

MONTEREY SYMPHONY
PRESENTS

SOUND WAVES

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



SOUND WAVES

CONCERT PROGRAM 4 MARCH 16–17, 2019

THIS CONCERT IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY
LEE AND SHIRLEY ROSEN

Jung-Ho Pak, guest conductor
Christopher S. Lamb, percussion

PROGRAM

And God Created Great Whales, Op. 229, No. 1 Alan Hovhaness (1913–1976)

Water Concerto Tan Dun (1957–)

Prelude: Largo molto rubato

I. Adagio molto misterioso

II. Andante molto animato

III. Allegro molto agitato

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 9, Op. 70 Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

I. Allegro

II. Moderato

III. Presto

IV. Largo

V. Allegretto – Allegro

KAZU will be rebroadcasting the Saturday, March 16th concert on both
Saturday, March 30th at 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 31st at 4:00 p.m.

CONCERT

PROGRAM NOTES

BY ALICIA MASTROMONACO



ALAN HOVHANESS (1911-2000)

And God Created Great Whales was premiered in 1970 by Andre Kostelanetz and the New York Philharmonic at one of the summer Philharmonic Promenade concerts. The conductor, inspired by the recordings of whale songs captured by Roger Payne and Frank Watlington (later released in the famous album *Songs of the Humpback Whale*), commissioned Armenian-American composer Alan Hovhaness to incorporate these songs into a piece.

Kostelanetz had reservations about the piece at first, questioning Hovhaness's use of pentatonic scales, commonly found in East Asian music. Hovhaness recalled in an interview that Kostelanetz complained (using vocabulary from that era), "but that idea is too Oriental. The whales don't sing Oriental music." But Hovhaness heard the whale songs as clearly pentatonic and incorporated a pentatonic theme from one of his early operas into the work. Today, *And God Created Great Whales* has become one of the composer's most famous works. Originally the composer wanted the orchestra to play the whale songs on their instruments instead of the recording (listen for whale-glissandi in the trombones), but Kostelanetz insisted on the recorded sounds as well.

Hovhaness writes about his piece, "Free rhythmless vibrational passages, each string player playing independently, suggest waves in the vast ocean. Undersea mountains rise and fall in horns, trombones, and tuba. Music of the whales also rises and falls like mountain ranges. Song of a whale emerges like a giant mythical sea bird. Man does not exist, has not yet been born..." The first reviews of *And God Created Great Whales* were less than enthusiastic. Donal Henahan, writing for the *New York Times* in 1970, appropriately utilized cetacean imagery to describe the premiere: "The Hovhaness score provided a few impressive spoutings, but was overmatched." Larry Rohter, writing later in the *New York Times*, asserted that the piece could "veer toward kitsch," but later reviews have praised the piece highly, particularly for bringing attention to the plight of the largest

mammalian inhabitants of the sea. The calls of the whales in the piece might resonate even more for this Monterey County audience, whose bay is home to humpback whales for part of the year. 🐋

TAN DUN (1957-)

Tan Dun is a Chinese-American composer who grew up in a rural village in Hunan Province during the Cultural Revolution. His childhood was spent playing folksongs and the fiddle in a local Beijing Opera troupe, rather than learning the Western Art Music canon. Famously, when he was asked to play something by Mozart at his audition for the Central Conservatory in Beijing, he replied, “Who’s Mozart?”. Since then, Tan has become one of the more famous composers to come out of China, composing, among many other pieces, the score for the award-winning film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Water Concerto for water percussion and orchestra was commissioned by Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic, and was premiered in 1999 with principal percussionist Christopher Lamb. Lamb mentioned in an interview that Tan heard the different percussive sounds and pitch bending as the imitation of the tones of the Chinese language. Tan Dun writes, “In Hunan, water was a daily thing with our life. Every day we washed everything with the river. All the old women, they always went to river for laundry, making a beautiful sound, very rhythmic. So I transpose those memories of beautiful laundry sounds, and swimming sounds, body popping sounds, water dancing sounds, water teasing sounds, water popping sound, into my orchestrations.” For Tan, water “always reminds me where I came from and where I want to go.”

The piece calls for a multitude of percussion instruments as well as extended musical techniques from the orchestra. The winds and brass are asked to play on their reeds or mouthpieces alone, separated from their instruments, and the strings use several extended techniques. This is also one of the few orchestral pieces that requires the members of the orchestra to sing. Listen for quiet humming a minute or so into the piece. There are many sounds and instruments that rarely make

their way on to the concert stage, such as waterphones (which open the piece), Agogo bells, sieves, slinkies, and various gongs, bottles, and bowls. The piece is a visual as well as an aural delight, and it is exciting to connect the sounds with visual cues.

In addition to the wide variety of percussive sounds, Tan incorporates his childhood memories of Chinese folk songs and Beijing Opera to create a piece that melds innovative musical ideas with Chinese folk melodies, symphonic instrumentation with brand new instruments, and orchestral structure with improvisatory passages, all of which flow together to create an evocative watery soundscape. 🌀

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

There is much speculation and analysis surrounding the composition and reception of Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony. The narrative often points toward Shostakovich's decreasing ability to hide his displeasure with Stalin and the Soviet government. After the enormous success of his Seventh Symphony, "Leningrad," and his Eighth Symphony, Shostakovich came under intense scrutiny for his Ninth Symphony, which, rather than serving as a glorification of Soviet victory in WWII (as Shostakovich was expected to write), served as a reminder of the tenuous life of an artist in the Soviet Union at the time.

In one of his early letters about the symphony, Shostakovich asserted, "I would like to employ not only full orchestra but a choir and soloists, if I can find a suitable text; in any case I don't want to be accused of drawing presumptuous analogies" (to Beethoven's 9th great Symphony, of course). However, after abandoning his first sketches of the work, Shostakovich finished a manuscript that, in the words of Shostakovich biographer Elizabeth Wilson, "was an about-turn typical of Shostakovich's paradoxical nature. It caused consternation in official circles for failing to be a grandiose hymn extolling Soviet victory over the Germans. Its light-hearted parodying tone was obviously open to misinterpretation." Shostakovich's "paradoxical" nature comes to the fore in this symphony, which runs the gamut of emotive qualities.

Today, the piece seems incongruous to some, for it does not have the same gravitas in the first movement as either the Seventh or Eighth Symphonies, but is almost reminiscent of a toy soldier playing at war. The other movements vacillate between moods, almost erratically. The second movement displays a melancholic solemnity with the growing tension in the woodwinds and viscous strings, whereas the spritely third movement is almost childlike in its exuberance. The fourth movement opens with a sinister brass call, followed by a doleful quasi-improvisatory bassoon passage. That same somber bassoon solo tumbles, almost facetiously, into the cheeky fifth movement. Stalin did not approve of the work. Shostakovich had created a symphony in his own voice, but did not deliver the celebratory, large-scale symphonic blow-out that Stalin expected. Although after its premier in 1945, the symphony was well-received by critics, by 1948 the piece was banned by the Glavretkom, the central censorship board, despite its nomination for the Stalin Prize in 1946. The piece was again allowed for public Soviet broadcast and consumption by 1955. 🌿

ALICIA MASTROMONACO

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.

