

CONCERT PROGRAM

Masterworks of the French Choral Repertoire

Cantique de Jean Racine (1865)

Gabriel Fauré

Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans

Claude Debussy

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder (1898)

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin (1908)

Yver, vous n'este qu'un villain (1903)

Geniece Leines, alto

Quatre Motets sur des thèmes grégoriens (1960)

Maurice Duruflé

Ubi caritas

Tota pulchra es

Tantum ergo

Tu es Petrus

Intermission

Requiem (1888 / 1893)

Gabriel Fauré

Introit and Kyrie

Offertorium

Michael Knutson, Baritone

Sanctus

Pie Jesu

Karin Almjeld, Soprano

Agnus Dei

Libera me

Elliott Schwab, Baritone

In Paradisum

Peggy Johnson, Organ

PROGRAM NOTES

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was one of the most significant composers of vocal music in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; his solo songs (*mélodies*) form a staple part of the singers' repertoire. Although he trained as an organist / choirmaster, and served as organist at the Parisian church of the Madeleine from 1874, his greatest influence was as composition teacher at the Paris Conservatoire, where his pupils included Ravel, Enescu, and Nadia Boulanger. Fauré began writing the *Requiem* not long after his parents died, and it was first performed at the Madeleine in 1888. The original version did not include the "Offertorium" or the "Libera me," both of which were added in 1893. A third version, with an expanded orchestra, premiered in 1900 during the Paris World Exhibition. In addition to the two works on today's program, Fauré wrote around 15 other choral works, including a *Messe basse* ("low mass") in 1881.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918), like most musicians in his generation, felt an initial attraction to the music of Wagner. Following his studies at the Conservatoire, he made the obligatory pilgrimage to Bayreuth in 1888 and was briefly swept away on the tide of Wagner-mania. However, as his true voice emerged, and he became more interested both in non-Western musical styles and in a quintessentially French classicism, he turned away from Wagner. With orchestral works such as *Prélude à "L'après-midi d'un faune"* (1894) and *La Mer* (1905) as well as highly individual piano pieces, he set the standard and tone for all French music of the early 20th century. Debussy was not known for his choral works, and the three pieces on today's program seem not to have been written for any particular ensemble or occasion. They seem to be the only *a cappella* choral pieces that Debussy finished and published. In what may have been homage to the poet, Charles d'Orléans, who died in 1465, Debussy utilizes imitative counterpoint in these pieces, an archaic convention not usually a feature of his work.

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986), like Fauré, trained as an organist, although he also studied composition at the Conservatoire with Debussy's teacher, Dukas. He accepted the organ post at St. Etienne-du-Mont in Paris in 1930, holding it for the rest of his life, and was a world-renowned concert organist. His early training in the choir school at Rouen gave him a deep love and appreciation for plainsong, and the motets on today's program demonstrate that appreciation, as each uses the incipit of the chant for which it is named as its inspiration.

TRANSLATIONS

Cantique de Jean Racine

True Word of the Most High, our one hope, eternal day of earth and heaven, we break the silence of the peaceful evening. Divine Savior, turn your eyes upon us! Pour on us the fire of thy powerful grace, that all of hell flees from the sound of thy voice, disperse the slumber of a languishing soul, that has been led to forget thy laws! Oh Christ, be favorable to this faithful people. Receive the hymns they offer to thy immortal glory and thy gifts we will return unto thee.

Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans

Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder

God! How good she is to look at, the good and gracious beauty! For her fine qualities everyone stands ready to praise her. Who could weary of her? Every day her beauty is renewed. Neither here nor there does the sea gaze on a lady or a maiden who is as perfect as she. It is a dream to think about her.

Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin

When I hear the tambourine sound, to summon us to go Maying, it doesn't frighten me on my bed, nor do I even lift my head from the pillow. I said, "It is too early. I'll go back to sleep." Young people are dividing their bounty; I cling to my nonchalance and find the nearest neighbor.

Yver, vous n'este qu'un villain

Winter, you are nothing but a thug! Summer is pleasant and sweet, arraying fields, woods, and flowers in their green livery and many other colors through the laws of nature. But you, winter, you are too full of snow, wind, rain, and sleet. One should banish you into exile! Without flattery, I speak straight out: Winter, you are nothing but a thug!

Quatre Motets sur des thèmes grégoriens

Ubi caritas

Where charity and love are, God is there.

Tota pulchra es

Thou art all lovely, Mary, and there is no original sin in you.

Tantum ergo

Therefore, on our knees, we revere the Blessed Sacrament.

Tu es Petrus

Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.

Requiem

Introit and Kyrie

Eternal rest grant them, Lord, and light perpetual shine upon them. To you hymns are owed, God, in Zion, and to you vows are recited in Jerusalem. Hear my prayer: to thee shall all flesh come. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Offertorium

O Lord Jesus Christ, king of glory, free the souls of the dead from the pains of hell and from the deep lake. Free them from the mouth of the lion; let them not be absorbed into Tartarus, or fall into the shadows. Offerings and sacrifices we bring to you, Lord: receive them for the ones whom today we remember. Let them pass from death into life, as you promised to Abraham and his seed.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Pie Jesu

Blessed Lord Jesus, grant them rest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest. Light eternal shine upon them with your blessed ones who are holy forever.

Libera me