

MENDELSSOHN CLUB

O P H I L A D E L P H I A

Alan Harler, Artistic Director
John French, Associate Conductor

PROGRAM

Requiem, Op. 9 Maurice Duruflé

- I. Introit
- II. Kyrie
- III. Domine Jesu Christe
- IV. Sanctus
- V. Pie Jesu
- VI. Agnus Dei
- VII. Lux æterna
- VIII. Libera me
- IX. In Paradisum

Kurt Ollmann, baritone
Jazimina MacNeil, mezzo-soprano

Alan Harler, conductor

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia
Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia
Alan Morrison, organ

Choruses from The Lark Leonard Bernstein

Connecting Scenes for The Lark Michael Moore

1. Prelude
2. Spring Song
3. Court Song
4. Benedictus
5. Soldier's Song
6. Requiem
7. Gloria

Bryan DeSilva, countertenor
Maura Caldwell, soprano

Alan Harler, conductor

Cast

Narrator	Kurt Ollmann
Joan, the Maid	Maura Caldwell
Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick	David Simpson
Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais	Donald St. Pierre
Charles Valois, the Dauphin	Frank Van Atta
Duke de la Tremouille, advisor to Charles	Michael Schaedle
First Soldier	Ian Highcock
Second Soldier	Nicholas Vitovitch

Rain Sequence Rollo Dilworth
premiere

1. In Time of Silver Rain
2. When Storms Arise
3. Didn't It Rain

Kurt Ollmann, baritone
Jazimina MacNeil, mezzo-soprano
Rollo Dilworth, conductor
Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia
Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia
Donald St. Pierre, piano

Sunday, February 27, 2011
4:00 pm
First Baptist Church
Philadelphia

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Rain Sequence was commissioned in part by Mark and Maxine Pinzur in honor of Mr. Pinzur's forty years of singing with Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia.

Special thanks to The College of New Jersey College Chorale and their conductor, John Leonard, Director of Choirs, for their assistance in the production of this concert.

Some musical scores for this concert were generously provided by the Bagaduce Music Lending Library and the Esther Boyer College of Music of Temple University.

The use of recording or photographic equipment during this concert is strictly prohibited. Please turn off audible cell phones and alarms.

PROGRAM NOTES

The audience inCHOIRing is the final and most ambitious program in Mendelssohn Club's season-long exploration of audience engagement. Each of the three works presented today provides opportunities for audience participation. The audience will learn some of the Gregorian chants that Duruflé used as the basis of his magnificent *Requiem*. Leonard Bernstein's *Choruses from The Lark* will be presented with short connecting dramatic scenes designed to place the music into its original context, and the audience will have a role in this little play. Finally, the audience will participate in the premiere of Rollo Dilworth's *Rain Sequence*, humming *Amazing Grace* as a counter-melody to one movement and providing percussive rain sounds in another movement.

As a boy, Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) studied at the Rouen Cathedral choir school until he was sixteen before moving to Paris to study organ with Charles Tournemire and Louis Vierne, two of France's premier organists. He entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he proved to be an outstanding student and performer, systematically winning first prizes in composition, harmony, organ, accompaniment and counterpoint. After graduation he briefly served as Vierne's assistant at Notre Dame until he was offered the post of organist at St. Étienne-du-Mond, a position he held for the rest of his playing career. Duruflé was a brilliant organist who had an extensive performing career. He premiered Poulenc's *Organ Concerto* in 1939 and advised the composer on registrations. He joined the faculty of the Conservatoire in 1942, where he served as professor of harmony. Between his demanding concert and teaching schedule and his self-critical nature, he only composed about a dozen works. A serious automobile accident in 1975 ended his performing career. He never fully recovered from his injuries and died in 1986.



Growing up in the Rouen Cathedral choir, Duruflé was immersed in Gregorian chant, and he frequently used it as the basis of his later compositions. Chant, or plainsong, derives from the earliest music of the Catholic church and was used for the liturgical texts in the celebration of the mass and the divine office, prayers said daily by priests. Chant is monophonic, i.e. having a single vocal line, and is sung without harmonization or accompaniment. The underlying text was the most important element in chant. Rather than having a fixed metrical pattern to which the text was fit, chant was sung in continuous phrases, with inflections reflecting the natural phrasing of the text. There was generally one note per syllable, but important words or syllables were emphasized by being stretched over multiple notes, called melismas. The uneven length of the lines of text coupled to the regular pronunciation of Latin words produces the characteristic irregular cadence of chant and provides a strong motive force that propels the music forward.

By the sixteenth century the more complex polyphonic music of composers like Palestrina had almost completely supplanted chant in the liturgy.

Gregorian chant languished until 1827, when a young priest named Prosper Guéranger raised sufficient money to purchase an abandoned monastery at Solesmes, where he intended to revive the Benedictine monastic way of life. A key goal was restoration of Gregorian chant, and the monks at Solesmes began an immense scholarly effort to recover and collect manuscripts, re-discover the authentic performance practices and reintroduce chant into the liturgy.

Duruflé was working on a set of organ pieces based on the Gregorian chants for the requiem mass when he was asked by his publisher to provide a *Requiem*. He adapted and enlarged this earlier work, completing the *Requiem* in 1947. In 1961, he rescored the work for small orchestra, which is the version performed in this concert. Concerning the *Requiem*, Duruflé wrote,

“This *Requiem* is entirely composed on the Gregorian themes of the Mass for the Dead. Sometimes the musical text was completely respected, the orchestral part intervening only to support or comment on it; sometimes I was simply inspired by it or left it completely, for example in certain developments suggested by the Latin text, notably in the *Domine Jesu Christe*, the *Sanctus* and the *Libera*. In general, I have sought above all to enter into the characteristic style of the Gregorian themes. Therefore, I have done my best to reconcile, as far as possible, Gregorian rhythm as it has been established by the Benedictines of Solesmes with the demands of modern meter...

“As for the musical form of each of these pieces, it is generally inspired by the same form presented in the liturgy. The organ’s role is merely episodic: it intervenes, not to support the chorus, but solely to underline certain accents or to replace temporarily the sonorities of the orchestra which sound all too human. It represents the idea of peace, of faith and hope.”

Duruflé used a number of techniques in setting the Gregorian chant. He often begins a vocal line on an off beat or with a syncopation, and he continually changes the meter from measure to measure, all of which diffuses the “strong beat-weak beat” feeling of strict metrical music. He often contrasts word accents and musical accents. Some chant melodies are harmonized; others are presented as canons, and some are given countermelodies.

The most recognizable part of the requiem mass is surely the *Sequence*, whose *Dies iræ* text presents such graphic images of the end of the world and the last judgment. Liturgically, it serves as a reminder about the transitory nature of earthly existence. Musically, it offers a rare opportunity for musical drama. Perhaps that is why the requiem appealed so strongly to opera composers like Berlioz, Mozart and Verdi. It was Fauré who broke with tradition and composed a liturgical requiem that omitted the *Sequence* entirely, concentrating instead on consolation and acceptance rather than on dramatic content. Duruflé followed Fauré’s model closely, setting and omitting the same text and even assigning solos to the same movements. The resulting works, however, are quite different.

The *Introit* opens with a murmuring in the strings like flowing water, giving the feeling that the listener has come upon a work already in progress. The chant is initially presented by the men's voices with the women offering a wordless countermelody. The *Introit* flows seamlessly into the *Kyrie*, where the chant is presented as a canon, joined by the trumpet playing a beautiful chorale-like melody.

The *Offertory* unfolds in short episodes. It opens with the chant melody, but moves away from chant for the most dramatic music of the *Requiem*, with repeated exhortations to "deliver us from the lion's mouth" and the wonderfully dissonant phrase "cast us not into darkness." The mood calms as the text changes to one of more reassurance, entreating God to remember his promise of deliverance made to Abraham and his descendants, ending with a beautiful duet in the women's voices.

The *Sanctus* again opens with the chant music, beautifully harmonized. The hosannas are set as a long processional, punctuated by the march-like beat of the timpani and building in intensity to a huge climax. The *Sanctus* ends quietly as the women's voices return to the chant melody. The *Pie Jesu* may be the emotional high point of the *Requiem*. Set for mezzo-soprano solo, it demonstrates the wonderful possibilities for harmonization that Gregorian melody can provide.

The *Agnus Dei* opens with the chant in the vocal line and a lush countermelody in the orchestra. It ends with a beautiful harmonization of the final phrase "grant them rest," using a whole tone cadence which is loosely derived from chant. The *Lux aeterna* opens with a melody adapted from the chant in the orchestra, which is then picked up by the soprano line, with the other voices providing a wordless accompaniment as in the opening *Introit*. The movement ends with unison voices singing on a single pitch, set over moving, lullaby-like block chords in the orchestra.

The *Libera me* is traditionally sung after the mass as the casket is sprinkled with holy water before being taken out of the church. It returns to the *Dies irae* text briefly, but the overall mood is one of supplication. As in the *Offertory* Duruflé breaks this section into short vignettes of contrasting mood. And like Fauré, Duruflé divides this text between baritone solo and chorus. The *Requiem* ends with *In Paradisum*, traditionally sung at graveside. It opens softly with an angelic chorus of sopranos, moving to a divisi chorus of slightly dissonant chords, ending quietly on the text "may they have eternal rest."

Jean Anouilh's play *L'Alouette (The Lark)* was written in 1952. He used the story of the trial of Joan of Arc to explore the intersection where faith and political reality and pragmatism meet head on, and took a number of liberties with her story in the process. Much of the play takes place in flashback, which allows him to bring characters together who would never have met in real life. And at the end of the play, Joan is saved from being burned at the stake when her judges realize that her story would not be complete unless she also was allowed to relive the coronation of the Dauphin Charles as King of France, which was her great accomplishment, and the play ends with Joan's ultimate fate unresolved.

The American playwright Lillian Hellman prepared an adaptation of *The Lark* for a Broadway production in 1955. The play premiered with an all-star cast including Julie Harris, Christopher Plummer, Boris Karloff and Theodore Bikel. Hellman turned to Leonard Bernstein to provide incidental music for the play in the form of eight short choruses, originally performed by a septet of solo voices, one per part. Bernstein at that time was heavily involved in the theatre. He had already written the musicals *On the Town* and *Wonderful Town*, and was working simultaneously on *West Side Story* and *Candide*, the latter also a collaboration with Lillian Hellman.

Bernstein provided a score with a decidedly medieval flavor, even incorporating period French songs. The music is highly rhythmic and accompanied only by percussion. Some sections are polyphonic, with complex overlapping melodies, and some sections are constructed on open fifths, like medieval organum. But the music is also infused with Bernstein's very contemporary, jazz-inspired harmonies, and there is a distinct Ivesian flavor as well, with polytonal chords and sets of overlapping fifths to produce rich chord clusters. Each of the choruses is associated with a particular scene in the play, and Bernstein carefully selected text taken from Latin mass parts as well as medieval French songs to suggest the appropriate mood and feeling. The *Prelude*, for example, with its Latin text "O Lord, hear my prayer,...have mercy on me" leads directly into the opening trial scene. Sometimes Bernstein provides a subtle contrast. The *Spring Song*, which leads into Joan's recollection of her rural childhood, is light and bouncy, with a simple, straightforward melody and text (Behold, spring is come; God be praised.) The *Court Song*, based on a rondeau by the 13th century troubador Adam de la Halle, is written in a much more florid, even affected, style, and features a rather more adult text (Take care, husband, for I have a new lover...who serves me night and day.)



Bernstein's songs did not just set the mood for the subsequent scenes; they also had an important structural role in the production. Hellman had adopted Anouilh's rather minimalist staging, and there were no sets, just a screen or cyclorama behind the stage on which images could be projected to suggest the setting. Hellman used Bernstein's songs, along with changes in lighting and the position of the actors, to help indicate a change in scene, or to represent actions, like Joan's burning, which takes place off stage.

In concert, the *Choruses from The Lark* are often presented out of their original order, and certainly without their original context. For this concert, we have tried to provide the context for the pieces by adding short dramatic scenes which link the pieces together. The scenes were designed to provide a continuous story line in abbreviated form, and to capture both the mood and concept of Hellman's play without actually quoting from it. And as part of our experiment in audience engagement, some of the action moves through the audience, and the audience has been given a speaking role as well.

Composer Rollo Dilworth is an active conductor, educator, and clinician who has taught choral music at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. He is a contributing author for the Essential Elements for Choir textbook series, published by the Hal Leonard Corporation/Glencoe Publications, and for *Music Express!* teachers magazine. His research interests are in the areas of African-American music and music education curriculum and instruction. Dr. Dilworth is an award-winning composer, his choral compositions being part of the Henry Leck Choral Series published with Hal Leonard Corporation and Colla Voce Music Company. His performing endeavors have taken him to Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Dilworth currently serves as Associate Professor of Choral Music Education at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music.



The composer has provided the following notes: "*Rain Sequence* is comprised of three movements: *In Time of Silver Rain*, *When Storms Arise*, and *Didn't It Rain*. The work was commissioned by Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia as part of organization's focused commitment to encouraging the audience to participate in the music-making process during its performances.

"The first movement, *In Time of Silver Rain*, is based on a Langston Hughes (1902-1967) poem that bears the same title. The first stanza of the poem is sung by the baritone soloist and then repeated with harmonic support by the chorus. The bridge section features call and response patterns between upper and lower voices ("the butterflies lift silken wings to catch a rainbow cry, and trees put forth new leaves to sing in joy beneath the sky"). In the latter portion of the movement, a layered gospel-style chorus commences as the sopranos sing the concluding text of the poem ("In time of silver rain when spring and life are new").

"The title of second movement, *When Storms Arise*, is taken from the first line of a poem entitled *Hymn* by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). The notion that Dunbar himself fashioned the text in a strophic, hymn-like structure was an inspiration to use a well-known American hymn tune (*Amazing Grace*) as a motivic thread that would run throughout the movement. The tune is first introduced by the mezzo-soprano soloist, then it is handed to the audience to hum as the choir sings a vocal-jazz inspired hymn using the Dunbar text.

"The third movement, *Didn't It Rain*, is based on the traditional African American spiritual that is narrative in its design. It depicts the story of Noah and the flood. After the baritone soloist introduces the chorus of the spiritual, the SATB choir responds with a harmonized version. The audience gets the opportunity to participate in this gospel-style by making percussive rain sounds during the 2-measure breaks of the closing section."

– Michael Moore