

MONTEREY SYMPHONY
PRESENTS

SOUND WAVES

Sunset Center, Carmel 2018-19 Max Bragado-Darman *Music Director*



SOUND WAVES

CONCERT PROGRAM 3 FEBRUARY 16–17, 2019

THIS CONCERT IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY
WILLIAM AND NANCY DOOLITTLE

Max Bragado-Darman, conductor

PROGRAM

The Oceanides, Op. 73 Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33a Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

- I. Dawn – Lento e tranquillo
- II. Sunday Morning – Allegro spiritoso
- III. Moonlight – Andante comodo e rubato
- IV. Storm – Presto con fuoco

INTERMISSION

Escales (Ports of Call) Jacques Ibert (1890–1962)

- I. Rome – Palermo. Calme
- II. Tunis – Nefta. Modéré, très rythmé
- III. Valencia. Animé

La Mer, L. 109 Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

- I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer (From dawn to midday on the sea)
- II. Jeux de vagues (Play of the Waves)
- III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer (Dialogue of the wind and the sea)

KAZU will be rebroadcasting the Saturday, February 16th concert on both
Saturday, March 2nd at 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 3rd at 4:00 p.m.

CONCERT

PROGRAM NOTES

BY ALICIA MASTROMONACO

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

The Oceanides (*Aallottaret* in Finnish), is a tone poem by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. It was commissioned by Yale composition professor Horatio Parker (acting on behalf of New England patrons Carl and Ellen Stoeckel), and premiered at the Norfolk Music Festival in 1914. At first, Sibelius was asked to write a piece for the festival, but his role expanded to not only compose the piece that would eventually become *The Oceanides*, but to also conduct an entire concert of his music. At the end of his stay, he would receive an honorary doctorate from Yale. Sibelius had already submitted a version of his piece (which is one of the three versions in existence), but upon learning about these new responsibilities, decided to revise and expand *The Oceanides* into the work it is today.

The piece involves two subjects, or musical characters. The title characters, Oceanids, are mythological Greek Nymphs who inhabit the Mediterranean Ocean. They are the 3,000 daughters of Titus Oceanus and Tethys. The other character is, as one might expect, the sea itself. The ocean makes its first appearance with the entrance of two flutes in the beginning of the piece, and the Oceanids first arrive

with the entrance of the oboe and clarinet. Although these two characters do not intersect musically throughout the piece, they play off each other, their juxtaposition creating a narrative-like structure to the tone poem. The piece swells and crashes, and returns to peaceful waters, mimicking the movement of the sea in musical form. 🌊

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

English Composer Benjamin Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* are excerpted from his famous opera, *Peter Grimes*. The title character, a fisherman, lives in a small village where he is widely reviled, ostracized, and ultimately driven to commit suicide by sailing his boat out to sea. This is not to say that Grimes is a blameless protagonist; on the contrary, two of his apprentices die in dubious accidents at sea, and Grimes does little to ingratiate himself to his fellow villagers. Benjamin Britten, a closeted gay man who was not legally allowed to show his relationship with his partner, the English tenor Peter Pears, often chose themes for his operas that could serve as allegories for the outcast individual in a closed society. Britten wrote, "the more vicious the society, the more vicious the individual," a sentiment echoed in the plot of *Peter Grimes*.

The four sea interludes are interspersed throughout the opera and propel the plot forward. The first sea interlude, "Dawn," flows from the duet between Peter Grimes and Helen Orford, who sing, "My/Your voice out of the pain/ is like a hand/ That you/I can feel and know:/ Here is a friend." The interlude depicts the sea in the early morning light as the ocean awakes, stretching its briny tendrils toward the shore and quickly receding. None of these interludes, of course, is truly naïve to the perils of the sea, and beneath the charming running lines of the flutes and violins loom ominous brass chords, a premonition of later events. The second interlude, "Sunday Morning," chimes brightly, with the four horns sounding the church bells to beckon the townspeople to church. However, even on the day of rest, the bustling runs carry an ominous weight, and the bright bell tones from the horns melt into more portentous tolling in the percussion. "Moonlight," which opens Act III, stumbles lugubriously at first, as if the ocean were half frozen. As the melodic line ambles upward, Britten builds tension through a series of suspensions, never resolving fully, but pushing toward an endless horizon. The final interlude, "Storm," finally tears

off all semblance of a calm, happy, small town. The ocean rages. As with many storms, there are moments of respite, when the orchestra recapitulates Peter Grimes's earlier passage: "What harbour shelters peace away from tidal waves,/ away from storms,/ What harbor can embrace terrors and tragedies?" The brass and percussion return with thunderous volume, as the woodwinds and strings shriek with gale-force winds. These sea interludes are integral to the opera *Peter Grimes*, but they have also formed one of Benjamin Britten's most performed orchestral works. 🌀

JACQUES IBERT (1890-1962)

Parisian composer Jacques Ibert (1890-1962), wrote *Escales* as a sonic postcard of the Mediterranean cruise he and his new wife, Rose-Marie Veber, a sculptor, took for their honeymoon. This was one of the pieces in Ibert's 1922 portfolio during his residency as a *Prix de Rome* winner, so Ibert made sure to include his most evocative harmonies, textures, and tone colors in the large-scale late romantic work.

The first movement evokes the waters from Rome south to Palermo, and Ibert brings out the capricious nature of the Mediterranean Sea, from the calm lapping of the waves in the opening, to the crashing of waves on the shore. The second movement depicts the Tunisian cities of Tunis on the coast, and Nefta, 300 miles inland. Ibert utilizes vaguely exoticist compositional tropes (exoticism was very popular in French musical society at the time), through the opening "snake charmer"-esque melody in the oboe, accompanied by col legno (tapping the wood of the bow on the strings) and pizzicato (plucked) strings. The third movement, full of "Iberian character," takes place in Valencia, and crescendos to a fiery Spanish-style finale, catapulted with castanets, snare drum, and tambourine. 🌀

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1919)

French composer Claude Debussy was the son of a sailor, and although he did not follow in his father's footsteps, perhaps the closest he came to a life at sea was his composition named after it. *La Mer*, subtitled "Three Symphonic Sketches," meanders, crashes,

flows, and bubbles through the three movements, each evoking a separate element of the sea. The work caused quite a controversy at its premier. It was indeed difficult for the Parisian orchestra to play (Debussy wrote a letter to Stravinsky complaining that the string section had tied white handkerchiefs to their bows in protest), and the audience did not appreciate Debussy's structural or tonal liberties. But what truly caused outrage at the premier had little to do with the music. Parisian audiences loved a good scandal, and Debussy was having an affair with Emma Bardac, who was expecting a child with the composer. Thankfully, the outrage over Debussy's personal life quickly subsided, and *La Mer* has since enjoyed the very popular reception it deserves.

Each of the three movements has wonderfully descriptive titles. The first, "From Dawn to Midday on the Sea," begins quietly, with bubbling strings and harp, but oscillates between calm and roiling seas. "Play of the Waves" juggles thematic snippets between the instruments of the orchestra, combining and separating the timbres in the way the sea changes color depending on how the sunlight glints off its surface or pierces through its depths. "Dialog of the Wind and the Sea" paints a sonic picture of a storm at sea, the winds battering against tumultuous waves.

Debussy's music has often been compared to the impressionist movement in visual art. While Debussy was certainly influenced by the works of the French impressionists, he was also inspired by English painter J.M.W. Turner and Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai, whose painting "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," was printed on the cover of the first published version of *La Mer*. 🌊

[READ ALICIA'S BIOGRAPHY ON PAGE 33](#)



Alicia has played with the Monterey Symphony since 2007. She is also a member of the Carmel Bach Festival and Marin Symphony. A San Francisco native, she began her music studies at age seven on the piano, and took up the horn after switching from the trumpet in her middle school band program. She earned Bachelors of Music degrees in Horn Performance and Musicology from Boston University, and did graduate work at the Universität der Künste Berlin before returning to California to continue her studies. She earned a Masters of Music degree at UCLA in Horn Performance, a Masters of Arts degree in Musicology at UCSB, and is currently working on her PhD at UCSB. Alicia's dissertation is focused on the daily lives of orchestral musicians and the organizations in which they play, and she is using her dissertation to explore the relationships between regional orchestras and their communities. Alicia is an avid outdoorsperson and animal lover.

