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ACU Orchestra in Concert, with Dr. Steven Ward as Conductor

Abilene Christian University

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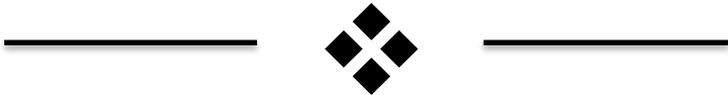
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THE ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

ACU Orchestra

Steven Ward,
Conductor

in concert



Tuesday, April 28, 2015

7:00 pm

Cullen Auditorium

Program

Desi

Michael Daugherty
(b. 1954)

Rise

Steven Bryant
(b. 1972)

Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88

Antonin Dvorak
(1841-1904)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso
- IV. Allegro, ma non troppo

Program Notes

Desi (1991)

Michael Daugherty

Desi was composed for and premiered by the Stephen F. Austin State University Symphonic Band, conducted by John Whitwell at the 1991 CBDNA in Kansas City, Missouri. Since then *Desi* has been widely performed in America by ensembles ranging from the U.S. Marine Band to the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and abroad by ensembles including the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, and the Zurich Tonhalle-Orchester.

This work is a tribute to the persona of Desi Arnaz (1917-87), who played the Cuban bandleader Ricky Ricardo alongside his wife Lucille Ball in "I Love Lucy," widely regarded as one of the most innovative television comedy shows of the 1950's.

The opening rhythmic motive is derived from the "Conga Dance" made famous by Arnaz when he sang and played bongos in Hollywood film musicals in the 1940's. In *Desi* the bongo soloist and percussion section provide a lively counterpoint to intricately structured musical canons and four-note cluster chords, creating polyrhythmic layers that intensify and build to a sizzling conclusion. *Desi* evokes a Latin sound punctuated by big band trumpets, trombone glissandi, and dazzling woodwind runs.

-Program note by the composer

Rise (2003)

Steven Bryant

Rise is an arrangement for strings of the first movement of my sax quartet of the same name. It is an entirely abstract piece of music, in that there was no extra-musical imagery or narrative structure present in my mind while I was composing the work. The music nevertheless has a clear direction, and its two

movements form a logical aural progression. The contemplative, lush *adagio* of the first movement [is a] cyclical progression [that] slowly evolves to a clear dramatic climax before descending.

Though *Rise* is not programmatic, I believe the connotation of the title, and the corresponding nature of the music, implies a clear, unsentimental sense of optimism and hope.

-Program note by the composer

Symphony No. 8 in G major, op. 88 (1889) Antonin Dvorak

“To Brahms [Dvorák] must have seemed almost the ideal musician, which Brahms himself was prevented from becoming through his being too heavily burdened with the past... Dvorák took over the heritage of absolute music quite naively, and filled its forms with an elemental music of the freshest invention, the liveliest rhythms, the finest sense of sonority – it is the most full-blooded, most direct music conceivable, without its becoming vulgar. He always drew from the sources of Slavic folk dance and folk song, much as Brahms had drawn from the German; the only difference was that with Dvorák everything was childlike and fresh, where with Brahms there was always an overtone of yearning or mystical reverence.” – Alfred Einstein, *Music of the Romantic Era* (1947).

Einstein may seem somewhat condescending (as Brahms himself can sound), with the “child of nature” stuff, but he does concisely state a major difference between the two composers – one which caused them to admire each other so greatly and which kept them at the same time from emulating each other. They appreciated each other’s individuality, the occasional echoes of Brahms in Dvorák’s music notwithstanding.

From the mid-1880s on, Dvorák wisely accepted invitations to conduct his own works abroad and to “appear” in all the right places – becoming a celebrity in the process. He was no longer “Brahms’ man,” as he had still largely been only a few years before, but very much his own man, in part due to the successes in

England of his *Stabat Mater* – a positive sensation in “the land of great choirs, of mighty oratorio performances,” in Paul Stefan’s resounding words; the String Sextet; the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies; and the second set of Slavonic Dances. The British love affair with the erstwhile butcher’s apprentice from the Bohemian provinces knew no bounds, and indeed they remained faithful even after Dvorák’s name and works were subjected to the marginalization outside Eastern Europe that took place after 1919 and from which they did not emerge until after the Second World War.

The English were, in Alec Robertson’s words, “quick to welcome a composer who had got away from the conventional musical utterance of the time, while those of them who felt bound to wait until a sign had been given from on high received the imprimatur of Brahms with relief...”

Whereas the Seventh Symphony, Op. 70, had in fact been commissioned by the London Philharmonic Society, which in 1884 had made Dvorák an honorary member, the G-major Symphony’s English connections are more tenuous – although it, rather than Op. 70, was at one time labeled the “English” Symphony. This is explained, although hardly validated, by the fact that the first publisher of Op. 88 was Novello of London. This came about when Simrock, Dvorák’s regular publisher, had turned it down (as he had some other of the composer’s large-scale works) because he was interested in turning a quick profit, possible only with the smaller pieces with which Dvorák had earlier made his name.

Of the Symphony’s background, the great Dvorák authority Otakar Sourek (1883-1956) wrote in one of his indispensable commentaries on the composer’s music: “In communion with nature [at his country home, in the Bohemian village of Vysoka], in the harmony of its voices and the pulsating rhythms of its life, in the beauty of its changing moods, thoughts came more freely to a mind that was unusually receptive at the time to all experience. Here he absorbed poetical impressions... here he rejoiced at life... and grieved at its inevitable decay.... Two characteristic qualities give the G-major Symphony the hallmark of Dvorák creation:

above all, the variety of mood and the emotional eruptiveness which were so typical of [his] human and artistic personality, and which are not to be denied in this symphony... and the composer's Slavic origins, which are manifested more completely here than in any of his other symphonies."

The first movement opens with a broad, dignified melody proclaimed by cello, clarinet, bassoon, and horn – which becomes a sort of motto, heard again at the start of the exposition, development, and recapitulation, and before the final “eruption” of energy in the finale. This opening G-major theme is pushed aside by the solo flute's delectable dance tune in the same key. The ensuing material unrolls with tremendous energy and considerable tension, but the mood of joyous revelry is never far from the surface.

The Adagio is a solemn idyll, whose first theme is succeeded by a broad, lyrical inspiration quite in a class with the slow movement of its predecessor, the Brahmsian Op. 70. Sourek – romantically, evocatively, as ever, observes: “It is as if the composer were resting at the foot of some old ruin whose blurred outlines rise against a sky from which daylight is rapidly fading, calling forth that strange melancholy which the contemplation of deserted human habitation and even the shadow of past glory raises in our breast.”

The third movement is in effect the scherzo of the Symphony, but in waltz time, a flowing, elegantly voluptuous creation, until its final, eruptive (again) measures, which prepare us for the finale: a raucous folk festival announced by the trumpets' call to arms, then a full stop to recall the luscious G-major theme of the Symphony's opening, and we are off and hectically running, via a series of boisterous variations ending in a whiplash final burst of energy.

The first performance of Op. 88 was given by the National Theater Orchestra in Prague in February of 1890, conducted by the composer, with performances following quickly – likewise under the composer – in London and Frankfurt.

-Program note by Herbert Glass, LA Philharmonic

Personnel

Violin I

Sean Estes, concertmaster
Claire Warlick
Chanel Brown
Emily Guajardo
Julie Taylor
#Thomas Roberts

Violin II

McKenzie Meenan, principal
Regina Nieman
James Mallon
Destiny Bennett
#Charles Robinson
#Sarah Reason

Viola

Nattapat White, principal
Katherine Kinnaman
*Mark Riggs
*Susan Teel

Cello

Roger Gee, principal
Chris Campbell
Zach Carstens
Ruth Martin
Reagan Dukes
Steven Yang
Erin Miller

Bass

Gao Catchawarat
Nicholas Grandell

Piano

Robert Hull

#Guest Musician
*ACU Faculty

Flute

Hannah Hamilton, co-principal
Dakotah Martinez, co-principal
Meredith Sellers (picc)

Oboe

Megan Cromis, principal
Abby Alford (+English Horn)
Parker Gordon (+English Horn)

Clarinet

Dayna Coppedge, principal
Megan Cooper (+Bass Clarinet)
Danna Swearingen

Bassoon

Janelle Ott, principal
Rachel Sakakeeny

Trumpet

Andrew Penney, principal
Cedric Dario
Grayson Hancock
Jordan Morris

Horn

Stephanie Bradley, principal
Daniel Archer
Kristen Clemons
Justin Rangel

Trombone

Geoffrey Driggers, principal
Ben Kimble
George Galindo (Bass)

Tuba

Taylor Lovett

Percussion

Jonathan Dannheim
Robert Herrera
Travis Houy
Austin Lemmons

Upcoming Events

Choirs Concert

April 30, 7:30 pm
Recital Hall

Brown Bag Concert

May 1, 12:00 pm
Cullen Auditorium

