Freimann 3, 2021-22
Fort Wayne Philharmonic

Program Notes

Torden og Lyn (Thunder and Lightning)

A Suite of Norwegian Melodies

Adrian Mann

As Edvard Grieg revealed in much of his music, Norway has a rich and lively tradition of folk music. The Philharmonic's Adrian Mann honors that tradition in *Torden og Lyn* ("Thunder and Lightning"), which he wrote in 2012 for the oboe and double bass team of Carrie Vecchione and Rolf Erdahl in celebration of the 80th birthday of Rolf's father and uncle, who are twins. In the family they were nicknamed Thunder and Lightning, "because wherever one was, the other was sure to follow."

Mann chose seven Norwegian folk tunes to use in his Suite for this unusual duo of one woodwind with one string instrument, one high and one low. The oboist also switches off to that instrument's slightly lower and mellower sister, the English horn.

Mann describes the folk tunes in the order in which they appear: "'Per Spelmann' — a jaunty tune about a farm boy who traded his cow for a fiddle; 'Pål Sine Høner' — Paul with his hens (complete with chicken squawks!); 'Saeterjentens Søndag' — a song by Ole Bull [famous Norwegian 19th-century violin virtuoso] describing a shepherdess' Sunday; 'Påskemorgen Slukker Sorgen' — a favorite Easter morning hymn; 'Den Store Hvite Flokk' — the vast throng of saints described in *Revelations*; 'Jeg Er Så Glad Hver Julekveld' — 'I am so glad

Notes by Janet E. Bedell copyright 2022

each Christmas Eve'; and 'Plucked' Halling — a traditional Lydian-mode tune played on the Hardanger folk fiddle."

Adrian Mann joined the Fort Wayne Philharmonic in 1973 as Principal Bass. The Phil's Staff Arranger since 1990 and Librarian since 2007, he has also served as Personnel Manager, Director of in-School Presentations, Director of Gallery Concerts, and Stage Manager. Mann holds an Artist Diploma from the New School of Music and master's and doctorate degrees from Catholic University of America. His arrangements have been performed by many orchestras, including Pittsburgh, Toronto, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and the New York Pops. Since 1990, the Phil has performed more than 75 of his arrangements and more than a dozen original compositions.

Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, opus 94a
Sergei Prokofiev
(b. 1891, Sontsovka, Ukraine; d. 1953, Moscow, U.S.S.R.)

In 1917, Sergei Prokofiev fled Russia to escape the Revolution and then for nearly two decades enjoyed a flourishing career in Western Europe, traveling extensively to display his compositions and his formidable skills as a pianist. Promising him equal freedom and even more honor, the Soviet government lured him back home in 1936. Though his creative work still advanced in the U.S.S.R., the composer found life progressively closing in on him. After 1938, he was no longer permitted to travel abroad, and eventually his first wife, Lena, was arrested and sent to the Siberian gulag because she was Spanish and suspected of being a spy. And throughout the war, he was moved around to artists' colonies in remote parts of Russia to protect him from the front lines.

A major solace was provided by the superb Russian artists Prokofiev found around him in these refuges. Among them was the great violinist David Oistrakh, for whom he had begun writing his first Violin Sonata in 1938. But that work was a

Notes by Janet E. Bedell copyright 2022

deep expression of his personal suffering during these years, and he didn't manage to finish it until 1946. Instead, he turned to lighter, more congenial assignments like the Flute Sonata he composed while staying in Perm in the Ural Mountains bordering Asia.

Still waiting for his promised sonata, Oistrakh was enchanted by the Flute Sonata's mixture of engaging melodies, classical design, and virtuosity and urged Prokofiev to turn it into a violin sonata. The violinist worked closely with the composer to create changes for the sonata that would better suit his instrument. Thus, the Second Violin Sonata in D Major was born even before the First Violin Sonata was finished. It was successfully premiered by Oistrakh in Moscow in June 1944 and immediately eclipsed its flute original in popularity.

Far more lyrical and optimistic than the First Sonata, the Second follows traditional classical forms for its movements, though Prokofiev tweaks them a bit with fresh inspirations. A sonata form in D Major, the **first movement** begins gently as if in *medias res* with a sweet, slightly wistful theme for the violin. The second theme ambles in like a carefree passerby. This music finally springs into action with the development section, which brings a virtuoso brilliance to these themes.

Next comes a speedy **Scherzo** in A minor buoyed by a jolly whirlwind theme for the violin and a constant rhythmic conflict of two beats against three. In the middle trio section, Prokofiev slides off to a slower, more introspective mood, periodically enlivened by little sparks of playfulness.

The ***Andante*** **third movement** is a lyrical song with an airy, soaring theme for the violin. Daniel Jaffé points out the bluesy quality of its middle section; Prokofiev had learned to love jazz in the West and used to hold semi-clandestine sessions in his apartment playing his jazz recordings for Russian aficionados.

Notes by Janet E. Bedell copyright 2022

Back in D Major, the **finale** is a sonata rondo, whose main theme is a jaunty, slightly intoxicated march. This is contrasted with a slower, angular theme introduced by the piano — and sounding initially like a piano practice exercise! — over which the violin flies freely. The movement's most remarkable feature is an unexpected lyrical episode, quiet and much slower, in which the violin sings an enchanting song over the piano's pattering. This song builds to return us to the impudent march and a brilliant, percussive finish.

String Quartet in F Major
Maurice Ravel
(b. 1875, Ciboure, France; d. 1937, Paris)

Though his music was to epitomize the French ideals of elegance, craftsmanship, and the refined exploitation of color, Maurice Ravel had an extraordinarily unsuccessful career as a student at the Paris Conservatoire during the 1890s and early 1900s. Five times between 1900 and 1905, he tried and failed to win the coveted Prix de Rome, a composition prize that even the more radical Debussy and Berlioz had won in their days. These cumulative snubs finally instigated the "Affaire Ravel" that toppled the Conservatoire's top administration, as the Paris musical world protested that such an already highly admired composer should be denied in favor of nonentities who played by the rules.

Ravel even failed to win the ordinary prizes necessary to retain his place in the Conservatoire composition classes under the great Gabriel Fauré, who always believed in the younger man's exceptional talent. In January 1903, he submitted the exquisite first movement of his Quartet, his first major chamber work; the movement was rejected and he was ordered out of Fauré's course. "It lacked simplicity," complained one of the judges. For although Ravel's Quartet, completed in April of that year, was to become one of the most beloved staples of the chamber music repertoire, it was a most original re-conception of quartet

Notes by Janet E. Bedell copyright 2022

writing for its day and bore little resemblance to earlier works, except Debussy's 1893 Quartet with which it is often paired.

This Quartet is marked by the superb ear for instrumental color that would make Ravel one of the 20th century's greatest orchestrators. Here the composer often creates sonorities that make his four players sound like a larger string orchestra. This also is rarely first violin-dominated music. In fact, Ravel makes the warm and dusky-toned viola the violin's rival in introducing and carrying important themes, especially in the slow third movement where its melancholy sound leads all the poignantly lyrical melodies. In the first movement, it joins the first violin in octaves to give plangent richness to the sweetly soaring second theme.

Irregular and ambiguous rhythms also animate this quartet. Movement two is a breathtaking example of conflicting meters combined with some of the most glittering pizzicato writing ever devised. The instruments' full plucked chords fluctuate deliciously between duple meter and triple. Like Debussy (whose Quartet also features a wonderful pizzicato movement), Ravel had been dazzled by the Javanese gamelan orchestra that performed at the 1889 Paris Exhibition, and he brilliantly recreated that memory here.

Notes by Janet E. Bedell copyright 2022