

Classics 2: Program Notes



Armed Forces Salute

Robert Lowden

Born in Camden, New Jersey, July 23, 1920; died in Medford, New Jersey, October 30, 1998

Composer, music educator, conductor, arranger, and trombonist Robert Lowden played in the Camden High School band and orchestra before studying music at the College of South Jersey. His studies were interrupted by World War II, during which he served as a trombonist and arranger for the 322nd Army Band at Fort Dix. After the war he resumed his studies at Temple University in Philadelphia though he was largely self-taught as an arranger. He taught in the public schools in Camden, New Jersey, and served as an arranger for Johnny Austin, Oscar Dumont, and Claude Thornhill. From 1958 to 1968 Lowden arranged for the 101 Strings Orchestra, receiving credit on their 150 plus popular music and easy-listening albums.

One of the best-known arrangers for big bands, jazz ensembles, and pops orchestras, Lowden also arranged for college and high school ensembles and was in demand as an adjudicator and clinician at festivals and schools. He also composed over 400 advertising jingles, of which the most famous was probably the Melrose Diner jingle “Everybody who knows goes to the Melrose.” In his last years he also worked as an arranger for the Pennsy Pops Orchestra (Norristown, Pennsylvania) and for the Ocean City Pops (Ocean City, New Jersey).

One of Lowden’s most often played arrangements is his stirring tribute to the five principal branches of the United States Armed Forces, which is played for Veteran’s Day concerts and other patriotic events across the country. Lowden begins with snippets of “America the Beautiful,” “Dixie,” and “Yankee Doodle” to introduce the first of his armed forces songs, the U.S. Army’s “The Caisson Song” (words and music by Edmond L. Gruber, later revised by H. W. Arberg as “The Army Goes Rolling Along”).

A bit of “Columbia Gem of the Ocean” brings on the U.S. Coast Guard’s “Semper paratus” (Francis S. van Boskerck)—slow at first, then in march time—followed by the “The Marines’ Hymn: From the Halls of Montezuma” (words: anonymous, some attributed variously to Henry C. Davis, Charles Doyen, and L. Z. Phillips; music based on a melody from Jacques Offenbach’s comic opera *Geneviève de Brabant*). Lowden inserts a fragment of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” to lead into “The U.S. Air Force (The Wild Blue Yonder)” (words and music by Robert Crawford).

Fragments of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” bring on the U.S. Navy’s “Anchors Aweigh” (music by Charles A. Zimmerman; words by Alfred Hart Miles, additional verse by Royal Lovell, revision by George D. Lottman). At the end Lowden cleverly inserts a bit of the “Sailor’s

Hornpipe” before the closing phrase from “America the Beautiful” brings the *Armed Forces Salute* full circle.

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Scored for 2 flutes, doubling piccolo, oboe, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, bassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, chimes, bells (glockenspiel), piano, and strings



D’un matin de printemps (Of a spring morning)

Lili Boulanger

Born in Paris, August 21, 1893; died in Mézy, March 15, 1918

Lili Boulanger, younger sister of Nadia by six years, was extremely gifted musically to the extent that Nadia felt somewhat eclipsed, much as she loved her sister and aided in her musical

education. Together they created quite a stir in many areas of French music that had typically been the domain of men. Their father and grandfather had been professors at the Paris Conservatoire, in which steps Nadia followed, though not without a struggle. Their mother, a Russian countess and singer, oversaw their early musical education but also instilled rigid values in them and rarely praised their achievements.

Before she was three Lili was diagnosed with intestinal tuberculosis (now known as Crohn’s disease). Because of her fragile health, she could not attend school regularly or go to concerts, but she studied with her sister, Paul Vidal, and Georges Caussade. She knew at the age of sixteen that she would be a composer, and at the age of nineteen attracted considerable attention when she won the Premier Grand Prix de Rome for her cantata *Faust et Hélène*. She was the first woman to receive the prize, which only a few years previously had eluded Nadia.

Besides composing, Lili put what energy she could toward helping the families of musicians who had been called into military service with the outbreak of World War I. In July 1917 she was forced by her illness to undergo a serious operation, which left her with only a few months to live. She continued to compose, however, even to her last hours on March 15, 1918, dictating her *Pie Jésus* for voice, harp, organ, and string quartet, note by note to her sister.

Nadia championed the works of her sister all her long life. One of her last projects, during the late winter and spring of 1979, was to prepare seventeen of Lili’s works for republication in order to guarantee her sister’s immortality, correct mistakes of the earlier editions, and insure royalty payments for her principal heirs.

Lili began composing the effervescent *D'un matin de printemps*, originally a violin (or flute) and piano piece, in March 1917 but did not complete the orchestration until 1918. She also fashioned an idiomatic piano trio version. In December 1917 she wrote a melancholy companion piece, *D'un soir triste* (Of a sad evening), which together with *D'un matin de printemps* were the last pieces she completed in her own hand, though Nadia later added some editing details. Both works show a certain debt to mainstream French composers such as Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel, but she was also continuing her quest for innovative harmonic and instrumental colors.

Over scintillating, rhythmic accompaniment, a sunny flute solo brings the spring morning to life in a triple meter dance, joined by other wind solos. More contemplative moments ensue, as in sections of lush string melody or when principal strings alternate in slower versions of the main theme, but the overall effect is one of dancelike luminescence. Boulanger shows a wonderful sense for dramatic buildup and relaxation and her groupings of instrumental colors are inspired. The final section positively shimmers before its climactic harp glissando and emphatic final chord.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

Scored for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, suspended cymbal, snare drum, harp, celesta, and strings

The Blues and Beyond

Chris Brubeck

Born in Los Angeles, March 19, 1952

For Chris Brubeck's biographic information please click on his name under the "guest artist" listing.

Note by the composer:

"The Blues and Beyond premiered in 2008 in Prague, Czech Republic. It was commissioned by The Czech National Symphony Orchestra and dedicated to Jan Hasenöhrl, the CNSO founder and trumpet soloist. Jan wanted to share the stage with me as the other soloist (trombone) to explore a piece that sounded really 'American!' There is actually nothing MORE American than jazz and blues, so my composition leaned in that musical direction.



The blues is a mercurial and powerful force. It can convey profound sorrow and it can also bring "good time" jazz to the heart and lift up the soul. It also is the child of a strange marriage of African and European cultures. Of course, the European culture long has been shaped by the presence and power of the church. Not only as a dominant moral and political force, but the

music itself had a great impact on Africans. When you listen to great and soulful African choirs, you can hear how they adapted and converted this European music. The African's interpretation of church music offers a version with more "soul" than the European composers ever would have imagined.

The "great Amen" chords of those hymns—dominant (V), subdominant (IV), and tonic (I)—are the foundations of chordal harmony and, not coincidentally, also the building blocks of the blues. This piece contrasts the similarities and differences between the blues and its many forms as a jumping-off point for explorations into the orchestral world. This includes the musical mechanisms of "call and response" at the start of the first movement; the somber truths of the second movement; and the jubilant celebration of African polyrhythms in a 5/4 shuffle and a 6/4 section, climaxing in a 3/4 section that is as far from a waltz as you can get but serves as the vehicle driving the piece to its celebratory conclusion.

I constructed the composition to have three distinct movements. The first movement, Hunt of the Souls, is powerful and extroverted with sweeping rhythms and themes. By contrast, the second movement is an expression of an emotion I often feel when I walk into the great old churches and cathedrals of Europe. I feel a tremendous emotional pull from the ghosts of the generations of the faithful who toiled to build their place of holy worship—hence the title Cathedral Blues for this sorrowful and contemplative movement. The third movement, Celebration Jubilation, is in direct contrast to the second and totally illustrates its name.

—Chris Brubeck

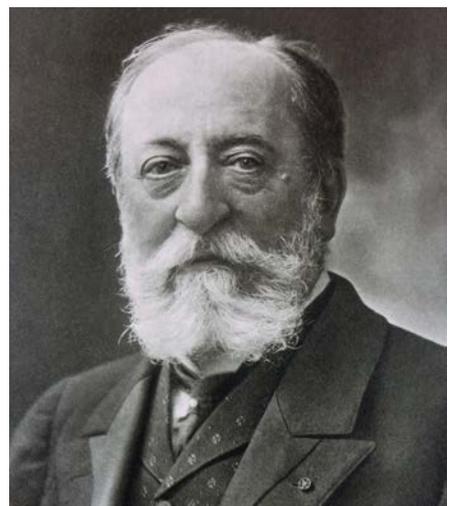
Scored for 2 flutes, 2nd doubling piccolo, 2 oboes, 2nd doubling English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, xylophone, marimba, calabash, slapstick, suspended cymbal, bell tree, ratchet, cowbell, glockenspiel, snare drum, congas, timbales, tubular bells, tenor drum, snap cymbal with soft mallets, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, drum set, piano, organ, electric bass, and strings

Symphony No. 3 in C minor, op. 78, "Organ"

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born in Paris, October 9, 1835; died in Algiers, December 16, 1921

The idea of employing organ so prominently in a symphony may have been a logical one for an organist and composer such as Camille Saint-Saëns but was certainly unusual. Saint-Saëns, who had enjoyed celebrity status in England since the 1870s, knew of the instrument's popularity there and may have decided the commission from the London Philharmonic Society in 1886 was the perfect opportunity to experiment. He may have also been inspired by the organ's role in the symphonic poem



Hunnenschlacht by Franz Liszt, to whose memory Saint-Saëns dedicated the *Organ* Symphony when it was published. His colleague had died on July 31, 1886, after the London premiere in May but before the French premiere in January 1887.

The way in which the commission for the Symphony came about seems astonishingly contrary to current expectations. Initially Saint-Saëns had been invited to appear as piano soloist and conductor. When he proposed a modest fee of forty pounds, the financially challenged Society hoped he would be amenable to a lesser honorarium of thirty pounds if he were also asked to compose a work for the occasion! The offer must have been acceptable to Saint-Saëns, who wrote three months later that the piece was “well under way.” Commenting on the enormous performing forces it would require, he warned: “It will be terrifying.”

It had been twenty-seven years since Saint-Saëns had composed a symphony, but the symphonic medium was enjoying a resurgence in France and he thought the time was ripe for his own contribution. Nevertheless, he felt obliged to write an extended commentary in defense of its adventurous instrumentation—which includes a novel four-hand piano part as well as the organ—and to explain its unconventional approach to form:

This symphony, like the author’s fourth concerto and sonata for piano and violin, is divided into two movements. Nevertheless, it contains, in principle, the four traditional movements; but the first, arrested in development, serves as an introduction to the Adagio, and the Scherzo is linked by the same process to the Finale. The composer has thus sought to avoid the endless repetitions, which more and more tend to disappear from instrumental music under the influence of increasingly developed musical culture.

Thus, where one might expect the recapitulation in the “first movement,” the composer makes a transition to the “second movement,” and instead of a five-part scherzo à la Beethoven or Schumann, Saint-Saëns launches into the finale after the second trio section.

Like Liszt and ensuing generations of French composers, Saint-Saëns was fascinated by cyclicism—the unification of a work by using a motto theme in more than one movement. Saint-Saëns’s agitated main theme, first heard after the slow introduction, reappears in several guises in the Allegro section. Its first four notes correspond with those that begin the *Dies irae* chant from the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass, a motive that had haunted Berlioz and Liszt and would obsess Rachmaninoff in the next century.

Saint-Saëns further transfigures his motto theme in the lush, radiant Adagio, where, he said, it brings “a vague feeling of unrest.” He interposes the motto again following the “energetic” opening of the scherzo, and, after the Maestoso opening of the finale, it returns “completely transformed,” said Saint-Saëns, “stated by the divided strings and the pianoforte and taken up by the organ with all the force of the orchestra.” Reappearing ultimately in the resplendent coda, the motto “takes the form of a violin passage”—the composer’s colossal understatement for the spectacular way in which the motto permeates the entire concluding section.

Countless listeners have been drawn to the lush and radiant “slow movement” (second half of the first movement), immediately recognizable by the serene first entrance of the organ. But the work is remarkable throughout for its variety of texture and masterful handling of the orchestral forces. One might single out the decisive but sparing use of the timpani in the main theme’s first appearance and in the opening gesture of the scherzo, the majestic entrance of the organ signaling the “fourth movement,” or the magical sonority of the divided strings and rippling piano in the ensuing return of the motto.

The *Organ Symphony* was first performed in London’s St. James Hall on May 19, 1886, conducted by the composer after he had appeared on the first half as the soloist in Beethoven’s Fourth Piano Concerto. He was given a rousing ovation and received equal acclaim when the work was first performed in Paris. Charles Gounod was heard to exclaim, “Behold the French Beethoven!” and Gabriel Fauré accurately predicted, “This Symphony will live much longer than us two, even when putting our ages together!”

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

Scored for 3 flutes, 3rd flute doubling piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, triangle, bass drum, organ, piano four hands, and strings