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FREDERICKSBURG
SYMPHONY

"BRIDGING A GREAT COMMUNITY WITH GREAT MUSIC"

SEASON OPENER

MASTERWORKS
MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 1 "TITAN"



DR. KEVIN P. BARTRAM, MUSIC DIRECTOR

BRIAN BALMAGES, GUEST CONDUCTOR

Friday, October 21, 2022
Lifepoint Auditorium 7:30 p.m.

FREDERICKSBURGSYMPHONY.ORG

Message from the Music Director



I'm so excited to open our second season with this remarkable program. Thanks to the support of our community, we had a tremendously successful inaugural year. Emboldened by our large audiences and strong performances, I began preparations for this concert immediately after our season concluded in May. First item on my list: I programmed the Mahler Symphony for our season opener. My goal was to aim high so that we could motivate our musicians and strengthen our position as a cultural asset in the region.

The second item was to contact composer and friend Brian Balmages about programming his new work "Through Waterless Places" for the same concert. I had invited Brian to compose this piece in 2019 with one artistic goal in mind: create a work that demonstrates in musical terms the intrinsic bond between an orchestra and its community. They both need each other to thrive. Given Brian's talent for melodic and rhythmic writing, I was hopeful that the result would be a potent inspiration for regional orchestras everywhere. He succeeded beyond expectations, and after seeing the score, I immediately invited him to conduct the work.

Operating a large symphony orchestra is no small task. On behalf of the staff and musicians of the FSO, we want to thank our dedicated Board of Directors, our Symphony Supporters, and the superb staff of Lifepoint Auditorium for making our second season happen. We hope to see everyone on December 2nd for our Holiday Pops!

Kevin P. Bartram

Kevin Bartram, Music Director
Fredericksburg Symphony Orchestra

THE FREDERICKSBURG SYMPHONY

Save the Date!

- **Friday, December 2 - Holiday Pops *"The Most Wonderful Time of the Year"***
- **Friday, February 17 - Valentine's Special *"Romantic Classics"***
- **Friday, May 19 - Symphony at the Cinema *"The Great Film Scores"***

PROGRAM

Festive Overture ..... Dmitri Shostakovich

Through Waterless Places ..... Brian Balmages
Brian Balmages, conductor

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 1 in D Major "Titan".....Gustav Mahler

I. *Langsam, schleppend* (Slowly, dragging) *Immer sehr gemächlich* (very restrained throughout)

II. *Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell* (Moving strongly, but not too quickly), *Recht gemächlich* (restrained), a Trio

III. *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen* (Solemnly and measured, without dragging), *Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise* (very simple, like a folk-tune), and *Wieder etwas bewegter, wie im Anfang* (once again somewhat more agitated, as at the start)

IV. *Stürmisch bewegt – Energisch* (Stormily agitated – Energetic)

- Block of free student tickets provided courtesy of The Fredericksburg Symphony Orchestra -

Use of recording devices is prohibited.

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Jeff Kahan

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David Vita

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Anastasia Pike

Festive Overture
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

We have an interesting picture of Dmitri Shostakovich from Sergei Prokofiev's son Oleg. Oleg recounts a time that he went to visit Shostakovich in the early 1950s:

"He never seemed to stop moving. He would continually change his position on the chair, as if he never felt comfortable, crossing one leg over the other, then swapping legs; then a slipper would fall off, and he would try and pick it up from the floor and put it back on; then he would drop it again. Occasionally he would try to light a cigarette, but matches kept breaking, and the cigarette would refuse to light…"

Shostakovich had very good reason for being a nervous man. During the reign of Stalin, Shostakovich spent much of his time playing cat-and-mouse games with the culture police; always trying to push his artistic boundaries outwards without offending Stalin by seeming too formalist.

Shostakovich the composer has taken a lot of flack from Western musicologists for seeming to capitulate to the whims of Stalin and his henchmen. There is the well-known example of his composing the crowd-pleasing Fifth Symphony in order to gain the graces of the Communist Party, following the negative reaction by the official press to his Fourth Symphony.

Shostakovich's side of the story was revealed after his death with the publication of Testimony – The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich. There is now a lively debate about the authenticity of the book, and some scholars believe that Shostakovich's amanuensis and editor, Solomon Volkov, fabricated much of the narrative [page 42]. But even if taken with a grain of salt, it is interesting to consider how Shostakovich might have perceived the place of the artist in the Stalinist order of things when he relates:

"An artist whose portrait did not resemble the leader disappeared forever. So did the writer who used 'crude words.' No one entered into aesthetic discussions with them or asked them to explain themselves. Someone came for them at night. That's all. These were not isolated cases, not exceptions. You must understand that."

We then get a sense of where his shaky nerves came from: "It didn't matter how the audience reacted to your work or if the critics liked it. All that had no meaning in the final analysis. There was only one question of life or death: how did the leader like your opus? I stress: life or death, because we are talking about life or death here, literally, not figuratively. That's what you must understand."

In Testimony, Shostakovich relates numerous stories about his colleagues who disappeared in the middle of the night, never to be heard from again. (This had happened, for example, to the Jewish actor Solomon Mikhoels, an outspoken Shostakovich supporter, in 1948.) Shostakovich constantly lived in fear that the same thing would happen to him.

The story behind the creation of the Festive Overture is one of those fantastic tales which reveals the true nature of a composer's genius, leaving all of the eye-witnesses shaking their heads in wonder. Shostakovich's friend Lev Lebedinsky related the story of how one time, when he was hanging out at the composer's apartment one day in the fall of 1954, they were visited by a conductor from the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra. Due to mysterious political maneuverings and bureaucratic snafus, the orchestra needed a new work to celebrate the October Revolution, and the concert was in three days.

Shostakovich had his friend Lebedinsky sit down next to him and began to compose. Lebedinsky relates:

"The speed with which he wrote was truly astounding. Moreover, when he wrote light music he was able to talk, make jokes and compose simultaneously, like the legendary Mozart. He laughed and chuckled, and in

the meanwhile work was under way and the music was being written down."

There is not a trace of haste or carelessness in the vibrant Festive Overture. Shostakovich always composed at a fast pace, writing down the notes with superhuman facility. We will never know whether or not he employed musical ideas which were already lurking in his imagination, or whether the entire work was simply an instantaneous flash of inspiration. It is amusing however to think of Shostakovich "laughing and chuckling" as he composed, for it is easy to imagine the pervasiveness of the composer's good humor driving this energetic, truly festive work.

Incidentally, Shostakovich, who (as we have seen) had shaky nerves, conducted an orchestra professionally on only one occasion, at a concert organized by his friend Mstislav Rostropovich in 1962. Shostakovich opened the concert with his Festive Overture.

-Ryan Dorin is a Ph.D. composition student at New York University and annotates programs for the Washington Square Contemporary Music Series

Through Waterless Places

Brian Balmages

Through Waterless Places was commissioned by the Fredericksburg Symphony Orchestra and performed at the opening of its second season, with the composer conducting. That same week, Balmages led clinics for area student orchestras at James Monroe High School. From its first concert in October 2021, the FSO has brought together professional musicians, music educators, students and community members, all united by a shared purpose: to build a great community with great music. The generous support of Fredericksburg audiences and Symphony Supporters made a commission of this kind possible in only the orchestra's second year. This sense of "orchestral community" became the central inspiration for the work.

Waterless places are mentioned in scripture, referring specifically to unclean spirits that pass through these places in search of rest but do not find it. This easily serves as a metaphor to the concert experience, especially when it involves a powerfully musical performance. In a world of unrest, orchestral musicians come together with the goal of communicating a profound musical idea that stirs the emotions of those who hear them play. It is an ideal microcosm of how society could be – people from various stages of life and career paths coming together for a unified experience – one that brings beauty into a world that so desperately needs it.

The soft, ethereal opening introduces two themes that become cornerstones of the work. The first is a fragment presented by the cellos and basses. This fragment continues to expand each time it returns, and ultimately begins to develop and transform into other fragments using similar intervals. The second idea is introduced by the horn and represents the most significant melodic fragment that is heard throughout the work. Almost immediately, this sequence of notes begins to materialize in other instruments including flute, clarinet and bassoon. It does not take long for both themes to find each other, even if only briefly at first.

Eventually, the music develops into a very slow, pensive waltz. There is a deliberate feeling throughout this section through the use of harmony and orchestration. At times the music feels heavy while at others, there is a feeling of transparency and vulnerability. There is also a noticeable shift in the opening melody. This shift is a 2nd stage of development from the opening motif, which eventually leads into a 3rd shift that forms the basis of the next section (Vivo).

The Vivo section is a stark contrast to the previous mood despite being based on the same sequence of notes that have been present throughout the work thus far. There is certainly an air of celebration and collaboration as various themes are introduced and developed, yet all within the context of a main "heroic" theme. The music alludes to the joy of community, acceptance, equality, inclusion and more. It demands a variety of colors from throughout the orchestra, each contributing to make the piece more magnificent, more beautiful, and more representative of all its members.

A highly rhythmic passage follows, representing the idea of all sections moving in the same direction – furthering the idea of community. As the music builds and tension is added, there is a huge release back into a slower tempo as the tension recedes. This final section becomes very contemplative and reflective. Various themes from throughout the work are slowly juxtaposed as the orchestration steadily builds over and over.

The final big crescendo, representing the coda of the work, layers idea after idea as harmonies linger and orchestration continues to build along with the addition of each theme. Ultimately, the work moves into its most powerful, euphoric and celebratory moment as everything reaches its peak – a symbol of unity, strength, glory and ultimate collaboration. In a world so full of darkness, music becomes the ultimate light. The ultimate sense of community. The perfect vehicle to bare the soul of a collective group of individuals who are in turn able to touch the souls of countless others who experience their music. We reach a place of rest. We reach a place of celebration. And after a year unlike any other, we have made it through the lifeless, waterless places; and find ourselves in a state of euphoria as musicians once again come together to bring beauty back into the world.

-Brian Balmages, 29 October 2021

Symphony No. 1 in D major "Titan"
Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)
COMPOSED: Mahler did most of the work on this symphony in February and March 1888, having begun to sketch it in earnest three years earlier and using material going back to the 1870s. He revised the score extensively on several occasions. The work is played this evening according to the second, and last, edition published during Mahler's lifetime and dated 1906.
WORLD PREMIERE: November 20, 1889. Mahler himself conducted the first performance of the work, then called Symphonic Poem in Two Parts, with the Budapest Philharmonic.
US PREMIERE: December 16, 1909. Mahler introduced the symphony, by then in its final four-movement form, at a New York Philharmonic concert.
INSTRUMENTATION: 4 flutes (3 doubling piccolo), 4 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 4 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet, 2 doubling high clarinet in E-flat), 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 7 horns, 5 trumpets, 4 trombones, bass tuba, timpani (2 players), bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tamtam, harp, and strings.

DURATION: About 53 mins

THE BACKSTORY Once, contemplating the failures of sympathy and understanding with which his First Symphony met at most of its early performances, Mahler lamented that while Beethoven had been able to start as a sort of modified Haydn and Mozart, and Wagner as Weber and Meyerbeer, he had the misfortune to be Gustav Mahler from the outset. He composed this symphony, surely the most original First after the Berlioz *Fantastique*, in high hopes of being understood, even imagining that it might earn him enough money so that he could abandon his rapidly expanding career as a conductor—a luxury that life would never allow him. But he enjoyed public success with the work only in Prague in 1898 and in Amsterdam five years later. The Viennese audience in 1900, musically reactionary and anti-Semitic to boot, was singularly vile in its behavior, and even Mahler's future wife, Alma Schindler, whose devotion to The Cause would later sometimes dominate a concern for truth, fled that concert in anger and disgust. One critic suggested that the work might have been meant as a parody of a symphony. No wonder that Mahler, completing his Fourth Symphony that year, felt driven to mark its finale *"Durchaus ohne Parodie!"* (With no trace of parody).

The work even puzzled its own composer. No other piece of Mahler's has so complicated a history and about no other did he change his mind so often and over so long a period. He changed the total concept by canceling a whole movement, he made striking alterations in compositional and orchestral detail, and for some time he was unsure whether he was offering a symphonic poem, a program symphony, or just a symphony.

When Mahler conducted the first performance with the Budapest Philharmonic in November 1889, he billed it as a "symphonic poem" whose two parts consisted of the first three and the last two movements. (At that time, the first movement was followed by a piece called *Blumine*, which Mahler later dropped.) A newspaper article the day before the premiere outlined a program whose source can only have been Mahler himself and which identifies the first three movements with spring, happy daydreams, and a wedding procession, the fourth as a funeral march representing the burial of the poet's illusions, and the fifth as a hard-won progress to spiritual victory.

When Mahler revised the score in January 1893, he called it a symphony in five movements and two parts, also giving it the name *Titan* after a novel by Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, 1763-1825), a key figure in German literary Romanticism and one of Mahler's favorite writers. But by October he announced the work as *TITAN, a Tone Poem in the Form of a Symphony*.

Before the Vienna performance in 1900, Mahler again leaked a program to a friendly critic, and it is a curious one. First comes rejection of Titan, as well as "all other titles and inscriptions, which, like all 'programs,' are always misinterpreted. [The composer] dislikes and discards them as 'anti-artistic' and 'anti-musical.'" There follows a scenario that reads much like an elaborated version of the original one for Budapest. During the nineties, when Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel, Also sprach Zarathustra, Don Quixote,* and *Ein Heldenleben* had come out, program music had become a hot political issue in the world of music. Mahler saw himself as living in a very different world from Strauss, and he wanted to establish a distance between himself and his colleague. At the same time, the extra-musical ideas would not disappear, and he seemed now to be wanting to have it both ways. There was no pleasing the critics on this issue. In Berlin he was faulted for omitting the program and in Frankfurt for keeping it.

THE MUSIC Mahler writes *"Wie ein Naturlaut"* (Like the sound of nature) on that first page, and in a letter to the conductor Franz Schalk we read, "The introduction to the first movement *sounds of nature, not music!*" Fragments detach themselves from the mist, become graspable, coalesce. Among these fragments are a pair of notes descending by a fourth, distant fanfares, a little cry of oboes, a cuckoo call (by the only cuckoo in the world who toots a fourth rather than a third), a gentle horn melody.

Gradually the tempo quickens to arrive at the melody of the second of Mahler's *Wayfarer* Songs (one of the most characteristic, original, and forward-looking features of this movement is how much time Mahler spends not *in* tempo but en route from one speed to another). Mahler's wayfarer crosses the fields in the morning, rejoicing in the beauty of the world and hoping that this marks the beginning of his own happy times, only to see that no, spring can never, never bloom for him. But for Mahler the song is useful not only as an evocation but as a musical source, and he draws astounding riches from it by a process, as Erwin Stein put it, of constantly shuffling and reshuffling its figures like a deck of cards. The movement rises to one tremendous climax, and the last page is wild. Most important, however, and constant is another of the features to which Mahler drew Schalk's attention: "In the first movement the *greatest* delicacy throughout (except in the big climax)."

The scherzo is the symphony's briefest and simplest movement, and also the only one that the first audiences could be counted on to like. Its opening idea comes from a fragment for piano duet that may go back as far as 1876, and the movement makes several allusions to the song *"Hans und Grethe,"* whose earliest version was written in 1880. The trio, set in an F major that sounds very mellow in the A major context of the scherzo itself, contrasts the simplicity of the rustic, super-Austrian material with the artfulness of its arrangement.

The funeral music that follows was what most upset audiences. The use of vernacular material presented in slightly perverted form (the round we have all sung to the words *"Frère Jacques,"* but set by Mahler in a lugubrious minor); the parodic, vulgar music with its lachrymose oboes and trumpets; the boomchick of bass drum with cymbal attached; the hiccupping violins; the appearance in the middle of all this of part of the last *Wayfarer* song, exquisitely scored for muted strings with a harp and a few soft woodwinds—people simply did not know what to make of this mixture, how to respond, whether to laugh or cry or both. They sensed that something irreverent was being done, something new and somehow ominous, that these collisions of the spooky, the gross, and the vulnerable were uncomfortably like life itself, and they were offended.

Mahler likened the opening of the finale to a bolt of lightning that rips from a black cloud. Using and transforming material from the first movement, he takes us, in the terms of his various programs, on the path from annihilation to victory, while in musical terms he engages us in a struggle to regain D major, the main key of the symphony, but unheard since the first movement ended. When at last he re-enters that key, he does so by way of a stunning and violent *coup de théâtre*, only to withdraw from the sounds of victory and to show us the hollowness of that triumph. He then goes all the way back to the music with which the symphony began and gathers strength for a second assault that does indeed open the doors to a heroic ending and to its celebration in a hymn in which the horns, now on their feet, are instructed to drown out the rest of the orchestra, "even the trumpets."

-Michael Steinberg, the San Francisco Symphony

Maestro Kevin Bartram



Dr. Bartram has done it all in the field of music: celebrated conductor of both orchestras and bands, author, researcher, and guest speaker. With over 30 years' experience directing groups from the high school to college and professional ranks, he has a track record of producing extraordinary results. His high school groups were among the finest in the nation, earning a Grammy Signature Award in 2001 for Top 100 Program in the United States and an Exemplary Music Program Award from the Maryland Music Educators Association. Consistently earning Superior Ratings at Festivals, his full symphony orchestra won seven Gold Medals in eight years performing Grade VI literature (professional level). There, he also founded and directed the Maryland Wind Symphony, which performed for the state MMEA Conference.

At the University of Mary Washington (2002-2020), he conducted the UMW Philharmonic Orchestra and taught courses in music education. In 2004, he created the Philharmonic Celebrity Series, which annually brought in world-class artists to perform with the college-community orchestra here in Fredericksburg. Artists included Itzhak Perlman, Renee Fleming, Sir James Galway, Joshua Bell, Kenny Rogers, Michael Feinstein, Tony Bennett, the Canadian Brass, Judy Collins, Nadya Salerno-Sonnenberg, Jose Carreras, Marvin Hamlisch, Kristin Chenoweth, and Paul Anka. He also added guest narrators including LeVar Burton and Henry Winkler.

In 2010, Bartram was honored as a semi-finalist in the American Prize for orchestral conducting, and the UMW Philharmonic was also honored in orchestral performance. In 2011, he produced and directed "A Fiddler's Holiday" with guest artist Jay Ungar and the Family Band, which became a national PBS Holiday pledge show. In 2006, he took the Philharmonic on the first of its five European tours, and in 2018, the group was the featured performer at the College Orchestra Directors Association's National Conference in Los Angeles.

Maestro Bartram became President of the College Orchestra Directors Association in 2017, after having served as the organization's first National Development Director, Vice-President, and President-elect. He has also served the Fredericksburg community in several capacities. In 2010, he joined the Arts Commission, eventually becoming Chairman, where he founded the Via Colori arts festival and led the effort to establish an Arts and Cultural District in Fredericksburg. He also served on the EDA Advisory Committee and as a member of the Rappahannock Rotary.

As a writer, Bartram has published several national articles on teaching and conducting, and recently completed a book entitled "Great Teachers: Exploring Excellence in Education." Based on 15 years of observation and research, the book profiles and analyzes the technique of America's most iconic teachers across a wide spectrum of disciplines. The book was published by New Forums Press in 2022 (available on Amazon) and is a professional development book for K-12 educators as well as college education students.

After 30+ years in the classroom, Bartram returned to his roots as a K-12 teacher…in the Fredericksburg City Schools. Seeking to give back to the community, he joined the staff at James Monroe High School and Walker-Grant Middle School as orchestra director in the Fall of 2021.

He has a Bachelor of Music Education from Northwestern University, a Masters of Music in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a Doctor of Music Education from Shenandoah Conservatory. He and his wife Connie (an elementary school music teacher) live in Spotsylvania with their two boys, Nicholas and Willie.

Brian Balmages



Brian Balmages is known worldwide as a composer and conductor who equally spans the worlds of orchestral, band, and chamber music. His music has been performed by groups ranging from professional symphony orchestras to elementary schools in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Sydney Opera House, Toronto Centre for the Arts, and many more. He is a recipient of the A. Austin Harding Award from the American School Band Directors Association, won the 2020 NBA William D. Revelli Composition Contest with his work Love and Light, and was awarded the inaugural James Madison University Distinguished Alumni Award from the School of Visual and Performing Arts. In the same year, he was commissioned by his other alma mater, the University of Miami, to compose music for the inauguration of the institution's 6th president, Dr. Julio Frenk. His music was also performed as part of the 2013 Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service, which was attended by both President Obama and Vice President Biden.

As a conductor, Mr. Balmages enjoys regular engagements with all-state and regional ensembles as well as university and professional groups throughout the world. Notable guest conducting appearances have included the Midwest Clinic, Western International Band Clinic, Maryborough Music Conference (Australia), College Band Directors Conference, American School Band Directors Association National Conference, numerous state ASTA conferences, Teatro dell'Aquila (Italy), and others. He is an elected member of the American Bandmasters Association and has taught instrumental conducting at Towson University where he also served as Assistant Director of Bands and Orchestras. Currently, he is Director of MakeMusic Publications and Digital Education for Alfred and MakeMusic.

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