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Utah Symphony

Madeline Adkins

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UTAH SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

JANUARY 20, 2017

CAINE PERFORMANCE HALL
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UTAH SYMPHONY
Madeline Adkins, leader

Divertimento for Strings in D Major, K.136

Allegro
Andante
Presto

Mozart

Battalia

Biber

St. Paul's Suite for String Orchestra

I. Jig
II. Ostinato
III. Intermezzo
IV. Finale (The Dargason)

Holst

INTERMISSION

Serenade in C Major for Strings, Opus 48

Tchaikovsky

I. Peyzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo -
Allegro moderato
II. Walzer: Moderato - Tempo di valse
III. Elégie: Larghetto elegiaco
IV. Finale (Tema Russo): Andante - Allegro con spirito

Madeline Adkins, in September 2016, assumed her new post as Concertmaster of Utah Symphony under Maestro Thierry Fischer. She made her concerto debut with Utah Symphony in November 2016, performing Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2. Prior to this, Adkins was the Associate Concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. She was appointed by Maestro Yuri Temirkanov in 2005, after joining the orchestra as Assistant Concertmaster in 2000. Adkins appeared semi-annually as soloist with the BSO, and performed over 25 works with the orchestra including pieces by Beethoven, Sarasate, Vaughan Williams, Bach, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Prokofiev, Vivaldi, Bruch, Saint-Saëns, and Arvo Pärt. She has served as guest concertmaster of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony, and the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra in Chicago, where she was featured in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. The daughter of noted musicologists, Adkins is the youngest of eight children, six of whom are professional musicians. The siblings, who include titled players in the National, Dallas, and Houston symphonies, joined together to form the Adkins String Ensemble. She performed on viola and violin with this unique chamber ensemble for over 15 years, and the group has made numerous recordings, including Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Adkins received her Bachelor's summa cum laude from the University of North Texas and her Master's degree from the New England Conservatory where she studied with James Buswell. Adkins performs on a 1753 Guadagnini graciously loaned to her by conductor Marin Alsop, as well as a violin crafted in 1987 by Brooklyn maker Samuel Zygmuntowicz.

NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 — 1791) : Divertimento for Strings in D major, K. 136

In general, music of the Classical era is strictly classified, and we have to watch our vocabulary. But there were some labels that were so broad as to mean almost anything the composer might want — in particular, divertimenti and serenades. Usually, these were suites of movements written for no other purpose than to entertain — something quite literally diverting, often produced as a *piece d'occasion* for a social event.

In the case of his three-movement Divertimento numbered K. 136, Mozart had good reason to undertake this kind of light entertainment. He was 16 when he composed it in 1772, during a period when he described himself as mad for opera and eager to try his hand at a large-scale music drama. He had just completed his most important Italian-language opera so far, *Lucio Silla*, but it was not to be mounted until the following year. His D major Divertimento could have served as a musical "palate cleanser" — something light to help him make the transition to his next musical "course" of serious composition in his career plan.

Then again, perhaps not. Even Mozart's divertimenti and serenades tend not to sound as casual as those of his contemporaries, and in this case, he did not even choose the term "divertimento" himself. It was added to the autograph score only after he finished composing it, and the order of its movements — fast, slow, fast, like a sinfonia — lends it more coherence than the typical divertimento. Mozart may well have composed this work for performance at one of the many musical salon evenings at the homes of prominent Salzburg families. Though we know Mozart better as a piano soloist, he was at that time the concertmaster of the Salzburg court orchestra and was one of the most accomplished violinists in Europe. The Divertimento is a showcase not just for the violin but for all its players, and unfolds with elegance and pleasing variety. It would undoubtedly have provided positive exposure for the ambitious, teen-aged Mozart — though, as commentator John Magnum notes, it also "was probably a nice way to blow off some steam, musical yoga for a stressed-out composer." You know how it is for an overworked 16-year-old.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644 — 1704) : Battalia (Sonata di Marche)

Though their lives did not overlap and their musical styles were totally different, the names of Wolfgang Mozart and Heinrich Biber are often linked in music histories. The reason is nothing more than a quirk: On his way to Innsbruck on a job-related trip to buy musical instruments for his employer, Biber seized an unexpected career opportunity that arose along the way and resettled in the Austrian city of Salzburg. He was 26 — about the same age as Mozart when he fled Salzburg, his hometown, to enhance his career 110 years later. Mozart considered Salzburg a provincial backwater, and resettled in Vienna. As the eminent commentator James Keller notes, "Keep your eyes peeled next time you find yourself in Salzburg and you may spot the historical marker posted on [Biber's] one-time residence at Kranzmarkt Nr. 2, just a block from where crowds line up to enter the Mozart [birthplace]."

Musically speaking, the two composers inhabited different worlds. While Mozart represents the pinnacle of Classicism, Biber was a son of the Baroque, born more than four decades before Bach and Handel. In the dramatic Battalia, we hear a baroque specialty: dramatic imitation rather than formal elegance.

Imitative "tone paintings" were a mainstay of Baroque musical craft; think of Vivaldi's evocations of weather and landscape in compositions such as *The Four Seasons*. Biber's catalog includes its fair share of imitative compositions depicting animals and the like. But in Battalia he accomplishes something more daring, rendering the sound of drunken soldiers celebrating after battle. Though they are victorious, the music is more frank than flattering — even depicting the drunkenness of the revelry and the pain of the wounded. The original full title is almost a descriptive literary work on its own: "Das leiderliche Schwarmen der Musquetirer, Mars, die Schlacht und Lamento der Verwundeten, mit Arien initirt und Baccho dedicirt..." or "The dissolute reveling of musketeers, march, the battle, and lament of the wounded, imitated with airs and dedicated to Bacchus..."

Biber was a noted violin virtuoso, and his skill and knowledge of stringed instruments continues to challenge players today.

Gustav Holst (1874 — 1934) : *St. Paul's Suite for String Orchestra*

Most of us know Holst mainly from his enormously popular 1916 suite *The Planets*, which is big in every way: subject (astronomical), scale (long, and for a very large orchestra), and hugely enjoyable. Though his *St. Paul's Suite* is shorter and far more intimately scaled, it shares some essential elements with *The Planets* — most notably charm, cheer, and the sound of the British Isles in every bar.

Born during the prim Victorian era in Cheltenham, an English spa town, Holst was a man of strict propriety and Swedish ancestry, with ethnic roots extending further back into Latvia and Russia, but in spirit he was English to his bones. The genial warmth of his music ran counter to the realities of his life, which was marked by poor health, unsociability, and dark moods. Even the enormous success of *The Planets*, which eclipsed his more serious religious and choral works, wound up displeasing him.

When neuritis curtailed Holst's piano career, Holst accepted a position as Director of Music at St. Paul's Girls' School, for which the *St. Paul's Suite* is named. He composed the suite in gratitude for the school's construction of a music studio for his composing work. In this suite, as in *The Planets*, Holst uses familiar folk tunes from England, Ireland and Scotland as source materials in each movement — starting with the familiar jig and proceeding through the equally exuberant finale, which is based on the composer's "Fantasia on the Dargason" from his Second Suite in F for Military Band. And, yes, that is the classic "Greensleeves" that you hear as a counter-melody in the fourth movement.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 — 1893) : *Serenade in C major for Strings, Op. 48*

Some critics have described Tchaikovsky's *Serenade in C major* and his *1812 Overture*, both composed during the autumn of 1880, as "bookends." But they are actually musical opposites: Tchaikovsky was frankly embarrassed by the *Overture*, which he described as bombastic and crude. But, ah, the *Serenade*— all grace and elegance — is a work he deemed one of his best. As with his *Orchestral Suite No. 4, "Mozartiana"*, this serenade was composed as an homage and a loving imitation of the composer Tchaikovsky idolized above all others.

As with Mozart's *Divertimento*, the Tchaikovsky *Serenade* is crafted with more substance and finesse than the genre requires. It opens with a formally structured movement in sonata form with a stately introduction that seems almost solemn, like a salute to music's past glories. It has the grandeur of a chorale and an almosst religious seriousness. This opens onto a contrasting section that scurries with energy and rapid passagework. In the second movement — perhaps the *Serenade's* most celebrated — we hear one of the most beguiling waltzes Tchaikovsky ever composed. Only a master of the ballet could have written it, and it has been choreographed many times — most notably by George Balanchine for the New York City Ballet.

A moody elegy follows the lilt of the waltz: flowing and lyrical, but autumnal in contrast with the waltz's vernal radiance. This leads us to the fourth movement, which is played vigorously but with muted strings. Based on a Russian folk song that has the rhythmic pull of a Volga River work chanty, it builds in energy and pace until it, like the third movement, seems to cry out for choreography. Finally, as the *Serenade* closes, Tchaikovsky reprises its solemn opening chorale, creating a perfect arch form and a sense of Mozartian symmetry.