

~ The Apollo Ensemble Presents ~
“Poetry and Music”

The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Elias Miller, Conductor



Violin I

Minchae Kim (Concertmaster)
Lynn Giam
Nelli Herskovits-Jabotinsky
Thomas Collum
Amanda Grohowski
Ruta Nikitska

Viola

Ken Allen (Principal)
Arjun Mudan
Stephen Jue
Joyce Huang^ω
Jeff Bigler
Nickleotte Cartales

Violin II

Dorisiya Yosifova (Principal)
Meghan Titzer
Yoko Nakatani
Regina Cheung
Christopher Goessling

Cello

Marc Pasciucoo (Principal)
Haeju Song
Iverson Eliopoulos^δ
Timothy Paek

Harp

Lizary Rodríguez

Bass

Nathan Haggett (Principal)
Martha Davis

^ω – Principal Viola II (Schoenberg)

^δ – Principal Cello II (Schoenberg)

The Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Elias Miller, Conductor

Saturday, 19 September 2020 at 8:00PM

First Baptist Church of Medford – Medford, MA

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~ Program ~

Adagio for Strings	Samuel Barber (1910 – 1981)
The Dream Deferred	Evan Williams (b. 1988)
Where Springs Not Fail	Hanna Benn
Verklärte Nacht 1917 Version for String Orchestra	Arnold Schoenberg (1874 – 1951)

~ Notes ~

Barber:

Barber began work on his String Quartet Op. 11 in the summer of 1936 while living in Austria with his partner Gian Carlo Menotti. At the age of 26, the young Barber was already world-renowned. Since his days as a student at the Curtis Institute, he had already written a string of successful compositions, and, only the previous year, he had won both the prestigious Prix de Rome competition and a Pulitzer travel fellowship. Taking Virgil's *Georgics* as his inspiration, Barber crafted a work in three contrasting movements to be performed by the Curtis String Quartet on their tour that fall. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in completing the piece in time for its intended performances. On September 19th he wrote the quartet's cellist saying, "I have just finished the slow movement... it's a knockout! Now for a finale." The work was not premiered until that December.

While working on the quartet, Barber also completed an arrangement of its second movement for string orchestra, and, when he received a request from Arturo Toscanini for new works in 1937, it was this arrangement along with his *First Essay for Orchestra* that he sent the famed conductor. To Barber's dismay, Toscanini did not reply for a full year and then returned the scores without comment. Barber had already begun to look for other orchestras to perform his works when he received word through Menotti that Toscanini was planning to perform both pieces and had merely returned the scores because he had already memorized them. True to his word, Toscanini premiered the works in November of 1938 with the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a live radio broadcast from Studio 8H (most famous today for housing Saturday Night Live) in New York City's Rockefeller Center.

Barber's *Adagio* went on to become his most played and most recognizable work. Radio stations across the country broadcast the piece after President Roosevelt's death in 1945, and since then, live performances and television and radio broadcasts of the work have been organized following significant tragedies like President Kennedy's assassination, the September 11th attacks, and the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting. The piece has also carried on a life in popular culture and has been featured in famous movies (*Platoon*, *El Norte*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, and *Elephant Man*), songs (Sean "Diddy" Comb's *I'll be Missing U* and Tiesto's *Adagio for Strings*), and much more.

It is no exaggeration to say that Barber's *Adagio* has become inextricably tied to tragedy in our collective modern consciousness. We offer our performance of the work today in remembrance of the many whom we have lost to COVID-19 during the past year.

- Elias Miller

Williams:

(Note from the Composer)

The Dream Deferred was commissioned by the activist orchestra, The Dream Unfinished for their 2017 season "Raise Your Hand," which draws attention to the school-to-prison pipeline. The title of the work and its movements are inspired by the Langston Hughes poem "Harlem" in which he asks, "What happens to a dream deferred?"

The school-to-prison pipeline is a prime example of a dream deferred. Young children of color, especially Black and Latino males, are promised a good education, thus enabling them to succeed in society. Instead, they are often labeled as "aggressive," "thugs," and "super-predators," are subject to disproportionate policing of their communities as their white schoolmates, and receive harsher sentencing as well. Thus the dream of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" is deferred and denied.

Throughout the poem, Hughes asks various questions concerning the fate of the dream deferred: "does it dry up," "or fester like a sore," "or crust and sugar over," "or does it explode?" This angry explosion of frustration and pain begins the work, while the despair of the dried up dream ends it.

Melodies written by students of the Corona Youth Music Project, UpBeat NYC, Washington Heights Inwood Music Project, and the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's were incorporated into this work.

- Evan Williams

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

- Langston Hughes

Benn:

(Note from the Composer)

Where springs not fail is a tone poem, portraying the Gerard Manley Hopkins work "Heaven-Haven".

- Hanna Benn

Heaven-Haven

A nun takes the veil

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins

Schoenberg:

While Schoenberg is perhaps most famous for his promotion of atonal music and for his development of a system of 12-tone serialism, his early output was a great deal closer in style to the hyperchromatic music of later 19th century composers like Liszt, Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss. Nowhere were Schoenberg's compositional roots in the music of the so-called "New German School" clearer than in his programmatic 1899 work for string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht*.

Working with Richard Dehmel's 1896 poem by the same title and clearly enthralled by its narrative arc from forgiveness to acceptance, and ultimately to joy, Schoenberg drew on his then newfound love for Mathilde Zemlinsky (his teacher's daughter) in creating a lush and even decadent tone poem. Schoenberg's romantic treatment of a text that seemed to condone and perhaps even glorify premarital sex was met with a good deal of controversy at the turn of the 20th century in Vienna. On top of the poem's subject matter, there was also the issue of the composer's somewhat liberal use of harmony. At times, Schoenberg seemed to almost flaunt the rules of tonality, weaving into post-tonal spaces and constructing harmonies that outraged the more conservative members of the Viennese public. (Of particular note was Schoenberg's use of the dominant ninth chord set in its fourth inversion in several of the work's climactic moments. Dubbed the "Verklärte Nacht Chord," the Vienna Music Society called the harmony "uncategorizable," singling it out as one of the reasons they had refused to perform the work. Schoenberg later joked, "inversions of ninth chords just do not exist; hence, no performance, either, for how can one perform something that does not exist.") Even Schoenberg's teacher, Alexander von Zemlinsky, complained that the work's harmonies were too dense and brooding and that the piece owed too much to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

While the work is undoubtedly tonal in its overall composition and does contain a great deal of chromatic moves lifted almost directly from Wagner, it is in its more extended and atonal harmonies and progressions that Schoenberg showcased his originality and gave us a taste for how he would later expand and eventually explode the system of tonality that had characterized Western art music for so long.

Today, *Verklärte Nacht* is Schoenberg's most frequently performed piece. Wagnerian in its harmonies and Mahlerian in its virtuosity, it is not a coincidence that modern audiences are so attracted to the work. The composer arranged the piece for string orchestra in 1917 (this is the version

we will perform today), and then edited it again for a 1943 edition. Upon hearing the piece, the poet Dehmel remarked, "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." Whether or not you attempt to follow the narrative in the music, we are sure you will enjoy the work.

- Elias Miller

Transfigured Night

Two people are walking through a bare, cold wood;
the moon keeps pace with them and draws their gaze.
The moon moves along above tall oak trees,
there is no wisp of cloud to obscure the radiance
to which the black, jagged tips reach up.
A woman's voice speaks:

"I am carrying a child, and not by you.
I am walking here with you in a state of sin.
I have offended grievously against myself.
I despaired of happiness,
and yet I still felt a grievous longing
for life's fullness, for a mother's joys

and duties; and so I sinned,
and so I yielded, shuddering, my sex
to the embrace of a stranger,
and even thought myself blessed.
Now life has taken its revenge,
and I have met you, met you."

She walks on, stumbling.
She looks up; the moon keeps pace.
Her dark gaze drowns in light.
A man's voice speaks:

"Do not let the child you have conceived
be a burden on your soul.
Look, how brightly the universe shines!
Splendour falls on everything around,

you are voyaging with me on a cold sea,
but there is the glow of an inner warmth
from you in me, from me in you.

That warmth will transfigure the stranger's child,
and you bear it me, begot by me.
You have transfused me with splendour,
you have made a child of me.”
He puts an arm about her strong hips.
Their breath embraces in the air.
Two people walk on through the high, bright night.

- Richard Dehmel
- English translation by Mary Whittall

~ Biographical Notes ~

Conductor of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston:

Music director of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston since 2018, **Elias Miller** has established a reputation as one of Boston's leading young conductors and orchestra builders. During the past year, Miller also served as assistant conductor for both Opera Saratoga and the University of Michigan Campus Symphony Orchestra and led performances with a range of additional ensembles including the University of Michigan Philharmonia and Symphony orchestras, the Weston Wind Quintet & Friends, and the Harvard Early Music Society (HEMS). An active conductor of opera and oratorio, Miller conducted several important premieres of works with HEMS between 2016 and 2019. These productions included the Boston premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Alcide al Bivio* in collaboration with the Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, the North American premiere of Telemann's 1745 *Johannespassion*, a production that featured famed countertenor Charles Humphries and earned Miller an enthusiastic preview in the Boston Globe, and the North American premiere of J.A. Hasse's *Sanctus Petrus et Sancta Maria Magdalena*. Miller has also conducted performances of operas by Gluck, Stravinsky, William Grant Still, and Gilbert & Sullivan. Other ensembles he has conducted in the past include the University of Michigan Campus Philharmonia Orchestra, the Ann Arbor Camerata, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra Chamber Players, the Chromos Collaborative Orchestra, the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players, and Harvard College Opera. Miller has also served as the assistant conductor of the Boston Chamber Symphony.

A distinguished pianist and cellist, Miller holds degrees from Harvard University (B.A. *summa cum laude* in music) and the University of Michigan (M.M. in orchestral conducting). Miller's past conducting teachers include his father, David Alan Miller, conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra, Kenneth Kiesler, director of orchestras at the University of Michigan, and Federico Cortese, conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. Miller is excited to begin a postgraduate diploma with Mark Stringer in Vienna this year at the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien.

Cofounder of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston

Michael Tabak studied flute, theory, and ensemble at the Juilliard School of Music Preparatory Division where he was rated “Exceptional” by the woodwind faculty jury and was principal flute and soloist multiple times with the orchestra. He has been principal flute of orchestras including the National High School Symphony at Interlochen, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Fine Arts Symphony, the Boston Chamber Symphony, the Apollo Ensemble of Boston, and others. An avid chamber musician, he is a founding member of the Weston Wind Quintet (<https://wwqboston.org/>), the Atrium Winds, and the Aujourd’hui Ensemble. He has displayed a talent for assembling orchestras and chamber music groups from scratch. While in high school, he organized and was flutist of the Long Island Wind Quintet, whose oboist became principal oboe of the Munich Philharmonic and whose clarinetist became principal clarinet of the Atlanta Symphony. He recruited the members of the Boston Chamber Symphony from its inception in 2012 through 2016, and has recruited the members of the Apollo Ensemble of Boston since its inception in 2018. He often expands his chamber music groups to play pieces for larger ensembles. Live recordings of many of those concerts are available, free of charge at <https://soundcloud.com/wwq/sets>.

Composer (*The Dream Deferred*):

The music of **Evan Williams** has been performed and commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra, Quince Ensemble, and by members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the International Contemporary Ensemble, and Fifth House Ensemble. He has received performances at festivals such as RED NOTE, the New Music Gathering, SEAMUS, the Electroacoustic Barn Dance, and the New York City Electronic Music Festival. His work can be found on recordings by The Namaste Ensemble’s “No Borders Quartet” and Levels.

Williams has received a number of awards and honors, including serving as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s inaugural Classical Roots Composer-in-Residence in 2018. Williams holds a DMA in Composition with a cognate in Orchestral Conducting from the College-Conservatory of Music

at the University of Cincinnati, where he served as a teaching assistant in electronic music. He also holds degrees from Bowling Green State University and Lawrence University.

As a conductor, Williams leads the Rhodes College Orchestra, and has led performances with the Lawrence University Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble, numerous chamber ensembles, and members of the International Contemporary Ensemble. He also trained at the Bard Conductors Institute and the Band Conducting and Pedagogy Clinic at the University of Michigan.

Williams serves as Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Instrumental Activities at Rhodes College, where he teaches composition, music technology, and leads the Rhodes Orchestra. He previously held teaching positions at Lawrence University, Bennington College, and at the Walden School.

Composer (*Where Springs Fail*):

A composer, vocalist, and genre-spanning collaborator, **Hanna Benn** has been creating music for over a decade. Her multi-disciplinary approach has incorporated dance, opera, and theater — submerging boundaries and discovering new sonic landscapes in the process.

With origins rooted in gospel and choral music, Benn began exploring music as both an intimate and collective experience at an early age. Her influences soon included Stravinsky, English pastoral music, R&B, Alice Coltrane, and Olivier Messiaen.

Benn studied composition and voice at Cornish College of the Arts and has been composing ever since. While in Seattle, she co-founded an experimental pop band called Pollens. She has worked with CMF Festival Orchestra, Saint Helen’s String Quartet, Seattle Chamber Players, St. Marks Cathedral Choir, Opus 7, and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

She released her debut EP *DIVIDE* in 2018, a resolute four-song collection which *Pitchfork* praised as “luminous chamber pop.” Her other work includes writing and recording on Son Lux’s *Bones* album and touring with Boots (who has produced Beyoncé, FKA Twigs, and Run the Jewels). Her commissioned work and compositions have been performed across the country, from a five-hour immersive opera and dance performance in collaboration with Alice Gosti and the Northwest Symphony Orchestra to a

composition celebrating Black American composers with Davida Ingram and the North Chamber Orchestra. She was recently commissioned by the Liquid Music Series to present a new work with percussionist Deantoni Parks. *Procession* explored the spiritual and emotional core of ceremonial music in the form of a song cycle, with new arrangements by Benn featuring her ethereal vocal textures elevated by electronic flourishes, and anchored by Park's ceaselessly kinetic rhythms alongside a string quintet.

Benn's voice carries with it the crispness of cathedral tones — the sensuality of her sacred sonic corpus mixes with a clarity that rushes ambiguity out through the stained glass windows. She is able to take clearly delineated genres, deconstruct them, and then unify them in her work — creating pieces that are simultaneously accessible and profound, elevated and organic, sacred and common.

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Sincerely,
Dorisiya Yosifova

Founder & Artistic Director Maud Powell String Institute
Principal Second Violinist Apollo Ensemble of Boston

A Note of Thanks~

Rev. Matt Rasure and the First Baptist Church of Medford, for the use of the lower hall as a rehearsal space and concert venue and for their continued support and generosity

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Ken Allen, for the use of his garden as a rehearsal space

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Dorisiya Yosifova for her administrative help

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Program Template:

Nicolas Sterner

