

STRING ORCHESTRA

OF THE ROCKIES

2021-2022
CONCERT SERIES



Norwegian Romance



SUNDAY **FEBRUARY 13** 7:30 PM

UM MUSIC RECITAL HALL | UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

TONIGHT'S MUSICIANS

VIOLIN

Maria Larionoff, *Artistic Director*
Margaret Baldrige, *Orchestra Leader*
Jason Bell
Laura Dalbey
Mary Kothman
Loy Koch
Kira Lee
Rachel Schnackel

CELLO

Adam Collins, *Principal*
Chris Sopko

BASS

Thomas Sciple, *Principal*

VIOLA

Jenny Smith, *Principal*
Lisa Shull
Amelia Thornton

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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Tonight's program honors the memory of three cherished friends of SOR. John Talbot, Susan Johnson, and Anne Hoell are in our hearts as we perform this evening. We will miss their smiles and warm presence at our concerts.

The Grieg string quartet is the centerpiece of our concert tonight, and although originally written for four players, it translates wonderfully to a large ensemble. The writing is so rhythmically and harmonically rich that expanding the work to a full string section and adding the double bass seems natural, and even necessary! My husband, double bassist Barry Lieberman, always has the same response upon hearing a string quartet: "It's ok—but would REALLY sound better if you added a bass!" and his inspired arrangement showcases this idea. We round out our program with the frolicsome and lighthearted Herbert *Serenade for Strings* and some extraordinary film music by William Walton. Happy Valentine's Day from all of us!

Musically yours,
Maria Larionoff
Artistic Director, SOR

STRING ORCHESTRA
OF THE ROCKIES

Season Finale



SUNDAY / **April 24, 2022** / 7:30 PM
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PROGRAM NOTES BY TOM COOK

Two Pieces for Strings from the Film Music *Henry V*

Ah, love and Shakespeare! They go together like rich chocolate and fine wine. So it's appropriate that, on this Valentine's Day eve, we begin with music composed for a Shakespearian drama by one of England's most renowned composers. It was nearly eight decades ago now, in 1944, that a highly anticipated version of Shakespeare's *Henry V* was released by Two Cities Films to rave reviews. The renowned British actor, Laurence Olivier, both directed and starred in the cinematic production, which also featured actors Dallas Bower and Alan Dent. **William Walton**, one of the generation's leading and most highly respected composers of the day, was asked to compose music to accompany and enhance the motion picture creation. It was the film's co-producer, Dallas Bower, who suggested that Walton compose the music, and Olivier agreed. Accepting the invitation, the forty-two-year-old Walton was already immersed in a creative career which was to span some sixty years and include classical genres and styles from film scores to opera. All told, he wrote music for about a dozen films and was to go on to compose music for two later film adaptations of Shakespeare plays by Olivier, *Hamlet*, in 1948, and *Richard III*, in 1955. But, the first project to unite the talents of the famed actor/producer with the gifted British composer was the one that combined Shakespeare with the music we will enjoy on this program.

For *Henry V*, Walton drew upon samples of existing material from Shakespeare's time, using melodies from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, a compilation of pieces for the virginal, a small keyboard instrument related to the harpsichord. For the French scenes, Walton borrowed a pair of old French battle songs and a few themes from Joseph Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne*, which are themselves settings of French folk songs. Tonight, we will hear two selections from the film music, experiencing first-hand the reason the composer was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Musical Score!

Serenade for Strings, Op. 12

Those who recognize the name **Victor Herbert** often associate him with the many melodies from his wildly successful forty-three operettas that premiered on Broadway from the 1890s to World War I. Perhaps most famous among these was the 1903 production of *Babes in Toyland*. But it all started in 1859 in Dublin, Ireland, where he was born. Nearly three decades would pass before Herbert and his young wife immigrated to New York City, where he was to live and create for the rest of his sixty-five years, and she, Therese Förster, would become a prima donna in the Metropolitan Opera. Although well known by then as a virtuoso cellist and recitalist, Herbert joined the pit orchestra! What followed was an incredible life of hyper-activity for the brilliant musician. From 1898 to 1904, he conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and in 1904 he organized his own concert orchestra. In addition to operettas and two operas, he wrote the music for several Ziegfeld Follies, wrote musical scores for motion pictures, composed for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and between 1900 and 1915, wrote 23 musicals. Oh, and he also composed numerous other compositions, romantic and melodious, to be performed by the New York Philharmonic Society and even, for a time, assumed leadership of the celebrated 22nd Regiment Band, formerly conducted by the famed bandsman, Patrick S. Gilmore. Even so, one of Herbert's greatest achievements was leading the fight for favorable copyright legislation, which was signed into law in 1909. In this leadership role, he was one of nine founders of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) in 1914.

Out of all those compositions, tonight we will hear Herbert's amazing *Serenade for Strings*, written when he was 25 years old. This piece is an exploration, on Herbert's part, encompassing an array of techniques and well-crafted Romantic contrasts involving dynamics, textures, timbres, and harmonies throughout its five movements. Fully reflecting his extensive writing for string quartet by the time, the *Serenade* demonstrates use of extended techniques. One publication describes the work as a "dainty delicate composition, full of fine color, replete in artistic contrasts, with crescendos almost Wagnerian in their swing." A writer for the *New York Times* praised it as being "a particularly good work" and noted its lush writing for strings. See what you think as you listen closely to the creative genius of Victor Herbert.

String Quartet #1 in G Minor, Op.27

The *String Quartet #1 in G Minor, Op 27* is a complex and highly dramatic work that perfectly balances out the other two pieces on tonight's program. It may have been originally composed for just four players, but this arrangement for string orchestra by Barry Lieberman proves it works just as well and, perhaps even better, when performed by an ensemble of artists like our own String Orchestra of the Rockies. **Edvard Grieg**, a Norwegian composer associated with the nationalistic trend in Romantic music in the latter part of the 19th century, earned the reputation, during his lifetime, as Norway's most celebrated composer. Despite such crowd favorites as his *Piano Concerto in A minor* and the incidental music to *Peer Gynt*, including the lovely "Morning Mood" and the boisterous "Hall of the Mountain King," Grieg is prized, too, for his intimate musical miniatures, well-known art songs, and all those *Lyrical Pieces* for solo piano. He was, after all, a composer who was perhaps more accustomed, in the long run, to writing in smaller forms, such as those art songs and Romantic piano miniatures.

Grieg was 35 years old at the time he wrote the music we will hear tonight, and historical evidence indicates that it may have been a challenge for him to write in this musical setting. But, in 1877-78, Grieg wrote this string quartet, his first of a total of two, declaring to a friend, "I have recently finished a string quartet which I still haven't heard. It is in G minor and is not intended to bring trivialities to market. It strives towards breadth, soaring flight and above all resonance for the instruments for which it is written." In another declaration, Grieg reiterates, "It aims at breadth, vigor, flight of imagination and above all, fullness of tone for the instruments...." This work remains as one of the most original and influential string quartets of the late 19th century, appearing at a time when the first important quartets of Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Borodin, and Dvorak were emerging. In addition, it garnered the attention and admiration of Claude Debussy and clearly influenced his own quartet in the same key written several years later. Maurice Ravel, Debussy's colleague writing in the Impressionistic style, once said that nothing he wrote was very far from Grieg's influence. As so beautifully articulated by our Artistic Director, Maria Larionoff, this "is a composition so forward-thinking and colossal in scope that it harmonically expanded the musical language and range of the string quartet genre for future generations of musicians and composers." Those future generations include not only the SOR musicians who performed this piece in its original form, as a quartet, last April, but extends to all of the performing artists of our full String Orchestra of the Rockies. We, dear audience members, are the beneficiaries!

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STRING ORCHESTRA
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“Norwegian Romance”

Sunday, February 13, 2022, 7:30 pm
University of Montana, School of Music - Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Two Pieces for Strings from the film music for *Henry V* (1944).....William Walton
Passacaglia: Death of Falstaff (1902-1983)
“Touch her soft lips and part”

Serenade for Strings, Op. 12 (1884).....Victor Herbert
Aufzug: Tempo di Marcia (1859-1924)
Polonaise: Tempo moderato
Liebesscene: Langsam
Canzonetta: Allegretto
Finale: Molto vivace

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op.27 (1878).....Edvard Grieg
(arr. for string orchestra by B. Lieberman) (1843-1907)
Un poco Andante—Allegro molto ed agitato
Romanze: Andantino
Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato
Finale: Lento—Presto e Saltarello

This evening’s performance is being recorded.
Please be sure to silence all cell phones and other devices.
Please be aware that some hearing aids may emit noises that
interfere with the performance. *Thank you.*