



the
veil of
memory

SATURDAY
MAY 11 2024

7:30^{PM}

BATTELL CHAPEL
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NEW HAVEN

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HISTORY OF THE ORCHESTRA

In 1939, founding conductor Harry Berman gathered a group of 30 advanced amateur musicians for a first rehearsal; they performed their first concert on April 7, 1941, at Sprague Memorial Hall on the Yale University campus under the name "Philharmonic of New Haven, Connecticut." In its early years, the orchestra's repertoire consisted primarily of light classical selections.

In the 1960s, Gordon Emerson became music director. Under his 40-year leadership, the orchestra expanded its repertoire to include local, state, and world premieres of works by composers such as Charles Ives and Leonard Bernstein. In addition, under its new moniker, the Civic Orchestra of New Haven, it began to feature instrumental soloists and local school choruses.

Christopher James Hisey became music director in the 2000s. Under his baton the orchestra expanded its repertoire, including a memorable performance of Carmina Burana in Norwalk.

In 2018 the Civic Orchestra welcomed rising star Kalena Bovell to the podium. At the time, Maestro Bovell was the only American professional conductor of African-American and Hispanic descent. Her reputation and skill soon led her to a full-time assistant conducting position with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

The 2019 season brought music director Matthew Scinto to the Civic Orchestra. During the COVID-19 shut-down Maestro Scinto kept members engaged with on-line discussions of musical topics. In 2022 Maestro Scinto accepted a faculty position at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts.

In 2022, the Civic Orchestra was under the baton of Interim Director Robert "Bobby" Smith, who brought inspiring energy to match his formidable conducting skills.

Now in its 85th season, and after an extensive music director search, the Civic Orchestra of New Haven is proud to conclude its first concert season under the direction of Maestro Samuel Hollister.

PROGRAM

the veil of memory

Emilie Mayer
1812 – 1883

Overture No. 3 in C major

Harriet Steinke
b. 1994

Marimba Concerto
World Premiere

Makana Medeiros, *marimba*

Intermission

Johannes Brahms
1833 – 1897

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro giocoso
- IV. Allegro energico e passionato

CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF NEW HAVEN

SAMUEL HOLLISTER, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

YIRAN ZHAO, *ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR*



VIOLIN I

Tae Shik Kim,
Concertmaster
Isabelle Aboaf
Stephen Grodzinsky
Hannah Jordan
Reina Maruyama
Mauranda Men
Sue Prasad
Eleanor Schiff

VIOLIN II

Sarah Roman *
Jerry Anne Dickel
Marlow Hubbard
Yoshiko Maruyama
Mary Mattheis
Catherine Miller
Will Platt
Sung Eun Wang
Lawrence Zukof

VIOLA

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Mira Debs
Margaret Liddell
Ron Moore
Laurie Ongley

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Hoon Cho
Jill Polisson
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Linnea Weiss
Meg Myers ≠

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Jay Elfenbein
Sooo-z Mastropietro ≠

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Karen Devonshuk

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TUBA

Art Hovey

PERCUSSION

David Liskov *
Jen Ongley

* *principal*
≠ *on leave*

SAMUEL HOLLISTER, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

Conductor, pianist, composer, harpsichordist, and theorist Samuel Hollister believes that music tells powerful stories that create and strengthen communities. In 2022 Maestro Hollister joined the faculty of the University of Rhode Island as interim director of orchestral activities. He is also currently pursuing a D.M.A. in orchestral conducting at the Yale School of Music, serving as the Yale Philharmonia's conducting fellow and as the assistant to Peter Oundjian, Carolyn Kuan, Leonard Slatkin, and others. Hollister holds two master's degrees in orchestral conducting and music theory pedagogy from the Peabody Conservatory, where he studied with Marin Alsop.

While an undergraduate in music and mathematics at Yale, he conducted the Saybrook College Orchestra and concert productions of Mozart's Requiem and Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil. He has conducted world premieres of opera and concert music at Yale, Peabody, the University of Rhode Island, with the PHACE ensemble in Vienna, and elsewhere around the world. He conducted and arranged



the Peabody Opera's 2020 production of Britten's Turn of the Screw, bringing singers together virtually even as the world grappled with a pandemic.

Hollister joined the music staff of Opera Saratoga in 2022 as a conductor and pianist and was named a conducting fellow at the Eastern Music Festival in 2019, returning on invitation in 2021. In 2018 he founded Aurora Collaborative, a Rhode Island nonprofit music organization, to provide opportunities for musicians and artists of any age or background to collaborate and communicate their own musical narratives.

MAKANA MEDEIROS, *MARIMBA*

Makana Kai Noah Medeiros is a percussionist emerging as a musician participating in many genres ranging from jazz to classical to contemporary music.

As a chamber musician, Makana has performed with ensembles and festivals including the Yale Percussion Group, New Music New Haven, Eastman Percussion Ensemble, Eastman Jazz Combos, Nief-Norf Summer Festival, and Chautauqua Festival Orchestra. Makana has performed with established artists in the contemporary music genre including Pamela Z, Caroline Shaw, and Eighth Blackbird. Presented by TedX, he has performed works by Alejandro Viñao and Garth Neustadter in Shenzhen, China with the Yale Percussion Group. Makana has also appeared as a guest at summer festivals such as Next Festival of Emerging Artists and the inaugural season of ContemporArt in Satu Mare, Romania. With a reputation as an advocate of contemporary music, Makana has held leadership positions and participated in peer-managed ensembles including Ossia New Music at



the Eastman School of Music and Versicolor New Music at Yale University, both with a mission to promote innovative music of the last century.

Makana holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, where he was also awarded the prestigious Performer's Certificate and Arts Leadership Certificate. He is currently pursuing a Master of Musical Arts degree at the Yale School of Music under the tutelage of Robert van Sice.

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HARRIET STEINKE, COMPOSER

Harriet Steinke is a composer currently living in New Haven. She is originally from Detroit, Michigan, and recently completed her graduate studies at the Yale School of Music. Her work has premiered across the U.S. and some of her favorite performances have been those in her hometown city of Detroit. From 2018 to 2020 she was composer-in-residence for the Detroit-based new music quartet Virago, who released their debut album of Steinke's concert length *Listening for Bells* in March of 2022. A *Closer Listen* called the album "a bright, exuberant release, a rush of spring air in the midst of winter." Steinke is currently working with the award-winning Akropolis Reed Quintet on a programmatic Mass they commissioned for a Detroit premiere in 2025. Other favorite projects include commissions from the Albany Symphony, the Tanglewood Music Center, Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings, Pro Musica of Detroit, the Voyageur Reed Quintet, and the Red Clay Saxophone Quartet. The 2023–2024 season saw the premiere of her song cycle *Hymnal*, a 50-minute work for the vocalist Molly McGuire that sets Alessandra Lynch's beautiful and evocative poem "Hymnal" in a cycle of 10 songs. The work premiered at the Firehouse 12 recording studio's live performance



photo by Muriel Steinke

space in New Haven. Upcoming in 2024–2025, the piano-clarinet duo CRUX (pianist Lisa Moore and clarinetist Lloyd Van't Hoff) will feature Steinke's work *Rituals* on their debut album release. While studying at Yale, Steinke has had multiple premieres on the New Music New Haven series and has written new works for ensembles including the Yale Philharmonia, the Yale Cellos, and most recently, the Civic Orchestra of New Haven. Harriet studied English and music at Butler University where her primary mentor was the composer Michael Schelle. While at Yale she studied with composers Michael Schelle, Martin Bresnick, Chris Theofanidis, Aaron Jay Kernis, and David Lang.

YIRAN ZHAO, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Conductor, composer, pianist, and vocalist Yiran Zhao is the assistant conductor of the Civic Orchestra of New Haven and the Greater New Haven Community Chorus, faculty member at ECA (ACES), post-graduate teaching fellow at Yale Music in Schools Initiative, and organist at First Baptist Church in New Haven. She actively sings with professional vocal ensembles including Apollo's Fire, VAE Cincinnati, Yale Choral Artists, and VOCES8 US Scholars.

She holds a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Yale School of Music, where she was the recipient of the Robert Shaw Prize (for distinguished achievement) and the Margot Fassler Prize in the Performance of Sacred Music, and the Hugh Porter Scholarship. She holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Piano and Theory & Composition from Westminster Choir College, summa cum laude. Yiran was the director of Yale Divinity School (Marquand) Chapel Choir.

Yiran is an active composer whose works have been frequently performed at Yale, USC, Westminster, and in Europe and Asia. Her Symphony No. 1 was performed by Westminster Community Orchestra, receiving 1st place in the Westminster Composition



Competition. She is one of five initial composers to be commissioned by the Yale Glee Club Alumni Board for its "NextWorks" project, with the goal of making the transformative experience of performing new music and working with living composers accessible to ensembles of all ability levels regardless of their financial resources.

Yiran will be an orchestral conducting fellow at the Eastern Music Festival in summer 2024, and she will pursue her Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Eastman School of Music starting fall 2024.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture No. 3

Emilie Mayer (1812–1883)

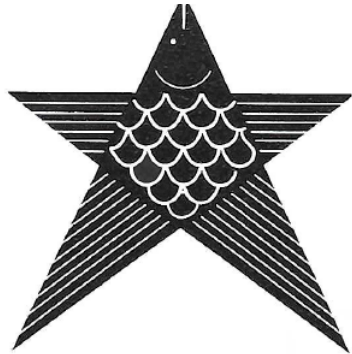
The extraordinary music of nineteenth-century German composer Emilie Mayer, despite enjoying fiercely vocal support and praise from musicians, audiences, and royalty of her day, still remains largely unperformed and, often, exists only in her own manuscript. Her few symphonies and overtures that have been published languish behind exorbitant paywalls, meaning that most of the works of this talented and underperformed composer are, still today, only within the reach of orchestras with massive budgets. Two years ago, fascinated by Mayer's musical voice and determined to bring her works into the spotlight, I teamed up with fellow faculty member Vilde Aaslid at University of Rhode Island, alongside a group of dedicated students, to select a work that had yet to be published in the public domain, free of charge—and, hundreds of hours of work later, we produced our own free-to-access public-domain edition of this piece and premiered it with great excitement. Tonight's performance will be the second modern performance of this edition, and we are thrilled that you are with us to help bring this special moment to life.

Note by Samuel Hollister

Marimba Concerto

Harriet Steinke (b. 1994)

Today's concert is the first performance of my Marimba Concerto, commissioned by the Civic Orchestra of New Haven. This project came about through my friendship with the CONH conductor Sam Hollister, who has now conducted three world premiere performances of my music over the past few years. This piece was written especially for Sam and this wonderful orchestra and for the marimba player Makana Medeiros, who was my colleague at Yale. Over the course of writing this piece (my first piece of this scale for the Marimba), I was amazed by the



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expressive breadth and extreme tenderness of this instrument that, in most orchestral settings, is hidden deep within the texture of the ensemble. Once I started working up close with Makana, I immediately realized that this instrument was a lot more sophisticated than “the big wooden xylophone at the back of the orchestra.” I developed this piece as a sort of theme and variations, with musical material that is passed around to different sections of the orchestra and expertly expanded by the marimba soloist. Most of the music material for the piece is introduced in the first minute of music and the piece develops through varying presentations of this material in dialogue with the soloist. This piece is a single movement lasting around 13 minutes and in many ways, the piece is somewhat unfinished. I have been so inspired by working with Makana, Sam, and this wonderful, sensitive orchestra and hope to expand the piece to a multi-movement work in the future. Thank you very much for coming to today’s concert and listening to this new piece! I’d love to hear what you think of my piece, so please find me after the concert or you are welcome to send me an email: harriet@harrieststeinke.com.

Note by Harriet Steinke

Symphony No. 4

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Johannes Brahms is a singularly lonely figure. Caught amid the maelstrom of modernization at the hands of everyone from Wagner to Liszt, Brahms was the odd one out: a fiercely faithful traditionalist. His career began with Robert Schumann’s enthusiastic and extremely public prophecy in 1853 that then-20-year-old Brahms would, one day, carry on Beethoven’s torch of musical greatness. Flabbergasted, the young and already self-critical Brahms wrote to Schumann that his praise “will arouse such extraordinary expectations by the public that I don’t know how I can begin to fulfill them.”

Indeed, this pressure to make a mark—to continue Beethoven’s legacy, as was the rampant desire of the time—nearly led Brahms to creative self-destruction. His First Symphony, very evidently an homage to Beethoven and a testimonial to the continued livelihood of traditional forms and contrapuntal languages, took him 21 years to compose. The attention that he pays in the First Symphony to formal narrative, voicing, orchestration, harmony, and rules of voice leading betrays his passionate sense that this traditional world

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he was charged with caretaking was hallowed. He refused to crank out a brash symphony only to mar the sanctified ground on which he felt he stood — so, instead, he toiled for decades, aiming for perfection. Perhaps he was partly molded into the role of a traditionalist by Schumann's prophecy; perhaps it was something in his nature or his innate musical ear. Regardless — from then on, Brahms was lonely.

Fast forward to 1884, when the 51-year-old lonely traditionalist completed what would be his final symphony: the Fourth. By now, Wagner had written his world-shattering *Tristan und Isolde*, completed all four mythical operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and even completed the mammoth *Parsifal*. Liszt had written both the "Dante" and "Inferno" Symphonies as well as thirteen rich and daring tone poems. Then there was Brahms, toiling away as ever, comfortable in his intelligently and sensitively crafted musical values but increasingly anguished in the face of what he saw to be an ever-modernizing and garishly belligerent musical trend. This dissonance—between the traditions that Brahms hoped to uphold and the bitter anguish he felt in witnessing them quashed by his

contemporaries — defines the spirit of the Fourth Symphony.

The first movement begins with an intense but serene picture of resignation. The opening melody cascades down, with occasional upward leaps, to create the illusion of a singable tune—yet, if you subtract the upward octave leaps, you are left with just a simple chain of falling thirds, a resigned and fateful sigh charged with a sense of Brahms's disillusionment. In an homage to the likes of Haydn (again working in a reverence for tradition), Brahms forges the entire movement around the idea of falling thirds, taking this initial nucleus and expanding it into an entire sonata-form movement with all of the character, gristle, variegation, and sensitive, intellectual craft of the old master. The movement concludes with what appears to be the fiery dissolution of the very thirds-based theme that opened the movement, with as much anguish as if Brahms were chained to his desk and forced to watch as the musical languages, styles, and sensibilities he loved so dearly were immolated in front of him. As the musicologist Donald Tovey put it, the end of this movement "bears comparison with the greatest climaxes in classical music." But

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amid the fiery, fateful ending of this movement, Brahms includes just as much of his deep love and admiration of style and tradition. For the critic Eduard Hanslick, who heard initial trial performances by Brahms of the movement, "it is like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back."

The second movement begins with a more literal take on traditionalism: an arcane musical language reminiscent of plainchant. The horns and woodwinds begin in neither minor nor major, but Phrygian—a Medieval musical mode with haunting intervals and a chilled, stone-like quality. From this frozen and sepulchral

soundscape comes a contemplative clarinet theme, finally in major, as if serenely strolling decades later through the now-motionless rubble of the first movement's catastrophe. The second movement belongs to a place, a timeline, and a sentiment highly foreign to ours—or, maybe, all too familiar. It is at once nostalgic, calm, disillusioned, spiritual, longing, lifeless, and intensely human. It is as though the horrifying end of the first movement forced Brahms to pull the escape valve—to make one last-ditch attempt at averting the apocalypse—and time itself stops. Brahms, or the listener, is now a disembodied figure not experiencing but rather floating above the music, observing it

PROGRAM NOTES

from a distance, as if through a veil separating the self from the memory. So often throughout the movement, the music becomes fuzzy and dreamlike, but just as often it bursts forth with uncanny vivacity, like a long-gone spirit—or tradition—striving to regain a place in the living world.

The third movement is remarkable among Brahms's symphonies: it is the only of his symphonic movements to embody the spirit of a scherzo. But this scherzo is not a typical "joke," as the word would suggest: rather, it feels like a seriously triumphant and jubilant celebration. In the aftermath of the first and second

movements, one might be flabbergasted to hear this movement—are we really celebrating after all this? Celebrate the third movement does, with quick feet, capriccioso-like figures, and Rossini-style lightness. There is an almost academic quality to some of Brahms's outbursts here, as if to further strain the veracity of the celebration by projecting a sense of calculation, of overthinking. Nevertheless, the movement ends in a grand gesture of triumph, almost as if suggesting an ending to the entire symphony.

If the third movement felt like a victory too soon or too unjustified,



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the fourth movement confirms those fears. From the first few measures, we immediately know that a fateful course-correction is underway, taking us back to the embattled, minor world of the anguished traditionalist. In fact, the first eight chords of the movement declaim a simple melodic line: do-re-mi-fa-fi-sol-sol-do (with “fi” referring to sharp fa, halfway between fa and sol)—and this melodic line repeats through every eight-bar phrase of the movement until its final passage. Of course, in this construction, Brahms was paying one final homage to a traditional form: the passacaglia, where a melodic idea repeats itself, sometimes quite obscured but present nevertheless, with varying accompaniment. See if you can hear this melodic pattern pervade the rest of the movement, even in the slower and sweeter middle passage and the fiery return thereafter.

Some say the Fourth Symphony is an enigma, and so by design.

I say the Fourth is unambiguously pessimistic. Brahms had devoted his career to expanding and extending a storied stylistic path—whether of his own accord, Schumann’s, or otherwise—and, to his mortification, discovered himself to be one of the few remaining journeyers daring to tread that path. The Fourth is a desperately anguished cry—an endling song, the last gasp of a species. But I don’t personally experience Brahms’s disillusionment when I conduct or hear this work. For me, it is an excuse to reconnect with how loved and deeply felt the styles that Brahms cherished remain to this very day. It’s an excuse to imagine the joy on his face if only he could know how relevant his music still is. The craft he prized, the poised but intense expression he sought—it all fills me with love for a lonely composer who knew what it meant, better than anyone else, to treasure something dearly.

Note by Samuel Hollister



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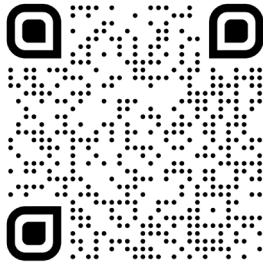
 
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