



**MUSICANOVA
ORCHESTRA
ON WINGS
OF HOPE**

Scottsdale Center for the
Performing Arts
Virginia G. Piper Theater

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Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts
Presents

MUSICANOVA ORCHESTRA
ON WINGS OF HOPE

Friday, May 14, 2021
8:00 p.m.

Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts
Virginia G. Piper Theater

PROGRAM

Moz-Art a la Haydn

Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)

Gamelan Suite for String Orchestra
(world premiere)

Graham Cohen (b. 1999)

- I. Gong Kebyar I
- II. Degung
- III. Kotekan
- IV. Gending Rebab
- V. Gong Kebyar II

Svítání (world premiere)

Quinn Mason (b. 1996)
MusicaNova Composition Fellow

Symphony No. 45 “Farewell”

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Adagio
- III. Minuet. Allegretto-Trio
- IV. Finale: Presto - Adagio

Program notes by MNO Music Director Warren Cohen

(Except where noted)

Alfred Schnittke

***Moz-Art a la Haydn* (1977)**

Alfred Schnittke was a unique figure in 20th century music. Working in an environment that encouraged musical conformity and a kind of propagandistic jollity, Schnittke developed an unusual approach to music that included intense emotion, dense scoring, and radical dissonance, as well as wayward, often cynical, humor, and radical stylistic juxtapositions.

He is probably best known for this last feature. He is far and away the most successful “polystylistic” composer. No one else has ever been as able to convincingly throw together disparate music elements and styles of music into a coherent whole.

This skill is apparent in every bar of the wonderfully amusing *Moz-Art a la Haydn*. The work begins in total darkness, as the players play quasi-improvised patterns that suggest no coherent vision. Suddenly the lights come on, and we are introduced to a socially distanced orchestra of standing string players who play fragments of music Mozart wrote for a pantomime he never completed. This music is interrupted by rude and often comical commentary.

At one point, the musicians move to different positions on the stage, with the last violinists now the first violinists and vice versa. The music continues with additional quotes from Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and Mozart’s G minor Symphony before the musicians, one by one, leave the stage while playing fragments of music as they did at the start of the piece.

The conductor is left alone on the stage, instructed to continue conducting while no music is being played. The effect is at once humorous and disturbing, as is so much of Schnittke’s music. Although written in 1977, it sounds like it was written specifically to reintroduce live music to an audience after a pandemic!

Graham Cohen

Gamelan Suite for String Orchestra (world premiere)

- I. Gong Kebyar I
- II. Degung
- III. Kotekan
- IV. Gending Rebab
- V. Gong Kebyar II

A disturbing effect of the pandemic has been the extreme limit on travel. In such times, musical journeys to distant lands become even more important.

The music of the gamelan orchestras of Java and Bali have inspired musicians since they were introduced at the Paris Exposition in 1889. Debussy regarded this event as a seminal moment in his musical development. The extraordinary beauty and virtuosity displayed, the odd scales and radical (to Western ears) tuning of the instruments were unlike anything anyone had heard, but once heard, the sound of the gamelan was unforgettable. Throughout the 20th century, Western musicians wrote works explicitly influenced by the sounds of these Indonesian ensembles. Composers as diverse as Godowsky, Turina, Britten, and Lou Harrison wrote gamelan-inspired music.

Graham Cohen’s *Gamelan Suite* primarily uses gamelan musical devices, yet the music is played by a string orchestra, something completely unknown in traditional Balinese music. This is a unique attempt to work within the idiom and translate the actual sounds, scales, rhythms, and overtones of a gamelan to a different group of instruments.

Each of the five movements emphasizes different aspects of gamelan music, ending with an exuberant dance that works off the traditional Balinese “fast music” called gong kebyar, with its characteristic alternation between two tempos. The effect is extraordinary, as the music is recognizable as “gamelan music” without using any of the instruments associated with the style.

Quinn Mason
Svitání (world premiere; program notes by the composer)

“Svitání” is a Czech word that means “sunrise” or “dawn.” The overall message of this composition is rebirth and renewal, which can relate to the title as the birth of a new day or time. The composition itself was born out of time of great struggle and uncertainty for everyone, which is reflected in the first movement as a calm, yet tension-filled meditation.

The second movement has a similarly meditative feel, but it triumphs this time, ending quietly in introspection like the breaking of dawn on a still and tranquil morning.

With this piece being written about such a tumultuous time, the overall message is that we are leaving an old chapter and beginning a new, fresh one—one that will hopefully lead us to better days ahead.

This piece is dedicated with sincere gratitude to Warren Cohen and the MusicaNova Orchestra, for whom I wrote this composition.

Franz Joseph Haydn
Symphony No. 45 “Farewell” (1772)

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Adagio
- III. Minuet. Allegretto-Trio
- IV. Finale: Presto - Adagio

One of the characteristics of Haydn as a composer was the ability to turn lemons into lemonade. Anyone else stuck with a patron who played (badly) a bizarre instrument that was a cross between a cello and hurdy gurdy would have been in despair. Haydn wrote 160 trios for this baryton, creating gorgeous, expressive music while carefully concealing the limited talent of the prince with the accompanying parts.

The familiar story of the “Farewell” Symphony is another such example. Prince Esterhazy had taken his musicians to his remote summer castle for an extended period. They were without their families, who had to stay at the regular residence in Eisenstadt. The prince had extended their stay past the promised dates, and the musicians were restless. They urged Haydn to ask the prince to let them return home. Rather than make a direct appeal, Haydn tacked on a last movement to his symphony in which the players leave the stage one by one, leaving only the concertmaster and one other violinist to finish the piece. (The other violinist in this case was Haydn himself.) The prince got the hint, and the court returned to Eisenstadt the next day.

The music is heartbreakingly beautiful. The symphony itself is a tour de force of dramatic energy, and the key of the work—F sharp minor—is unique in the music of the times. Haydn had to have the blacksmiths at Esterhazy create special crooks for the horns to tune in F sharp!

At the end of the turbulent and dark fourth movement, where the symphony would normally end, Haydn unexpectedly starts an adagio in the key of A major. The effect is startling (and gorgeous) and would have immediately caught the prince’s attention. As the music continues, the wind players leave the stage. The piece takes a dark turn, suggesting it might still end in F sharp minor. Instead, with only the strings still on stage, the music turns to the remarkable key of F sharp major. As the string players slowly leave, the concertmaster and his or her stand partner take center stage. The music ends in a mood of melancholic nostalgia, a kind of “smile through tears.”

There have been attempts to “clown up” this finale, which, for many reasons, is a terrible idea. One might smile at the musicians leaving, but anything that detracts from some of the most extraordinary music ever written is simply wrong.

With our performance coming as we slowly emerge from the horrors of a pandemic, the gesture of this finale is both a reminder of those we have lost, and a statement of our resilience—a resilience we share with those Esterhazy musicians of 1772.

**Quinn Mason,
MNO composition fellow**

Quinn Mason has been described as “a brilliant composer . . . who seems to make waves wherever he goes” by Theater Jones and “one of the most sought-after young composers in the country” by *Texas Monthly*. In 2020, he was a *Dallas Morning News* finalist for Texan of the Year.

Mason’s mission is to compose music for various mediums based in traditional Western art music and reflect the times in which we currently live.

His orchestral music has been featured by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Utah Symphony Orchestra, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, South Bend Symphony Orchestra, New England Conservatory Philharmonia, Symphoria, Orchestra Seattle, New Texas Symphony Orchestra, and the Mission Chamber Orchestra.

His works for winds and chamber ensembles have also been played by multiple groups, and his solo music has been championed by distinguished soloists such as David Cooper (principal horn, Chicago Symphony), Holly Mulcahy (concertmaster, Wichita Symphony), and Michael Hall (viola soloist).

A multiple prize winner in composition, Mason has been honored by the American Composers Forum, Voices of Change, Texas A&M University, The Diversity Initiative, the Dallas Foundation, Dartmouth College Wind Ensemble, the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra of New York, the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra, the Heartland Symphony Orchestra, and the Arizona State University Symphony Orchestra.

An avid and passionate writer, Mason maintains his own classical music blog at MasonianMusic.com and contributes guest articles to other blogs. He is a member of ASCAP and the Conductors Guild.

Graham Cohen, composer

Graham Cohen is a graduate of Juilliard Pre-College, where he studied composition with Ira Taxin for seven years. He has written hundreds of works, including 11 symphonies; two string quartets; a string quintet; a piano quartet; pieces for piano, percussion, horn, violin, viola, and cello; and other works for smaller chamber ensembles and orchestra, receiving performances across the globe.

Cohen has been honored multiple times by ASCAP, including winning the Charlotte Bergen Award and Scholarship at the age of 10 in 2009. He won the Music and More competition in 2013 and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra’s Young Composers Competition in 2014 for his work *Quintessential Dances*. The piece was performed by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and subsequently choreographed by the New Jersey Ballet, receiving performances in Morristown, New Jersey, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. Cohen has been commissioned to write several works, including his concerto grossos for reed quartet and violin, soprano saxophone, and piano.

As a performer, Cohen has been active in the New Jersey and New York state area since high school. A viola major and student of Toby Appel at The Juilliard School, he has participated as a member of the Juilliard Orchestra, AXIOM and New Juilliard Ensembles, Juilliard’s Historical Performance Ensemble, and the chamber music program. Additionally, Graham is principal violist and viola coach at the New Jersey Intergenerational Orchestra, a violin/viola teacher, an alumnus of Yellow Barn’s Young Artists Program, and an active freelance musician.

This June, he will graduate with his bachelor of music degree in viola performance from The Juilliard School, and in the fall, will be returning to Juilliard to pursue his master of music degree in viola performance, continuing his studies with Toby Appel.

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Christiano Rodrigues, concertmaster
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Emilio Vazquez, principal

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Graham Cohen

Elizabeth Hanson

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Maria Simiz, principal
David Connell chair

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Yeil Park

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