



2023-2024 SEASON

JAYCE OGREN, MUSIC DIRECTOR



SANTA LUCIA

March 16 & 17, 2024

SUNSET CENTER, CARMEL

Jayce Ogren, Music Director and Conductor

Orli Shaham, piano

Overture to *Don Giovanni*, K. 527
[running time 7']

Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart (1756-1791)

Light Forming
(West Coast premiere) [21']

David Robertson
(b. 1958)

I: "...la musique incertaine
de leur voix..."

II: Anfore del cuore

III: Rounding to Joy

INTERMISSION [20']

Lyric for Strings [6']

George Walker
(1922-2018)

Piano Concerto No. 20
in D minor, K. 466 [30']

Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart (1756-1791)

I: Allegro

II: Romanze

III: Rondo, allegro assai

*The March concert will be rebroadcast on KAZU's HD2 Classical station on
April 6, 2024, and April 7, 2024, both at 4 PM.*

PROGRAM NOTES

By Dr. Alicia Mastromonaco
March 16 & 17, 2024

SANTA LUCIA (Light)



The Santa Lucia Preserve stretches from Carmel south to San Luis Obispo County. *Lucia* is Latin for “light,” and Santa Lucia was famous for lighting her way to Christians hiding in Roman catacombs by wearing a candlelit wreath. Music Director Jayce Ogren compares the works on this program to the artistic technique of *chiaroscuro*—light and shadow. It is a concert that invites listeners to meditate on important relationships that are full of light, as well as those that are full of darkness.

Overture to *Don Giovanni*, K. 527

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)



Both of the pieces by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) on this program were not only written in the same year, 1787, but have similar juxtapositions of comedy and tragedy, hyper dramatic action and sublime beauty. Mozart’s collaborator Lorenzo Da Ponte’s libretto is a retelling

of the already centuries-old tale of the conquests of Don Juan. In the final act of the opera, Don Giovanni is dragged down to hell by the marmoreal Comendatore, after refusing to repent for his sins throughout the opera. The music for this scene is also the opening of the overture; in it, the Comendatore sings, “*Don Giovanni, a cenar teco m’invitasti, E son venuto*,” (“Don Giovanni, you’ve invited me to dinner, and here I am”). From the first notes of the overture, Mozart sets the listener’s expectations for Don Giovanni’s eventual demise.

Light Forming

David Robertson (b. 1958)



Most concertos are composed with a specific soloist in mind, even if the composer does not work closely with the intended soloist during the composition process. However, few concertos are written specifically for a spouse. Composer and conductor David Robertson (b. 1958) wrote *Light Forming* for his wife, Orli Shaham, who is performing it with the Monterey Symphony.

Robertson studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London, but much of his career has been dedicated to being a conductor with orchestras such as the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, where he and Shaham met in 1999 when he was conducting her performance of Chopin's first concerto in E minor. Robertson and Shaham have performed over 25 concertos together, and *Light Forming* is a continuation of their working and life partnership.

Light Forming was commissioned by the Orlando Philharmonic and premiered in October 2022 under the baton of Eric Jacobson. Robertson notes that he knew he wanted the piece to be around twenty-one minutes so that it could serve as a companion piece to another concerto. Additionally, Robertson's instrumentation

is nearly identical to that of a Mozart concerto, albeit with the modern addition of a percussionist.

Robertson notes that he has always been interested in the sounds people make when talking and wanted to use the piano as a musical transliterator of poetic meaning. The first movement, "... la musique incertaine de leur voix..." ("the uncertain music of their voices,") is a line from Marcel Proust's *Sodom et Gomorrah* that is beloved by the composer, and which he uses to bolster the movement within literary underpinnings. The inspiration for the music comes from French structuralist poet Stéphane Mallarmé's prose poem *La Déclaration Foraine* ("Declaration at a Fair"). Robertson notes that Mallarmé's poems "often flicker between the sound and the sense of a phrase, an inherently musical approach," and that was the inspiration to use the piano to pull meaning out of the inflections of the sonnet.

The second movement draws inspiration from a room full of amphorae at the Museum of the Imperial Fora in Rome. Robertson was moved not only by the vessels but the room in which they were housed, within the ancient walls of the Forum. The fact that the vessels need to be carried with both hands inspired the foundational technique of the movement, the use of two-fisted piano chords.

In the final movement, Robertson reflects on the immense joy that music can provide. Particularly during the pandemic when he was composing the work, music was a source of solace, wonder, and delight. Robertson writes that the third movement "is an exuberant, grateful dance around the light and love that Orli is constantly bringing to me ever since that first lucky meeting" in 1999.

Lyric for Strings

George Walker (1922-2018)



Composer George Theophilus Walker (1922-2018) was a groundbreaking composer whose long career was filled with many prominent compositions premiered by major orchestras, and numerous prizes and awards for his output. Walker started attending Oberlin Conservatory when he was 14 to study piano with David Moyer and organ with Arthur Poser. At age 18 he went to the Curtis Institute of Music to study piano with Rudolf Serkin, chamber music with William Primrose, Gregor Piatigorsky, and composition with Rosario Scaler (who was also Samuel Barber's composition teacher). He was the first Black graduate of Curtis, where he received artist diplomas in piano and composition in 1945. Later, he attended Eastman where he was the first Black graduate to earn a Doctorate of Musical Arts in 1955. Walker was awarded a Fulbright in 1957 and moved to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger for two years. Walker was the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for his work *Lilacs*

for *Voice and Orchestra*, which was commissioned by the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa. He wrote over ninety works, with commissions from the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, among others.

"He was the first Black graduate of Curtis, where he received artist diplomas in piano and composition in 1945."

Walker first composed *Lyric for Strings* as the second movement of his String Quartet No. 1 in 1945 when he was a graduate student at Curtis. The first version for orchestra, titled *Lament*, was premiered by the Curtis orchestra with Seymour Lipkin conducting. Walker later rearranged and renamed the piece. *Lyric for Strings* is dedicated to the memory of Walker's grandmother, a formerly enslaved person, who died shortly before the piece's completion.

Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Out of his twenty-seven piano concertos, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) composed only two in minor keys, this one, and Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491, which was premiered in 1786. With the ink hardly dry on the parts at the premiere, the 20th piano concerto contains all the *sturm und drang* "storm and stress" turbulence that was so popular at the time. It also has the joyous happy ending that was given to the Lenten audience at the premiere in February 1785.

D minor is an important key for Mozart, one that for him evokes a tragic state. D minor is a world, as musicologist John Rice argues, of "vengeance and violence, the supernatural, the underworld, and the furies." The overture from *Don Giovanni* (who eventually is dragged down to hell) is in D minor, as is the Queen of the Night's aria from *Die Zauberflöte*, in which she implores her daughter to murder the Queen's arch nemesis, Sarastro. The overture, aria, and concerto all have similar characteristics of violence and fury, particularly in the first movement.

The concerto opens with foreboding rumblings in the low strings. The disquieting syncopations remain ominously quiet until the entire orchestra enters, with trumpets and drums ringing out. Even the second movement does not provide a complete respite from the *sturm und drang*—in the middle of the movement is a minor outburst that agitates the placid beauty from before.

There is the saying that all of Mozart's music is opera. As with many of the operas at the time, the piano concerto does not remain in minor for the duration but ends triumphantly in major. It is the *Lieto fine*, the happy ending that audiences expected, that appears only after the final cadenza at the 3rd movement. The optimism of the era shines through, and the chiaroscuro of this program appears again. From darkness comes light.

DR. ALICIA MASTROMONACO

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL HORN

Program Notes Author



Alicia has played with the Monterey Symphony since 2007. She is also a member of the Carmel Bach Festival, Marin and California Symphonies and plays with orchestras across the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Berkeley Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, New Century Chamber orchestra, and other regional orchestras. She is Lecturer of Horn at Sonoma State University.

A San Francisco native, Alicia began her music studies at age seven on the piano and sang in the San Francisco Girls Chorus before taking up the

horn. Alicia earned Bachelor of Music degrees in Horn Performance and Musicology from Boston University, then did graduate work at the Universität der Künste Berlin before returning to California to continue her studies. She earned a Master of Music in horn performance at University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts and PhD in Musicology from University of California, Santa Barbara.

Alicia lives with her husband, daughter, and two cats in El Cerrito where she enjoys the many beautiful hiking trails just outside their door, baking sourdough bread, and gardening.