

Meetings of Varèse, Strauss and Wen-chung ... Music Director

Steven Schick

Our upcoming concert is based on two seemingly innocent meetings that had great impact on the people involved. Actually, there are three meetings, if you count the one that involved me.

In 1909 Edgard Varèse was a young composer, unknown and nearly without professional prospects. He had just finished his studies in Paris, and just as young composers do, even to this day, he moved to Berlin to begin a professional career.

There he found an unlikely ally in Richard Strauss, whom he met by accident on the street. Strauss, one of the world's most well-known and influential composers, befriended the young Varèse and agreed to serve as a reference. A few doors were opened, but eventually Varèse decided that the Old World had little to offer to him. According to legend, on the eve of World War I, he burned all of his youthful scores and moved to New York for a fresh start.



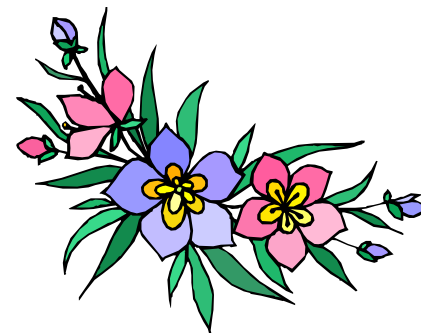
He made a grand entry into the music scene in New York by conducting the bombastic and unabashedly romantic Berlioz *Requiem*. What a scene it must have been: Varèse, father-to-be of the American musical avant-garde, conducting a quintessential piece of the old guard just as European culture, and indeed Europe itself, was fixed firmly in the cross-hairs of advancing armies!

Fast-forward nearly a half century: Varèse is the famous (and perhaps infamous) composer of some of the 20th century's most inspired, powerful, and important music. One day he is at home and the young Chinese composer, Chou Wen-chung, phones to ask for composition lessons. Mr. Chou has just emigrated from China, and seeks a new life in America. He visits the famous man in his home on Sullivan Street in Greenwich Village and offers a recent score as proof of his *bona fides*.

Here let me fast forward again. Mr. Chou became Varèse's student, then his assistant for many years, a close friend, and the executor to the Varèse musical estate. Now he himself lives in the former Varèse apartment. I am pleased to say that Wen-chung and I are friends – good friends if I flatter myself. I visited him and his wife Yi-an last fall and told him about our plans to play his work, *Landscapes*, in this set of concerts. The weather was threatening that evening and we decided to order food in. The three of us were sitting in the Chou's downstairs sitting room when Wen-chung asked me if I'd like to hear the story of his first meeting with Varèse. This was a chance to hear firsthand about one of the most fabled encounters in 20th century art! Yes. Please!

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Wen-chung started, "Well, Varèse was sitting there at the piano." He gestured to a now empty place along the wall. "I was sitting where you are. He stared at my score for a half hour without speaking, then said gruffly to come back next week for a lesson." Then Mr. Chou paused for a long moment in recollection and said, "You know, Steve, the piece I showed him that day was the one you're going to play in San Diego." There was a silence and then an enormous clap of thunder!

This concert memorializes those two meetings. The characters involved are represented by pieces of music. Varèse, torn between the embrace of Strauss and his future in New York, is cast as *Amériques*, the first piece that he composed after moving to the New World. Audiences in his day heard little more than an onslaught of noise. As we perform, I challenge you to hear the fading embers of the 19th century. Listen for the voice of Debussy in the languid alto flute solo at the opening, or to the vestiges of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* in the strongly rhythmic ensemble moments (practically the only moment in all of Varèse where one hears him imitating another composer!) The role of Strauss is played by his second concerto for horn, performed wonderfully here by our Young Artist Competition winner and La Jolla Symphony member, Nicolee Kuester. While Varèse was facing the future head-on, Strauss was riding out the chaos of World War II in relative serenity where he soothed himself in a bath of nostalgia, writing music that was more classical and restrained than any he had composed in the 19th century. And, of course, the part of Chou Wen-chung is played by his *Landscapes*, the piece in which Varèse first saw Chou's original and sophisticated musical voice.

It may not be hard to tell from my words that this is a very personal concert for me. I can say with no exaggeration that without Varèse I would not be a musician today. His *Amériques*, *Déserts*, and most importantly *Ionisation*, written in 1931 for thirteen percussionists, were my guiding lights as a student. On my first trip to New York City my only real goal was to see Varèse's house. So I walked from my friends' apartment on the Upper West Side down a hundred city blocks to stand outside the door on Sullivan Street, just as Wen-chung had once done, and marveled at what had taken place in that house. Before leaving for New York I had worried that the city would be too big for me; too foreign, too noisy. But as I walked, I realized I had heard it all before: I already knew the noises of New York in the sirens and clangs of *Amériques*; in the multi-ethnic, multi-rhythmic melting pot of *Ionisation*, and in the forbidding and lonely vistas of *Déserts*, where the only limits to imagination are those we place on ourselves. I realized then that Varèse's music is about that sound – beguiling, earsplitting, incantatory, whispered, life-affirming sound. Sound – simultaneously the concrete material of the musician's art and living matter with dreams of its own.

As I return to Varèse for this performance I am dazzled all over again. But in the noisy prescience of this music the most astonishing thing, as Henry Miller noted in his essay, "With Edgar Varèse in the Gobi Desert," is that "after you listen to it you are silenced."

This concert is dedicated in friendship and gratitude to Chou Wen-chung on the occasion of his 90th birthday.



News from the Executive Director ... Diane Salisbury

Help Close the "Funding Gap"

This season the Board of Directors, and especially Board Secretary Jenny Smerud (principal clarinet), has worked to increase our membership's understanding of our Association's financial operations. We've heard from many of you that this information-sharing is appreciated and has contributed to a broader understanding of our expenses and financial needs.

As we approach the end of our fiscal year (June 30), I want to share that we are projecting that the Association will end this season with a funding gap (loss) of about

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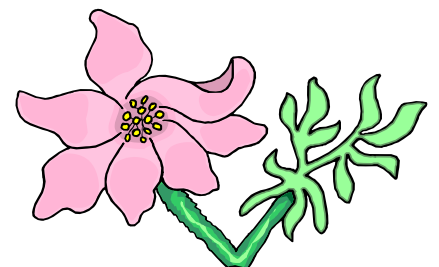
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\$7,000. Though this amount represents less than 2% of our annual budget of \$480,000, we strive to end each year at breakeven or with a slight surplus. This 2% shortfall is not due to over-spending; in fact, our expenses remain on budget or slightly under budget. The shortfall is income related, due mostly to lower-than-expected income from our first two fundraising events, and to a lesser degree, to not meeting our projections for concert ticket sales, subscriptions and member dues.

We have weathered the Great Recession well during a period when many arts organizations have struggled. In all, we remain a financially-healthy organization and our finance committee and I are diligent in keeping us that way.

I bring this projected shortfall to your attention as there is still time to “close the funding gap” and make budget this year. Here are ways you might help: 1) If you are a dues-paying member and haven’t completed your financial commitment, please make an effort to do that as soon as possible. 2) If you’ve made a gift to the Association already this season, and can possibly increase your contribution by another \$25, \$50, \$100 or more, it all helps. 3) Help get the word out about our last two concerts to assure strong ticket sales – use the marketing tools on our website, such as e-postcards and concert videos, to communicate upcoming concerts and events. 4) Forward my e-promotions to friends and family. If you are not receiving these, please contact the office to make sure we have your current email address. 5) And, of course, if you are a fan of social media, make LJS&C part of the conversation.

Thank you for all that you already do to make LJS&C a success, and for considering ways to keep us financially strong.



Meet Francis Tonello ... Evon Carpenter

Fran has been playing clarinet with the orchestra for over fourteen years. He started out as a substitute and has been in the second clarinet position for ten years. When asked what he likes about being part of LJS&C he replied, “It’s great playing with musicians of such high caliber and devotion to music and to our orchestra. I very much enjoy the music we play, and really appreciate getting to play very large works which are rarely performed by non-professional orchestras.”



San Diego has been Fran’s home for twenty nine years. He was born in Buffalo and grew up in upstate New York and Connecticut and moved to central Ohio for his last two years of high school. He earned a degree in computer science at Ohio State University. He currently works as a software engineer for Intuit, Inc.

At the age of six Fran’s mother started teaching him piano. He began playing clarinet over forty years ago, at the age of ten. In addition to playing in LJS&C, he played second clarinet with the Grossmont Symphony for twelve years and was formerly principal clarinet for San Diego State and Mesa College symphonies. He has also occasionally had the opportunity to play with members of the San Diego Symphony.

Fran has been fortunate to have had excellent teachers in his musical career. His current teachers have been San Diego Symphony members with whom he has become good friends. One of those teachers played in the San Francisco Symphony when Herbert Blomstedt recorded the Nielsen symphonies, and he credits her with his love of Carl Nielsen. A prized possession of Fran’s is a Nielsen Fifth Symphony CD autographed by Blomstedt and both clarinet players that played on the recording.

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In addition to playing clarinet, Fran is an amateur astronomer, and enjoys taking astrophotos with a telescope he built as a teenager. He is also an avid hiker and does a lot of geocaching, a type of scavenger hunt using GPS. He has found nearly twenty-six hundred geocaches and hiked hundreds of miles all over the country. Before he knew he wanted to be an engineer, he used to build electronic circuits and take apart his toys and put them back together again. He was attracted to the clarinet because of all of the cool buttons and levers it has!

He says, "It's a great joy for me to play with the wonderful people in LJS&C, who are all nice people and happen to be very accomplished in their day jobs, as well as musically. I feel very fortunate to be a member of this fine ensemble!"



A note of thanks ... Chuck Carver

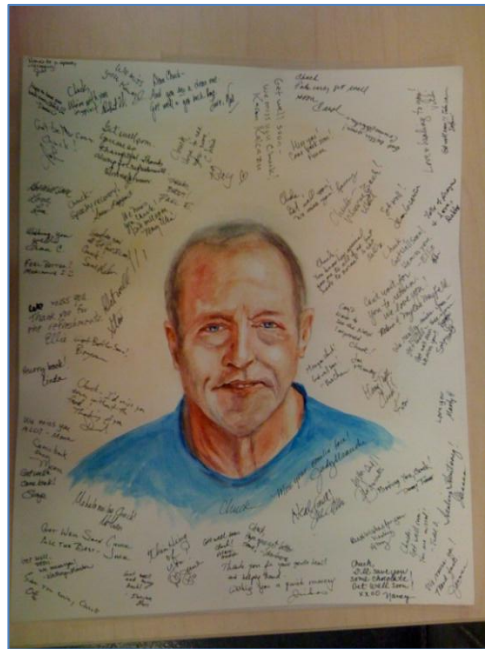
I write this note of appreciation with deep humility, to thank you for your care and concern these past four months while I have been battling on several fronts to restore my health.

Each of you (doctors, nurses, pathologists, surgeons, choir members, church friends, neighbors) has shown so much concern that I am simply overwhelmed. After nine surgeries, including two for melanoma, and more visits to medical facilities than I can count, I have gained great admiration for the skills and dedication of the personnel of Veterans Medical Center and Hospital.

Thank you for caring for me during this most difficult time. You are my greatest source of encouragement and support as I heal and regain my good health.



[Editor's note: Below are two photos of a watercolor made by soprano Judy Manuche of and for Chuck. Before giving it to Chuck, she invited everyone in the chorus sign it.]



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Article Watch

From Tom Peisch:

U-T San Diego, March 9, 2013

"David Chase celebrates 40 years with La Jolla Symphony & Chorus"

By James Chute

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/mar/09/la-jolla-symphony-david-chase-anniversary/>

and

U-T San Diego, March 10, 2013

"For Yiheng Yvonne Wu, music is the challenge of a lifetime"

By James Chute

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/mar/10/tp-for-yiheng-yvonne-wu-music-is-the-challenge-of/?print&page=all>



Vicki Heins-Shaw reminds us to regularly visit James Chute's blog at:

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/entertainment/arts-and-culture/classical-music/>

The U-T measures popularity by hits on its web sites and blogs, so visiting James' site helps boost classical music!



From Jean Lowerison:

Mail Online, March 21, 2013

"A sex toy that can help you hit the high notes? Study finds vibrator can improve the vocal range of singers"

By Margo Peppers

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2296958/A-sex-toy-help-hit-high-notes-Study-finds-vibrator-improve-vocal-range-singers.html>



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From David Chase:

New York Times, April 5, 2013

"Singing Sacred Songs in Secular Spots"

40-year-old choir sings in Grand Central "because the music is beautiful, not because it's religious."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/07/nyregion/the-renaissance-street-singers-perform-sacred-songs-in-secular-spots.html?ref=nyregion&r=0>



From Marty Hambricht:

La Jolla Light, April 19, 2013

"David Chase leads the chorus with a Hallelujah"

This site is pretty hard to navigate. In order to find this article, you first have to find the April 19 issue. Then find page 25. If you click on the page, it will go into full-screen mode and you'll be able to read it much easier.

<http://www.lajollalight.com/paper/>



From Diane Salisbury:

The Wall Street Journal, April 22, 2013

"Where Classical Music And Jazz Colaborate"

By Larry Blumenfeld

LJS&C is mentioned in the fourth paragraph

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324493704578433002397672038.html?mod=googlenews_wsj



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can bring it to rehearsal and hand it to one of us or snail mail it to Barbara at:

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Let the editor know!
barbara@peisch.com
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