

A NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR THE LA JOLLA SYMPHONY AND CHORUS ASSOCIATION

December 3rd, 2018

Conductor's Note



Steven Schick, Music Director
Photo: courtesy of San Diego UT

We continue with our season-long exploration of the twinned ideas of lineage and memory.

Memory flows down two related streams. The first is personal memory, which is usually what we as individuals mean by “a memory.” As I write these words just before Thanksgiving, I am awash in powerful personal memories of the Thanksgivings of my childhood: of the smell of my grandmother’s kitchen, of trips home to my visit my parents when I was a student at the University of Iowa, of the first real cold-snap of the season. If I were really lucky, the lake (Clear Lake, where I grew up) would be frozen enough to skate on. Then we’d have mile after mile of new smooth ice with no snow or slushy spots to slow you down and enough wind to pick up a head of steam (at least in one direction!). Or more adventurously, I’d get on an iceboat—a low-slung single-person hull with so little friction between blades and ice that it was basically a sail-powered rocket ship. That was paradise!

Personal memory can be a source of connection with other people, but unless you also have fond memories of Thanksgiving ice boating, you’re probably already bored with my story.

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A more powerful source of connection is communal memory, our collective societal recollection of important people and events. At its grandest, shared communal remembrance is at the root of religious ritual and at the core of patriotic fervor. It drives allegiances to sports teams and preferred vacation spots. Our sense of belonging—to one another, to a place, or to creed—is a kind of memory. Even, belief itself is impossible without communal memory. And, communal memory—since it is by definition widely shared—tends to amplify associated emotions of joy or grief; relief or anxiety.

A great piece of music plays simultaneously with both personal and communal memory. Take Handel's masterpiece *Messiah* for example. Nearly everyone reading these words has some personal memory of *Messiah*. Maybe that was a moving concert performance or a community sing-along. For me it was a Christmas Eve drive down the length of California to San Diego with all of Brenda's belongings packed in a U-Haul behind us. Threading the Grapevine, we had been talking of the momentous joining of our lives, when the drone of talk radio was interrupted by the immediate rush of joy of the "Hallelujah Chorus." That was also paradise!

Yes, we all have personal memories of *Messiah*, but the full force of the piece is communal. This music is now several centuries old and tells a story that spans millennia. So, in a communal sense, when we listen to *Messiah* we are listening along with millions of other people—indeed an entire culture—who came before us.

On this weekend's concert we'll hear *Messiah* in an infrequently-performed scoring by Mozart. It's the same *Messiah* you know and love—in this weekend's program you'll hear just Part 1, the "Christmas" portion of the piece, along with the ecstatic "Hallelujah Chorus." Mozart's orchestral colors, especially in vivid and lyrical woodwind writing, give the work a kind of classical-era sparkle.

Messiah is great music—pure and simple—and doesn't need justification beyond that. But what I love about this program is the way this most traditional of music contextualizes the lesser-known works on the program. Perhaps this is why we tell familiar stories; we are rehearsing communal memory. And as one of our most familiar stories, *Messiah*, with its catechism of personal and heartening connections among people of all (or no) faiths, satisfies like few other pieces. It can also be a guide to us when we are dealing with the less familiar.

Perhaps we can apply the lessons of universal belonging—so evident in Handel—to the world premiere of Qingqing Wang's *Between Clouds and Streams*. As I write these words, we have just begun to rehearse this new piece (Qingqing is this year's Nee Commission recipient.) It's a little early for observations from the conductor, but already I sense the deeply exploratory nature of this piece, as though the composer were unearthing her past in front of our ears. What will she decide to reveal to us and what to obscure? You'll hear the mixture of new sounds and new techniques of conducting—using, at times, Butch Morris's inventive hand signs called "conduction." That's pretty experimental, but there are also moments of sheer beauty and repose. In her music, Qingqing Wang is telling us a lot about how she sees and remembers the world.

And what about Florence Price's *Violin Concerto No. 2*, played by our own concertmaster, the extraordinary David Buckley? (We'll perform Price's First Concerto next season with Peter Clarke.) Florence Price is a fabulous composer whom history nearly forgot. Perhaps it was because her lush and romantic compositions were out of fashion among the mind-century modernists, or that she didn't have a publisher or famous conductor as an advocate. Alas, the sad and more probable reason was that an African-American woman with a powerful creative voice simply wasn't welcome in the hallowed and privileged halls of classical music. Listen to this beautiful music and reflect on the fact that we nearly let it recede into the mists of obscurity. How close did we come? It is thanks to sheer luck that a couple discovered the manuscript in a ramshackle, abandoned house and sent it to the University of Arkansas where Price's archives are maintained. The shocking fact is that Florence Price died in 1953 and this violin concerto received its first performance last February.

Sometimes a society is judged by what it is willing to forget.

So, as we celebrate the Season with *Messiah*, a piece of music that will never be forgotten, let us remember and celebrate other music, other inspirations. With any luck we will bequeath future generations communal musical memories of great richness and diversity!

Steven Schick

News from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I am very much looking forward to our December concerts! For the December 8-9 program, research into the Florence Price Violin Concerto revealed that our performance will be a West Coast premiere and only the fourth orchestral performance of this 1952 composition, which was lost for decades and only recently rediscovered. What a treat to bring this concerto to our audiences along with a new work by Qingqing Wang and a celebration of the season with Handel's "Messiah." After Sunday's concert, I look forward to seeing you at our annual Holiday reception in Mandeville's East Room.

The Christmas Messiah Community Sing in Carlsbad follows on December 16th. Ruben Valenzuela, who has been serving as Interim Choral Director this fall, will guest-conduct this holiday favorite.

Choral Director Search Update

The Search Committee continues to make progress, having narrowed the first round of applicants to eight semi-finalists. Those numbers will be narrowed further, as we complete Round 2 of the process and come up with our finalists. We will continue with Interim Choral Directors for the balance of the 2018-19 season. As Ruben is unable to continue past the December concerts, we've contracted with Stephen Sturk, who will take up the Interim Choral Director duties in January, and stay with us through the June concerts.

Parking Update

We made it through the first concert without too many frayed nerves, but also with lessons learned. Many people who parked in Osler Parking Structure exited the structure on Gilman Drive and, not only had a very long walk to the Auditorium, but wondered where the promised volunteers, shuttles and assistance were to be found! If you are parking in Osler Parking Structure over the concert weekend, please exit on **Level 4, North Lobby**. The North Lobby exits on Osler Lane, which is where you can pick up our free shuttle or, if walking, be directed to the wide well-lit walkway. Volunteers and staff are located along Osler Lane to assist you. Valet parking will also continue to be available at the top of Mandeville Lane loop.

Diane Salisbury

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Ready for Your Close-Up?

You may have noticed that during concert intermission we are videotaping interviews in the auditorium. This project is a video response to our season theme, "Lineage: A Memory Project." Patrons and ensemble members are sharing stories of their own musical lineage and legacy. The final product – a "video quilt," of sorts – will be shown at the end of the season. Please join us at intermission to record your response to these questions:

Q.1 Reflect on a parent, grandparent (or great-grandparent!). Is there a piece of music or song that comes to mind when you think of them – perhaps something they especially loved? What memories of them come to the fore when you think of the music they loved?

Q.2 Imagine that it's 2068 -- 50 years from now. Is there a piece of music or song that you would like your child, grandchild (or great-grandchild!) to bring to mind when they think of you, something that you especially love? How would you like them to remember you or this historical moment through music?

Diane Salisbury

Christmas Messiah COMMUNITY SING

December 16, 2018 • 4:00 pm

Guest Conductor RUBEN VALENZUELA
Handel's Messiah (Christmas portion)

St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Church • Carlsbad



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PURCHASE TICKETS AT 858-534-4637
Or online at lajollasympphony.com



Meet Soprano Danbi Ahn



Just so you know, Danbi, who organizes and whips *Tutti* into shape, most certainly did not suggest herself as the subject of a *Tutti* profile. That was me, or, rather, it was I. I wanted to know more about the young woman I've been trading emails with over the last many months, so I asked.

Danbi was raised in Seoul, Korea, until she was 13, when she was transplanted with her parents and younger sister to Palos Verdes, a beautiful coastal community just south of L.A. In Korea, she played piano starting at the age of seven, and kept it up in Southern California. In her senior year of high school, Danbi was the accompanist for the beginning level of choir, a move which encompassed more than a bit of serendipity.

The job actually led to an acute case of boredom as the choir director incorporated more and more a capella works into the repertoire, and Danbi simply sat. "The teacher felt bad for me," she says, "and suggested I join the singing for the last few songs we learned. Until then, I never thought of joining a classical choir."

2010 was a big year for Danbi. She moved to San Diego to start her college studies at UC San Diego; the rest of her family moved back to Korea; and she started looking for a choir to join, fortunately discovering the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, where she's been ever since, singing as a soprano.

In the meantime, she got a B.S. and M.A. in psychology and is now working on her Ph.D. in cognitive psychology with a focus on psycholinguistics. Her Ph.D. thesis is on "how people who know multiple languages produce grammatical sentences," she notes. Her fiancé, Thijs Walbeek, from the Netherlands, is also studying cognitive psychology (with a focus on circadian rhythms) at UC San Diego.

Danbi loves singing and "making music with 100+ other musicians who also love music enough to dedicate three hours of the evening every week." Her favorite works so far? Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Benjamin Britten's *Spring Symphony*. She would most like to perform Mozart's *Requiem* one day.

Pat Finn

Plan Now. Give Later.

We are happy to announce that our Planned Giving Society has a logo! The new “roofed” design is a nostalgic reference to Therese Hurst, a chorus member whose bequest of her house to LJS&C more than 30 years ago established our legacy program.

Planned Giving is a way to plan now for a gift that will benefit LJS&C in the future. These gifts can be made by naming LJS&C in your will, trust, retirement plan, or insurance policy or by leaving a gift of real property. It’s easy to ensure your musical legacy. For more information, visit lajollasympphony.com or contact Diane Salisbury at dsalisbury@lajollasympphony.com.



Melanie Intrieri

Article Watch

From David Chase & Mea Daum



Photo by Eduardo Contreras - San Diego Union-Tribune

Feature article on Sally Dean: A love of music and song shared with thousands of kids for over 20 years

Lisa Deaderick - The San Diego Union-Tribune

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/lifestyle/people/sd-me-one-dean-20181108-story.html>

Need to contact the LJS&C?

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Diane Salisbury, Executive Director

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If you find an interesting, music-related article or web site, please send the information about it to Danbi at yoahn@ucsd.edu