



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY
Classical Series

Sunday, June 20, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Michael Stern, *conductor*

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night),
op. 4 (1943 revision)

The 2020/21 Season is generously sponsored by

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Orchestra Roster

MICHAEL STERN, *Music Director*

JASON SEBER, *David T. Beals III Associate Conductor*

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Sunho Kim, *Acting Concertmaster*

Miller Nichols Chair

Stirling Trent,

Acting Associate Concertmaster

Chiafei Lin,

Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Gregory Sandomirsky ‡,

Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

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Betty Chen

Anthony DeMarco

Susan Goldenberg*

Tomoko Iguchi

Dorris Dai Janssen

Vladimir Rykov

Alex Shum*

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Kristin Velicer, *Acting Associate Principal*

Minhye Helena Choi,

Acting Assistant Principal

Nancy Beckmann

Mary Garcia Grant

Kevin Hao ‡

Kazato Inouye

Rena Ishii

Stephanie Larsen

Francesca Manheim

VIOLAS

Matthew Sinno, *Acting Principal*

Jessica Nance, *Acting Associate Principal*

Duke Lee, *Acting Assistant Principal*

Kent Brauninger

Sean Brumble

Marvin Gruenbaum

Jenifer Houck

Jesse Yukimura

CELLOS

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Robert A. Kipp Chair

Susie Yang, *Associate Principal*

Richard Hill Chair

Alexander East, *Assistant Principal*

Maria Crosby

John Eadie

Lawrence Figg

Rung Lee*

Meredith McCook

Allen Probus

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Jeffrey Kail, *Principal*

Evan Halloin, *Associate Principal*

Brandon Mason ‡

Caleb Quillen

Richard Ryan

Nash Tomey

FLUTES

Michael Gordon, *Principal*

Marylou and John Dodds Turner Chair

Shannon Finney, *Associate Principal*

Kayla Burggraf

PICCOLO

Kayla Burggraf

OBOES

Kristina Fulton, *Principal*

Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair

Alison Chung, *Associate Principal*

CLARINETS

Raymond Santos, *Principal*

Bill and Peggy Lyons Chair

Silvio Guitian, *Associate Principal*

John Klinghammer

E-FLAT CLARINET

Silvio Guitian

BASS CLARINET

John Klinghammer

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Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Chair

Thomas DeWitt, *Associate Principal*

Maxwell Pipinich

CONTRABASSOON

Thomas DeWitt

HORNS

Alberto Suarez, *Principal*

Landon and Sarah Rowland Chair

David Sullivan, *Associate Principal*

Elizabeth Gray

David Gamble

Stephen Multer,

Associate Principal Emeritus

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Julian Kaplan, *Principal*

James B. and Annabel Nutter Chair

Steven Franklin, *Associate Principal*

Brian Rood ‡

TROMBONES

Roger Oyster, *Principal*

Porter Wyatt Henderson,

Associate Principal

Adam Rainey

BASS TROMBONE

Adam Rainey

TUBA

Joe LeFevre, *Principal*

Frank Byrne Chair

TIMPANI

Timothy Jepson, *Principal*

Michael and Susan Newburger Chair

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David Yoon, *Associate Principal*

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Fabrice Curtis

* Non-Rotating Musician

[^] New Member

‡ On Leave of Absence

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG***Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night), op. 4 (1899; revised 1943)****30 minutes**

The composer Arnold Schoenberg is perhaps best known for inventing the twelve-tone technique of composition, exchanging the major and minor scales of tonality for a chromatic scale in which no note holds more importance than any other. But his most-performed work was written more than twenty years before the development of the technique and ten years before his decisive break with tonality in the Second String Quartet.

Verklärte Nacht was composed in 1899, when Schoenberg was 25 years old. He was inspired by a poem of the same name by Richard Dehmel, who had been tried for obscenity and blasphemy upon its publication. (Dehmel was acquitted but only on technical grounds). Schoenberg was also smitten at the time with Mathilde Zemlinsky, his composition teacher's sister. The combination of the composer's strong feelings for Mathilde and the vividly descriptive language of the poem gave birth to a lush and highly imaginative score. Its passionately expressive harmonic language, reminiscent of Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, married to masterful contrapuntal writing and continuous developing variation in the style of Brahms, united two disparate and even opposing schools of German composition.

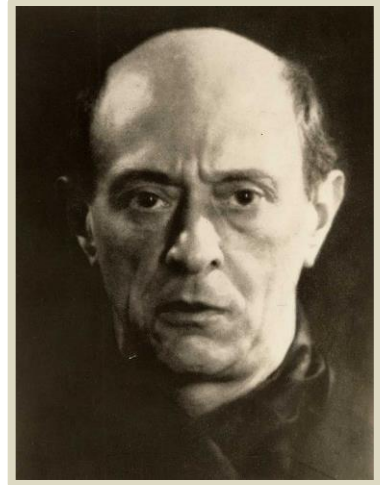
Schoenberg's piece follows the structure of the poem. A man and a woman walk together "through a bare, cold wood." The woman confesses, through plaintive music in the violins, that she is pregnant by another man, seeking fulfillment in motherhood but now feeling punished by fate having met her true love ("Now life has taken its revenge"). After a brief interlude, the man, represented by the cellos, responds in acceptance and love, telling the woman that they will be satisfied in each other and he will raise the child as his own (their love will *verklären*, "transfigure," the child). The lovers embrace as the night is transfigured from a "bare, cold wood" to an "exalted, shining night."

The composition created controversy even before its premiere. Schoenberg submitted it to the Vienna Music Society for performance; the society rejected it because of the poem's subject matter and the adventurous harmonies, particularly an inverted ninth chord with the ninth in the bass that the society condemned as "uncategorizable." Schoenberg later quipped, "Inversions of ninth chords just don't exist; hence, no performance, either, for how can one perform something that does not exist?" When the piece finally received its premiere in 1902, the audience was scandalized. But the poet Dehmel, who was in attendance, later wrote to Schoenberg saying, "I had intended to follow the motives of my text in your composition, but soon forgot to do so, I was so enthralled by the music."

Verklärte Nacht was originally written for string sextet (two violins, two violas, two cellos), and thus was one of the earliest examples of program music (music with an extramusical scenario or story) composed for chamber ensemble. Schoenberg orchestrated the music for string orchestra in 1917, and further revised the score in 1943; this has become the most popular version in performance. *AJH*

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
(1874–1951)

Arnold Schoenberg, one of the most revolutionary composers of the early 20th century, came from rather modest beginnings. His father was a shopkeeper who sold shoes, his mother a piano teacher. Schoenberg was largely self-taught in violin, cello and composition. When his father died in 1890, he took a job as a bank clerk along with occasional work orchestrating operettas, while continuing to compose his own music. He married Mathilde Zemlinsky, his composition teacher's sister, in 1901. His compositions, exhibiting a unique Post-Romantic voice, came to the attention of Richard Strauss, who arranged for him to study at the Stern Conservatory with a stipend, and Gustav Mahler, who adopted him as a protégé and supported him until his own death in 1911.



Arnold Schoenberg
Photo by Man Ray

In the summer of 1908, Mathilde left Schoenberg for an affair with the Austrian painter Richard Gerstl (who committed suicide when Mathilde returned to Schoenberg). During that time, the composer began experimenting with chromatic music that had no reference to a key or tonal center. His Second String Quartet, composed in that year, added a soprano for the third and fourth movements. The fourth movement, Schoenberg later wrote, “begins with an introduction, depicting the departure from earth to another planet ... Becoming relieved from gravitation — passing through clouds into thinner and thinner air, forgetting all the troubles of life on earth — that is attempted to be illustrated in this introduction.” One of the musical illustrations of this theme comes through complex chromatic chords completely disconnected from any sense of tonality. The piece does end on a major triad, but it was to be the last major chord he was to write for years.

Other influential works of Schoenberg's from this period that exhibited a free treatment of notes and chords without a key include the song cycle *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* (The Book of the Hanging Gardens), Five Pieces for Orchestra, and *Pierrot Lunaire*, which, in addition to atonality, used *sprechstimme* (speech-singing) to convey the songs of the sad moonstruck clown. Schoenberg wrote of *Pierrot*, “I sense that I am definitely moving towards a new way of expression. The sounds become a truly animalistic immediate expression of sensual and psychological emotions.”

In 1918 Schoenberg founded the Society for Private Musical Performances with his two most prominent students, Anton Webern and Alban Berg. The Society presented carefully rehearsed performances of contemporary compositions to a private audience “to provide artists and art lovers a true and exact knowledge of modern music.” Any expressions of approval or disapproval, including applause, were prohibited. Over the course of its three-year existence, the Society presented more than 350 performances to its paid members.

Unmoored from tonality, Schoenberg sought a compositional technique that would provide unity and coherence the way tonality had for the past 250 years. In 1921 he announced the development of his “method of composing with twelve tones which are related only with one another.” This method used a unique sequence of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale for each piece, called a “tone row”; the row can be transposed to different pitches and played upside down and backward (or both), but must always complete the full sequence before beginning again. The first piece Schoenberg completed using this method was his Suite for Piano, op. 25. Webern, Berg and Schoenberg’s other students enthusiastically adopted the method, forming what was later dubbed the “Second Viennese School” (the first comprising Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven). Schoenberg made use of this method for the rest of his life for works as varied as his Fourth String Quartet, the orchestral concertos for piano and violin, and the choral work *A Survivor From Warsaw*.

Mathilde died in 1923, and the following year Schoenberg married Gertrud Kolisch, the sister of one of his students. In 1925 he was appointed professor at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin, but was dismissed by the Nazi regime in 1933 as a Jew. Schoenberg had converted to Christianity in the Lutheran church in 1898, but felt the pull of his heritage throughout his life. Just prior to emigrating to the United States in 1933, he formally reclaimed membership in Judaism while living in Paris. He taught at the Malkin Conservatory in Boston before settling in Los Angeles, becoming a professor at both UCLA and USC and receiving American citizenship in 1941. His students in Los Angeles included Otto Klemperer, John Cage and Lou Harrison.

While continuing to compose using the twelve-tone method, Schoenberg also wrote several tonal pieces in the 1930s. He turned to Jewish themes in some of his later compositions, including *Kol Nidre* for chorus and orchestra (1938), *A Survivor From Warsaw* for narrator, men’s chorus and orchestra (1947) and his unfinished opera *Moses und Aron*.

The opera was named *Moses und Aron* rather than *Moses und Aaron* because Schoenberg had triskaidekaphobia, fear of the number 13, and he realized that the title of the work with two A’s in “Aaron” had a total of 13 letters. He feared he would die in a year that was a multiple of 13. He dreaded his 65th birthday in 1939 so much that a friend asked for a horoscope from a noted astrologer, who declared the year was dangerous for Schoenberg but not fatal. In 1950, a different astrologer wrote to Schoenberg warning that his 76th birthday in September of that year was critical, as the sum of 7 and 6 is 13. This revelation, which had never occurred to the composer, left him stunned and depressed. During his final illness in July 1951, he confided to a friend his fear that he would not survive Friday the 13th of that month; indeed, he died on that date, 15 minutes before midnight. **AJH**





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