

In This Issue ...

- "Lelio" Oct 30 & 31
- Recap of 50th Anniversary Gala
- Young Artists Competition
- Volunteers Needed
- Our Multi-National Association (Part 1)
- Election Results
- Editor's Corner

"LELIO" ... Harvey Sollberger



The Berlioz "Choral Excerpts from Lelio" which we will be performing on October 30th and 31st is an example of a particular 19th-century genre not often practiced today, the monodrama (or melodrama). In such works a speaker recites with music or with his utterances framed by music (as is the case in "our" "Lelio"). I don't mean the remarks which follow as a dry musicological disquisition, but rather as a very practical heads-up as to what to expect when everything comes together at our dress rehearsal on October 29th.

First of all, "Lelio," was composed as a sequel to the "Symphonie Fantastique," and Berlioz in fact meant it to be performed as the second half of a program of which the first half was the "Symphonie Fantastique." As you'll remember, in the "SF" Berlioz - or his alter ego, "the composer" - is afflicted by a devastating love for a woman who is represented in each of the symphony's five movements by what he called the *idée fixe*, a melody which in its first appearances is seductive and beguiling, but which, as the piece progresses becomes increasingly distorted, mocking and diabolical (as embodied, for instance, in the main theme of movement five, the Witches' Sabbath, where the *idée fixe* is first presented by a sneering and leering e-flat clarinet). To make a long story short, the "SF" ends with the hero/composer's death, and it's at this point that "Lelio" comes to the rescue.

A not so subtle clue as to its function is provided in its full title: "Lelio ou la Retour a la vie" ("Lelio, or the Return to Life"). As "Lelio" commences, our hero, Lelio aka the Composer aka Berlioz, awakens from his near-death sleep and begins a series of reflections on life, love, art and Shakespeare that are interspersed with various

Contributors:

Barbara Peisch, Ed.

Harvey Sollberger

Diane Whitley

Thelma Parris

Ann Merkelson

Erdis Maxhelakli

Eliane Garo

Ted Bietz

Amee Wood

musical pieces, including the three choruses which we are performing (some of the other pieces we won't be performing include a song for tenor and piano and a piece called "The Aeolian Harp" for clarinet, harp and strings -"Lelio" is a somewhat motley crue or shaggy dog of a piece as compared to the "SF").

At any rate, the adaptation I've made will begin with all of us, Chorus and Orchestra, in place while I make a few remarks from the podium describing the "SF" "demise" from which Lelio is recovering and setting the stage for what is to come. In the course of this, I'll ask our violins to play the idee fixe/theme of the beloved from the "SF" (you'll see why, later). We then bring the lights up on our Composer, the in-real-life irrepressible Ken Bell, who in discussing his depression and devastation (caused by you-know-who), is enlivened by the thought of Hamlet and the powerful emotions aroused in him by that character. As the Composer intones "What ideal orchestra is that playing within me" and goes on to describe the rebirth and reawakening of his imagination, the Orchestra enters with the first thin strands of the "Chorus of the Shades."

Following this Chorus, Lelio meditates on art and its enemies, the vile mediocrities who dismiss all original thought and who "expect music to charm, flatter, divert and caress them, denying the chaste muse all possibility of aspiring to a higher, a nobler mission." Like so many of us who, when confronted with vile mediocrities who etc., etc., dream of embracing an alternative life-style, Lelio envisions fleeing to the South of Italy and there living a free, unfettered life with a band of brigands. Fun pastimes will include drinking wine from the skulls of one's enemies, getting their women drunk and ravishing them, etc., etc. At this point Chorus and Orchestra illustrate all this with the "Chanson de Brigands."

Following this, Lelio finally resolves to return to life, to live! He dreams of Shakespeare and the vivid characters of "The Tempest." Conveniently, this is the time when his "numerous students" (us) are assembling, so he summons us to attention to read his newly-created "Fantasia on Shakespeare's Tempest," barking instructions right and left to both chorus and orchestra (what a fussbudget Berlioz must have been! Mendelssohn found him and all his "enthusiasm" insufferable. . .)

Well, to make a short story longer, we perform the "Fantasia," and upon finishing the Composer looks up, compliments us for our good reading of his "feeble sketch" and dismisses us, saying, "But, go now, my friends. I am exhausted; leave me alone." Orchestra and Chorus start to leave, rising, heading offstage when suddenly the music of the beloved's idee fixe in its pure, chaste original form is heard coming from loudspeakers in the auditorium. All freeze, suspended in thrall to the Muse, the Beloved, the Ideal. As the theme ends, Lelio intones "once more," and then at the very end, "once more - and forever! . . ." followed by a total blackout on stage and -we hope - thunderous and rapturous applause.

Ken and I have had a good time discussing and planning his role, and I think that while this will not be "the compleat Lelio," it will give a good representation of Lelio's "retour a la vie" centered around Berlioz's thrilling and thoroughly first-rate choruses. Adapting the words of the Composer to this article, I'll close simply by saying, "May Shakespeare protect us!"

50th ANNIVERSARY GALA A GRAND SUCCESS! ... Diane Whitley

On October 3, 2004, the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus celebrated its 50th anniversary with friends and neighbors, old-timers and newcomers in a grand gala at the Great Hall of Eleanor Roosevelt College. The event was attended by more than 170 people who enjoyed the wine and food pairings on the terrace along with a raffle and silent auction before retiring to the Great Hall for a concert of Broadway Jazz.

LJS&C Music Director Harvey Sollberger welcomed the crowd at the concert's start and, before introducing Gala Honorary Chair Provost Ann L. Craig, pulled the winning raffle ticket. The winner was orchestra member Jim Swift and wife Sue who won a 96-bottle Instant Wine Cellar sponsored by Beverages & more! that included contributions from the private cellars of LJS&C board members and wine critic Robert Whitley. Provost Craig welcomed the audience to the Great Hall's first concert event and introduced the evening's special guest UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox.

Then the music began. Cecil Lytle on piano, with bass and drum accompaniment, got everyone's pulses thumping with Fats Waller. The 40-member jazz chorus (aglit in tux and gown) then joined the combo along with LJS&C Choral Director David Chase to take the audience on a journey of favorite show tunes. Songs were performed with full-on chorus, speaking parts, and theatrical staging (thanks to Ann Chase); others in wistful a cappella. The backdrop was drop-dead gorgeous as the expansive wood beams of the Great Hall's ceiling were reflected in the floor-to-ceiling glass windows that overlooked the campus.

Each attendee received a 50th anniversary commemorative booklet prepared by LJS&C concert lecturer, Eric Bromberger as a memento of the evening. Thank you to all who helped make this event a success, and to the attendees who shared our celebration of the first 50 years.

YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION

The Young Artists Competition is coming up and all ensemble members under 28 are eligible to enter. The dates are Sat. Jan. 29 for the competition and Sun. Jan. 30 for the winners' showcase concert. Applications and repertory requirements are on the LJSC web site at <http://www.lajollasympphony.com>

What sorts of things would YOU like to know and read about?

Please direct any inquiries, comments, news, or story ideas to the Editor at

barbara@peisch.com

Need to contact the LJS&CA?

La Jolla Symphony & Chorus Assoc.

9500 Gilman Drive

Mail Code 0361

La Jolla, CA 92093

(858) 534-4637

<http://www.lajollasympphony.com>

Sylvia Grace, Executive Director
sgrace@ucsd.edu

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We desperately need volunteers in the office to help put together our program guides. We do all the copying and stapling of the 1,600 programs ourselves and could use some extra hands. Even an hour or two would be a great help.

Please call Anne Merkelson at 858-534-4637 to schedule a time that's convenient for you. We promise to ply you with coffee and cookies.

OUR MULTI-NATIONAL ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

As our association matures, we are attracting more and more members from all over the globe. This is the first in a series of articles highlighting members from abroad.

Erdis Maxhelakli - Cello

I'm from Albania, a Mediterranean country that's right above Greece. I decided to come to the U.S.A. after I finished university for cello performance. I came over with my wife who is an American from San Diego. We wanted to come to pursue the opportunities that America has for musicians. I always had a love for America, especially after communism fell in my country. It was always an unreachable dream in my mind. But that dream became reality and I haven't been disappointed.

I heard about La Jolla Symphony from a friend of my wife's who had been a part of the symphony some years before. I was drawn to it even more when I heard of its superb reputation.

Eliane Garo - Chorus Soprano

I come from Nyon, a small city close to Geneva (Switzerland), founded more than 2000 years ago by the Romans. There are ruins everywhere and 5 years ago, they found the Roman amphitheater in the garden of our neighbor. We are wondering what lies under ours!!!

After finishing my Ph.D., I received a grant from the Swiss government to continue my study and came to San Diego to do a post doctoral at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. I was thinking I would stay only for one year... but here I am more than 5 years later!! Actually the story got complicated when I had a child and got married to a Swiss citizen who needed to stay longer in San Diego for his work. Therefore, after my Scripps experience, I started a real job in a biotech company in Sorrento valley.

Besides my scientific career, music is part of my life. I grew up in a musical family, surrounded by the sounds of my father's compositions. I played the piano for many years and took singing lessons. I was singing in various chorales back home and when I arrived in San Diego, I naturally looked for a choir to sing with and joined the LJ Chorus. This group is amazing. Everybody is an excellent musician and the group is performing music of high quality. And we also have the incredible chance to have an orchestra we can play with ... It will take leaving San Diego to get me to stop singing in that choir.

Actually, my husband and I are planning to go back home in about two years. I will miss you and sunny San Diego. San Diego is a very nice place to live and very exotic

for us as we don't have an ocean, nor a desert in Switzerland. But before that big move, let's play and sing together a few more pieces....

ELECTION RESULTS

On Monday, October 18, the chorus voted for a new board member to represent the chorus as one of three choral members on the board. The winner is Anne Second. Anne replaces Wayne Cornelius, and will be fulfilling the one year remaining of his term. Congratulations Anne!

EDITOR'S CORNER ... Barbara Peisch



The Occupational Hazards of the Classical Musician

Recently, fellow chorus member Susan Taggart handed me a newspaper article from the Chicago Tribune titled, "Danger: Music zone" with the tagline "Decibel assault on performers' ears isn't relegated to rock shows; the classical ranks deal with it too"*. She knew this was a topic of great interest to me, as we're both short altos who are almost always in the front row, and frequently right behind the French Horns. I have a genetic tendency to suffer from tinnitus, and the horns don't help any.

The article discusses the increasing awareness among music organizations of the excessive volumes to which musicians are frequently exposed, and some of the remedies used to protect musicians' hearing. I've seen some of these in use myself—things like Plexiglas shields that stand between horns or percussion and surrounding musicians, or baffles behind the bells of the French Horns. We tend to see these more where the musicians are unionized than in groups like the LJSC. Also, it seems that these remedies often are only used when there's enough room on stage for them, and generally they're given the lowest priority, meaning most of the time there isn't room for them. Excessive sound levels on stage are a serious problem. According to the article in the Tribune, a survey of over 400 musicians revealed that close to 80 percent of them had experienced pain due to noise and about a third reported some loss of hearing. Loss of hearing may affect musicians in a variety of ways, including loss of the ability to hear upper range notes, tinnitus and even loss of intonation. Earplugs may work in some cases, but it certainly doesn't work well for singers—you can't balance your voice with those around you when you wear earplugs.

What's the answer? We need more awareness of the problem on the part of both musicians and organizations and we need to put a high priority on taking measures to protect our hearing. Our hearing is an asset to the organizations we work for as well as an important part of our well-being. We can't afford to lose our hearing!

* Chicago Tribune, September 8, 2004, Arts & Entertainment section, page 3

