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MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Daniela Candillari, Conductor

James C. Harris (MM '23), baritone

Winner of the 2022–23 Eisenberg–Fried Concerto Competition

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2023 | 7:30 PM
THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH



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PROGRAM

ELLEN REID
(b. 1983)

Floodplain

RALPH VAUGHAN
WILLIAMS
(1872–1958)

Five Mystical Songs

Easter

I Got Me Flowers

Love Bade Me Welcome

The Call

Antiphon

Intermission

JEAN SIBELIUS
(1865–1957)

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Allegretto

Tempo andante, ma rubato

Vivacissimo

Finale

MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Daniela Candillari, Conductor

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Carlos Martinez
Arroyo
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Shaker Heights, Ohio

Eugene Liu
Clarksville, Maryland

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Vivian Kao
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* REID

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

† SIBELIUS

*Floodplain**Five Mystical Songs**Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43*

PROGRAM NOTES

Floodplain

Ellen Reid

Self-described as a sound artist as well as a composer, Ellen Reid has been breaking barriers throughout her career's meteoric rise. She had gained early experience as a chorister and pianist, but it wasn't until her freshman year at Columbia University that one of her professors, experimentalist George Lewis, suggested composing. After receiving her Bachelor's degree she taught in Thailand for several years, then earned her Master's degree at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). She has continued to work and make a name for herself in both metropolises.

Among her groundbreaking achievements, Reid received the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for her opera *p r i s m*, based on a libretto by Roxie Perkins that deals with a mother and daughter's relationship after a sexual assault, as they are isolated in a glass cube. The work was premiered by the Los Angeles Opera, making Reid the first composer to have had her works premiered by the four major Los Angeles entities, which include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

Ellen Reid's orchestral works have also been performed by the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, and the American Composers Orchestra, among others. Among her innovative recent projects, Reid created *SOUNDWALK*, a GPS-enabled work of public art with interactive soundscapes that premiered in New York's Central Park in 2020 and has gone on to Los Angeles's Griffith Park, London's Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, and Tokyo's Ueno Park.

Ellen Reid serves as the contemporary music chair of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and is currently the first composer-in-residence with both Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Concert Hall and Concertgebouw Orchestra simultaneously. She has also composed numerous film scores and recently released the album *Isomonstrosity*, an avant-pop exploration with artists Johan Lenox and Yuga Cohler. In another of her glass-ceiling breakers, Reid has also cofounded with composer Missy Mazzoli the nonprofit Luna Composition Lab, a mentorship program for young self-identified female, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming composers.

Reid began composing *Floodplain* early in 2020 but was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. She writes, “Once it became clear that the premiere would need to be moved due to COVID-19, I put the work on the shelf and didn’t look at it for about two years. In the interim, my concepts of unpredictability and the creative fertility found in it were fundamentally reshaped, and *Floodplain* emerged as a wholly different work than the one I had conceived before the pandemic.”

Reid’s conception of a floodplain as “a low-lying area of land near a river whose role changes depending on precipitation and weather” gave her the impetus to explore both its benefits and its potential for disaster. “It can morph from a fertile home for grasses, plant, and animal life to a silty bed for the swollen river. In writing *Floodplain*, I was inspired by this landscape that is both lush and dangerous. Musically, I used a rhythmic figure made of sextuplets, which unifies the work and alternatively propels it in different directions.”

Floodplain is full of water-based images—shimmering tremolos and other oscillations, surges, and releases. Occasional Asian influences mingle with Western washes of sound, and solo cello and violin cadenzas provide commentary. If the piece shows any resolution to the metaphorical stages of drought and flooding that may have come from living through the pandemic, it might be, says Reid, that “I’m learning to trust and make plans again. I think some of those things are certainly somewhere in the work, but it’s not very specific.” Indeed, the work ends in quiet contemplation.

As it happened, the work’s premiere on May 12, 2022, by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra was not led by Jaime Martin, who had been involved in the commission but was stranded with COVID-19. Instead, Stefan Asbury stepped in at the last minute, presenting a moving performance of the work to great acclaim.

Five Mystical Songs **Ralph Vaughan Williams**

In light of the success of two works that established his personal voice—*On Wenlock Edge* (1909) and *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* (1910)—Vaughan Williams was asked to compose a work for the 1911 Festival of Three Choirs in Worcester. The resulting *Five Mystical Songs*, which he had begun earlier, received their first performance that year on September 14 with baritone Campbell McInnes, conducted by the composer. The version on that occasion—for baritone, orchestra, and chorus—is one of many versions that Vaughan Williams

wisely made available, also making the choir optional; the cycle is most frequently performed by baritone alone with orchestra or piano.

Throughout his life Vaughan Williams was inspired by the liturgy and music of the Anglican Church despite his youthful declarations of atheism, which later transformed into what his wife Ursula called “cheerful agnosticism.” She explained more about his attraction to the visionary religious verse of scholar and rector George Herbert (1593–1633) in a program note she wrote in 1969:

Ralph Vaughan Williams’s father was for a time curate at Bemerton, George Herbert’s parish, just outside Salisbury, and then, or after their marriage, he gave Ralph’s mother a copy of Herbert’s poems. So it is quite possible that RVW knew some of these from early childhood, for his mother used to read aloud to her children and her choice was wide: poetry, adventure, fairy tales, and classics had a part in the time they spent with her each day.

In the course of his life, RVW set a number of poems by Herbert and from the earliest to the latest there is a special quality, a belonging, a matching of mood to that of the poet’s, that reminds the listener that Herbert was also a musician. It is as if the tune was implicit in the poem and RVW heard it.

Vaughan Williams chose four poems from Herbert’s collection *The Temple*, published just after the poet’s death in 1633, and split the first into two songs to arrive at his *Five Mystical Songs*. The first, *Easter*, celebrates the resurrection of Christ in rising, impassioned phrases, surging accompaniment, and a seraphic ending.

Throughout Vaughan Williams relies on symbols of the Holy Trinity, which may partially explain his division of the poem into two groups of three verses, as well as three-verse poems for the third and fourth songs. He further sets the fourth song in compound triple meter and the fifth in 3/4 time with three-fold repetitions in the last. *I Got Me Flowers* maintains a slow, tender demeanor of personal reflection until its final grand affirmation.

The third song, *Love Bade Me Welcome*, with its undulating accompaniment and gentle flow reflects introspectively about the poet’s relationship with Love (i.e., God). Toward the end, Vaughan Williams intones the plainchant “O sacrum convivium” (optional wordless chorus or orchestrally) while baritone sings “You must sit down” (invitation to Communion), which rises ethereally into the stratosphere.

Vaughan Williams decided on a simple folklike setting for *The Call*, whose three verses describe Christ's/God's attributes in threes. The composer carefully mirrors Herbert's text repetitions and internal rhythms.

The final song erupts jubilantly—a strong contrast to the primarily introverted preceding songs. Its title, *Antiphon*, refers to verses sung as responsively at certain parts of the service often in response to a psalm. Vaughan Williams based his song on the well-known hymn of praise *Let All the World in Ev'ry Corner Sing, My God and King*, adding to its celebratory nature by imitating pealing church bells in the accompaniment.

In a fascinating little confluence of music history, the orchestra at the premiere was amplified by another outstanding musician, violinist Fritz Kreisler. Vaughan Williams later recalled: “When I looked at the fiddles I thought I was going mad, for I saw what appeared to be Kreisler at a back desk. I got through it somehow, and at the end I whispered to [violinist and friend W. H.] Reed, ‘Am I mad, or did I see Kreisler in the band?’ ‘Oh yes,’ he said, ‘he broke a string and wanted to play it in before the Elgar concerto [next on the program, conducted by Elgar], and couldn’t without being heard in the Cathedral.’”

TEXTS

I. *Easter*

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen.
Sing his praise without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand,
that thou likewise with him may'st rise;
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.
Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part with all thy art.
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name, who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is the best to celebrate this most high day.
Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song pleasant and long;
Or since all musick is but three parts vied and multiplied.
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

2. I Got Me Flowers

I got me flowers to strew thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.
The Sunne arising in the East.
Though he give light, and th'East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.
Can there be any day but this,
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we misse:
There is but one, and that one ever.

3. Love Bade Me Welcome

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back.
Guiltie of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.
A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungrateful? Ah, my deare,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?
Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.
You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

4. *The Call*

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.
Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length:
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.
Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can part:
Such a Heart, as joyes in love.

5. *Antiphon*

Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing:
My God and King.
The heavens are not too high,
His praise may thither flie;
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing:
My God and King.
The Church with psalms must shout,
No doore can keep them out;
But above all, the heart
Must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing:
My God and King.

—From George Herbert's The Temple

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

Jean Sibelius

Sibelius's Second Symphony, associated for so long with the Finnish landscape and even with a specific patriotic program, was a work the composer actually conceived in Italy. Supporter Baron Axel Carpelan, though not wealthy himself, had succeeded in raising enough money to help Sibelius leave his teaching duties for a year to travel and compose. Thus Sibelius and his wife and daughter spent most of the winter of 1900–01 in Rapallo, Italy, where he sketched much of the Symphony. He eventually found it too disruptive going back and forth constantly between the Pension Suisse and his rented study and also wanted the stimulation of artistic life in a big city, so he simply took off one day—alone—for Rome instead, where he was able to be more productive.

Returning to Finland that summer, Sibelius worked on completing the Symphony—an arduous task as it happened. He wrote to Carpelan on June 11, 1901: “I have been in the throes of a bitter struggle with this symphony. Now the picture is clearer and I am now proceeding under full sail.” Further correspondence with Carpelan shows the Symphony to have been near completion at the beginning of November, but extensive revision caused the premiere of the work to be postponed first to January 1902, then to March. Sibelius at last conducted the new Symphony, dedicated to Carpelan in gratitude, on March 8, 1902, in Helsinki. The concert, for which he also quickly composed an Overture in A minor and an Impromptu for women's voices and orchestra, was repeated three times to capacity houses; the new Symphony proved an enormous success. Its acceptance outside Finland came more slowly, but the Second eventually proved to be the composer's most popular symphony.

The Finnish people held onto Sibelius and his music as representative of their national identity, a fact that alternately impeded and inspired the composer. The idea that the Second Symphony, with its heroic “anthem” finale, portrayed Finland's resistance to Russian domination, was first described in an article by conductor Robert Kajanus after the premiere. Georg Schnéevoigt, another conductor who did much for Sibelius's music, perpetuated the myth in notes for a performance he conducted in Boston in the 1930s. Though Sibelius repeatedly denied any such programmatic basis for the Symphony, the notion understandably persisted.

Erik Tawaststjerna, Sibelius's comprehensive biographer, has shown that many of the Symphony's ideas sprang from disparate, apolitical sources. During his Rapallo stay Sibelius considered writing a set of four tone poems, one of which was to treat the story of Don Juan. The main theme of the Symphony's Andante (bassoons, cello/bass pizzicato) he first jotted down for the episode of Don Juan's Stone Guest. While in Florence two months later, Sibelius considered setting part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. A sketch marked "Christus" later became the tranquil F-sharp major theme in the Andante. His wife Aino revealed that he wrote the Finale's lamenting wind figure over scale patterns in memory of his sister-in-law, Elli Järnefelt, who had taken her own life. The main theme of the Finale's coda occurred to him while he was officiating as pianist at a christening in 1899 in the exotic Karelian home of painter Gallén-Kallela. Sibelius was reported to have stood up suddenly and said, "Now I will show you what impression this room makes on me, its basic mood."

The Second Symphony follows the standard symphonic four-movement sequence and employs traditional forms for the individual movements, yet Sibelius's technique of presenting fragments that evolve into themes led early commentator Cecil Gray to describe the first movement as "a veritable revolution . . . the introduction of an entirely new principle into symphonic form." Distinguished commentator Gerald Abraham has pointed out, however, that even this technique had been used by Borodin almost forty years earlier. Nonetheless, Sibelius's ingenuity can be measured by the fact that though experts agree that he employed sonata form here, they disagree considerably on the numbering and labeling of themes. Sibelius's particular strength lies in his manipulation of the traditional form combined with the organic growth and dovetailing of his themes. Of particular interest is the opening stepwise three-note ascent, which he inverts for the main theme and reuses in many guises throughout the work. Another Sibelius trademark, the falling fifth, appears in the theme at the Poco allegro, which has been variously labeled as the second or third theme group, and reappears in each movement.

Sibelius thought of the form of the Andante in terms of a Classic slow-movement sonata form, that is, with a section presenting the main themes (exposition) and its return (recapitulation), without an intervening development section. With its dramatic unfolding and highly contrasting thematic groups, this second movement gives a first-movement impression.

The fiery scherzo links without pause to the Finale in the manner of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Twice in the scherzo, as in Beethoven's Seventh, Sibelius interposes his contrasting trio section, with its famous oboe solo growing out of nine repeated B-flats. But here, instead of leading to a third repetition of the scherzo, the music serves as a dramatic transition to the Finale. The rising three-note idea, already present in the trio, becomes more prominent in the transition, directly begetting the Finale's main theme. In the Finale's coda, the three-note motive "one ups" itself by rising triumphantly another level.

—*Program notes* ©Jane Vial Jaffe

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Daniela Candillari, Conductor

Conductor Daniela Candillari brings her “confidence and apparently inexhaustible verve” (*New York Times*) to opera houses and concert stages throughout North America and internationally. Recognized for her “powerful and breathtaking performances” (*Review STL*) and “fine combination of fire and attention to detail” (*KDHX*), she enters her third season as both Principal Conductor at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Principal Opera Conductor at Music Academy of the West.

After Summer 2023 performances of *Tosca* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, four separate programs with Classical Tahoe, and *La bohème* with Music Academy, Candillari’s 2023–24 season opens with the world premiere of composer Rene Orth and librettist Hannah Moscovitch’s *10 Days in a Madhouse* at Opera Philadelphia, where she makes her company debut. The production stars Kiera Duffy as trailblazing reporter Nellie Bly, plus Raehann Bryce-Davis and Will Liverman. Immediately following, Candillari conducts the world premiere of Jeanine Tesori’s *Grounded* with Washington National Opera at The Kennedy Center. With a libretto based on the stage play by George Brant, *Grounded* is commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and stars Emily D’Angelo.

Candillari’s season continues with her return to Arizona Opera for *Don Giovanni*, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for *Julius Caesar* and *Center Stage*, plus appearances at Yale School of Music for Stravinsky’s *A Rake’s Progress*, Music Academy for Bizet’s *Carmen*, and Manhattan School of Music.

As a composer, Candillari has been commissioned by established artists including instrumentalists from the Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh Symphonies, as well as the three resident orchestras of Lincoln Center: the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the New York City Ballet. An avid educator, she is deeply involved with Music Academy’s programming for young artists and has recently participated in master classes and discussions at DePaul University, Chicago Humanities Festival, and Valissima Institute.

Daniela Candillari grew up in Serbia and Slovenia. She holds a Doctorate in musicology from the Universität für Musik in Vienna, a Master of Music degree in jazz studies from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and a Master’s and Bachelor’s degree in piano performance from the Universität für Musik in Graz. A Fulbright Scholarship recipient, she was also awarded a TED Fellowship.

James C. Harris (MM '23), baritone

James C. Harris is a versatile singer and actor based in New York City. He holds a BM from Westminster Choir College and an MM from Manhattan School of Music, both in voice performance. Recent opera credits include *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Angélique*, and *Orpheus in the Underworld* at MSM, as well as engagements with Spoleto Festival USA, Opera Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. No stranger to the New York stage, James was seen off Broadway in the premiere of *Audrey: The New Musical* at the Players Theatre, *Secret of the Possible* at the 14th Street Y Theatre, and concerts at 54 Below, among other credits. Upcoming projects include the New York premiere of *An American Soldier* in the Perelman Performing Arts Center's inaugural season. James is the winner of the 2023 Eisenberg-Fried Concerto Competition, an Encouragement Award winner in the Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition, a finalist for the 2023 Respighi Prize in Performance, and second-place winner of the 2020 National NATS competition. He is also a proud member of the Actors' Equity Association and the American Guild of Musical Artists.

jamescharris.net

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