

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

March 11th, 2019

Conductor's Note



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

At first glance, this concert program seems like a straightforward juxtaposition of light and dark: we have Leonard Bernstein's magnificent "Kaddish"—his prayer for the dead—and, on the other hand, Beethoven's genial Eighth Symphony. Tying them together—metaphorically if not musically—is Laurie San Martin's evocatively entitled, *nights bright days*.

But though there are plentiful juxtapositions in this concert, they are not straightforward. Take the Kaddish. Every end-of-life celebration, from the small-town Protestant funeral to a grand Roman Catholic Mass; from the Balinese *Nyepi* that marks the death of the old year to *Día de Muertos* serves in part to remind us of the imminence of our own demise. These rituals are often threaded with heartening memories of the departed, but they function primarily to contextualize our smallness in the grand scheme of things, to demonstrate our vulnerability.

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But the Kaddish is a special case among rituals of mourning. For starters, there is not a single mention of death anywhere in the prayer. On the contrary the far more frequent references are to *chayim*, Hebrew for “life.” Throughout, we sense the dualism of the Jewish tradition—the recursive embedding of life within death, and the poignant juxtaposition of “I and Thou.” This latter idea makes the Kaddish into a personal prayer rather than an institutionalized homily. The familial intimacy with which a Jew addresses God allows her or him to speak with a frankness that would seem shocking and out of place in many other religions.

Bernstein, among the most personally expressive musicians of the 20th century (some might say idiosyncratic), takes fully to heart the invitation for unmediated and personal communication with God. As he does in his more stylistically eclectic *Mass*, he pushes forward in the Kaddish with heated, dissonant music then retreats in moments of suspended harmony. He gave the Kaddish a distinctly male, practically aggressive, perspective in his original 1963 version with a part for narrator that spoke on behalf of the patriarchy. Then 15 years later, he reversed that idea in a more moderate version of the text that allows for a female narrator. The symphony was premiered just weeks after the assassination of President Kennedy, who was a friend of Bernstein’s from their Harvard days together, and still evokes the gut-punch of that fateful month. But the work is also about the struggle for belief in immediate post-Holocaust generation of Jews. In a symphony that seems to be about everything, to this listener the music walks right up to the line where it might be about nothing. But that is the gamble an artist might take in order to achieve great things.

Indeed, the incongruities—the brilliance mixed with the meandering—are dizzying: In the Kaddish, Bernstein purports to speak for his era, yet he wears his spiritual uncertainty and generational guilt like a badge. He wields his well-honed skill as a composer like a ginseng knife and at the same moment muddles his way through life in an existential fog. The embedded contradictions make his music function a little like a well-shaken bottle of warm Coca-Cola—a favorite past time of mine in 1963. Before too long everything is going everywhere!

But that is what makes this music seem more like life to me than death. Life is joyously sloppy and uncertain, while death—as the painter Mark Rothko once said of silence—is “so accurate.”

The *riposte* to Bernstein in today’s concert is Beethoven’s light-filled *Eighth Symphony*, which he sometimes called his “little symphony in F” to separate it from the longer *Sixth Symphony* in the same key. The common mistake with Beethoven is to see his even numbered symphonies, all written in sunny tonalities (D, B-flat, and F Major), as not just light-hearted but also light weight. While it’s true that the even-numbered symphonies were generally sparer in emotional force and more classical in construction than their more dramatic odd-numbered counterparts, they also were written in times of particular distress in Beethoven’s personal life.

The *Second Symphony* was created as Beethoven came to terms with his growing deafness. The *Fourth Symphony* was composed at one of Beethoven’s many moments of existential uncertainty (witness as the composer tiptoes through a set of mysterious harmonies before finally declaring himself to B-flat major.) And the *Eighth* was made around the time that Beethoven wrote to his “immortal beloved,” a woman to whom he pledged undying love and whose identity is still unknown. Some believe that she was the wife of a friend of Beethoven. With every loss—of hearing, of spiritual certainty, and of meaningful and requited love—Beethoven turned to the rational purity of classical forms for comfort. Beethoven’s *Eighth Symphony* sounds a lot like Haydn, not out of nostalgia for a past master, but because the firmness of Haydn’s classical language offered clarity and certainty in times of personal turmoil. On the other hand, one could argue that the stormy, dramatic symphonies required a modicum of personal security to counterbalance the artistic risks he took, and may have been the tokens of (slightly) happier times.

Laurie San Martin’s brief overture to the program shows how dark and light can co-exist in the same musical framework. But whether we take this structure as the object lesson of today’s concert or not, we nevertheless feel urged to find light where we might least expect it, and are warned that below a calm surface sometimes lies hidden turbulence.

Steven Schick

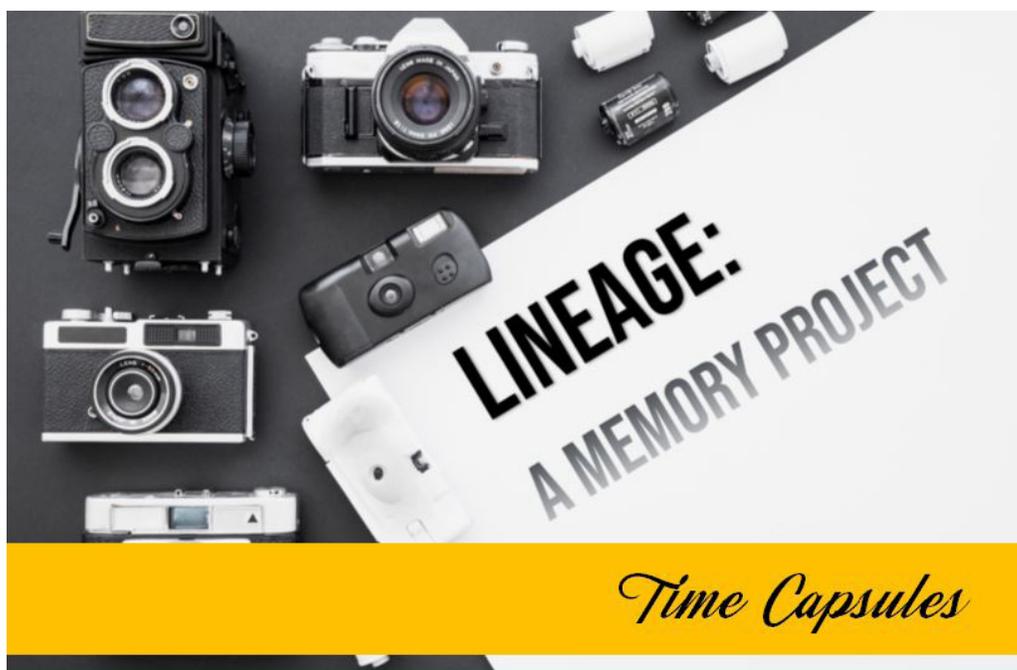
News from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

When Maestro Schick conceived of a season entitled “Lineage: A Memory Project,” we decided to address that theme by videotaping audience members retelling personal memories of music in response to a set of questions. This weekend concludes the interview process, and we will begin assembling a video “quilt” to show at the May concert. If you would like a sneak peek of some of the interviews, you can find samples on our website at <http://lajollasympphony.com/lineage-video-time-capsules/>. And if you would like to share your own personal memories, please join us at intermission this weekend as we record the final segments.

Choral Director Search Update: The Search Committee has narrowed its list of finalists and is conducting finalists’ auditions with the chorus. The Committee, headed by past Board President and chorus member Steve Marsh, is hoping to announce a new choral director before the end of this season. In the meantime, a thank-you to Stephen Sturk, who has been serving as Interim Choral Director since January and will continue in that capacity through the June concerts.

Diane Salisbury



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BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND – ANNUAL WINE TASTING & BENEFIT!

"The Way Way South!" Wines from South of the Equator

Spring Fundraiser: Back by popular demand—but with a different wine savant at the helm—is the LJS&C Wine Tasting. Rich Cook, director of several wine competitions, will moderate this year's event held on Saturday, April 13th at the home of Elizabeth Taft in La Jolla (Mt. Soledad). This year's theme for the blind tasting is "The Way Way South" and will focus on wines from south of the equator. This casual afternoon event is great way to have fun while supporting your favorite symphony and chorus. I hope to see you there.

Diane Salisbury

The Way Way South!

***Wines from
South of the Equator***

**18th Annual Wine Tasting and Benefit
Rich Cook, moderator**

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2-5 PM**

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Young Artist Winners Recital

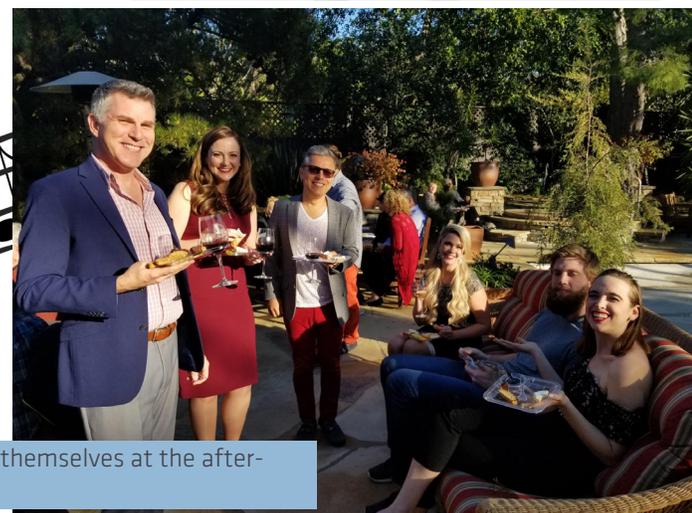
On Sunday, February 24th, we showcased winners of our 59th annual Young Artist Competition at the Young Artists Winners Recital. The event was held at the beautiful home of Michael Kaehr in La Jolla and was emceed by Dr. Elena Yarritu (Instrumental Co-chair) and Laurinda Nikkel (Vocal Co-chair). The young artists each performed an award-winning piece from their competition audition. The event concluded with amazing refreshments provided by orchestra and chorus members – Thank you to all who contributed! A big thank-you also goes to onsite volunteers Loie Flood, Marty Hambright, Ray Park, Pat Gifford, June Allen, and Anne Gero-Stillwell, and to co-chairs Jeannie Saier (Instrumental) and Fiona Chatwin (Vocal).

A complete list of winners is available on our website. https://lajollasympphony.com/young-artists-competition/?et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off

A special thank you to all who attended, enjoyed, volunteered and were a part of this one-of-a-kind event!



Melanie Tuttle



Meet Elena Yárritu: Co-principal flutist



That Elena Yárritu currently lives in San Diego is fortunate for local music lovers. She might easily have set down roots in a more exotic city.

Her on-line bio notes she was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Hispanic Basque American father. She was raised in San Jose, California; studied in Paris and has travelled and performed extensively in Europe. Even so, she moved to the San Diego area with her husband in 2007 and almost immediately auditioned for the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, landing a position as second flute. Two years later, the position of co-principal flute opened up, a post she has held for some 10 years, alongside co-principal Joey Peyton.

As for playing in the LJS&C, Elena is more than enthusiastic. “Playing in this orchestra,” she says, “has been one of the greatest experiences in my musical career.” She loves the inspiring leadership of Music Director Steven Schick, the “positive, mutually respectful atmosphere” within the ensembles, and the unmatched contemporary, cutting-edge music the LJS&C performs.

Two of those works particularly stand out for her. One she found most challenging to perform was Ravel’s *Orchestral Suites from Daphnis and Chloé*. “It’s a monumental work,” she says, “with effects requiring fast

and nimble fingers. It’s also a tour de force for the flute section with big solos for flute, alto flute and piccolo.” For the concert she found the most memorable, Elena discovered a Native American flute made by an artist in Sedona, Arizona, and learned to play it for the Philip Glass *Piano Concerto No. 2*.

Elena teaches aspiring young flutists in her home studio, preparing them for examinations, auditions and competitions. Her students, of course, have different strengths, and she says, “The best part about working with young people is that they all have to learn the same things, but getting there isn’t the same and isn’t always easy. I love problem-solving and helping students figure out how to overcome obstacles.”

In her spare time (of which there’s not much) Elena listens to all kinds of music: rock, folk, jazz, opera – and loves movies. And she is learning the process of grooming her pair of Wheaten Terriers, which the American Kennel Club describes as “an exuberant Irish farm dog.”

Pat Finn

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2019 GALA - SEPTEMBER 28
THE WESTGATE HOTEL

Need to contact the LJS&C?

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Diane Salisbury, Executive Director

Article Watch

From Beda Farrell

The Climate Music Project is turning data into concerts

They're translating climate information into a more universal language.
Jan O'Brien - Yale Climate Connections

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/02/climate-music-project-turns-data-into-concerts/>



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