

10-12-2012

Graduate Recital: Patrick Valentino, conductor

Patrick Valentino

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

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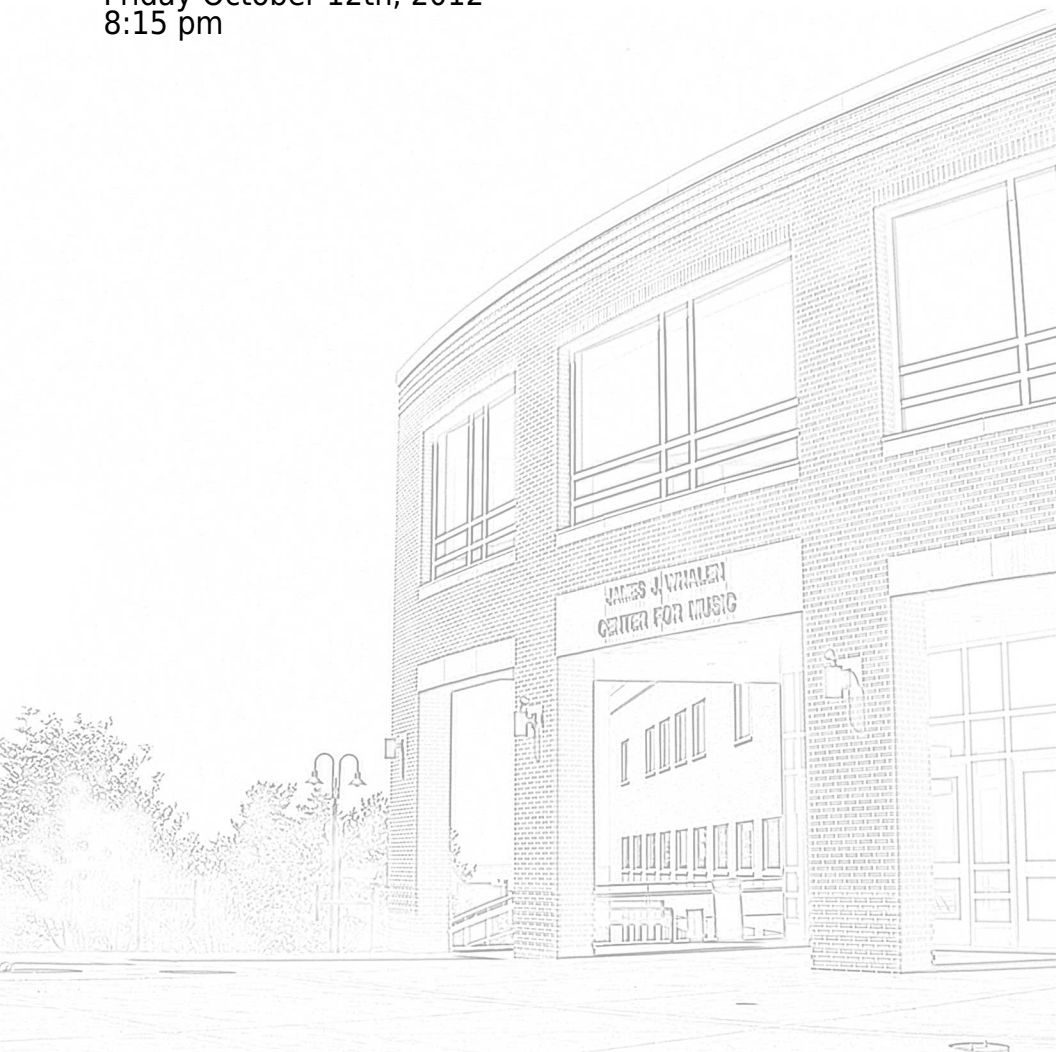
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Graduate Recital:

Patrick Valentino, conductor

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Ford Hall
Friday October 12th, 2012
8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner
(1813-1883)

Intermission

Symphony No. 94 in G Major
I. Adagio - Vivace assai
II. Andante
III. Minuet - Allegro molto
IV. Finale - Allegro di molto.

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Patrick Valentino, conductor

Patrick Valentino's conducting has been called "stirring", "original," and "achieving wonderful results from the orchestra". Trained as a composer as well as a conductor, he brings to the podium a desire to realize musical works as the composer intended, while enabling a state of spontaneity and discovery that makes every piece sound fresh and vital.

Currently enrolled in the graduate conducting program at Ithaca College where he studies with Jeffery Meyer, Patrick also holds degrees from New England Conservatory and Montclair State University, in addition to having spent time studying at the Moscow Conservatory. At Ithaca College Patrick serves as assistant conductor for the Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, and guest conducts the Contemporary Ensemble and numerous student ensembles.

Prior to coming to Ithaca, Patrick was the assistant conductor of the Neponset Valley Philharmonic Orchestra (now Symphony NOVA, MA) and the Westfield Symphony (NJ), and worked as production manager for Boston Musica Viva. Now in his second year of the graduate program at IC, highlights from last season include conducting the ICSO in a concert-recital that included a world premiere of one his own compositions, leading the ICSO on tour in Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, and participating in a masterclass with Larry Rachleff.

This season began with the premiere of his first opera, and continues with tonight's ICCO concert-recital. Later this season he will work with the ICSO again, as well as the winner of the Ithaca High School Piano Concerto Competition in a concert featuring works by Beethoven, Strauss, and Saint-Saens. In addition, *I Venti*, a work of his for string orchestra will be co-premiered by the Central New Jersey Symphony and the Orchestra Filharmonica Nissena in Sicily.

Program Notes

Siegfried Idyll

"When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew even louder, I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, R. came in to me with the five children and put into my hands the score of his "Symphonic Birthday Greeting." I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household..."

Thus begins Cosima Wagner's diary entry for Christmas Day 1870, the day her husband Richard assembled a chamber orchestra in their house in Tribschen and performed an *Idyll* as a birthday present for his wife. Originally titled the *Tribschen Idyll* in honor of their homestead, the work we know today as the *Siegfried Idyll* is a poignant musical jewel celebrating domestic bliss and profound love.

The *Siegfried Idyll* is named not for the operatic character, but Wagner's son (the character's namesake) who was born a year earlier. The complete title of the piece was *Tribschen Idyll with Fidi's Birdsong and the Orange Sunrise*. This bizarre title is significant - the use of Siegfried's diminutive name *Fidi* and the "orange sunrise" reference to curtains in Cosima's bedroom that caught the morning's light indicate how subtly intimate the work is. The *Idyll* was never intended to be sold or performed in public, however financial troubles seven years later would result in just that. (When writing on that day, Cosima laments "The *Idyll* is sent off today; the secret treasure is to become public property—may the pleasure others take in it match the sacrifice I am making!").

Cosima's sacrifice was indeed the world's gain - not only is the work a fascinating miniature of concentrated musicality and emotion from a composer of ordinarily grandiose proportions, but also it's a completely organic synthesis of musical line and extramusical elements. The entire story of Richard and Cosima's love and life together is represented, through Wagner's selection of musical themes central to their relationship.

They met in 1853, when Cosima was still married to Hans von Bülow; the opening pastoral air was written in 1863 (originally as a string quartet) when Cosima and Richard first declared their (illicit) love. Between 1868 and 1869, Wagner indicated the lullaby (heard first as an oboe solo) would be a piece for their daughter Eva; in 1869 when little Fidi was born, the bird calls became a part of the work as well (Cosima believing a bird announced Siegfried's birth).

Musically, all these themes are interrelated, and the result is one organic sweep of music, sometimes placid, sometimes heroic, from

opening to closing gesture. Sound awakens in the string orchestra and becomes increasingly harmonically rich; woodwinds join the ensemble for what would be a climactic moment, but a detour in the horns and clarinets delays the true peak until nearly 30 bars later, when a wonderfully long line brings the orchestra to the first arrival and the end of the first section.

The lullaby *Schlaf, Kindschen Schlaf* is intoned by the oboe, and this tune combines with musical material from the beginning – one can almost see Cosima rocking little Fidi and Eva to sleep, Richard’s music still lingering in her mind. The central section of the work awakens slowly, but assuredly grows from a woodwind *sol*i in $\frac{3}{4}$ time to a grand tutti statement. An interlude for solo horn (with Fidi’s bird singing in the clarinet and flute) brings us to a more florid section where all themes combine and we get the true climax, with the trumpet (which only plays 13 bars of the piece).

The same “detour” section from the beginning is intoned in the horns again, and all the previous themes are revisited in the home key of E Major. There are peaks and valleys in this music, but it is evident to the ear we are on the return journey. One final statement of the horn interlude theme, though this time slower and more dreamlike and distant, serves as the farewell wave. From here we can imagine the children returning to sleep, or perhaps the mother musing on their now-past childhoods, or simply that sun which rose to enliven Cosima’s orange curtains slowly sinking beneath the hills of Tribschen, and the home where these tones were first heard.

Symphony No. 94 in G Major, Hob. I/94 "mit dem Paukenschlag"

In 1761, Franz Joseph Haydn started one of the most fruitful musical experiences of his life when he accepted a post working for the Esterházy family, first as Vice-Kapellmeister and then in 1766 as full Kapellmeister. It was at Esterházy that Haydn wrote many of his most beloved works, and his good fortune further developed in 1779 when he was granted permission to compose works for people and events outside the estate.

In 1791, Haydn took advantage of this freedom when he accepted an invitation from the impresario Johann Peter Salomon to appear in London for a series of concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms. Ordinarily such a lengthy trip would not have been approved, but a year earlier the accession of Prince Nikolaus's son Anton created a new dynamic at Esterháza. The new Prince Anton had less use for Haydn's work, but his disinterest allowed such a long sabbatical to take place.

This trip to London in 1791, and another in 1794 marked yet another time of good fortune for Haydn - the concerts solidified his popularity in England, and also resulted in a string of symphonies which would stand as examples of the pillars of the genre.

Of these sets of "London" symphonies (one written for each of the two trips) the Symphony No. 94 belongs to the first set. Composed in 1791 and premiered on March 23, 1792, it eventually earned the nickname "Surprise" for the unexpected fortissimo outburst during the slow movement, but the German subtitle "*mit dem Paukenschlag*" ("with the timpani stroke") seems more appropriate. For aside from the obvious *Paukenschlag* in the second movement Andante, there are major timpani showcases at important structural points in every movement of the symphony, and the piece becomes a kind of celebration of the instrument.

The first movement opens with a lyrical adagio marked *cantabile* in the winds; its contour reflects the third-relationships that will become central to the harmonic organization of the whole work. After the adagio takes a *misterioso* turn and ends with an open musical question, the Vivace Assai answers it, although in its own time. The 6/8 tune takes a few disjointed starts to really get rolling, but after that it's off to the races for a rollicking romp, whose fortissimi even seem playful. Like many of Haydn's opening movements, it is in a monothematic sonata form (that is, without a second theme), although various thematic sections arise. Woodwinds play a large role here, as in the rest of the symphony, and the timpani (very much present throughout) ushers in the final statement of the closing material (a string of offbeat pulses in the strings) in the home key.

The second movement is a placid Andante, taking the form of an interrupted theme and variations. Haydn takes a tune which already is the essence of simplicity and underscores its repetitive structure by the use of a series of *tenuti*, or consciously held notes. The famous timpani stroke takes place during the pianissimo statement of the theme, although Haydn indicated he did not include it merely to wake up the audience. "I was interested in surprising the public with something new, and in making a brilliant debut, so that my student Pleyel, who was at that time engaged by an orchestra in London and whose concerts had opened a week before mine, should not outdo me." Perhaps this is just Haydn's good nature showing through, as the designation of "timpani stroke" does seem to apply throughout the symphony. Toward the end of the variation set, the theme is presented once more in its original form, but over grindingly dissonant harmonies, before finally settling on the home key of C major - just one more parting joke from the master musical humorist.

The third movement, while ostensibly a minuet, is more in the style of a rustic *Ländler*, or folk dance. Open harmonies and multiple-stop fiddle playing abound, which makes the elegant, 'proper' trio section all the more jarring. The tune in the trio is carried by the violins and solo bassoon, which creates an interesting tone color which suits the trio's chamber feel but still pays homage to the folksy setting of the minuet proper. And, as always with Haydn, there are a few surprises. In the very end, the timpani of course brings the listener home.

If the ear could blink, it might miss the effervescent fourth movement, a spirited allegro in a hybrid sonata-rondo form. Again, woodwinds play a prominent role, and again there are more than a fair share of unexpected twists and turns - but it's all in good fun. The timpani, our guide to the symphony thus far (or its impish troublemaker) makes its presence known a bar too soon when, amid numerous prolongations of the final cadence, it decrees that the orchestra conclusively move on to the final tutti flourish.

— Patrick Valentino

Personnel
Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Violin I

Sadie Kenny,
concertmaster
Samantha Spena
Haehyun Park
Jason Kim
Emily Frederick
Marcus Hogan
Natalie Brandt

Violin II

Laura Sciavolino, *principal*
Joohyun Lee
Jessica Chen
Elizabeth Benz
Brian Schmidt
Colleen Mahoney
Tiffany Lu

Viola

Maxwell Aleman, *principal*
Kelly Ralston
Kate Inie-Richards
Carly Rockenhauser

Cello

Erin Snedecor, *principal*
Peter Volpert
Pan Yan
Rachele Prawdzik

Bass

Samuel Shuhan, *principal*
Samuel Verneuille

Flute

Maya Holmes, *principal*
Sandra O'Hare

Oboe

Elizabeth Schmitt, *principal*
Chloe Washington

Clarinet

Christopher Peña, *principal*
Michelle McGuire

Bassoon

Sean Harkin, *principal*
Ross Triner

Horn

Colin Speirs, *principal*
Emma Staudacher

Trumpet

Keli Price, *principal*
Ryenne Flynn

Timpani

Daniel Pessalano, *principal*