



Silicon Valley Symphony

Christopher Bengochea, tenor soloist

Michael Paul Gibson, music director and conductor

Saturday
17 Nov. 2012
7:30 pm

Holy Trinity
Episcopal Church,
Menlo Park

Sunday
18 Nov. 2012
4:00 pm

Saint Mark's
Episcopal Church,
Palo Alto

Ticket Donation \$20/\$15/Children 12 and under free with adult

Brahms: *Variations on a Theme By Haydn* Op 56a (1873)

- Var. I: Poco piu animato
- Var. II: Piu vivace
- Var. III: Con moto
- Var. IV: Andante con moto
- Var. V: Vivace
- Var. VI: Vivace
- Var. VII: Grazioso
- Var. VIII: Presto non troppo
- Finale: Andante

Tosti: *A Marechiare* (1886)

Verdi: *La donna è mobile* (1851) from *Rigoletto*
***Christopher Bengochea* , Tenor soloist**

Fauré: *Pavane* (1887)

Denza: *Funiculì Funiculà* (1880)

***Christopher Bengochea* , Tenor Soloist**

Menlo Park Chorus, April McNeely, Music Director
Audience singalong

di Capua: *O Sole Mio* (1898)

***Christopher Bengochea* , Tenor Soloist**

INTERMISSION

Ravel: *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17))

1. Prélude
2. Forlane
3. Menuet
4. Rigaudon

Rimsky-Korsakov : *Capriccio Espagnol* (1887)

1. Alborada
2. Variazioni
3. Alborado
4. Scena e canto gitano
5. Fandango asturiano

Variations on a Theme By Haydn (1873) by Johannes Brahms

To this day, the theme on which this magnificent work was based remains something of a mystery. Brahms gave credit to the illustrious composer, Joseph Haydn, but it seems he was misled. Publishers, in those days, were wont to misattribute works to better known composers in order to boost sales and, furthermore, modern scholars do not believe the theme matches Haydn's style. Instead, it is thought Haydn's pupil, Ignaz Pleyel may have been responsible though it is not certain. What we do know is that the theme, written for a wind ensemble, carried the title "Chorale Saint Antoni" and for this reason Brahms' composition is also sometimes known as the "St Anthony Variations".

Brahms started writing his variations for two pianos, but then decided to create an orchestral version in parallel. He had yet to write his first symphony and felt intimidated by the symphonic legacy left by Ludwig van Beethoven. The unusual idea of creating a full blown orchestral work out of a set of variations may, therefore, have had a certain appeal as a way of testing the waters but also as a logical extension of ideas he and other composers had played with previously. In the apotheosis of all variation works, Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* for piano, for example, had shown that it was possible to take a rather banal little waltz and transmogrify it into a spellbinding magnum opus. Right from variation one, Beethoven deconstructed the tune and reinvented it as if born unto a world operating under different physical laws.

Brahms achieves almost the same effect here. The Baroque formality of the opening theme, pretty though it is, suddenly unfolds in the first variation into an all color spectacle in which Brahms's Romantic lyricism comes to the fore. The other variations exhibit no less skill and imagination in exploring a wide variety of moods, from the infectiously lively to the soberly contemplative, while still somehow hewing to a semblance of the original theme. Everything comes together in the glorious finale which itself was written as a *passacaglia*, a kind of theme and variations built on recurring motif in the basses. After the motif has moved upward through the strings, we enter the darkening clouds of the minor mode, but then suddenly emerge into the radiant sunshine of the original "Haydn" theme triumphantly proclaimed by the strings and decorated by fusillades of scales in the winds. It's a thrilling moment that launches this music not just into greatness but into transcendence.

A Marechiare (1886) by Francesco Paolo Tosti

Tosti, an Italian composer best known for his songs that come from the salon rather than the opera house, was reputedly at one time so poor, he subsisted on a diet of oranges and stale bread. Nevertheless, he eventually enjoyed better times becoming a British citizen and a friend of King Edward VII. In this popular song set in Marechiare, a district of Naples, Tosti provided music for a poem in which a young man serenades his girl outside her window, likening the power of her eyes to the shining stars.

La donna è mobile (1851) from *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi

This surprisingly jolly crowd pleaser whose provocative title means “Woman is fickle” is doubly ironic in that it is both part of an operatic tragedy and its words are sung by the most duplicitous of men, the Duke of Mantua, who like some Don Juan spends his time constantly chasing women. The melody of the song is so striking that before the first performance of *Rigoletto*, Verdi insisted on maximum secrecy by requiring the tenor, who was playing the role of the Duke, not to sing or whistle the tune outside rehearsals, lest it somehow prematurely leak and be plagiarized.

Funiculì Funiculà (1880) by Luigi Denza

A perennial Italian favorite, *Funiculì Funiculà* was written to celebrate the opening of the first funicular railway on Mount Vesuvius. Its catchy tune was one the German composer, Richard Strauss, mistakenly took to be a Neapolitan folk song, using it in his tone poem, *Aus Italien*, only to find himself the subject of a lawsuit. *The Grateful Dead* often used the song in live concerts while warming up, and it made a brief appearance in an episode of *Seinfeld*, where Elaine sings it with her latest flame, the conductor of the “Policeman's Benevolent Association Orchestra”, a man, who causes much bemusement and irritation by insisting on being called “Maestro” at all times even by his closest acquaintances.

Funiculì Funiculà: Audience Sing Along:

(transliteration by Shirley Harned-Kelley)

Yahm-moh yahm-moh ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah!
Yahm-moh yahm-moh ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah!
Foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah, foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah!
ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah!

...solo... too sah-yahd doh? fahr-meh noon poh.
...solo... teh lahs-sah stah ... soh-loh gwa-dah.

Yahm-moh yahm-moh ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah!
Yahm-moh yahm-moh ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah!
Foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah, foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah!
ncoh-pah yahm-moh yah foo-nee-koo-lee foo-nee-koo-lah!

***O Sole Mio* (1898) by Eduardo di Capua**

Perhaps the most famous of all Neapolitan songs, *O Sole Mio* has been covered by a gaggle of singers from Enrico Caruso to Luciano Pavarotti, and from Bryan Adams to Elvis Presley (*It's Now or Never*). For more than a decade in the UK, an ice-cream manufacturer exploited the tune in its TV advertising to the words "One more Cornetto, give it to me ..." The title *O Sole Mio* literally means "my sun" and the lyrics are a paean to the wonder of the star powered celestial orb that rises and sinks each day bringing alternately happiness and sadness into our lives.

***Pavane* (1887) by Gabriel Fauré**

Though the French composer, Gabriel Fauré, may not have had made the same splash on the musical world as his two protégés, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, he did bestow on us some truly beautiful melodies, among them this stunning *Pavane*. The work was originally written for small orchestra but after deciding to dedicate it to his patron, a rich countess, he felt obliged to turn it into a grander affair by adding a chorus though the work is often performed without one. The pavane was originally a 16th century court dance from Padua, and performances of this work are also sometimes staged as a ballet. The lyrics written for it are timeless enough though, speaking, as they do, of the romantic helplessness of man.

***Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17) by Maurice Ravel**

Ravel originally wrote *Le Tombeau de Couperin* as a six movement suite for piano of which he subsequently chose to orchestrate four movements. Perhaps intended as a memorial to the Baroque composer Francois Couperin aka Couperin “The Great”, Ravel also dedicated each movement to the memory of friends who had died fighting in World War I. Though it started life as a piano work, like Brahms’ “Haydn” variations the suite shows little evidence of its provenance, a testament to the superb orchestral skills of the composer. And while the piece was also intended to pay homage to the French keyboard suites of the 18th century, Ravel’s 20th century sensibilities shine through in the form of spicy harmonies and angular rhythms evident particularly in the *Forlane*, a kind of Italian folk dance. When criticised for composing a light-hearted work rather than a sombre one for such a lugubrious topic, Ravel is said to have replied: “The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence.”

***Capriccio Espagnol* (1887) by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov**

As a cadet in the Imperial Russian Navy, and one with little formal musical training, Rimsky-Korsakov would surely not have seemed like a promising candidate to become a distinguished composer. Somehow, though, he realized early enough he had a musical calling and after joining forces with other notable self-trained musical amateurs (Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Borodin - forming a group that famously became known as “The Five”), he eventually seized the composer’s mantle with gusto. By the time he was 27, he had secured a position as a professor at the St Petersburg’s Conservatory, staying one step ahead of his students by disciplined self-study of harmony and counterpoint.

Not that his time in the navy was entirely wasted. He worked with military bands where he obtained an intimate understanding of how many wind instruments should be played. He also got to travel across the globe which no doubt broadened his cultural enthusiasms, evident in his two most famous compositions: *Scheherazade*, evoking the mysteries of the Orient with tales from *A Thousand and One Nights*, and *Capriccio Espagnol*, reveling in the brio and panache of folk tunes from Spain.

The composer had originally intended *Capriccio* to be a virtuoso work for violin and orchestra perhaps influenced by Lalo’s

famous *Symphonie Espagnole*. However, after creating an initial sketch, Rimsky Korsakov instead decided to make virtuoso demands on the whole orchestra. The composition, which is in five short interconnected movements, starts with the *Alborada*, a festive dance that celebrates the rising sun, and which reappears in different guises later in the work. *Scene and Gypsy Song*, features five solo cadenzas, first for horns and trumpets, then solo violin, flute, clarinet, and harp. This leads into the *Fandango of the Asturias*, which embraces themes from the whole work culminating in a frenzied finale. The dazzling nature of the writing for each instrument so impressed the players during its first rehearsals that they applauded the composer after every movement, and after its first performance the audience demanded an instant reprise of the entire work. One suspects that instead of the usual bravos, they may have even cried “¡Olé!”.

Program notes by Julian Brown, concertmaster of the SVS



Christopher Bengochea

Critically acclaimed and prize winning international opera tenor, **Christopher Bengochea**, is rapidly being sought after by opera houses, concert venues, and audiences alike. Mr. Bengochea has been heralded as having "power, sure intonation, and fine diction that come in a package tied with a ribbon of 'natural sound.'" Christopher Bengochea has delighted audiences with his unique combination of vocal and dramatic interpretations in performances ranging from oratorio to opera. It is a unique, broadly-projected "wide" sound that can serve lyrical or heroic music equally well."

Last year Christopher, a former resident artist of Opera San José, returned to perform the title role in Opera San José's production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* with enormous success. The vocally and dramatically demanding role of Idomeneo, King of Crete, was met with vigor and brilliance by this tenor. As Jason Victor Serinus of Opera News exclaimed, "Tenor Christopher Bengochea's dark-hued (voice)... conquered virtually every vocal hurdle Mozart set out for Idomeneo ... Bengochea's performance was exceptional. How many Puccini tenors can also negotiate the runs of 'Fuor del mar' with something approaching ease? The cheers that

accompanied his exultant Act III aria, "Torna la pace," were more than justified."

Mr. Bengochea also performed the roles of Stiva Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina*, Mario Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*; and in the 2009 – 2010 season, he performed the role of Ruggero in the company premiere of *La Rondine*. Other recent performances include Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Opera Idaho, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* for Atlanta Opera, and the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* for Opera Saskatoon. On the concert stage, he appeared as tenor soloist in San Juan Symphony's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Spring 2009, and was a featured soloist with the Modesto Symphony in their performance of Verdi's *Requiem* in May 2010.

During Christopher's time as resident artist of Opera San José, Richard Scheinin of *The Mercury News* wrote glowingly "Bengochea expanded into big, lusty high notes... Verdi specials ...were thrilling... Bengochea could be the tenor the company has been waiting for." During this period he performed Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, the title role in *Roméo et Juliette*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the title role of *Werther*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)*.

Besides Opera San José, Mr. Bengochea has performed with Opera Company Brooklyn, MCT Theater Opera, Jarvis Conservatory, Intermountain Opera, Townsend Opera, Rimrock Opera, Pacific Repertory Opera, Livermore Valley Opera, West Bay Opera, Teatro Felice, Caramoor Opera, and the Tigulio Festival Opera.

At home on both the operatic and concert stages, he appeared as the tenor soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* for the Modesto Symphony and Symphony Silicon Valley. Other oratorio engagements have included Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*, and Tallis's *The Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet* and Mozart's Great Mass in C minor, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, the Evangelist in Bach's *Weihnachts Oratorium* with the New York City Chorale Society, the world premier of Alva Henderson's *From Greater Light*, performed under world renowned Carl St. Claire and the Orange County Symphony Orchestra.

This Basque American tenor began his musical career as a pianist then moved into the study of opera during his time at Montana State University and later the University of Montana. After becoming an award winner at the Northwest Regional Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and winning third prize at the Internationale Societa Concertistica di Voce competition in Santa Margherita-Ligure, Italy, he decided to devote his time on singing entirely. It was in Italy where he had the opportunity to study and work with renowned tenor, Gianni Raimondi who described Mr. Bengochea as "having a voice most brilliant and romantic, one that will become very important in the future of opera".



Michael Paul Gibson is one of the most versatile and experienced conductors in the Bay Area since 1975. Gibson founded the Silicon Valley Symphony in 2001 and is Music Director and Conductor. Maestro Michael Paul served as Conductor and Founding Music Director of the Foothill Orchestra (1999), Menlo Park Chorus (1998), and Colorado

Springs Chamber Music Society (1971). His experience includes conducting Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Concert Chorus, Church Choir, Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Musical Theater and Ballet Pit Orchestra. Michael's charismatic energy garners respect and reviews from critics, audiences and musicians. In addition to conducting, he has expertise in recording and editing audio and video of concerts and performances, and he makes the recordings of the Silicon Valley Symphony available on its website (siliconvalleysymphony.net).

Maestro Gibson has had master classes with Georg Solti and Carlo Maria Giulini working with the Chicago Symphony, Neville Marriner with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Pinchas Zukerman at San Francisco State University, and Peter Schickele (PDQ Bach) with the Denver Symphony. He studied orchestral conducting with Bernard Rubenstein (NU), John Miller (Denver Sym.), and Laszlo Varga (SFSU); instrumental conducting from John Paynter (NU); and choral conducting with Margaret Hillis (Chicago Symphony Chorus) at Northwestern University from which he holds Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting degrees. He played trombone in the Denver Symphony, Bohemian Club Orchestra, and the San Francisco 49ers Band. Gibson is also Music Director and CEO of the Bay Area Music Foundation, a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation, fiscal sponsor of the SVS. He offers expertise in business, operating his own company, BACH to Music. For details and resume, please visit www.bach2music.com.

**The Silicon Valley Symphony would like to thank
Robert Maltz for his generous donation and
support to the orchestra.**

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Judy Borlase, for rehearsal and Robert Maltz Violins for his major sponsorship of this concert.

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Silicon Valley Symphony

Michael Paul Gibson, Music Director and Conductor

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*Concertmaster**
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Jay Perry

Timpani

Doug Chin*

Percussion

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Chester Leung
Masako Iguchi
Shirley Huang

Harp

Celeste Everson Misfeldt

* denotes principal player

Menlo Park Chorus

Joan Angelopoulos
Judith Don
Bruce Frymire

Laura Hill
Darlene Lazar
Andrea Marra

Nola Masterson
Ann McCarty
Diana Pohlman

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