



Mission Chamber Orchestra of San José

27th Season

Ardent Echoes

Saturday, December 2, 2023

7:30 PM

Hammer Theatre Center
San Jose, California

Program

A Downland Suite for String Orchestra

John Ireland

- II. *Elegy*
- III. Minuet

with Pioneer H.S. musicians

Egmont Overture, op. 84

Ludwig van Beethoven

Double Percussion Concerto

Nick DiBerardino

California premiere

- I. **Molto Allegro**
- II. **Poco meno mosso**
- III. **Presto**

arx duo, percussion
Garrett Arney and Sijia Huang

- Intermission -

Symphony No. 4, op. 120

Robert Schumann

- I. **Ziemlich langsam - Lebhaft**
- II. **Romanze: Ziemlich langsam**
- III. **Scherzo: Lebhaft**
- IV. **Langsam - Lebhaft**

No still or video photography is permitted during the performance.

A Message from our Board

Would you like to help the Mission Chamber Orchestra of San José by volunteering your time? Looking to grow or use your leadership skills to enhance your resume? The Santa Clara Valley Performing Arts Association Board of Directors, responsible for the MCOSJ, is looking for a few good people interested in helping this musical community organization dedicated to artistic excellence! In particular, the board needs people with financial or marketing experience.

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1. Donate online at the MCOSJ website: www.missionchamber.org
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Mission Chamber Orchestra of San José

James Beauton, Guest Conductor

Violin I

Geoff Noer, concertmaster
Monte Benaresh
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Tomomi Matsumoto
Mary Lou Meeks

Violin II

Anne Spector, principal
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Jerry Yen

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Goetz Leonhardt, principal
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Pragathi Venkatesh

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Emily Petersen

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Lynne Burstein

Horn

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Brian Holmes, co-principal
Kathryn Crandell
Jeanette Levinson

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Tim Bacon, principal
Fred Munic

Tenor trombone

Randy Chase, principal
Ken Rydeen

Bass trombone

Steve Barnhill

Timpani

Stuart Langsam

Percussion

Zubin Hathi

Harp

Ruthanne Adams- Martinez

Pioneer High School Chamber Orchestra

Special thanks to music instructor Lara Levy!

Violin 1

Erik Franquez
Matt Coelho
Carlotta Laudani
Adam Tavares

Violin 2

Connor Pham
Dylan Jue
Sofia Guzman
Mairead Mullin
Montse Aguirre
Abigail Carreno

Viola

Mason Jones
Elizabeth Mercado
Jessica Potter
Ashley Duenhauer
Chris Ahn
Veer Tomar
Talya Boulos
Derek Wang
Curtis Ison
Tressa Riggioni
Tessa Camama

Cello

Mateo Gutierrez
Natalie Yao
Rishi Shah
Asha Farsi
Jason Borges
Naomi Mulfinger
Frank Chen

Bass

Keagan Anders
Kaushal Anand

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About the Guest Conductor



James Beauton

Conductor and Percussionist

James Beauton is currently the Director of Orchestra and Classical Music Studies at the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts in San Francisco. He began his conducting career in 2017 as director of the UC San Diego Wind Ensemble, where he led the group through a wide range of repertoire, including several

world premieres. Beauton emerged on the orchestral podium in 2019, conducting a performance of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* with the Villa Musica Summer Orchestra in San Diego. Shortly following, he became assistant conductor of the Coachella Valley Symphony, a position that included directing the Buddy Rogers Youth Symphony. James was also director of the Mt. San Jacinto College Concert Band and founded and conducted the Villa Musica Chamber Players in San Diego. The 2023-24 season will be James' first as Music Director of the Winchester Orchestra of San Jose. 2022-23 was James' inaugural season with the Ruth Asawa SOTA Orchestra, featuring debut performances of Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9*, Debussy's *La Mer*, and Mozart's *Requiem in D minor*. 2023-24 guest conducting highlights include the California premiere of Nick DiBerardino's *Double Percussion Concerto* with Mission Chamber Orchestra of San Jose, and a performance of the *Lord of the Rings Symphony* with the Villa Musica Summer Orchestra in San Diego. In a workshop setting, James has conducted the Chamber Orchestra of New York, in which he learned from maestros John Farrer, Dirk Brossé, and Edward Cumming. He has also worked closely with maestro Neil Thompson and Dr. Scott Weiss at the Los Angeles Conducting Workshop and Competition, where

he was selected as a finalist both in 2022 and 2023. As a concert percussionist, James was the grand prize winner of the 2012 Southern California International Marimba Competition, and performed as a member of Steven Schick's renowned percussion ensemble, red fish blue fish, from 2015-2020. As a soloist, James has performed some of the most demanding music in the percussion repertoire, including works of Stockhausen, Lachenmann, Manoury, Xenakis, Donatoni, Ferneyhough, and Grisey, among others, and has been a concerto soloist with the Michigan State University Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras, the Contemporary Chamber Players, and at the Stony Brook Day of Percussion. As a chamber musician, he has performed as a part of Monday Evening Concerts and the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Noon To Midnight Festival and is a founding member of the percussion trio Tala Rasa, which has commissioned several composers, including Alejandro Vinao. James earned his Doctorate in Contemporary Music Performance from UC San Diego, a Masters in Percussion from SUNY Stony Brook, and a Bachelor of Music from Michigan State University.

Equipped with a mastery of the percussion repertoire, a theoretical background in media theory, and a robust practical application of recording technology, James' scholarly work includes a published dissertation that explores the symbiotic connection of classical musicians and 21st century life. James is a Yamaha Performing Artist.

About the Artists



arx duo

Garrett Arney and Sijia Huang are *arx duo*, dedicated to the expansion of the percussion chamber music repertoire through the creation and presentation of new works, the educating and inspiring of young artists, and exciting performances inviting audiences to engage with new works and artists from all over the world. They have had premiere

performances throughout the globe, conducted workshops on three continents, and worked with a variety of composers and artists to bring new creations to life for communities everywhere.

Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the duo had given their Royal Albert Hall Debut in London with British Composer of the Year (2018) Dominic Murcott's "Harmonic Canon". They were also scheduled to have their Carnegie Hall Debut in April of 2020. Through the pandemic, the group has continued to commission and workshop new pieces with composers, and engage with students and audiences across the globe. Honing their recording skills, they have released numerous videos and full online concerts, and were preparing to release their first album in the spring of 2022, through a residency with Jack Straw Artists in Seattle.

With a repertoire ranging from established masters to today's newest compositional voices, *arx duo* has worked closely with composers such as Jonathan Bailey Holland, Ted Hearne, Steven Mackey, Juri Seo, and many more. They have worked with and performed with renowned chamber ensembles such as the Dover String Quartet, Aeolus String Quartet, Bergamot String

Quartet, Amy Yang, Henry Kramer, The Percussion Collective - Robert van Sice, among many others.

As educators, *arx duo* has held guest positions at Peabody Conservatory, Michigan State University, and are currently faculty at Curtis Institute of Music Young Artist Summer Program. They've also given masterclasses to young musicians on three continents, including many locations in the States. Mari and Garrett have also given residencies (both in person and virtual) for the composition departments of Princeton, Boston Conservatory, and have more in the coming seasons.

The name "*arx duo*" comes from the artists' desire to forge new connections and artistic pathways or "arcs" within the genre, expanding the opportunities for their music to reach new audiences.

www.missionchamber.org

Mark your calendars!

Upcoming Mission Chamber Orchestra 2024 concerts:

Celebration of Italian Musical Heritage Sunday, Jan. 28, 3:00PM
Italian American Heritage Foundation, 425 N. 4th St., San Jose
Emily Ray, guest conductor

Symphonies and Memories Saturday, Feb. 24, 7:30PM
Hammer Theatre Center, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose
Thomas Shoebottom, guest conductor

Illumination Saturday, May 11, 7:30PM
De Anza College Visual and Performing Arts Center, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd.,
Cupertino
Anthony Rivera, guest conductor

Program Notes

Notes on the program from the conductor

This program combines some of my favorite things: making music with friends (old and new), filling a stage with percussion instruments, youth education in the arts, and of course, Beethoven! The program begins with two movements of John Ireland's *A Downland Suite for Strings*, a truly beautiful and moving work. In addition to the orchestra's string section, it will feature members of the Pioneer High School Chamber Orchestra. Following a quick set change, the winds and percussion will join the orchestra for Beethoven's heroic *Egmont Overture*. We will ramp up the intensity with the California premiere of Nick Diberardino's *Double Percussion Concerto*, featuring longtime collaborative friends *arx duo*, and culminate with Robert Schumann's *Symphony No. 4*.

The Gist of It

Like any great symphony, a concert program needs thematic material. While it's not the main event, the music of Beethoven is this evening's connecting thread. The composer's triumphant spirit embodies the concept of what we could call an ardent echo; a powerful, musical signature that reaches and resonates through generations of music. Here's how each piece tonight connects with the music of Beethoven.

- 1. *A Downland Suite* – John Ireland:** A composer who epitomizes English classical music (ironically belying his surname). Beethoven echoes through this composer in Ireland's penchant for pastoral sound and use of harmony. I also see Ireland as a perfect example of "know the rules before you break them." His extensive technical knowledge and application of musical theory allows Ireland to break traditions of harmonic function and phrasing into absolute smithereens, yielding inventive and exciting musical harmonies. Fellow rule-breaker Beethoven would have approved.
- 2. *Egmont Overture* – Ludwig van Beethoven:** The man. The myth. The musician that brought us here. This piece truly embodies the spirit of Beethoven—unrelenting spirit, phenomenal artistry, the courage to break through physical and musical limitations to create a piece that evokes some of the deepest, truest parts of being human. I could go on, (and do below).

- 3. *Double Percussion Concerto* — Nick DiBerardino:** This piece is our most contemporary echo. Influenced by Beethoven's musical signatures, DiBerardino creates a captivating contemporary work with all the drama of beloved classical masterpieces. You'll find the composer's own words in the In-Depth section below. And you'll find the composer himself in the audience (be sure to say hello).

 - 4. *Symphony No. 4* — Robert Schumann:** It's hard to overstate the influence Beethoven had over this composer. After all, Schumann helped build monuments to Beethoven (no hyperbole here, just Google 'Beethoven Monument.')
- Like Beethoven's works, Schumann's compositions conveyed the rich, complex, and sometimes deeply sorrowful interior world of the composer's psyche. Beethoven's musical patterns certainly echo through Schumann's work, but I like to think there's an echo right back from Schumann to Beethoven that whispers, *I feel it, too.*

The In-Depth Stuff

Just like the composers on our program, I too enjoy breaking tradition. But if it's not broken, don't fix it! Below is more context on the music you'll be hearing tonight, in a more or less traditional format.

***A Downland Suite* for String Orchestra John Ireland (1879-1962)**



Like Edward Elgar or Benjamin Britten, John Ireland's music is quintessentially English. It is music for the countryside, where the prevalence of pastoral life and traditional folk tunes serve as a major inspiration for its composers. Tonight you will hear the two middle movements from his *A Downland Suite* for Strings, the *Elegy* and the Minuet.

Ireland has an elegant control over harmony and form, which is particularly evident in the *Elegy*, the first selection heard this evening. Beautifully rising and falling melodies are stretched out over rich, dense harmony. This

is made possible through the liberal use of *divisi* throughout the movement. *Divisi* is a musical term that divides up the musicians so they read from the same musical staff but perform different pitches. In the case for us tonight, the 1st violins, 2nd violins, and cellos are in two part *divisi*—so instead of five possible “voices,” or musical lines (1st violin, 2nd violin, viola, cello, contrabass), the *divisi* allows Ireland to utilize eight. Thus, more harmonic possibilities yields a more dense harmonic backdrop.

But Ireland also understood the power of contrast. There is a brief middle section where the *divisi* is abandoned and the musicians play a new melody all together. The shift between the previous dense harmony and this new, passionate melody grounds the *Elegy* with a certain weight that makes it a heart-wrenchingly beautiful movement.

Next, we have the Minuet. Measured and metered, prim and proper, the “sophisticated” English sound is astutely personified in the Minuet movement. The Minuet form comes from what was originally an aristocratic social dance that originated in 17th century France. It is a triple meter dance with a moderate tempo—like a waltz but slower. Likely because of its popularity, classical composers started integrating it into their compositions, especially string quartets and symphonies. This eventually evolved into the much faster and playful *scherzo* style (of which Beethoven gets a lot of the credit for doing), but many composers still use the Minuet form in their works.

Though faster, Ireland’s Minuet has a similar structure to that of the *Elegy*—phrases that follow the pattern of A - B - A. Here, Ireland utilizes a stark contrast between the sections by exploring a darker, minor key during the middle B section, a very nontypical approach to the form. (This B section is called the trio, because at this point in the traditional Minuet, only three instruments would play). The choice of Ireland, in 1932, to include a Minuet in his *Downland Suite* shows the influence of the Baroque and Early Classical periods in his composition.

The incredible thing about this music is that we don’t need to get into the theoretical weeds of what makes something sound “pastoral” (if a tree falls in the forest, is it a dominant or tonic chord?...or something like that). We just have to listen, and our ears take care of the rest.

***Egmont* Overture, op. 84**
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



I'll admit, it's hard to write a program note about Beethoven—what is there to say that hasn't been said already?

Of course, I can speak to the background on this particular piece. Like how the *Egmont* Overture was written as incidental music to the Goethe play of the same name, and that it follows the journey to martyrdom of the historical Count Egmont that sparked the Dutch revolution against Spanish oppression. Or, I can mention Beethoven's control of form and how he

seamlessly weaves the slow introduction, a middle *scherzo*, and final *allegro* into a cohesive story that compliments Goethe oh so well. I could also go into how Beethoven's mastery of composition so effectively depicts the allegorical nature of the play—the fight against tyranny, the overcoming of oppression, and the quest for individualism. These may not seem like concepts one can hear in music, but when you listen for it...it's there (trust me).

But at the end of the day, when I think about what makes this composer truly worth talking about, it's the way Beethoven infused himself into the music. Listening to Beethoven, you can hear the tenacity of his spirit, centuries out of time. An unyielding, unflinching force of sheer artistic will. Where triumph over oppression is not only possible, it's guaranteed. Beethoven's music is about transcending limitation, no matter the struggle. We can hear in Beethoven's music someone facing the terror of deafness, the frustrations of life, and the anguish of losing connection with art altogether. But he persisted, and composed an extraordinary body of work up to the end of his life, that continues to echo throughout time to this day.

Double Percussion Concerto
Nick DiBerardino (b. 1989)



Program note from the composer:

My *Double Percussion Concerto* for *arx duo* has been a dream project for many years. I have known *arx* for almost a decade and love many things about them: the energy in their playing, their infectiously engaging personalities, and their habit of imagining percussion instruments as seamlessly integrated members of the orchestra. Above all, I admire *arx* for their commitment to drawing together everyone in the room – for their desire to engage with as many communities as possible in their music-making,

which is a passion we share. My concerto is inspired by all these qualities.

I wanted to deliver the goods in this music, leaning into some of the things percussion does best. This music grooves, pulses, and above all, dances. There are moments of rhythmic trickery in this piece that were influenced by my favorite contemporary dance music—work by composers like Anna Meredith and Squarepusher. The rhythmic language in these passages trades on expectation and surprise, emphasizing repeated patterns before subverting expectations.

I think of this piece as a syncopated, slithering way for the orchestra to move together with the percussion soloists. That idea of togetherness is centrally important to the piece. Rather than engage with the traditional soloist vs. orchestra dynamic of a typical concerto, I imagined this work as a concerto for percussion duo and orchestra, with both parties working together.

The phasing section of this piece captures that kind of virtuosity: it foregrounds the artistry of how two musicians interact with one another, and with the orchestra, rather than emphasizing their technical ability as solo players.

For a percussion concerto, this piece is also very much obsessed with pitch. In that domain, my Double Percussion Concerto has an especially close kinship with Beethoven. Love him or hate him, it's undeniable that Beethoven's favorite musical patterns have influenced composers for centuries. I suppose I'm now joining those ranks, except that in this piece I've worked towards an aesthetic that twists Beethoven's turns of phrase. This concerto is partly comprised of stolen elements of Beethoven's vocabulary, ones that have been distorted into somewhat deranged progressions that I think sound fresh. They certainly make me smile, and I hope they'll do the same for you.

--Nick DiBerardino

Symphony No. 4, op. 120 **Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**



If there's one thing to listen for in Robert Schumann's 4th symphony, it's the diversity of character that Schumann displays with his compositional voice. Every second of the symphony depicts some part of the composer; his mental state, his tinnitus, his love for his wife Clara, or his various literary personas. Originally written in 1841, *Symphony No. 4* was heavily revised by Schumann a decade

later. The 1851 revision—which we'll be performing tonight—gave way to a darker, brooding intensity throughout the piece. That's not to say there aren't moments of brightness or joy. Schumann's *Symphony No. 4* gives voice to the composer's internal struggle. It is in D minor, after all—the saddest of all the keys.

In addition to composing, Schumann was also a literary writer and founded the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, (translation: *New Journal of Music*) a critical literary journal on new music of the time. Schumann was in his late 20's then, so much of the writing was really him just getting his feelings out. Schumann would often sign his articles under different pseudonyms. His most common bylines were Florestan, the recent Prince of Monaco and Eusebius, an ancient Greek philosopher. The alter egos of composers could be written about for decades. But maybe, by writing from these different characters,

Schumann sought perspective. So naturally, this approach comes out in his music, especially his revised 4th Symphony heard tonight. It is personified by a richness of musical characters—some joyful, some brooding, some sorrowful, some romantic, that can at times seem manic.

We must remember, this is 1851, so any provocative rule-breaking was still done within the confines of tradition. The symphony contains four movements: the first movement opens with a slow introduction before entering into the standard, faster Sonata form (like the A - B - A form from above but more complicated). The second movement is a slow, lilting *Romanze*. A *Scherzo*-like minuet form (thanks, Beethoven) for the third movement precedes a joyous and energetic fourth movement, which closes out the symphony.

However, with Schumann's twist:

The slow, haunting melody of the introduction is tinged by a sustained unison pitch spread throughout the orchestra. This has been said to represent the composer's tinnitus, or the ringing in the ears that occurs when experiencing hearing damage. I'd like to point out that programmatic music—music that represents the physical world—was still a new concept being explored (a little credit here goes to Beethoven, *again*). The haunting melody of the slow introduction returns in the second movement, almost as an homage between the reserved opening theme played by solo cello with oboe and the free, bubbly second theme played by solo violin. The third movement comes in two contrasting sections: a heavy, grimacing *scherzo* with a swoony, smitten trio section—“*scherzo*” literally means “joke” in Italian, offering further depth to Schumann's choice of musical character here. Playing with the Minuet form a bit, Schumann winds down the end of the third movement in tempo, but leaves anticipation in the harmony. Without realizing it, we've transitioned to the slow introduction of the fourth movement (the contrabass section slyly triggers this transition with their *pizzicato*, or plucked strings). The anticipation remains, but builds in intensity with thematic quotes from the first movement and culminates with an epic brass chorale of trumpets, french horns, and trombones. One final hurrah, and then the *finale* movement wraps up the whole symphonic experience. But perhaps the most stark break from tradition is the fact that each of the movements are to be performed *attacca*, or without pause (so no need to be concerned about clapping in the incorrect spot!)

Acknowledgements

(Donations received December 1, 2022 - December 2, 2023)

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