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Ensemble Concerts: Symphony Orchestra, September 25, 2022

Glenn Block Music Director/Conductor

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Illinois State University
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
School of Music

Illinois State University
Symphony Orchestra

Glenn Block, *Music Director and Conductor*

Center for the Performing Arts
September 25, 2022
Sunday Evening
7:00 p.m.

This is the tenth program of the 2022-2023 season.

Program

Please silence all electronic devices for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Overture to *Rienzi* (1840) Richard Wagner
(1813- 1883)
(13 minutes)

Afrikana Aburukusu (2001) Kwasi Aduonum
(born 1939)
(4 minutes)

Concerto for Double Bass (1902) Serge Koussevitzky
(1871-1951)
(18 minutes)
Allegro
Andante
Allegro

Benjamin, De Kock, *double bass*

~ INTERMISSION ~

Symphony No. 4 (1841) Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)
(35 minutes)
Andante con moto - Allegro di molto
Romanza – Andante
Scherzo - Presto
Largo - Finale - Allegro vivace

Next ISU Symphony Orchestra concerts:
October 19 – 20: Chicago area tour
October 30 – Hadyn's *Mass in Time of War* and Block's *Schelomo*

Program Notes

Overture to *Rienzi*

Although it is rarely performed today, *Rienzi* was the greatest popular success of Wagner's career, and the work that made him famous almost literally overnight. *Rienzi* is the only so-called grand opera Wagner ever wrote, and although he may well have succeeded in his attempt "to outdo all previous examples with sumptuous extravagance," even he eventually admitted that the work gave no hint of his ultimate significance as a composer—"...in it there is not yet evident any important instance of the view of art which I later came to assert." In fact, its close proximity to *The Flying Dutchman*—the work which marks the turning point in Wagner's career and strikes out in an entirely different direction—remains one of the mysteries of nineteenth-century music.

Rienzi was Wagner's third completed opera. Based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel, *Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes*, tells the story of a man who rises to power on the strength of his vow to make Rome a great city once again. Wagner began work in the summer of 1838.

The overture captures both the showy orchestral brilliance and melodic splendor of grand opera, and it became a favorite of orchestras long before the opera disappeared from the stage (Wagner himself used to conduct it in concert). The overture begins with a call to arms and ends with a dazzling military march. The slow main theme—drawn from *Rienzi*'s fifth-act prayer—is one of Wagner's most majestic and eloquent melodies, although it is less convincing when speeded up in the overture's rousing *Allegro energico*.

The manuscript for *Rienzi* ended up in the possession of Adolph Hitler and apparently was destroyed in 1945, although Hitler's more decisive contact with the score came as early as 1906 or 1907, when, in one of history's cruelest ironies, he attended a performance of the opera and was transformed by the title character's charismatic leadership, stirring oratory, and sense that he alone could redeem mankind.

Notes by Phillip Huscher

Afrikana Aburukusu

A B U R U K U S U is an appellation for a person who is never shaken up, one who keeps going when everyone gives up, one who moves slowly, but with determination. In Ghanaian Akan language, we say *Aburukusu a woapɔ atete, ɔsen oyoyo*. "The tattered diligent person has more potency than the ordinary one." "Afrikana Aburukusu" reflects the resilience, vitality, and determination that defines Aburukusu. The resilience and vitality are manifested in the layered patterns and sonorous textures, the sudden shifts in dynamics and tempo, repetition, syncopation, and the polyrhythmic and polymetric sensibilities of the piece. The call and response features among the different sections are used to capture the dialogic and communal essence in many cultures in Africa. The accompanying percussion pattern is based on the vivacious *Agbeko* drumming and dance music of the Ewe of Southeastern Ghana. Like all Aduonum's compositions, the piece celebrates the beauty, wealth, and dynamism of African music and cultures through its vibrant melodic and harmonic progressions, layering, and the use of triplets, 6/8, 2/4, 3/4 patterns and rhythmic acuity. Performers and audience are encouraged to engage the music through their minds, bodies, and souls. "The *gankogui* bell is the heart and soul of the piece. Listen to the bell, for grounding."

Notes by the composer

Concerto for Double Bass

Serge Koussevitzky, known primarily to many as the conductor of the Boston Symphony from 1924-1949, began his musical career as a double bass virtuoso in Russia and all over Europe. While he composed a handful of pieces, he did not think of himself as composer. He had to write music for himself as he did not have access to much solo repertoire composed specifically for the

double bass. It was in 1902 that he composed his *Concerto for Double Bass*, which he premiered and toured extensively with great success. Some musicologists and double bassists theorize that Koussevitzky had help composing his concerto by other Russian composers like Reinhold Glière, but his wife, Olga Koussevitzky, is adamant that he composed the piece with no help from other musicians.

This concerto can be thought of as a compact musical idea split into 3 sections A-B-A'. Movements 1 and 2 connect without pause, and the 3rd movement brings back material from the 1st movement, ultimately bringing the piece to an epically climactic close. Koussevitzky's *Concerto* is a *tour de force* for any double bassist.

Notes by Ethan Reed

Symphony No. 4

The compositional arc in Robert Schumann's life was clearly defined and well-ordered. As an aspiring pianist, his first works were understandably pieces – wonderfully imaginative, romantic pieces – for the piano. (Poor Robert, his hope for becoming a great keyboard artist was self-aborted: in an effort to strengthen his fourth fingers through the use of a mechanical contraption of his own design, he permanently damaged his hands irreparably.) The depression, into which he fell as the result of what he considered a devastating blow to his career, was prolonged and painful.

This cloud was lifted in 1840 when, after much parental opposition, he married Clara Wieck, the gifted pianist daughter of his and her piano teacher, Frederick Wieck. (In fairness to him, Herr Wieck, trying to protect his Clara, was well aware of Robert's bouts of drunkenness and of his temperamental instability.) The marriage year became the year of song – some 120 lied for voice and piano came from his pen.

Then he decided to flex his orchestral muscle and he produced a *Symphony in B-flat* that he named "Spring," a splendid *first symphony* with one of the happiest final movements imaginable. Flushed with the major success the work enjoyed in its premiere, Schumann almost immediately produced a *second symphony*, this one in D minor. Unfortunately, lightning did not strike twice and, as the composer wrote to a friend, "The *Second Symphony* did not have the same great acclaim as the *First*. I know it stands in no way behind the *First*, and sooner or later it will make it on its own."

Because of Schumann's procrastination in reworking the composition, however, the *Second Symphony* had to wait until much later – ten years later, in fact – to reach completion, and by then it came to be numbered four. In his final revision of this dramatic work, which is so strikingly the other side of the emotional coin of its near-twin, the "Spring" *Symphony*, Schumann changed the orchestration in many places (i.e., made it heavier through doublings) and, importantly, put into effect his original intention of linking the traditional four movements, thus achieving a stronger unity than was present in the original.

Recycling a composition's basic materials through transformations was not a new concept; Schubert had shown the way in his "Wanderer" *Fantasy* for piano in 1822, and Berlioz worked his wonders with his *idée fixe* in the *Symphonie fantastique* in 1829. Later, Liszt adopted the method with unbridled enthusiasm, and this process of thematic transformation set the pace for the symphonic poems of the later 19th century. The transformation process begins early in Schumann's *D-minor Symphony*, as the first five notes of the introduction are utilized in the main theme of the movement proper, a theme whose restless energy is so typical of the composer's brand of Romanticism, and then used throughout the *symphony* in various rhythmic and melodic guises.

In the course of the fantasia-like first movement, another idea is introduced that also plays an important role in subsequent movements: three emphatic chords followed by a forceful five-note motif. We find them at the beginning of the *Scherzo*, where they are combined with a vital main theme, and at the opening of the rousing finale, to which the first movement's main theme is added as a figure in the bass. Before the *Scherzo*, Schumann devises a piquant slow movement, a

Romanze that presents a new minor-key melody in oboes and cellos, alternating it with the pensive melody of the first movement's introduction, stretching it here as an interlude decorated by a tender violin solo.

The transition to the final movement, so similar to the one that leads into the finale of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, is a clear representation of Schumann's dual personalities first presented as literary figures in his publication *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Journal for Music): Eusebius, the epitome of poetic reticence, and Florestan, with his posturings and bravura flights. Clearly, Florestan prevails in a movement that develops, again like Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* (but without that model's monumental scope), into a major-key affirmation that joyously rejects the *Symphony's* d-minor urgencies.

Notes by Orrin Howard

Biographical Notes

KWASI "MUGAFO" ADUONUM is a retired musicologist, conductor, composer, *ɔkyeɛma* drummer, and orator. He graduated from the University of Michigan with a PhD in Music Education. He is the former director for the Ghana National Symphony Orchestra, and the founder and artistic director for Aburukusu Africkana Orchestra, an integrative arts organization that focused on his compositions. As a composer, Aduonum has over a hundred compositions, including symphonies, operas, marching bands, jazz, highlife, and choral works. His compositions are based on arrangements of Ghanaian *mmoguo* folktale songs, folk songs, and Ghanaian church songs; many are original and inspired by natural disasters, Biblical/scriptural themes, satirical themes, words of wisdom, *ngyegyeso nsisido* polyrhythmic structures, etc. Aduonum's compositions are meant to be performed with vigor, enthusiasm, and light bodily movements, swaying from side to side.

BENJAMIN De KOCK received his bachelor and master's degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music under the instruction of Professor Albert Laszlo, and his doctorate at the University of Colorado at Boulder under Dr. Paul Erhard. He received additional instruction with various faculty at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

As a performer he plays with several orchestras and chamber groups across the United States. He served as principal bass of the San Juan Symphony in Durango Co, principal bass with the Colorado Bach Ensemble, assistant 3rd chair with the Greeley Symphony, section member of the Boulder Philharmonic, is currently assistant principal of the Steamboat Symphony Orchestra, a guest musician with the Charleston Symphony in South Carolina, and a sub with the Colorado Symphony, Colorado Ballet, and Opera Colorado. In the summers Dr. Benjamin subs with the Breckinridge Music Festival, and the Colorado Music Festival.

Dr. Benjamin resides in Illinois and is the Instructional Assistant Professor of Bass at the Illinois State University where he teaches private and studio classes, and various other courses. He also co-teaches with his other fellow string faculty in String Project, a nationally recognized organization that offers string education to children in the community. In the summers he teaches at the Lamont Academy at Denver University, the Rocky Ridge Festival in Estes Park, and the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory in Steamboat Springs.

GLENN BLOCK has served as the Director of Orchestras and Opera and Professor of Conducting at Illinois State University since 1990. In addition, he served as Music Director of the Youth Symphony of Kansas City from 1983-2007. Prior to his appointment at Illinois State in the fall of 1990, Dr. Block served for 15 years as Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri - Kansas City and Music Director of the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, Dr. Block was educated at the Eastman School of Music. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego.

A frequent guest conductor, he has appeared in over 42 states with all-state and professional orchestras. Foreign guest-conducting have included concerts and master classes at the Fontainebleau Conservatoire in France, and concerts in Spain, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic and throughout South America since 2012. He has served on the Boards of Directors for both the Conductors Guild and the Youth Orchestra Division of the American Symphony Orchestra League. The Youth Symphony of Kansas City and Dr. Block made their Carnegie Hall debut in June 1997. Dr. Block has served on the faculty of the National Music Camp at Interlochen as Resident Conductor of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and at the Interlochen Arts Academy as Visiting Conductor. In addition, he has served as Music Director of the Summer Festival Orchestra at the Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado.

He has conducted many of the major orchestras of Argentina: Teatro Colón, Chascomus, Posadas, Salta, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Iguazu International Music Festival; Paraguay: Orquesta Nacional de Paraguay, Camerata Miranda, Orquesta de la Policia Nacional, Orquesta Camera de la Ciudad de Asunción (OCMA); Londrina, Brazil International Music Festival (2019); Guadiagrele, Italy Opera Festival (2019, 2020, 2022); Wuhan, China (2019); Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam National Orchestra of Vietnam (2018). He has led international conducting seminars throughout South America, Asia, and Europe.

This year, he has been invited to serve as Adjunct Professor of Conducting at Illinois Wesleyan University and Interim Music Director of the Illinois Wesleyan Symphony. He returned in the summer of 2022 to guest-conduct orchestras in Argentina (Misiones/Posadas, Mendoza); Asunción, Paraguay (Orquesta of the Universidad de Norte (UniNorte), Orquesta de la Policia Nacional; Orquesta Camera de la Ciudad de Asunción (OCMA) and in Italy.

Illinois State University Symphony Orchestra
Glenn Block, Music Director

VIOLIN I

Gibson Swalley, *concertmaster*
Colleen Loemker
Satomi Radostits
Hannah Appleyard
Blake Bowers
Amanda Tauch

VIOLIN II

Antonia Tapias, *principal*
Mark Moen
Maddy Dunsworth
Lily Ryan
Daniel Blanco
Alejandra Jaramillo
Avery Garcia

VIOLA

Nick McKee, *principal*
Carlos Leon
Shelby Fick
Ulzhan Ydyryssova
Zeph Mussman

CELLO

Gita Srinivasan, *principal*
Joe Brackman
Peyton Miles
Kahauri Givens
Elliot Butler
Isabelle Boike
Paris Roake
Brian Hershey
Ian Crossland
Jenny Komperda
Lily Moen

DOUBLE BASS

Alyssa Trebat, *principal*
Ali Jennings
Laura Velez
Jacob Webber
Andrew Viveros

FLUTE

Rachel Nulf, *co-principal*
Gina Russell, *co-principal*
Christopher Bulding
Kirsten Townander

OBOE

Elli Ji, *principal*
Emma Edwards
Justine Ehee

CLARINET

Alex Jenkins, *co-principal*
Christian Rusinski, *co-principal*
Trent Nolin, *bass clarinet*

BASSOON

Nick Filano, *principal*
Wes Smith

HORN

Nathaniel Parson, *principal*
Keziah Cobden
Scott Whitman
Zhiyuan Gao
Alicia Cruz
Joanna Cieczka

TRUMPET

Jeri Blade, *co-principal*
Katherine Shindledecker, *co-principal*
Ryan Valdivia
Matt Fischer
Milo Johnson

TROMBONE

Joseph Buczko, *principal*
Peyton Gray
Cole Richey

TUBA

Micah Crouse, *principal*

PERCUSSION

Baryl Brandt, *principal*
Braeden Forman
Bailey Graunke
David Norgaard

Katherine Shindledecker, *Graduate Assistant/Manager*
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