prior, it is sounded first by the violas, then by the bass clarinet. A final peroration of soft chords and ascending winds fades away, as if summoning the spirits of the dead to rise from a quiet battlefield. The music ends in frost and ashes.

Arthur Machen's Childhood is scored for a large orchestra consisting of three flutes (all doubling piccolo), three oboes (3rd doubling English horn), three clarinets (2nd doubling E-flat clarinet, 3rd doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, suspended cymbals, tam-tam, piano and strings. It lasts about 15 minutes.

Program notes by Franklin Davis and Preben Antonsen

GRACE WILLIAMS

Trumpet Concerto (1963)

Welsh composer Grace Mary Williams (1906-1977), was born in Barry, a coastal town near Cardiff in Wales. Her parents, both teachers and amateur musicians, gave Grace an early start on piano and violin; she was soon playing trios with her father and brother, and working as accompanist for her father's choir. In 1923 she won a scholarship to Cardiff University; from there, she progressed to London's Royal College of Music, where she studied with Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob. In 1930 Williams traveled to Vienna for a year of musical study, and in 1932 she settled in London to begin her teaching career. When Germany bombed London in 1940, Williams and her class were evacuated and relocated to Lincolnshire. This is where she composed many early works, including her first symphony and what became her most popular orchestral piece, the *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* of 1941. She returned to her home town for good in 1947, her presence there helping to establish Cardiff as a center of music and art.

Williams produced highly original music in many genres, including two symphonies, a variety of orchestral works, an opera and a ballet, solo works or concertos for piano, violin, oboe and trumpet, chamber music, and, in true Welsh tradition, a lot of great choral music. Her music for the movie *Blue Scar* in 1949 was the first film score by a British woman. Through it all, Grace Williams became her country's most important female composer.

Grace Williams had a great affinity for the sea: as a teenager she would sit on the beach composing songs and dances, and later composed the evocative *Sea Sketches* for string orchestra. She also had a special fondness for the trumpet, so much so that her friends gave her the nickname "Grace the trumpet." The instrument figures prominently in her orchestral works, which often begin with bold trumpet calls.

In 1963, Grace Williams composed the haunting *Trumpet Concerto,* in three movements. It is dedicated to the famous British trumpeter, brass band director and music publisher Bram Gay (b. 1930). The initial *Andante con moto* progresses from a key center of A to one of B-flat. The movement's ethereal opening has the trumpet intoning pensive fanfare figures over a quietly pulsating accompaniment from strings and harp. The trumpet's light-footed fanfares (a couple of which recall Stravinsky's *Petrushka* trumpet theme) alternate with rhythmic, lyrical phrases, which float on a light orchestral accompaniment, though there are several *fortissimo* climaxes. The movement concludes with the solo trumpet's last fanfare line rising weightlessly to a high B-flat like a helium balloon disappearing into the distance. The flute plays a final fanfare figure, reaching a high D, positioned over a quiet B-flat major chord.

This leads without break into the dark *Poco lento* second movement. This passacaglia boasts a highly chromatic theme, played at the outset by mysteriously creeping low *pizzicato* strings; it employs all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, without sounding at all like what we know as twelve-tone music. Over this, a muted trumpet introduces a set of nimble rhythmic figurations. The texture thickens, and insistent timpani beats lead us into a death march, with high solo trumpet wailing up above. Softening, the music maintains its quietly dark march character under quasi-improvisatory trumpet perorations. It ends peacefully on a C major chord with solo trumpet coming to rest on a high E—which becomes the key of the next movement.

The *Allegro con brio* finale is where the concerto's big fireworks occur: the orchestra unleashes a series of stormy rhythmic figures in E minor, recalling Benjamin Britten's storm music for the opera *Peter Grimes.* Solo trumpet announces the arpeggiated 6/8 time main theme, riding the storm swells with dramatic flair. After this initial episode dies down, the soloist plays a series of quick triplet figures in 2/4 time, recalling the first movement's fanfares, over a quietly turbulent orchestral texture in 6/8 time. Several episodes follow, the main theme returning twice more in a somewhat loose rondo form. Though the texture lightens up considerably in places, the forward pulse of the music never lets up. The solo trumpet offers a display of virtuosic runs and high fanfares as it navigates the choppy orchestral waters to a quick, dramatic conclusion.

The *Trumpet Concerto* is scored for solo trumpet and an orchestra without trumpets: 2 flutes (2nd doubles piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubles English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, timpani, side drum, bass drum, cymbal, triangle, maracas, castanet, tambourine and strings. It is around 14 minutes long.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 54 (1939)

Premiered Nov. 21, 1939 in Leningrad by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mravinsky. Scored for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, cor anglais, 3 clarinets (3rd doubles Eb clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (3rd doubles contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare & bass drums, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, tam-tam, xylophone, harp, celesta, and strings. Duration: about 30 minutes.

Continued on page 10

"Music has a great advantage: without mentioning anything, it can say everything." - Ilya Ehrenberg, from the book *Testimony* by Solomon Volkov

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) was born in St. Petersburg (renamed Leningrad during the Soviet era). When, at age 9, he began piano lessons with his mother, young Dmitri demonstrated perfect pitch and a quick aptitude for music. As a teenager he played piano for silent film shows, helping to support the family. At 19, Shostakovich graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and in short order premiered his First Symphony, which, in 1926, propelled him to international fame. So began the career of the most brilliant, controversial, and persecuted Russian composer of the 20th century.

Shostakovich's career as a "hero of the people" continued to blossom, despite some official censure. The mid-1930s, however, saw his fortunes fall dramatically. His wildly successful opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk,* had its run suddenly cut short after Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin attended a performance in January 1936. Two days later, the infamous unsigned article "Muddle Instead of Music" (written under Stalin's direction) appeared in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda,* and Shostakovich was instantly branded an "enemy of the people." Those who drew the dictator's wrath—including many of the composer's friends and colleagues—were often taken away during the night and sent to their deaths in Siberian labor camps. Due to his international stature, Shostakovich was luckier than most. But after the attacks in the press, most of his friends feared associating with him, and he henceforth kept a packed suitcase beside his bed in case he was arrested in the night.

At this time, Russia was undergoing what was later called "The Great Terror." After staging an assassination attempt, Stalin "retaliated" with a level of repression rarely seen in human history. Declaring that five percent of the population was "unreliable," he ordered that the number of arrests must match this figure. Guilt was irrelevant; it was sufficient to round up several thousand people from a given town and march them off to the Gulags, where millions perished.

In this volatile climate, with a family to support, it was a matter of survival that Shostakovich try to appease the authorities. He succeeded, even redeemed himself, with what became his most admired work: the Fifth Symphony, composed and premiered in 1937, at the height of mass terror. The premiere, at which many in the audience wept, took place in Leningrad, a city that had suffered particularly harsh repressions. The Fifth was hugely successful. The regime was pleased that the rebel Shostakovich had knuckled under, even awarding him the Stalin Prize in 1940 for his Piano Quintet.

In September 1938, Shostakovich announced plans for his next symphony: an orchestral/choral "Lenin Symphony" in which he would draw upon Russian folk music and poetry to celebrate the memory of the great leader and founder of the USSR, Vladimir Lenin. Or, he may have been told to announce those plans. Shostakovich did write a new symphony, which, at its premiere, bore no resemblance to the epic work he had described. Moreover, he offered no explanation. He let his music do it—and it does, quite clearly and eloquently, give us an expression of the composer's true spirit.

"The majority of my symphonies are tombstones. Too many of our people died and were buried in places unknown...that's why I dedicate my music to them all." - Shostakovich, in *Testimony*

To many, Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony of 1939, premiered two years to the day after his Fifth, seemed to stand as a deformed child next to its predecessor. It had but three movements, the first being a long, sad, introspective *Largo,* followed by two short, quick ones: a heavy-handed waltz-scherzo and a boisterous galop. In its "headless" form, missing a traditional first movement, the symphony seems to portray the illogical and contradictory world of the Soviet Union during the Great Terror of 1935-1941. In its musical content, it powerfully expresses the composer's emotions during this hostile and fearful time.

Leonard Bernstein, speaking of the "secret confession in public" that is the Sixth Symphony's first movement, draws comparisons to Shostakovich's idol Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique.* It is also in B minor, and also has a long, despairing, self-confessional slow movement put out-of-place, this one as the symphony's final movement.

Shostakovich's Largo immediately grips us with a long, sinuous string melody, starting with a 4-note kernel motif: B-D-B-high B (up a minor third, down a minor third, up an octave) in a funereal dotted rhythm (long-long-short-long, after Chopin's famous Funeral March). The music builds to two terrible climaxes. During the second climax, bright french horns capped by shimmering strings offer an all-too-brief ray of hope, which then vanishes forever. Subsiding into dark meditations, the music recalls a funeral procession with that unmistakable rhythm, often played over a sustained *tremolo* in the strings. Prolonged soliloquies for piccolo, cor anglais and flute make use of another kernel motif, B-B-D-B, covering only a minor third in an equally funereal long-short-long-long dotted rhythm. A lengthy lamentation in the strings gives way to a dark soliloquy on bass clarinet. Somber woodwinds lead us into an otherworldly coda, where a high B minor string chord gradually fades away over Mahlerian timpani beats.

This is, to quote Bernstein, "abruptly followed by two comedy acts displaying the optimism of the good life in Soviet Russia: Hooray! Aren't we all having fun! It's a ball! It's all carnivals, fandangos and patriotic pleasures! In other words, pure hypocrisy…accurately reflecting the realities of Russian society in 1939." But even these two rather light and playful movements have their moments of terror: in the 3/8 time Allegro, the brass and percussion push the music to a crushing climax, from which the movement recedes quietly and unobtrusively to an innocuous, if graceful, dissolution. The finale, a galloping Presto that encases a grotesque waltz, also reaches quite an ugly climax before that waltz ends. It takes a stint in slow tempo for the music to regain its composure and proceed along its merry Presto way. For the final coda, a comic polka tune in the horns and trumpets, based on the minor-third kernel, incites the whole orchestra to have a rollicking last laugh.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

Meet the Musicians

Winslow Taub

Instrument: Flute / Piccolo
Hometown: Boston, MA
Joined Symphony Parnassus: 2017
Day job: Attorney

When did you start playing your instrument?
I started playing the flute when I was 9; I had played piano for a year, previously, but it never really appealed to me. A wind instrument sounded like it would be more fun, and my dad had an old Armstrong that he played growing up, so it wasn't hard to convince my parents. I started piccolo in middle school, and was able to play it quite a bit in high school and college.

What do you like best about playing your instrument?
You never have to worry about being heard! The piccolo part doesn't always have a lot of notes (the former piccoloist of the LA Phil used to read a book on stage during especially long rests), but the ones you have are usually pretty important. As the top of the range of instruments in the orchestra, your job is to contribute a touch of brightness—either a brilliant flash or a gentle shimmer.

Favorite book you've read recently:
Post Captain, by Patrick O'Brian. It's the second novel in a series of historical fiction set in England (and at sea) during the Napoleonic Wars. Funny, lovingly written, and full of fascinating details.

Cover Artist

Pam Berry is a working painter and art teacher based in San Francisco, California. Her broad knowledge of world art history and art appreciation serves as a visual and verbal scaffolding on which students can develop their imaginations and connect with the great human tradition of art making. Pam teaches to a wide array of skill levels and age groups. Please email her at berry64pam@gmail.com to inquire about private art or structured group lessons.

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Symphony Parnassus

STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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