

## Illuminations of Genius

February 26, 2011, 7:00 PM, Broadmoor Community Church

February 27, 2011, 2:30 PM, First Christian Church

Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)

Les Illuminations, op. 18

- I. Fanfare
- II. Villes
- IIIa. Phrase
- IIIb. Antique
- IV. Royauté
- V. Marine
- VI. Interlude
- VII. Being Beauteous
- VIII. Parade
- IX. Départ

*Movements played without pause.*

Marlissa Hudson, soprano

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in E Minor, op. 64

- I. Allegro molto appassionato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto non troppo; Allegro molto vivace

*Movements played without pause.*

Desiree Cedeno-Suarez, violin

### INTERMISSION

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K.441 "Jupiter"

- I. Allegro vivace
- I. Andante cantabile
- II. Menuetto: Allegretto
- III. Molto allegro

*If wind and water could write music, it would sound like Ben's.*—Yehudi Menuhin, renowned violinist and conductor

Born in Lowestoft on November 22, 1913, **Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976) was heavily influenced by his mother, an amateur musician and vocalist, in his early years. Recognizing his talent, his mother took him to study with composer Frank Bridge, who exposed him to the music of Berg, Schoenberg and Bartók and helped him secure admission to the Royal College of Music. After graduating, Britten composed scores for the Post Office film unit, working on several innovative documentaries and honing his craft in the fast-paced pressures of film-making. It was during this period that he met poet W.H. Auden, whose works would provide text for many of Britten's vocal pieces. Auden would immigrate to the United States in 1939; Britten and his longtime companion Peter Pears would follow and spend three years in the U.S. It was during this critical period that Britten broke away from smaller works to write two of his most significant large-scale pieces: *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1940) and the operetta *Paul Bunyan* (1941) on a text by Auden. Despite these successes, Britten found himself longing for England and returned home in 1942, bursting into a new phase of productivity that included *A Ceremony of Carols* and *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*. 1945 brought a major success with the opera *Peter Grimes*, based on a text by George Crabbe, which firmly put Britten on the musical map in England and won him recognition overseas. At the time, England had only two established opera companies and the challenges of getting a full-scale opera performed moved Britten to found his own opera company, the English Opera Group, and focus on chamber opera instead. In 1948, he founded the Aldeburgh Festival, maintaining it largely to feature his own works. Now firmly established, Britten was able to be more outspoken in his graceful navigation of social commentary, producing some of his most poignant works, including the *War Requiem* and *Death in Venice*. In 1976, Britten accepted the royal honor of a life peerage—the first musician to be so honored—but died in December of that year from heart disease.

One of Britten's earliest major works, **Les Illuminations** was written in 1939, setting to music eight ethereal (and often erotic) poems of revolutionary French poet Arthur Rimbaud. The poems were originally considered so risqué that many French composers had declined to set them to music. The cycle takes the listener to an elusive world where the mythical god Pan exists alongside modern cities. The piece takes an almost neo-Classical approach, with lean textures and an economy of writing reminiscent of Mozart or neo-Classical Stravinsky. The piece is equally effective sung by a tenor (Peter Pears performed the piece many times and recorded it) or with a soprano, as it was first premiered by (and dedicated to) soprano Sophie Wyss.

#### **Les Illuminations**

##### Fanfare

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

##### Villes

Ce sont des villes! C'est un peuple pour qui se sont montés ces Alleghenys et ces Libans de rêve! Des chalets de cristal et de bois se meuvent sur des rails et des poulies invisibles. Les vieux cratères ceints de colosses et de palmiers de cuivre rugissent mélodieusement dans les feux... Des cortèges de Mabs en robes rouges, opalines, montent des ravines. Là-haut, les pieds dans la cascade et les ronces, les cerfs tettent Diane. Les Bacchantes des banlieues sanglotent et la lune brûle et hurle. Vénus entre dans les cavernes des forgerons et des ermites. Des groupes de beffrois chantent les idées des peuples. Des châteaux bâtis en os sort la musique inconnue... Le paradis des orages s'effondre... Les sauvages dansent sans cesse la fête de la nuit... Quels bons bras, quelle belle heure me rendront cette région d'où viennent mes sommeils et mes moindres mouvements?

##### Phrase

J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher; des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre; des chaînes d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.

I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

These are towns! This is a people for whom these Alleghenies and these Lebanon were raised up! Crystal and wooden chalets move on invisible rails and pulleys. The old craters, surrounded by colossuses and copper palm-trees, roar melodiously in the flames. . . . Processions of Mabs in russet and opaline robes climb the ravines. Up there, Diana suckles stags, with their feet in the cascade and brambles. Suburban Bacchantes sob, and the moon burns and howls. Venus enters caverns of blacksmiths and hermits. Groups of belfries sing the people's ideas. From castles built of bones pour forth unknown music. . . . The paradise of storms collapses. . . . The savages dance ceaselessly the festival of the night. What lovely arms, what beautiful hour will bring back to me that region from whence come my slumber and my smallest movements?

I hung strings from steeple to steeple; garlands from window to window; gold chains from star to star, and I dance.

### Antique

Gracieux fils de Pan! Autour de ton front couronné de fleurettes et de baies, tes yeux, des boules précieuses, remeunt. Tachées de lies brunes, tes joues se creusent. Tes crocs luisent. Ta poitrine ressemble à une cithare, des tintements circulent dans tes bras blonds. Ton coeur bat dans ce ventre où dort le double sexe. Promène-toi, la nuit en mouvant doucement cette cuisse, cette seconde cuisse et cette jambe de gauche.

### Royauté

Un beau matin, chez un peuple fort doux, un homme et une femme superbes criaient sur la place publique: "Mes amis, je veux qu'elle soit reine!" "Je veux être reine!" Elle riait et tremblait. Il parlait aux amis de révélation, d'épreuve terminée. Ils se pâmaient l'un contre l'autre. En effet ils furent rois toute une matinée où les tentures carminées se relevèrent sur les maisons, et toute l'après-midi, où ils s'avancèrent du côté des jardins de palmes.

### Marine

Les chars d'argent et de cuivre - Les proues d'acier et d'argent - Battent l'écume, - Soulèvent les souches des ronces. Les courants de la lande, Et les ornières immenses du reflux, Filent circulairement vers l'est, Vers les piliers de la forêt, Vers les fûts de la jetée, Dont l'angle est heurté par des tourbillons de lumière.

### Interlude

J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

### Being Beauteous

Devant une neige un Être de Beauté de haute taille. Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique sourde font monter, s'élargir et trembler comme un spectre ce corps adoré: des blessures écarlates et noires éclatent dans les chairs superbes. Les couleurs propres de la vie se foncent, dansent, et se dégagent autour de la Vision, sur le chantier. Et les frissons s'élèvent et grondent, et la saveur forcenée de ces effets se chargeant avec les sifflements mortels et les rauques musiques que le monde, loin derrière nous, lance sur notre mère de beauté, - elle recule, elle se dresse. Oh! nos os sont revêtus d'un nouveau corps amoureux.

O la face cendrée, l'écusson de crin, les bras de cristal! Le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre à travers la mêlée des arbres et de l'air léger!

### Parade

Des drôles très solides. Plusieurs ont exploité vos mondes. Sans besoins, et peu pressés de mettre en oeuvre leurs brillantes facultés et leur expérience de vos consciences. Quels hommes mûrs! Des yeux hébétés à la façon de la nuit d'été, rouges et noirs, tricolorés, d'acier piqué d'étoiles d'or; des facies déformés, plombés, blémis, incendiés; des enrouements folâtres! La démarche cruelle des oripeaux! Il y a quelques jeunes... O le plus violent Paradis de la grimace enragée!... Chinois, Hottentots, bohémiens, niais, hyènes, Molochs, vieilles démentes, démons sinistres, ils mêlent les tours populaires, maternels, avec les poses et les tendresses bestiales. Ils interpréteraient des pièces nouvelles et des chansons "bonnes filles". Maîtres jongleurs, ils transforment le lieu et les personnes et usent de la comédie magnétique... J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage.

### Départ

Assez vu. La vision s'est rencontrée à tous les airs. Assez eu. Rumeurs de villes, le soir, et au soleil, et toujours. Assez connu. Les arrêts de la vie. O Rumeurs et Visions! Départ dans l'affection et le bruit neufs!

Gracious child of Pan! Around your brow, crowned by tiny flowers and berries, your eyes - precious globes - stir. Stained by brown dregs, your cheeks are hollowed. Your fangs glisten. Your bosom resembles a zither, its chiming spreading about in your fair arms. Your heart beats in that belly where the double sex sleeps. Walk in the night, moving gently this thigh, that other thigh, and that left leg.

### Royalty

A beautiful morning, among a most gentle people, a superb man and woman, cry out in a public square: "My friends, I wish to make her your queen!" "I wish to be your queen!" she cries, and trembles. He speaks to his friends of revelation, of finished ordeals. They swoon, one against the other.

Indeed, they were kings all that morning while the crimson hangings went up on the houses, and all that afternoon, when they advanced toward the coast through gardens of palms.

Chariots of silver and copper - Prows of steel and silver - Stir up the foam - Lift up the roots of bramble, The currents of the land, And the immense tracks of the ebb, Running out in a circle towards the east, Toward the pillars of the forest, Toward the piles of the jetty, Whose corner is struck by whirlpools of light.

I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

In front of the snow stands a tall Beauteous Being. The hissing of death and circles of muffled music make this adored body climb, expand, and tremble: black and scarlet wounds burst in the superb flesh. The proper colors of life darken, dance, and give off around the vision, upon the yard. And the shudders rise and fall, and the maniacal flavor of these effects being charged with the mortal hissing and raucous music that the world, well behind us, hurls on our mother of beauty - she withdraws, she stands up. O! Our bones are dressed once more in a new amorous body.

O ashen face, with shield of hair, and arms of crystal! The cannon on which I must throw myself down, amid the scuffle of trees and the light breeze!

What sturdy odd fellows. Several have exploited your worlds. Without needs, and little concerned with putting their brilliant minds and their experience of your consciences to work. What mature men! Dazed eyes like a summer night, red and black, tri-colored, steel dotted with golden stars; deformed features, leaden, made pale, made to burn; their foolish cries! The cruel walk of rags! There are some young ones. . . . O the most violent Paradise of the fanatical grimace! . . . Chinese, Hottentots, Bohemians, deniers, hyenas, Molochs, old demented ones, sinister demons, they mix popular and maternal tricks with bestial poses and tenderness. They interpreted new plays and - nice girl - songs. Master jugglers, they transform the place and the people and use magnetic comedy. . . . I alone hold the key to this wild parade.

Enough seen. Visions have been met in every respect. Enough has been. Rumors of towns, at night, and in the light of day, and always. Enough known. The decrees of life. O rumors and visions! Depart in new affection and new noise.

*To the Noble Artist, who, surrounded by the Baal-like worship of debased art, has been able, by his genius and science, to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the worship of true art, and once more accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty, frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony: to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements.* –Inscribed in grateful remembrance of Mendelssohn by Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace on April 24, 1847.

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) was shockingly gifted as a child. He painted with skill, wrote flowing poetry, succeeded in sports, spoke several languages, played several instruments, and completed one of the great chamber works of the nineteenth century—his *Octet for Strings*—at the age of only sixteen. He was born into a wealthy Jewish-German family, and his talents were encouraged by his parents and, most of all, by his sister, with whom Felix would maintain the closest of friendships throughout his life. He made his concert debut in 1818, met and befriended Goethe when he was only 12, and in 1826 (a year after the *Octet*) composed his overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which established his reputation internationally. Despite all that success, it was *after* three years of study at Berlin University that he finally decided upon a career in music!

At the age of 20, Mendelssohn became a champion of the music of Bach, which had passed into obscurity throughout Europe. He led the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* since the composer's death in 1750. Near the end of the year, he made his first visit to England, where he was widely lauded as both pianist and composer. After touring in Scotland, he returned to the European mainland to spend two years touring Germany, Austria and Italy. He visited England again in 1832 and 1833 and became a popular guest with what would become the London Philharmonic. In 1835, he took the conducting post with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. In 1843, he established a music conservatory in Leipzig, assisted by Robert Schumann. In 1847, he made his tenth and final visit to England, where he befriended Queen Victoria and taught piano to Prince Albert. In May of that year, his beloved sister Fanny died and the shock of this loss, together with the pressure of severe overwork, led to his own death six months later.

Mendelssohn wrote two violin concerti in his teens, neither of which is played much today even though they are fine works. While Mendelssohn's critics occasionally make the claim that he lost his edge once he turned twenty, his **Violin Concerto in E Minor, op. 64** leaves no doubt that he retained his originality to the end of his life. Written when he was thirty-five for his longtime friend Ferdinand David, the piece is one of his most melodic, colorful, brilliant and exciting. (David was Mendelssohn's concertmaster during his Leipzig Gewandhaus music directorship and the two were close friends since childhood.) Borrowing on the soloist-as-hero model of Beethoven, Mendelssohn creates a strong contrast between the first and second themes of the first movement, creating a quiet and confiding intimacy in the second theme that would influence virtually all violin concerti to follow. If the first movement is thoroughly Romantic, the second takes on a Mozartian quality with sparse textures and lucid themes. The third movement is one of the most recognized in all the violin repertoire, with a laughingly virtuosic theme introduced by the soloist that bursts into an all-out chase—soloist and orchestra—to the brilliant close. The concerto was completed on September 16, 1844, after a long process of composition and revision with the help of David, who also wrote the cadenzas. The premiere took place March 13, 1845 at a Gewandhaus concert, but Mendelssohn's poor health prevented him from conducting. The audience response was overwhelmingly positive and the orchestra gave Mendelssohn a welcoming flourish when he finally returned to work.

*I declare to you before God, and as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by name.* —Joseph Haydn, to Leopold Mozart.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791) showed such a prodigious talent for music in his early childhood that his father, also a composer, dropped all other ambitions and devoted himself to educating the boy and exhibiting his accomplishments. Between ages six and fifteen, Mozart was on tour over half the time. By 1762, he was a virtuoso on the clavier—an early keyboard instrument and predecessor of the piano—and soon became a good organist and violinist as well. He produced his first minuets at the age of six, and his first symphony just before his ninth birthday, his first oratorio at eleven, and his first opera at twelve. His final output would total more than 600 compositions. Much has already been said and studied in the popular media about Mozart's roguish lifestyle and apprehension of conformity. It was this aspect of his personality that never won him the support of royalty or the church, which, at that time, was critical to any composer's survival. As such, Mozart died young, ill, poor, and relatively unappreciated ... only to become the mostly widely acknowledged orchestral composer in history.

Mozart completed his ***Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K.551*** on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, 1788. Soon after the composer's death, Peter Salomon, the London violinist and concert manager, nicknamed the symphony the "Jupiter," and the name stuck. This particular symphony is clearly the point where the pre-Beethoven classical symphony reaches its highest peak, and is exceptional for two reasons: First, there is a persistent "cantus firmus" throughout the work though not strictly adhered to, made up of notes c-d-f-e-a-g-f-e-d-c. Second, the Finale, with its elaborate polyphony (extending to the great height of five-part invertible counterpoint), is given unusual emphasis by Mozart, clearly breaking with Classical tradition by emphasizing the last movement of the symphony instead of the first. This latter move would have a profound effect on the early symphonies of Beethoven.