Welcome to this season’s second Young People’s Concert!

Music is song – it springs from our very speaking, surrounds us in the singing of the birds, lodges unforgettable melodies in our heads. Song fills our homes and communities with joy. What makes a great melody, the kind you can’t forget? What enables melody to express every kind of emotion? Today we’ll find out in a program devoted to music. Get ready to sing out!

THE PROGRAM:

RICHARD WAGNER  Prelude to Act III, from Lohengrin
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  Fantasia on “Greensleeves”
GABRIELA LENA FRANK  Havana Jila (“Hava Nagila”)
GUSTAV MAHLER  Sehr behaglich, from Symphony No. 4
CHARLES IVES  Variations on America

Delta David Gier, conductor
Tom Dulack, scriptwriter and director
Daniel Santiago Castellanos, boy soprano
Arnaud Sussmann, violin
Erin Morley, soprano

songs from the heart

Most of the composers on today’s program fell in love with the folk melodies of their native countries and heritages. For them, simple folk songs inspired big artistic statements. Sometimes the composers set the lyrics of folk songs to their own, original melodies, and sometimes they wove the whole folk song right into the fabric of their compositions.

CHARLES IVES  UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My country ‘tis of Thee, Sweet land of Liberty, of Thee I sing.

GABRIELA LENA FRANK  PERU

Ha-vu-na Ji-la Ne mi haja Pu-ro’a ji par-ah-l pa-pe-o

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  ENGLAND

Imagine you’re composing music for the New York Philharmonic. What song would inspire your composition?

GUSTAV MAHLER  AUSTRIA

Wir genießen die himmlische Freuden,
Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972)

Composer and pianist Gabriela Lena Frank has been hailed as one of the next generation of American composers. Her Peruvian-Jewish-Chinese heritage has always been at the center of her music — she adapts traditional folk music of South America to Western classical instruments and forms. Studying classical piano from the age of four, Frank recalls getting into trouble with her piano teacher because she often tried to “improve” works by Bach and Beethoven by adding little Latin American touches to them! Whether inspired by the Andes Mountains or folklore of the Quecha Indians, Gabriel Lena Frank has developed an original musical voice that celebrates the beauty and challenge of fusing different cultures together.

Richard Wagner (1841–83)

Richard Wagner composed operas that aimed to fuse all of the arts — poetic, visual, musical, and dramatic — into a “total art work” or “music drama.” As a young adult, he worked in small opera houses all over Europe, conducting, learning the opera business, and promoting revolutionary political ideas. King Ludwig II of Bavaria became a great fan of Wagner’s works and enabled him to build his dream opera theater at Bayreuth in Southern Germany. Wagner’s 13 operas are some of the most loved and most performed around the world because of their gripping stories and powerful melodies.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the greatest composers in Great Britain since Henry Purcell — in over 200 years. Born in a small village in the Cotswolds, he studied composition with Max Bruch in Berlin and Maurice Ravel in Paris. He was one of the first composers to travel into the countryside to collect folk songs and carols from singers. He collected more than 800 songs during his lifetime. His fondness for folk melodies, lyricism, and mysticism contributed to the “Englishness” of his music.

Fantasia on “Greensleeves”
(from Sir John in Love, 1928; arranged by Ralph Greaves, 1934)

Adapted from his opera Sir John in Love, “Greensleeves” is based on an English folksong that dates back as early as 1580. There are some who believe it was written by King Henry VIII for his future queen, Anne Boleyn. Shakespeare made reference to a popular 16th century folk tune called “The Ballad of My Lady Greensleeves” in his play The Merry Wives of Windsor (which was the basis for Sir John in Love). Vaughan Williams wove together the tune of “Greensleeves” with a folk melody from Norfolk called “Lovely Joan” to create atmospheric music for his opera. It was later arranged into the Fantasia for flute, harp, and strings by Ralph Greaves.


Gabriela Lena Frank came up with the idea to write music that drew on her heritages one Christmas morning in the family home. The blend of Jewish and Peruvian music was inspired by conversations with her parents about Perú — her father had met her mother there as a member of the Peace Corps. Her mother described a Jewish song that was popular in her hometown of Piura and began to sing it. Her father, recognizing the tune, just laughed. It turned out that many Peruvians had reinterpreted the Hebrew lyrics of “Hava Nagila” (“Come let us be glad and rejoice. Arise brethren, with a joyful heart”) directly into Peruvian slang (“Girl from Havana, Look at my girl, Pure hot sauce for the food”). The result is a perfect example of how a melody can be transferred from one culture to another and develop a completely different meaning!

Hamburg’s sixth “music drama” is based on the Germanic legend of Lohengrin, “The Knight of the Swan.” King Ludwig II was so moved when he saw the opera that he built a fairy tale castle which he called “New Swan Stone” (“Neuschwanstein” in German). Lohengrin, the knight in shining armor who first appears in the opera being drawn by a swan down a river, defends the honor of his bride, Elsa, and magically brings her brother back to life. The Prelude to Act III is a moment of youthful joy. We find Elsa and Lohengrin in their wedding chamber and the music evokes the passion between them as they fall in love. The Wedding March that follows is some of the most familiar music in the world.

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

Gustav Mahler was known in his time as a leading orchestral and operatic conductor. Today, he is loved around the world as a great Romantic composer of symphonies and songs. His music is very influenced by the lavishness of Wagner’s music dramas. It combines a deep feeling for humanity, longing for the divine, and love of nature — he often composed in his studio in the forest by a lake. Mahler moved to New York in 1909 to be chief conductor of the New York Philharmonic! He was the last in a line of great Viennese symphonists, from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert to Bruckner and Brahms.

Sehr behaglich, from Symphony No. 4 (1899–1900)

Sehr behaglich (“very contentedly”) is the last movement of the Symphony No. 4. A song for soprano and orchestra, it is based on a Bavarian folk song and describes a child’s vision of heaven — in particular, a great feast (“Good greens of every sort, grow in the heavenly vegetable patch…”). Mahler began composing his Fourth Symphony during the summer of 1899 when he was staying in a villa near the Aussee spas. He would take long walks, always bringing a sketchbook to write down his musical ideas. He finished the composition the following summer, working in a studio he had built in a forested area around the alpine lake Wörthersee. While the premiere performance of the Symphony No. 4 received boos from the audience, today it is beloved for its intensely lyrical radiance.
Charles Ives (1874–1954)

written by Ives for solo organ when he was just 17, Variations on America is inspired by the song “America” (“My Country ‘Tis of Thee”) – one of Ives’s favorite melodies. It takes the form of a “theme and variations,” meaning a tune (theme) that is followed by a series of pieces (variations) that present the same tune in new ways. Ives became familiar with “theme and variations” while playing the organ in church, as many Baroque works used the form. In 1963, nine years after Ives’s death, American composer William Schuman was commissioned to arrange Variations on America for full orchestra.

Variations on America (1892)

The New York Philharmonic is by far the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and one of the oldest in the world. It was founded in 1842 by a group of local musicians, and currently plays about 180 concerts every year. On December 18, 2004, the Philharmonic gave its 14,000th concert — a record that no other symphony orchestra in the world has ever reached. The Orchestra currently has 106 members. It performs mostly at Avery Fisher Hall, at Lincoln Center, but also tours around the world. The Orchestra’s first concerts specifically for a younger audience were organized by Theodore Thomas for the 1885–86 season, with a series of 24 “Young People’s Matinees.” The programs were developed further by conductor Josef Stransky, who led the first Young People’s Concert in January of 1914. The Young People’s Concerts were brought to national attention in 1924 by “Uncle Ernest” Schelling, and were made famous by Leonard Bernstein who honored Ives on one of his televised Young People’s Concerts (the very series of concerts you’re attending today!).

Delta David Gier

Delta David Gier is music director of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, and has been a cover conductor of the New York Philharmonic for the past 10 seasons. He first conducted the Philharmonic in 2000, during the Concerts in the Parks. After completing his studies, he was invited by Riccardo Muti to spend a year as an apprentice at The Philadelphia Orchestra. As a Fulbright Scholar, he has led many performances in Eastern Europe. Mr. Gier has served as visiting professor at the Yale School of Music, the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, San Francisco Conservatory, and SUNY—Stony Brook.

Erin Morley

Soprano Erin Morley has just joined the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program and is making her Met Opera debut in Puccini’s Manon Lescaut and Britten’s Peter Grimes in February 2008. Her recent engagements have included performances with the New York City Opera, Wolf Trap Opera Company, and National Symphony Orchestra. She has performed in Carnegie, Avery Fisher, and Alice Tully halls, and has been a featured soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. A native of Salt Lake City, Utah, Ms. Morley completed her artist diploma at the Juilliard Opera Center in May 2007. She studies voice with Edith Bers.

Arnaud Sussmann

Twenty-three year old violinist Arnaud Sussmann has performed as a soloist throughout the United States, Central America, Europe, and Asia at many renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan and Louvre museums. A winner of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic String, Andrea Postacchini, and Vatelot/Rampal competitions, he was recently accepted into the prestigious Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two program. Mr. Sussmann holds both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Itzhak Perlman. He plays a 1728 Stradivari violin, “The Arto,” generously donated by Leopold Godowsky, Jr. and on loan from the Juilliard Rare Instrument Collection.

Daniel Santiago Castellanos

Daniel Santiago Castellanos was born in 1995 in Hoboken, New Jersey. Daniel enrolled at the St. Thomas Choir School at the age of eight, becoming a full chorister in his first year. He was chosen as the first recipient of the Lewis Choristership and received the 2007 Candlyn Award for his outstanding musicianship. This past summer Daniel performed as a soloist in Benjamin Britten’s “Hymn to St. Cecilia” while touring in Scotland and England with the St. Thomas Choir. Daniel enjoys playing Schumann on the piano, composing sacred music, and writing humorous stories.
Really got us humming!

What's coming up this season?

What other building blocks of music do we have to look forward to this season?

Music4song

Music4story

Saturday, January 12, 2008

Music is Color

Explore how harmony and instrumentation bring stories to life with the music of Prokofiev, the Very Young Composers, and R. Strauss.

Music4imagination

Saturday, April 5, 2008

Music is a World Unto Itself

Explore how all music’s elements inspire imaginings beyond words with the music of Shostakovich, Beethoven, Steven Stucky, Mozart, and Sibelius.

What Makes a Melody?

If you string together a series of notes, one after the other, you have a melody — easy as pie! But what are the characteristics that make a melody unforgettable? Can you match the following melodic traits with their musical notation?

1. Melodic contour - the shape of the melody.
   An interesting melody doesn’t stay in the same place, but rises and falls.

2. Phrases - just like when you read aloud and pause at the commas, a good melody requires you to breathe between groups of notes.

3. Steps and Leaps - the musical distances separating the notes of a melody. A good melody has a mix of steps and leaps.

4. Range - the musical distance between the lowest note in a melody and the highest. A memorable melody fits the range of one’s voice or instrument.

A.

B.

C.

D.

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