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Arapahoe Philharmonic to Debut New Orchestral Work Composed in Response to Gun Violence in Colorado

March Concert Features Instrument of Hope, Created After Parkland Shooting, and a Performance by Concerto Competition Winner Ethan Blake

Littleton CO – The Arapahoe Philharmonic’s March 27 concert will premiere an original composition by award-winning composer Jack Frerer, written in response to gun violence in Colorado.

Frerer won the orchestra’s Vincent C. LaGuardia, Jr. Composition Competition last season and was named composer-in-residence. His arrival in Denver to accept the award in May 2019 coincided with the day of the STEM School Highlands Ranch shooting.

Being in a community where this type of trauma was happening was a new experience for him, one that impacted him deeply. He was inspired to focus a new composition on “the landscape of Colorado gun violence through the varying perspectives of students, those who have aged beyond the classroom, and a community who love and are loved by students.”

Titled splinter, Frerer’s composition incorporates a libretto written by Denver youth poet laureate Xuan Chi Sullivan, who is now pursuing a graduate degree in play-writing at Columbia University in New York, and sung by baritone Luke Sutliff, also a Colorado-born artist and a Juilliard graduate. Both Sullivan and Sutliff have also been touched by the now-generational nature of gun violence in the state they love. Sullivan calls the libretto they wrote their “love song for Colorado, the heart of Colorado.”

The Philharmonic has secured the Instrument of Hope, a trumpet crafted from bullet casings by Shine MSD, Inc., a nonprofit started by student survivors of the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida. Arapahoe Philharmonic Principal Trumpeter Anthony Zator will play it for the premier of splinter. This is the Instrument of Hope’s first visit to Colorado.

Frerer’s music and Sullivan’s words are meant to give the audience an opportunity to reflect and mourn, both individually and together, rather than as a political statement. “We need to talk to each other to figure this out,” said Sullivan. “What’s needed is empathy and compassion, neighbor to neighbor.” Added Sutliff, “To
bring something meaningful to the state I love, it’s bringing something about home, home. This means more than any other performance I’ve been a part of.”

Devin Patrick Hughes, Arapahoe Philharmonic’s music director and conductor, agrees with Frerer in the view of the orchestra as “a global model of cooperation,” and emphasizes the potential for that model as a path toward solving problems like violence in a community.

Frerer has composed a chamber version of splinter for piano, voice and trumpet that will be performed in schools and as community outreach the week of the concert.

The March 27 concert, called “Apotheosis of the Dance,” will also feature music by Ludwig van Beethoven and Ernest Bloch, with cellist Ethan Blake, winner of the 2019-2020 T. Gordon Parks Concerto Competition, performing his Schelomo: Rhapsodie Hébraïque.

Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony is known for its joyful dance-like character with its dotted rhythms and buoyant melodies. One admirer, Richard Wagner, called it the “apotheosis of the dance.” The second Allegretto movement of the symphony, more brooding than the other movements, is perhaps one of the most popular orchestral compositions Beethoven wrote, often performed as a stand-alone piece and influencing composers that came after such as Shubert, Mendelssohn and Berlioz.

Schelomo: Rhapsodie Hébraïque is the final work in Bloch’s Jewish Cycle comprising five compositions. Schelomo was originally intended to be a vocal work, but Bloch was so impressed by the skill of Russian cellist Alexandre Barjansky and the lyrical vocal quality of the cello’s sound that he gave the voice of King Solomon to the cello. Ethan Blake, currently working toward his bachelor’s degree in cello performance at CU Boulder, will perform the concerto as part of his first prize award in this year’s Arapahoe Philharmonic’s concerto competition sponsored by Universal Music Company in Thornton.

Concert details:
- Date: Friday, March 27, 2020, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
- Location: Denver First Church of the Nazarene, 3800 E. Hampden Ave., Cherry Hills Village, CO 80113
- Tickets are available online at https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/event/concert-5-apotheosis-of-the-dance/, by phone at 303-781-1892, or at the door starting at 6:30 p.m.

Program:
- Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- Jack Frerer: splinter (World Premier Commission), featuring baritone Luke Sutliff and text by Xuan Chi Sullivan

For a video of Jack Frerer and Xuan Chi Sullivan talking about splinter, and biographies of the artists: https://www.arapahoe-phil.org/event/concert-5-apotheosis-of-the-dance/
For more information on the Instrument of Hope: https://instrumentofhope.org/

For a music video featuring the Instrument of Hope:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ICYPQ4Q81c&feature=youtu.be

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