



Massachusetts Youth Symphony Project at Powers (MYSP)
Winter Concert Notes - 2016



www.powersmusic.org
617-484-4696
Belmont, MA

The MYSP Winter Concert repertoire carries a resounding theme of pride throughout all four works. Listening to these pieces by Smetana, Holst, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, you can't help but feel humbled and amazed at the bustling waters of a Czechoslovakian river, the surface of the planet Jupiter, the strength of the people of Vienna, and the beauty of a violin solo. After the turbulence of a divided nation during this fall's election, we hope you will find joy and peace during this winter concert and feel proud of the accomplishments of our own country and the young orchestra members onstage.

MYSP Preparatory String Orchestra Conductor Aaron Kuan

Themes from "The Moldau"

Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884), arr. Robert Frost

About this Piece...

The Moldau is the second of six symphonic poems that make up the larger work *Ma Vlast* (My Country), written in 1874. The full suite premiered in Prague in 1882, described as "musical pictures of Czech glories and defeats." Composer Bedrich Smetana was immensely proud of his country (present-day Czechoslovakia, formerly Bohemia), and the images his work brings to mind paint a picture of different parts of his homeland.

The Moldau is the German (and most commonly used) name for the Vltava, the largest river in the Czech Republic that runs through the Bohemian forest, through Czechoslovakia, and into Prague. As a symphonic poem, this piece exists to tell the story of the river, and paint a picture in our minds of the various ebbs and flows, and the life that exists in and around it.

If you listen close, you can hear the different stages of the river - the warm and cold springs that make up the source of the river in the mountains, the main theme where the sources combine to form one powerful river, the horns and the polka rhythms representing the river's journey past a hunt and a village wedding, the mysterious tones of nymphs in a gorge under the moonlight, the power of the St. John's whitewater rapids, and finally the river's ending point at Prague and the castle Vysehrad.

We Recommend...

- Learning more about symphonic poems in this Encyclopaedia Britannica article:
<https://www.britannica.com/art/symphonic-poem>
- Picturing the river's journey as you listen to this performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34oeAxETdbc>

“Jupiter” from The Planets, Op. 32

Gustav Holst (1874-1934), arr. Deborah Baker Monday

About this Piece...

Similar to “The Moldau,” this piece is the fourth in a suite of movements, entitled The Planets, Op. 32 (originally known as Seven Pieces for Large Orchestra).

Holst had a fascination with astrology which may have been born from conversations with astrologer Clifford Bax while the two were vacationing in Spain. Another source of inspiration was Alan Leo’s book “The Art of Synthesis,” with each chapter named after a specific planet. Wherever the idea originally came from, Holst attempted to convey through orchestral music the idea of the planets ruling the astrological signs of the zodiac. Each movement of The Planets, Op. 32 attempts to call to mind an image of how a specific planet influences ourselves and our world. The full suite includes movements named for Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, in that order, the titles of which also include astrological characters (for example, “Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity”). The Jupiter movement portrays a planet that beams with benevolence and generosity, and has been called the “spine” that falls in the middle of the suite, holding it together.

The first public performance of the full suite was in 1920 by the London Symphony Orchestra. Later, the text of Cecil Spring Rice’s poem “I Vow to Thee My Country” was set to the music of “Jupiter” and became a strong part of British culture and identity, so much so that it was included in the wedding and funeral of Princess Diana as well as the Royal Wedding in 2011.

We Recommend...

- Seeing how music can reflect the emotions of a country in these videos of Princess Diana’s funeral and the Royal Wedding in 2011:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_DleifOlrU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_EApXM7WTo
- Listening to the orchestral version by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu77Vtja30c>

MYSP Chamber Orchestra
Conductor Dr. Spencer Aston

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

II. Allegretto

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

About this Piece...

Imagine the pride you might feel if your country experiences a great victory after many years of defeat. The people of Vienna experienced this pride for themselves in the early 1800s. Years of disappointment had kept the frowns on their faces as Napoleon occupied their homeland in 1805 and 1809, but when he was defeated in the Battle of Leipzig (also known as the Battle of Nations) in 1813 and the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon's younger brother Joseph Bonaparte in Spain, the Viennese people felt their smiles return and a surge of hope rising within them.

As Beethoven premiered Symphony No. 7 in Vienna in 1813 at a charity concert for wounded soldiers, the pride he felt in one of his most popular works echoed the patriotism the audience felt. The same night, Beethoven also premiered his piece Wellington's Victory. Critics and historians note the joy and beauty the pieces brought to that audience and many more audiences in the weeks after the premiere. Whether because of the circumstances or his own personal satisfaction with his work, Symphony No. 7 was an immediate success, and remains so today.

We Recommend...

- Watching the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's performance of Symphony No. 7 here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNnuN8-wlwY>
- Listening to this interview with Conductor Christoph Eschenbach on NPR Music:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5481664>

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64

I. Allegro molto appassionato

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

About this Piece...

So far we have looked at pieces that show pride in the world around us. Let's finish by looking at a piece that makes musicians proud - Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, his last large orchestral work.

Mendelssohn wrote this piece for a friend, Ferdinand David, who was an accomplished violinist and Concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra while Mendelssohn was serving as Music Director. Mendelssohn wrote the concerto over six years with encouragement and advice from Ferdinand David himself. How proud they must have been of the final result when it finally premiered in 1845 with David as soloist.

Mendelssohn made several changes from the traditional concertos of his time to suit his own tastes. His adaptations included starting the first movement with a violin solo instead of the main theme performed by the full orchestra, writing out the solo cadenza (which at that time was usually improvised), and linking the movements together by holding out a single note instead of leaving room for applause. His changes certainly left their mark. Called the “heart’s jewel” by Joseph Joachim and one of Germany’s four notable violin concertos at the time, this piece is still popular and a piece that any aspiring young musician would be proud to perform.

We Recommend...

- Checking out this interesting explanation of the different movements on the “Daily Kos” website:
<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/3/29/1078971/-Thursday-Classical-Music-OPUS-74-Mendelssohn-s-Violin-Concerto-in-E-minor>



See you at the concert!

Sunday, December 18, 4:00 pm

Cary Hall, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington

*Learn more about The Massachusetts Youth
Symphony Project at Powers (MYSP) at:*

<http://www.powersmusic.org/orchestra>