The AMHERST COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC presents the

AMHERST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK LANE SWANSON, Music Director & Conductor
ANNIEROSE KLINGBEIL, Assistant Director

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2025!

Saturday, September 18, 2021 from 8-9pm
Buckley Recital Hall, Arms Music Center at AMHERST COLLEGE

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PROGRAM OF WORKS TO BE PERFORMED

FANFARE FOR HORNS, BRASS & PERCUSSION (2016; rev. 2020) — QUINN MASON (1996-)

ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE, op. 80 (1890) — JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

ADORATION for strings (1951) — FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953)

SYMPHONY #8 in G major, op. 88 (1890) — ANTONIN DVORAK (1841-1904)

I. ALLEGRO CON BRIO
(Quickly, with spirit)

II. ADAGIO
(Slowly; at ease)

III. ALLEGRETTO GRAZIOSO
(Somewhat briskly but gracefully)

IV. ALLEGRO, MA NON TROPPO
(Relatively fast, without rushing)

FIRST VIOLINS

MARIE LEOU, concertmaster
TARA ALAHAKOON
ANNIKA BAJAJ
CASSIE JIN
JASON KANG
EMILY KIM
ISABELLE KIM
JAKE KIM
SUNNIE NOH
GRACE LEE
DAVID XU
ZHIHAN XU

SECOND VIOLINS

DANIEL MARTIN, principal
FRANCISCA ABDO ARIAS
NII-AYI ARYEETEY
ALEXANDRA CONKLIN
NORA DOCKTER
JARED GRACIA-DAVID
MEENAKSHI JANI
JOY JOHNSON
HANNAH KARLIN
CHLOE METZ
ALEXANDRA OLSON
BIANCA SASS
DESMOND SHEA
OLIVIA STOCKARD
ALEXANDER YAN

VIOLAS

YOSEN WANG, principal
EMMA CANDLAND
GRACE GEEGANAGE
IRENE LEE
ASHLEY LOH
HARRY PANNER

CELLOS

TAZ KIM, principal
JACK DUNHAM
YEJU KANG
VANESA FAROOQ
MICHAEL LIU
CLAIRE MACERO
YAFFA SEGAL
LIAM TANGLAO
OREN TIRSCHWELL
THOMAS YE

STRING BASSES

PABLO CASTILLA, principal
ADAM KORETSKY

FLUTES

LORENA BERGSTROM
ANNIE CHEN
REID DODSON
ROBIN KONG
SAM SPRATFORD (also piccolo)

OBOES

DIANA DANIELS
VIVIANA LABARCA
THOMAS MEYER

CLARINETS

STEPHEN CHEN
HANNAH GOLDBERG
JINAE HONG
DANNY JEONG
KENNY KIM
CHRISTIAN PATTAVINA
ABIGAIL ROBBINS
MAJD ROUHANA

BASSOONS

DAVIS RENELLA
NAT ROTH

HORNS

CECE AMORY
JASON DEGRAAF
CLAIRE TAYLOR
RACHEL WILLICK

TRUMPETS

CAMERON CHANDLER
SHUZO KATAYAMA
GABRIEL PROIA

TROMBONES

CONNOR BARNES
MASAHIRO NISHIKAWA

EUPHONIUM

ERIC INGRAM

TIMPANI

KAI GLASHAUSSER
CLARA HOEY
MIN WINTON

PERCUSSION

CHARLOTTE WANG
SAM YOUNG

ABOUT THE WORKS & COMPOSERS

QUINN MASON (b. 1996) is a brilliant young and prodigious Black composer based in Dallas. He studied at Southern Methodist University, and his music has been performed in concert by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Utah Symphony Orchestra, South Bend Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Seattle, and many other leading ensembles. I fell in love with his work while researching music for the ASO's May, 2021 three hour marathon "Black Music Matters," in which ASO graduating seniors performed solo works by Mason for viola and cello. Mason's FANFARE FOR HORNS, BRASS & PERCUSSION ("DALLAS ARTS DISTRICT") which we perform tonight is, in his words, "a tribute to the brilliant and glamorous atmosphere of the Dallas Arts District, which houses the Meyerson Symphony Center, Winspear Opera House and Moody Performance Hall. On any given night, the district comes alive with multiple performances happening at the same exact time and Las Vegas-esque lights that invites one to enjoy and partake in the festive cultural ambience." This buoyant and joyous fanfare seemed a perfect opening to the ASO's return to live performance in Buckley Recital Hall! — Mark Lane Swanson

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897) never went to college. When he was 20, however, he had the opportunity to indulge in the perks of student life for several weeks, without having to do a stitch of academic work. This serendipitous state of affairs resulted after he got "laid off" while on tour with the flamboyant 25-year-old Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi. Early in July of 1853, Reményi and Brahms were guests at the home of Franz Liszt during an extended stopover in Weimar. Reményi worshipped at the shrine of Liszt, but Brahms wanted nothing to do with their host's artistic goals and the "New German School." Incensed that his reticent accompanist wasn't according the great master proper respect, Reményi sent Brahms on his way.

A few weeks earlier, at the end of May, Reményi had introduced Brahms to violinist-composer Joseph Joachim during a concert stop in Hanover. Foreseeing a personality clash between the ill-matched duo, Joachim had invited Brahms – if the opportunity arose – to join him at Göttingen, where he would be taking some summer courses in philosophy and history at the local university. For two glorious months that summer, Brahms hung out with Joachim and his circle, enjoying reading, debates, pleasant walks, beer-drinking sessions and song fests at the local beer-halls, and general student camaraderie. By doing a recital with Joachim, he raised enough money to finance a long-held dream to take a walking tour of the Rhineland. Thus, the young composer packed his knapsack and bid peripheral university life adieu.

Brahms' next brush with academe occurred 23 years later, in 1876. Cambridge University offered him an honorary Doctorate in Music, which required his presence at the ceremony – but Brahms had a paralyzing distaste for sea travel. Then, he learned that Londoners were hatching lavish plans to celebrate his sojourn in England. Harboring an innate horror of fuss and lionization, and unwilling to face the Channel crossing, the composer stayed home and relinquished the honor.

It was in 1879 that the University of Breslau conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Brahms was flattered and sent a postcard of thanks to the faculty. However, a subsequent letter from his friend Bernhard Scholz, Director of Music in Breslau, made it clear that the university expected him to express his gratitude in musical form. While vacationing at Bad Ischl during the summer of 1880, Brahms penned his musical "thank you" – the Academic Festival Overture.

With a masterful balance of serious and light-hearted elements, the emphasis is on the "festival" rather than the "academic" in an overture that brims with an irrepressible sense of fun. The work also sports the most extravagant orchestral forces the composer ever employed. Brahms himself described the piece as "a very boisterous potpourri of student songs." Indeed, excerpts from four student beer-hall tunes play a significant role in the orchestral texture in what is, perhaps, a fond backward look to the carefree summer days of 1853.

A hushed, but urgent statement launches the Overture, followed by a dramatic succession of contrasting ideas and dynamics. The principal idea here is an adaptation of the Rakóczy March, a favorite tune with the composer since his youth. Following a soft drumroll, three trumpets then present the first of the traditional students' songs: "Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus" (We have built a stately house). Its roots lie in a Thuringian folk song, which had been transformed into a defiant protest song in the East German town of Jena when the students' association there was disbanded in 1819. After Brahms develops and mixes this song with the earlier Rakóczy adaptation, the melody of "Der Landesvater" (The father of our country) appears in a sweeping, lyrical rendition introduced by violins and violas. The tempo shifts to animato for the freshman's song known as The Fox-Ride ("Was komm dort von der Höh'" – What comes from afar). Bassoons, accompanied by off-the-beat violas and cellos, add a touch of humor that must have raised a faculty eyebrow or two at the premiere. Not forgetting to stir in his original material, Brahms then plays the three student songs off one another in a light-handed development. For the grand finale, a rambunctious version of the imposing "Gaudeamus igitur" (Therefore, let us be merry) makes a joyful noise and provides a rousing conclusion with its blazing brass and full orchestral forces.

The Overture has been one of Brahms' most often played works ever since the composer himself conducted the premiere in Breslau on January 4, 1881. — Kathy Henkel, for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Throughout her remarkable and under-appreciated career as a Black composer and pianist, FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953) faced the relentless double challenge of racism and gender bias. Nevertheless, "she persisted," and earned a crucial place in American music history that is still in the process of being fully recognized and celebrated. Born into an upper-middle class, mixed-race family in Arkansas, Price excelled at school, and was accepted into the New England Conservatory of Music to study piano and organ, but won admittance only by "passing" as Mexican, in order to avoid the heightened racial bias against African-Americans. After graduating from the Conservatory in 1906, she taught at colleges in Arkansas and Georgia before moving to Chicago in 1927, where she worked until her death in 1953. Price's Symphony in E minor, from 1932, won a Wanamaker Foundation Award, and was performed the following year by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra —the first time a major American orchestra had performed a work by a Black woman. But after her death, Price and almost all her 300 compositions (including about 100 songs) faded into obscurity. After decades of diligent scholarly work, and the miraculous recovery of many of Price's manuscripts from a derelict house in rural Illinois, Price's music has recently enjoyed a much-deserved revival.
Price's ADORATION (1951) was originally composed as a work for organ, but its beauty has inspired many arrangements, including ours tonight for strings. With a warm domesticity typical of popular semi-sacred songs of the era, such as "Bless This House" or "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked," it intones a gentle, lyrical, reverential melody over long sustained bass notes.
—adapted from program notes by Luke Howard for the University of Georgia

The EIGHTH Symphony of ANTONIN DVORAK (1841-1904), written in less than a month in 1889, is a classic example of music with a simple and direct exterior hiding a very sophisticated and multi-layered interior. It is a work that is often described as "sunny" as well as "songful", "warm" and "optimistic," and in many important ways, it is all of those things. However, it is also his most harmonically and structurally ambitious symphony work, his most modern, and beneath its sunny surface lie moments of great pathos...Dvorak himself said that in this piece he wanted "to write a work different from my other symphonies, with individual ideas worked out in a new manner." Dvorak's intentions would have been clear to his contemporaries just from the key of the symphony alone - G major. No major composer since Haydn had published a symphony in G major, perhaps because it was a key more associated with or appropriate for folk music and song than a complex, worked-out symphony.

The Eighth begins with a portent of darkness in a long, lyrical and melancholy melody played by the cellos. His later masterpiece, the Cello Concerto, was final proof that no composer ever understood the cello better than Dvorak, but in this symphony the cellos carry so much of the melodic weight that they take on the role of something like a narrator or Greek chorus. At each pivotal moment in the symphony, it is the cellos who instruct the listener where we are (interestingly, this is a role cellos would reprise in the next symphony in G major by a major composer, the Fourth Symphony of Gustav Mahler). These early bars are full of the ambiguity that will haunt the symphony: why if the title page informs us that the symphony is in G major, does the music begin in G minor? The tempo marking notes "Allegro con brio" but written in "cut time" (in 2), it can sounds as if an "Andante." Could this G minor section be a songlike introduction to the work, and is the symphony a voyage from dark to light? The flute quickly provides some answers, with a simple, triadic "bird call" squarely in G major, the first of many tunes in the symphony that often seem childlike in their directness.

The Eighth's first movement is a huge span of musical architecture anchored to the three occurrences or returns of the opening cello theme; notably, this melody is never significantly developed or modulates from G minor. (It is the bird call that is subject to the most extended "working out" of themes in the first movement, and the entire movement yet ends in raucous good spirits and blazing sunshine.) Shadows return in the second movement (Adagio), which is very much an example of Nachtmusik (Night Music); G major light quickly gives way to C minor austerity. Musicologist Michael Steinberg believes the key structure of the movement is an homage to the slow funeral march of Beethoven's Third ("Eroica"); interestingly, whereas Beethoven moves from C minor to its relative major E-flat major, Dvorak reverses the order, beginning in a noble E-flat major which disintegrates into C minor, the predominant key of the movement. A children's song supplies variety and bounce to the middle of this movement.

The Eighth's third movement is sublimely beautiful—an exquisite Czech folk dance unambiguously in G minor and characterized by a long, soulful, even slightly mournful melody built entirely of descending diatonic scales contrasting with bouncy descending chromatic scales. It is in "scherzo and trio" form; but the playfulness of this traditional third movement form is most reflected in the trio, or middle section, which features the most childlike tune in the entire symphony.

The Eighth's finale begins with a bracing fanfare in the trumpets, followed by a theme in G major (again in the cellos) which will be subjected to numerous variations interrupted by boisterous "returns" by the full orchestra of a version of the principal melody (thus adding a touch of "rondo" and "ritornello" to the movement. When the opening theme returns once again in the cellos, it now sounds heartbreaking, inward and profoundly bittersweet. It sounds as though Dvorak is letting go of something very dear to him. Does his use throughout of tunes which evoke childhood reflect a musing on the deaths, months apart, of three of his children? Do the three ascending notes in G major of the tune itself each represent one of his children? These questions lead to an even more profound inquiry: does the "pastoral" (evocative of nature, often associated with an Arcadian, perfect past) character of the entire symphony suggest that Dvorak is engaged in tone painting of an earlier time in his life? (The death of children was also a pre-occupation of Mahler, even in his G major symphony, which makes numerous musical allusions to the afterlife.) Nonetheless, Dvorak ultimately decides to end with an exuberant coda based on the ritornello "tuttis" we have heard throughout the movement. As one commentator has put it: "Having said goodbye for the last time, the music storms back to life, and ends in the highest possible spirits." — adapted from program notes by Kenneth Woods