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Ensemble Concerts: Philharmonia Orchestra, February 28, 2024

Glenn Block
Illinois State University

Useon Choi
Illinois State University

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**Illinois State University
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
School of Music**

Illinois State University Philharmonia Orchestra

Glenn Block, *Music Director*

Useon Choi, *Graduate Assistant*

with

Katherine Lewis, *Viola*

**Kemp Recital Hall
February 28, 2024
Wednesday Evening
7:30 p.m.**

This is the one hundred and thirteenth program of the 2023-2024 season.

Program

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

Budapest Lizard (2014)

Jive

Michael Pisaro
(born 1961)

Trauermusik (1936)

Paul Hindemith
(1895-1963)

I. Langsam

II. Ruhig bewegt

III. Lebhaft

IV. Choral "Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit" – Sehr langsam

Soloist: Katherine Lewis, *viola*

Lyric for Strings (1933)

George Walker
(1922-2018)

Glenn Block, *conducting*

St. Paul's Suite in C Major Op.29, No. 2 (1913)

Gustav Holst
(1874-1934)

I. Jig: Vivace

II. Ostinato: Presto

III. Intermezzo: Andante con moto

IV. Finale (The Dragason): Allegro

Useon Choi, *conducting*

Program Notes

Budapest Lizard by MICHAEL PISARO

Jive:

A very large lizard comes to Budapest and tramples the entire city. Kind of like King Kong but it is a lizard!

In *Jive*, Budapest heals from the attack. Sparks of life jump up and return to tonality. The people dance!

Trauermusik by PAUL HINDEMITH

Trauermusik was composed on the 21st of January 1936 at very short notice in memory of King George V, who had passed away the previous night. The English translation of the title is 'Funeral Music', although it is always known by its German name. On the 19th of January 1936 Hindemith travelled to London intending to premiere his new viola concerto *Der Schwanendreher* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra on the 22nd of January. This was to be the UK premiere of the work.

This did not go to plan, however. On the 20th of January King George V died. Therefore, the concert was cancelled. However, BBC Music Producer Edward Clark and conductor Sir Adrian Boult still wanted Hindemith to be involved in the music that was going to be broadcast instead of the original concert. After much deliberation it was decided that Hindemith should compose a new work. The BBC gave him a quiet office for six hours as Hindemith composed *Trauermusik*.

Composed for viola and string orchestra, *Trauermusik* was performed in a live broadcast from a BBC radio studio with Sir Adrian Boult conducting and Hindemith as the soloist. The work consists of four short movements, with the fourth being the real heart and soul of the piece.

The lamenting first movement shows Hindemith's flair for sonorous string writing. The orchestral opening sets the scene for the solemn viola soloist who plays dotted quarter/eighth-based theme. Hindemith's writing for the viola is dynamic and heart-wrenching at times, and this is also reflected in his rich string writing.

Shifting into a 12/8 beat, the second movement moves the themes along in a very short space of time. The flowing movement from the accompaniment supports the movement of the soloist to the point where the lines are in a call and response dialogue.

The fastest, but also the shortest of all the movements, the third movement keeps the 12/8-time signature, but the tempo has increased. There is an increased amount of viola interludes in this movement, with the soloist laying the foundations of this movement.

Quoting the chorale “Für deinen Thron tret ich hiermit” (“Here I Stand Before Thy Throne”) was also known to the British as “All People that on Earth Do Dwell”. Hindemith commented on this choice saying that it was “very suitable for kings”. As the soloist plays their last interlude, the accompanying parts slowly die away to a peaceful end.

Throughout *Trauermusik*, Hindemith echoes previous works such as *Schwanendreher* and *Mathis der Maler*. After composing the new work Hindemith was not apologetic about his use of previous material: “*At that speed I couldn’t set out on a voyage of discovery!*”. He knew that few composers could have done as well as he did under those kinds of pressures.

Program notes by Alex Burns.

Lyric for Strings by GEORGE WALKER

A string of firsts dominated George Walker’s long life and career. He was the first African-American graduate of the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music with a dual diploma in both piano and composition. In 1945, he was the first African American to debut with a solo recital at Manhattan’s Town Hall and the first to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra as the soloist for Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3. In 1950, he became the first African American artist to sign with a major artist management company, and he spent the next several years playing a string of high-profile concerts in nearly every European capital. In 1956, Walker became the first African American to graduate with a doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music. In 1961, he was hired by Smith College where he became the first tenured African American faculty member in any department. And finally, in 1996, Walker was the first African American to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music in recognition of his composition *Lilacs* for voice and orchestra. At his death in August 2018, Walker was one of the most decorated and revered composers in American history.

Lyric for Strings was composed when Walker was only 24 years old, but it has remained one of his most enduring compositions. The sound, structure, and instrumentation of the piece are all clearly inspired by the famous *Adagio for Strings* composed by Walker’s Curtis Institute classmate Samuel Barber in 1936. Walker first conceived the music that became *Lyric* as a middle movement for his first-String *Quartet* and originally titled it “Lament” in dedication to his grandmother who died the year prior. The piece fluidly and dramatically alternates between lush harmonies and stark solo passages which showcase the range of sounds possible in the string orchestra. In an interview not long before his death, Walker commented: “I never played a string instrument, but somehow strings have always fascinated me.” In *Lyric*, we hear the beginning of this life-long fascination.

Program notes by Charleston Symphony Orchestra.

St. Paul's Suite by GUSTAV HOLST

In the early days of his career, long before the success of his suite *The Planets*, British composer Gustav Holst found it impossible to earn a living as a composer. In 1904, after holding several teaching positions, he was appointed musical director at St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, his biggest teaching post to date and one that he kept until his death. In 1913, the new music wing of St. Paul's was opened, and he was given a large, soundproof room for his work. On weekdays he would teach in it, but on Sundays and holidays he spent hours composing there. The first piece he wrote in this room was the *St. Paul's Suite* for string orchestra.

The four movements of this short and straightforward work provide insight into Holst's development as a composer and reveal several of the influences most important to him. The first and last movements, *Jig* and *Dargason*, the latter of which is an arrangement of the final movement of his *Second Suite in F for Military Band*, illustrate the composer's fascination with British folk music. The second movement, *Ostinato*, demonstrates his interest in clever musical devices that facilitate the development of material. The third movement, *Intermezzo*, is undoubtedly the most interesting of this suite, and it illustrates two characteristics of the mature Holst. The first of these is his lifelong interest in the music and religion of the Far East, an influence that is vividly evoked by the solo violin. The second characteristic is his penchant for combining seemingly unrelated and disparate styles of music. In the *Intermezzo*, the composer is still experimenting with this technique, juxtaposing the mystical solo violin with energetic interludes that are evocative of a British barn dance. If the effect isn't entirely convincing in *St. Paul's Suite*, Holst had certainly refined this technique by the time he composed *The Planets*, a work which masterfully combines all of the aforementioned influences.

Biographical Notes

Katherine Lewis enjoys a multi-faceted career as a teacher, and as a solo, chamber, and orchestral musician. Since 2006 she has taught courses on viola performance and technique, viola pedagogy, string pedagogy, and chamber music at Illinois State University where she is Professor of Viola and Interim Director/Master Teacher for the ISU String Project. As a performer, she is a member of the ISU Faculty String Quartet, principal viola in the Peoria Symphony and Peoria Bach Festival Orchestras, and gives numerous solo performances each year throughout the U.S.

Dr. Lewis is active in the viola community at both a local and national level. She currently serves as past-president of the Illinois chapter of the American String Teacher's Association. Recently, she completed a three-year term as an elected member of the American Viola Society Executive Board, where she served as chair of the Education Committee, working to broaden educational offerings through media and programming. She also is the founder and director of 'Redbird Viola Day' at Illinois State University and the festival director of the 'Chicago Viola Festival' hosted by Midwest Young Artists Conservatory.

Dr. Lewis is a recipient of several awards and grants for her teaching, research, and service including the ISU College of Fine Arts Outstanding Teaching Award, the ISU College of Fine Arts Outstanding Researcher and Research Initiative Awards, and the ISU University Service Initiative Award. She has given recitals, presentations, and master classes at venues and conferences throughout the country and in Brazil. Additionally, she is the co-creator of the Viola Ensemble Database, which is currently housed on the website for the American Viola Society.

Dr. Lewis holds degrees from Rice University (DMA), The Cleveland Institute of Music (MM), and Lawrence University (BM). Her primary teachers include Jeffrey Irvine, Karen Ritscher, James Dunham, and Matthew Michelic.

Useon Choi is a native of South Korea and is currently pursuing his second master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at the Illinois State University with Dr. Glenn Block. He has abundant experience teaching in the collegiate level and conducting professional chamber orchestras in South Korea. Previous to his studies at Illinois State University he was Adjunct Clarinet Professor at Inje University (South Korea) and Visiting Professor in Clarinet/Wind Conductor at Silla University (South Korea) and music director for Gimhae Jungang Girls Middle School Bridge Youth Orchestra and Viva Chamber Orchestra. Prior to his music journey in South Korea, he was the Principal Clarinetist of the Great Falls Symphony in Montana and Ft. Collins Symphony in Colorado. He currently is the Backun Clarinet Artist and Silverstein Works Artist.

In the conducting realm Dr. Choi was invited to Busan International Music Festival to conduct the youth orchestra concert and worked with K-12 orchestras in South Korea. He was also the Music Director for the Viva Chamber Orchestra for one year in Busan, South Korea which was comprises armature and professional musicians.

During his undergraduate years Dr. Choi received third place at the National Busan Music Competition and won two concerto competitions, one with the Busan Philharmonic and the other with the Dong-A University Orchestra. After graduation he headed to Indiana University to study with James Campbell for his master's degree and with J. David Harris at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for his doctorate degree in clarinet performance.

Internationally, Dr. Choi has given performances in Belgium, Spain, Japan and South Korea collaborating with international clarinetists. A devoted enthusiast of the clarinet choir, Dr. Choi has performed with numerous clarinet choirs such as the Busan Clarinet Choir, Kansai Clarinet Society and now leads the Jubiler Clarinet Ensemble. Dr. Choi is very passionate about chamber music and his experience blossomed when he held the position as Resident Clarinetist for the Chinook Winds Woodwind Quintet in Montana. Dr. Choi is always grateful to continue his musical career and to be able to travel the world performing and conducting. In his spare time, he enjoys playing tennis (NTRP 3.5), golf, fishing and watching vintage and children movies with his lovely wife Woohee and his two sons Junjae and Minjun.

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 Fontainebleau Conservatoire in France, and concerts in Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic and throughout South America since 2012. 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 has been repeatedly invited to serve as Adjunct Professor of Conducting at Illinois Wesleyan University and Interim Music Director of the Illinois Wesleyan Symphony.

He has had a major international presence guest-conducting and leading international conducting seminars regularly in South America, Europe and Asia since 2010. He has conducted many of the major orchestras of Argentina and Paraguay: Buenos Aires' Teatro Colón, Chascomus, Posadas, Salta, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Iguazu International Music Festival; Paraguay: Orquesta Nacional de Paraguay, Camerata Miranda, Orquesta de la Policia Nacional, Orquesta Camera de la Ciudad de Asunción (OCMA); Londrina, Brazil International Music Festival (2019); Guadiagrele, Italy Opera Festival (2019, 2020, 2022); Wuhan, China (2019); Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam National Orchestra of Vietnam (2018). He has led international conducting seminars throughout South America, Asia, and Europe.

He will return in the summer of 2024 to guest-conduct orchestras in Argentina (Misiones/Posadas, Rio Negro/Patagonia); Asunción, Paraguay (Orquesta of the Universidad de Norte (UniNorte), Orquesta de la Policia Nacional; in the Republic of San Marino (Europe) and Italy.

ISU PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Glenn Block, Music Director

Violin I

Gibson Swalley, *concertmaster*

Daniel Haan

Esther Cheng

Viola

Carlos Leon, *principal*

Nayeli Wood

Danni Munzert

Double Bass

Lucas Hobbs, *principal*

Devin Parks

Violin II

Sergio Ravelo, *principal*

Riley Brooks

Kate Drechny

Emily Leeper

Cello

Drake Strutzel, *co-principal*

James Dickson, *co-principal*

Micah Johnson

Isabella Martinez

Danielle Diaz

Uzay Togay

Staff

Choi, Useon, *assistant conductor, manager/librarian*

Ravelo Chaparro, Sergio Alberto, *manager/librarian*