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## Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra: Les Préludes, September 19, 2021

Glenn Block Music Director

Elizabeth Thompson Mezzo Soprano

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ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts  
School of Music

*Presents*

Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra  
Glenn Block, Music Director and Elizabeth Thompson, mezzo soprano

# "Les préludes"

Music by Haydn, Mahler and Liszt



**Sunday, September 19, 2021, 7:00 P.M.**

Center for the Performing Arts Concert Hall



WONSOOK KIM  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
*Illinois State University*

[FineArts@IllinoisState.edu](mailto:FineArts@IllinoisState.edu)

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**This is the third program of the 2021-2022 season.**

## Program

Please silence all electronic devices for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Symphony No. 100 in G Major, Hob. I/100 “Military” Joseph Haydn  
(1732-1809)  
I. Adagio, Allegro  
II. Allegretto  
III. Menuetto, Moderato  
IV. Finale, Presto

Rückert Lieder, Five songs to Poems by Friedrich Rückert Gustav Mahler  
(1860-1911)  
I. Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder  
II. Ich amtet' ein linden Duft  
III. Liebste du um Schönheit  
IV. Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen  
V. Um Mitternacht

Elizabeth Thompson, *mezzo-soprano*

Les préludes, Symphonic Poem No. 3 Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

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Next ISU Symphony concerts:

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Sunday, October 17, 3:00 PM – with guest conductor Maestro Maurizio Colasanti (Italy) - CPA

Saturday, October 30, 10:00 AM – Music for All Concert: A Family and Sensory Friendly Concert! – CPA

## Program Notes

### *Symphony No. 100 "Military"*

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) never shied away from pleasing the crowd. Near the end of his life, when he was Europe's preeminent composer, he made two trips to London for seasons of concerts devoted to his music, composing, among other works, 12 new symphonies. The "Military" Symphony was written for the second visit in 1794-95. The big hit of the first visit had been the "Surprise" Symphony, with its unexpected loud chord during a quiet passage in its slow movement. The audience had spontaneously cried for an encore of the movement, and even Haydn's greatest rival in London, the composer and pianist Ignace Pleyel, had complimented him on the idea.

So, the pressure was on Haydn to come up with another masterstroke for his return, and the "Military" Symphony was his response. The Symphony, which was originally labeled "Grand Overture with the Militaire Movement," premiered at the Hanover Square Rooms, which could hold an audience of 800, on March 31, 1794. Haydn led the orchestra from the fortepiano, a quieter forerunner of the modern grand piano, and Johann Peter Salomon, the violinist and impresario who had arranged Haydn's two London visits, sat in the concertmaster's seat. In addition to the standard pairs of winds, horns, and trumpets as well as strings and timpani, the orchestra included a battery of "Turkish" percussion (triangle, cymbals, and bass drum), for which there was a great vogue in late-18th-century European music. The Turks had ceased to be a threat to Europe when the Austrians and Poles defeated them outside of Vienna in 1683; a century on, Europeans could view their once-threatening enemies in a different light.

The Symphony opens with an imposing slow introduction; the spirited Allegro that follows (beginning with a solo flute and the oboes) is tautly constructed in Haydn's usual manner. Rather than introducing two sharply contrasted themes in the typical manner of the symphonies of his age, Haydn instead offers a selection of brief, tightly interconnected motives that form the basis of the movement.

Haydn holds his percussion in reserve until the second movement, the "Militaire Movement." The main theme, folk-like in its simplicity and steady in its march rhythm, comes from a duet for two liras (an instrument similar to a hurdy-gurdy) Haydn had penned a few years earlier. A review of the symphony from a London newspaper described the progress of the movement: "It is the advancing to battle; and the march of men, the sounding of the charge, the thundering of the onset, the clash of arms, the groans of the wounded, and what may well be called the hellish roar of war increase to a climax of horrid sublimity! which, if others can conceive, he alone can execute; at least he alone hitherto has affected these wonders." The vivid pictorial quality of the movement was indeed original, at least in the context of the classical symphony (earlier composers had used battle as an inspiration), and it was a coup that secured the "Military" Symphony's place as the most popular among its 100-plus brethren.

The third movement is a minuet, a courtly dance with a stately triple rhythm, the standard for the 18th-century symphony. The movement's outer sections employ the full orchestra, giving them a sense of grandeur and occasion, while the central Trio section relies mostly on the textures of solo winds and gentle, quiet violins, although even here there is a momentary military outburst. The Presto finale rushes by like an unstoppable perpetual motion machine. In a stroke of genius, Haydn brings back his Turkish percussion during the movement's closing moments, creating a sense of balance between the finale and the first two movements and bringing things to an exhilarating conclusion.

Notes by John Magnum, Program designer/annotator of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

### *Rückert Lieder*

The German Romantic poet Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), linguist and Orientalist, was one of Gustav Mahler's favorite poets, and he set a number of his poems to music, including the *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children). Mahler composed four of the five *Rückert Lieder* in 1901, initially with piano accompaniment, but immediately orchestrated them. He was in his fifth year as musical director of the Vienna *Hofoper*, a prestigious post he accepted even though it meant

converting to Roman Catholicism to allay the anti-Semitism rife in Austria. In 1899 he took on the added position of conductor of the Philharmonic concerts but in 1901 had to relinquish this duty as a result of a serious illness and his inability to get along with the orchestra. These setbacks, however, did not prevent him from experiencing a burst of creativity during the summer, when – in addition to four of the *Rückert Lieder* – he also completed the Symphony No. 4, started on No. 5 and composed three of the *Kindertotenlieder*. Mahler composed a fifth *Rückert Lied*, "*Liebst du um Schönheit?*" (Do you love for beauty?) a short while later, but never orchestrated it.

Mahler's *Rückert Lieder* do not form a cycle and there is no conventional order in which they are to be sung. Each song is distinct from the others in subject matter, structure and orchestration. Although the musical form is strongly conditioned by the poetic structure, Mahler uses different ways to vary the traditional strophic organization.

"*Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder*" (Look not into my songs) warns the listener not to be too inquisitive about the process of artistic creativity since only the finished work matters. The analogy made with the work of bees in the second stanza provides Mahler with the basis for his musical tone painting. A brief introduction establishes a perpetual motion with a subtle buzzing produced by muted strings without double bass, single woodwinds and a horn.

"*Ich atmet' einen linden Duft*" (I breathed a gentle fragrance) musically evokes the delicate fragrance of the lime tree which the poet associates with his beloved. The orchestration is extremely delicate, often one instrument at a time, even dropping out momentarily when the poet first senses the fragrance. The continuous even motion in the strings suggests the quiet wafting of the scent through the air. The settings of the two stanzas share musical material, but are not strophic.

The most traditional of the songs, "*Liebst du um Schönheit*" (If you love for beauty), was the last composed and was left unorchestrated by Mahler, but an orchestration by Max Puttmann, who worked for Mahler's publisher, is frequently performed. Of the five, it is the most strophic in form, with the four stanzas presented in pairs, separated by a short orchestral interlude. The first three stanzas are closely related one another, while the fourth begins as if it were simply to repeat the pattern, but then underscores the message of the song by stressing and expanding the melody on the words "*Liebe*" (love) and "*immer*" (always). Clara Schumann set this poem to music as well.

The poet theme of "*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*" (I have been lost to the world), one of Mahler's most beautiful and moving songs, evokes the peace achieved through the poet's withdrawal from the turmoil of the world into his heaven, his life, and his song. The comparatively long introduction is used as both an interlude and a counterpoint with the singer. It features that orchestral symbol of isolation, and often desolation, the English Horn, with an arch-shaped melody that moves upward from a simple two notes, to three, and then more rapidly to the line's melodic peak, followed by a descent that completes the arch. The voice then repeats the melody, in a dialogue with the English horn. Mahler sets the song's three stanzas irregularly by repeating the interlude after the third line of the first stanza with only the shortest break between the last line and the first line of the second stanza. The second stanza presents a passionate contrast as the poet declares himself dead to the world. The final stanza begins with the song's main theme but continues with new musical material leading to the climax, the poet's song. The English Horn concludes the song echoing the final line of the voice.

"*Um Mitternacht*" (At midnight) recounts the poet's battle with darkness (in both its literal and figurative sense) until he finally gives up his search and commends himself into the hands of God. Three central instrumental motives are introduced in the opening bars and form the foundation for much of the song: a three-note dotted figure in the clarinets; a rising and falling dotted figure in the flute and an even descending scale in the horns, mirrored by an ascending scale in the voice. While the poem has five regular six-line stanzas (the first and last line of each are "*Um Mitternacht!*"), Mahler sets each of them to different music. In musical imitation of the poet's persistent striving, he sets each stanza with new music. The final stanza, the transcendent moment in which he finds his answer through surrender to the "Lord of death and life," concludes with triumphant brass fanfares, harp glissandi and a resounding plagal ("church") cadence.

### ***Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder***

*Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!  
Meine Augen schlag' ich nieder,  
Wie ertappt auf böser Tat.  
Selber darf ich nicht getrauen,  
Ihrem Wachsen zuzuschauen.  
Deine Neugier ist Verrat!*

*Bienen, wenn sie Zellen bauen,  
Lassen auch nicht zu sich schauen,  
Schauen selbst auch nicht zu.  
Wenn die reichen Honigwaben  
Sie zu Tag gefördert haben,  
Dann vor allen nasche du!*

### ***Ich atmet' einen linden Duft!***

*Ich atmet' einen linden Duft!  
Im Zimmer stand  
Ein Zweig der Linde,  
Ein Angebinde  
Von lieber Hand.  
Wie lieblich war der Lindenduft!*

*Wie lieblich ist der Lindenduft!  
Das Lindenreis  
Brachst du gelinde!  
Ich atme leise  
Im Duft der Linde  
Der Liebe linden Duft.*

### ***Liebst du um Schönheit***

*Liebst du um Schöheit,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe die Sonne,  
Sie trägt ein gold'nes Haar!*

*Liebst du um Jugend,  
O nicht mich liebe!  
Liebe den Frühling,  
Der jung ist jedes Jahr!*

*Liebst du um Schätze,  
O nicht mich liebe.  
Liebe die Meerfrau,  
Sie hat viel Perlen klar.*

*Liebst du um Liebe,  
O ja, mich liebe!  
Liebe mich immer,  
Dich lieb' ich immerdar.*

### **Look not into my songs!**

Look not into my songs!  
My eyes I lower,  
as if I've been caught in a misdeed.  
I can't even trust myself  
to watch them grow.  
Your curiosity is treason!

Bees, when they build cells,  
do not let anyone observe them either;  
even themselves they do not observe.  
When the rich honeycombs  
have been brought out to the light of day,  
then you shall taste them before everyone  
else!

### **I breathed a gentle fragrance!**

I breathed a gentle fragrance!  
In the room stood  
a sprig of the linden tree,  
a gift  
from a dear hand.  
How lovely was the linden fragrance!

How lovely is the linden fragrance!  
That linden twig  
you broke off so gently!  
Softly I breathe in  
the fragrance of linden,  
love's gentle fragrance.

### **If you love for beauty**

If you love for beauty's sake,  
Oh, do not love me!  
Love the sun,  
it has golden hair!

If you love for youth's sake,  
Oh, do not love me!  
Love the spring;  
Which is young every year!

If you love for treasure's sake,  
Oh, do not love me!  
Love the mermaid;  
She has many bright pearls!

If you love for love's sake,  
Oh yes, do love me!  
Love me always,  
I'll love you now and forever!

### ***Ich bin der Welt abhanden geko***

*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,  
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,  
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernomme.  
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!*

*Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,  
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,  
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,  
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt*

*Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,  
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!  
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,  
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!*

### ***Um Mitternacht***

*Um Mitternacht  
Hab' ich gewacht  
Und aufgeblickt zum Himmel;  
Kein Stern vom Sterngewimmel  
Hat mir gelacht  
Um Mitternacht.*

*Um Mitternacht  
Hab' ich gedacht  
Hinaus in dunkle Schranken.  
Es hat kein Lichtgedanken  
Mir Trost gebracht  
Um Mitternacht.*

*Um Mitternacht  
Nahm ich in acht  
Die Schläge meines Herzens;  
Ein einz'ger Puls des Schmerzes  
War angefacht  
Um Mitternacht.*

*Um Mitternacht  
Kämpft' ich die Schlacht,  
O Menschheit, deiner Leiden;  
Nicht konnt' ich sie entscheiden  
Mit meiner Macht  
Um Mitternacht.*

*Um Mitternacht  
Hab' ich die Macht  
In deine Hand gegeben!  
Herr! über Tod und Leben  
Du hältst die Wacht  
Um Mitternacht!*

### **I have been lost to the world**

I have been lost to the world  
with which I used to waste so much time,  
It has heard nothing from me for so long  
that it perhaps believes that I am dead!

It is of no consequence to me  
Whether it thinks me dead;  
I cannot contradict it,  
for in truth I am dead to the world.

I am dead to the world's tumult,  
And repose in a quiet realm!  
I live alone in my heaven,  
In my love, in my song!

### **At midnight**

At midnight  
I awoke  
and gazed up to the sky;  
No star in the throng of stars  
smiled down at me  
at midnight.

At midnight  
My thoughts went  
out to the dark barriers.  
No thought of light  
brought me comfort  
at midnight.

At midnight  
I paid close heed  
to the beating of my heart;  
One single pulse of agony  
flared up  
at midnight.

At midnight  
I fought the battle,  
Oh Mankind, of your sufferings;  
I could not decide it  
with my power  
at midnight.

At midnight  
I surrendered my power  
into your hands!  
Lord! over death and life  
You keep watch  
at midnight!

Notes by Elizabeth and Joseph Kahn

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from "The Lied, Art Song, and Choral Texts Archive" -- <http://www.lieder.net/>

## *Les préludes*

Liszt himself declared, after becoming an abbé in the Catholic Church, “The best of me is in my religious music.” However, the composer’s judgment has not coincided with posterity’s, which has set the seal of approval on Liszt’s piano concertos, many of his solo piano pieces and on a select few of his orchestral works. *Les préludes* is one of these, being the most famous of his 12 symphonic poems. Liszt had a very strong conviction on the subject of program music, namely, that a given story is a symbol of an idea, and that the expounding of the inherent philosophical and humanistic elements of the idea in pure lyricism should be the goal.

In theory, and most often in practice, Liszt, of all the 19th-century composers of program music, was closer to realizing the sense of Beethoven’s preface to his “Pastoral” Symphony: “More the expression of sentiment than painting.” Of course, Liszt, like Beethoven, with his drenchingly graphic rain and thunderstorm, acceded to certain specific picturesque temptations. But essentially the Lisztian imagery is poetically suggestive rather than concretely descriptive, and it was arrived at in original musical ways that worked a profound influence on all those, including Wagner, prepared to accept a new order.

Liszt’s structural means for attaining his goal was the devising of a free form in which a few basic themes undergo continuous transformations of melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, or tempo (anyone, or several, or all of these simultaneously). Thus, for example, a Lisztian love theme can emerge as a blazing march, or vice-versa. The first-mentioned is precisely what happens in *Les préludes*. In the climactic section, the pair of lyric themes labeled by Liszt “the enchanted dawn of every life” and containing the work’s pervading three-note motif, are transformed into surging battle calls.

*Les préludes* was composed in 1854 and to it was appended a program note written by Liszt, indicating that the piece is to be considered a musical depiction of a poem by Alphonse de Lamartine.

“What is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown song whose first solemn note is tolled by death? The enchanted dawn of every life is love. But where is the destiny on whose first delicious joys some storm does not break?... And what soul thus cruelly bruised, when the tempest rolls away, seeks not to rest its memories in the pleasant calm of pastoral life? Yet man does not long permit himself to taste the kindly quiet that first attracted him to nature’s lap. For when the trumpet sounds, he hastens to danger’s post, that in the struggle he may once more regain full knowledge of himself and his strength.”

Notes by Orrin Howard



## Biographical Notes

**Elizabeth Thompson** made her debut to Bloomington-Normal audiences as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra (2018). Since then, she has been a featured soloist in Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* with the ISU Symphony Orchestra and Daugherty's *Songs from a Silent Land* with the ISU Wind Symphony. An art song enthusiast, Thompson performs recital and chamber works on a regular basis. Operatic highlights include leading roles in *Carmen*, *Florencia en El Amazonas*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Suor Angelica*, and *The Consul*.

Thompson earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Illinois in 2015 and has received awards through the Orpheus National Vocal Competition and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. A student-centric teacher, she emphasizes skills which provide a technical foundation to support thoughtful dramatic communication and longevity of the vocal instrument. Thompson is an active member in the Pan American Vocology Association (PAVA) and the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS). At the 2020 Central Region NATS conference, her lecture *VoceVista: A Pedagogue's Tool from the Pandemic Toolbox* was a featured presentation. Her current research, *Emotional Trauma and the Singing Voice*, has been selected for presentation at the upcoming 2021 Central Region NATS conference. Thompson teaches Applied Voice and Vocal Pedagogy at Illinois State University and serves as the Voice Area Studio Coordinator.

**Glenn Block** has served as the Director of Orchestras and Opera and Professor of Conducting at Illinois State University since 1990. In addition, he served as Music Director of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City from 1983-2007. Prior to his appointment at Illinois State in the fall of 1990, Dr. Block served for 15 years as Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri - Kansas City and Music Director of the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, Dr. Block was educated at the Eastman School of Music. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego.

A frequent guest conductor, he has appeared in over 42 states with all-state and professional orchestras. Foreign guest-conducting have included concerts and master classes at the Fountainebleau Conservatoire in France, and concerts in Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic. He has served on the Boards of Directors for both the Conductors Guild and the Youth Orchestra Division of the American Symphony Orchestra League. The Youth Symphony of Kansas City and Dr. Block made their Carnegie Hall debut in June 1997. Dr. Block has served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen as Resident Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy as Visiting Conductor. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Summer Festival Orchestra at the Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He will be returning in the summer of 2022 to guest-conduct orchestras in Argentina (Buenos Aires/Teatro Colón, Misiones/Posadas, Mar del Plata, Mendoza), Asunción, Paraguay (Orquesta de la Policía Nacional, Camerata Miranda, Orquesta de la Ciudad de Asunción); Sao Paulo and Londrina, Brazil; Antefagosta, Chile; and Guadiagrele, Italy (International Guadiagrele Opera Festival).

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Cora Swenson Lee, *Cello*  
Elizabeth Thompson, *Voice*  
Tuyen Tonnu, *Piano*  
Matthew Vala, *Voice and Opera Practicum*  
Rick Valentin, *Creative Technologies*  
Justin Vickers, *Voice*  
Michelle Vought, *Voice*  
Mack Wood, *Associate Director of Bands and BRMM*  
Roger Zare, *Theory and Composition*