

# Season 2018-2019

**Thursday, December 13,  
at 7:30**

**Saturday, December 15,  
at 8:00**

## The Philadelphia Orchestra

**Bramwell Tovey** Conductor and Narrator  
**Dante Michael DiMaio** Boy Soprano (Amahl)  
**Renée Tatum** Mezzo-soprano (His Mother)  
**Andrew Stenson** Tenor (King Kaspar)  
**Brandon Cedel** Bass-baritone (King Melchior)  
**David Leigh** Bass (King Balthazar)  
**Kirby Traylor** Bass (The Page)  
**Philadelphia Symphonic Choir** (Shepherds  
 and Villagers)  
**Amanda Quist** Director  
**Omer Ben Seadia** Stage Director

**Walton** *Crown Imperial* (Coronation March)

**Britten** *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Op. 34

### Intermission

**Menotti** *Amahl and the Night Visitors*  
*First complete Philadelphia Orchestra performances*  
*Ryan Howell, designer*  
*Chris Frey, lighting design*

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes.

These concerts are part of the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ Experience, supported through a generous grant from the **Wyncote Foundation**.

The December 15 concert is sponsored by **Medcomp**.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit [www.wrti.org](http://www.wrti.org) to listen live or for more details.

# The Philadelphia Orchestra



Jessica Griffin

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of imagination and innovation on and off the concert stage. The Orchestra is inspiring the future and transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—that level, by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world.

Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin's connection to the Orchestra's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics since his inaugural season in 2012. Under his leadership the Orchestra returned to recording, with four celebrated CDs on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label, continuing its history of recording success. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of listeners on the radio with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM.

Philadelphia is home and the Orchestra continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with its loyal patrons at its home in the Kimmel Center, and also with those who enjoy the Orchestra's area performances at the Mann Center, Penn's Landing, and other cultural, civic, and learning venues. The Orchestra maintains a strong commitment to collaborations with cultural and community organizations on a regional and national level, all of which create greater access and engagement with classical music as an art form.

The Philadelphia Orchestra serves as a catalyst for cultural activity across Philadelphia's many communities, building an offstage presence as strong as its onstage one. With Nézet-Séguin, a dedicated body of musicians, and one of the nation's richest arts ecosystems, the Orchestra has launched its **HEAR** initiative, a portfolio of integrated initiatives that promotes **H**ealth, champions music **E**ducation, eliminates barriers to **A**ccessing the

orchestra, and maximizes impact through **R**esearch. The Orchestra's award-winning Collaborative Learning programs engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global cultural ambassador for Philadelphia and for the US. Having been the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, in 1973 at the request of President Nixon, the ensemble today boasts five-year partnerships with Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Shanghai Media Group. In 2018 the Orchestra traveled to Europe and Israel. The Orchestra annually performs at Carnegie Hall while also enjoying summer residencies in Saratoga Springs and Vail. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Conductor



Grammy and JUNO Award-winning conductor and composer **Bramwell Tovey** became principal conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra in January 2018. Following an exceptional 18-year tenure as music director of the Vancouver Symphony (VSO), which concluded this past summer, he is now the orchestra's music director emeritus. Under his leadership, the VSO toured China, Korea, and across Canada and the United States. His innovations included the establishment of the VSO School of Music, of which he is artistic advisor; the VSO's annual festival of contemporary music; and the VSO Orchestral Institute at Whistler, a comprehensive summer orchestral training program for young musicians held in the scenic mountain resort of Whistler in British Columbia.

Since making his debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the Mann Center in 2008, Mr. Tovey has performed with the ensemble in Saratoga, at Wolf Trap, and at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. He made his subscription debut in 2014 and has also led multiple holiday and New Year's Eve concerts. In addition to these current performances, highlights of his 2018-19 season include guest appearances with the Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Indianapolis, and Toronto symphonies. In January he returns to the Winnipeg Symphony's New Music Festival, which he initiated during his tenure as music director of that ensemble from 1989 to 2000.

An active composer, Mr. Tovey won the 2003 JUNO Award for Best Classical Composition for his choral and brass work *Requiem for a Charred Skull*. Naxos recently released a recording of his opera *The Inventor*, commissioned by Calgary Opera, and featuring the original cast, the Vancouver Symphony, and the University of British Columbia Opera. In 2014 his trumpet concerto, *Songs of the Paradise Saloon*, was performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra with soloist Alison Balsom. Mr. Tovey has also appeared as piano soloist with many major orchestras and in summer 2014 conducted Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* from the keyboard in Saratoga with the Philadelphians. In 2013 he was appointed an honorary Officer of the Order of Canada for services to music. In 2017 he joined the faculty of Boston University where he teaches conducting and oversees its extensive orchestra program.

# Soloists



Boy soprano **Dante Michael DiMaio** (Amahl) is returning to The Philadelphia Orchestra after having performed the solo in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Westminster Symphonic Choir at Verizon Hall and Carnegie Hall last spring. He also sang *Chichester Psalms* with Opera Philadelphia as part of the Kimmel Center's Organ Day celebration. As a member of the Philadelphia Boys Choir he appeared in Opera Philadelphia's production of Bizet's *Carmen* and sang in The Philadelphia Orchestra's production of Puccini's *Tosca* last season. He has been a member of the Philadelphia Boys Choir and Chorale (PBCC) for the last three years and appears with the choir in numerous performances throughout the year; he recently toured with PBCC to Singapore and Vietnam. He is currently working on the title role in Rachel Portman's opera *The Little Prince*, with performances scheduled for February with Tulsa Opera. Mr. DiMaio is a 7th grade honor student at his middle school in southern New Jersey. He hopes to someday pursue his career as an opera singer or as a conductor.



Lawrence Brownlie

Mezzo-soprano **Renée Tatum** (Mother), who is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut, is rapidly gaining acclaim on the most prestigious opera stages in the United States. She returns to the Metropolitan Opera this season for Nico Muhly's *Marnie* and as Waltraute and Flosshilde in Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. On the concert stage she joins the Savannah Philharmonic for Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ("Resurrection") and the Cecilia Chorus of New York City in Brahms's Alto Rhapsody. Recently she was heard as Waltraute and Flosshilde in San Francisco Opera's *Ring Cycle*, Flosshilde in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* at the Tanglewood Festival, Francisca in Bernstein's *West Side Story* at the Grand Teton Music Festival, Jenny in Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* for Boston Lyric Opera, and as a Flower Maiden in Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Met with Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Recent concert performances have included Penderecki's Credo with the Indianapolis Symphony, Duruflé's Requiem with Back Bay Chorale, Bach's Christmas Oratorio with the Cecilia Chorus, and *Das Rheingold* with the New York Philharmonic. Ms. Tatum is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

# Soloists



Dario Accasia

Tenor **Andrew Stenson** (King Kaspar) makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, he was first prize winner in both the 2015 Giulio Gari International Vocal Competition and the 2016 Gerda Lissner Foundation Competition. He was also the recipient of a 2011 Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation. His 2018-19 season began with his Dallas Opera debut as the Steersman in Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. In addition to these current performances, other season highlights include Fadinard in Rota's *The Italian Straw Hat* at Minnesota Opera and Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with Utah Opera. In concert he appears at the Mostly Mozart Festival for Mozart's Requiem conducted by Louis Langrée. Last season he made his debut with Wexford Festival Opera as Ernesto in Foroni's *Margherita*; returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*; sang the title role of Bernstein's *Candide* with the San Francisco Symphony; and made his debut with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in the role of Danny Chen in Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier*.



Dario Accasia

Bass-baritone **Brandon Cedel** (King Melchior) made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2012 as the Old Servant in Strauss's *Elektra*. A recent graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, he is currently an ensemble member at Frankfurt Opera. His roles with the company in the 2018-19 season include the Speaker in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Angelotti in Puccini's *Tosca*, Brander in Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*, Giovanni in Verdi's *Il corsaro*, and the Messenger in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Additional credits this season include his debut as Collatinus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* with Boston Lyric Opera and Colline in Puccini's *La bohème* with the Canadian Opera Company. He returns to the Metropolitan Opera to sing Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and to the Glyndebourne Festival as Argente in Handel's *Rinaldo*. Highlights of recent seasons include performances at the Metropolitan Opera as the Porter in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* under the baton of James Conlon and a Flemish deputy in Nicholas Hytner's production of Verdi's *Don Carlo* under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

# Soloists



Bass **David Leigh** (King Balthazar) makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. A recent graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, he makes a number of prestigious debuts this season, including at the San Francisco Opera as Zuniga in Bizet's *Carmen* while covering the role of Vodník in Dvořák's *Rusalka*; at Santa Fe Opera as the King in Poul Ruders's *The Thirteenth Child*; and at the Canadian Opera Company in the leading role of Turbo in the world premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian*. Mr. Leigh returns to the Bolshoi Theatre as Colline in Puccini's *La bohème* and also debuts with Kentucky Opera as Sparafucile in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Dallas Opera in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. The 2017-18 season included a company and role debut with the Bolshoi Theatre as Colline in a new production of *La bohème* and company debuts with both the Opéra National de Lorraine and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg as the Commendatore in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. He also appeared at the Met as the Surintendant des Plaisirs in Laurent Pelley's production of Massenet's *Cendrillon*.



Bass **Kirby Traylor** (The Page) returns to The Philadelphia Orchestra as a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir. A native Texan who is based in Houston, he has performed as a soloist, professional chorister, and choral director for over 30 years. Highlights from his solo career include appearances with the Dallas and Houston symphonies and the English and Cincinnati chamber orchestras. In addition to his work with the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir, he has been a professional chorister with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale and the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble, a Fellow with the Bach Aria Group, and a selected participant in the Cleveland Art Song Festival, where he coached art song with baritone Benjamin Luxon and the late soprano Arleen Auger. He studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, where he immersed himself in *Lieder* preparation under the coaching of pianist Hartmut Höll and mezzo-soprano Mitsuko Shirai. In addition to his performing, he has worked in the oil and gas industry for BP America as a human resources professional for the last 24 years.

# Soloists



Pete Cioecchia

The **Philadelphia Symphonic Choir** made its debut in December 2016, performing in three programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra that season. Consisting of talented vocalists auditioned from throughout the greater Philadelphia region, the ensemble was created to marry gifted and unique voices of Philadelphia with the legendary Philadelphia Sound. In the 2017-18 season, the choir appeared in The Philadelphia Orchestra's performances of Haydn's *The Seasons* and Puccini's *Tosca*. The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by Amanda Quist, associate professor and chair of the Conducting, Organ, and Sacred Music Department at Westminster Choir College. She conducts the Westminster Chapel Choir and Westminster Kantorei and teaches graduate and undergraduate conducting. She is the recipient of Westminster Choir College of Rider University's 2014 Distinguished Teaching Award and the 2018 Mazzotti Award for Women's Leadership, and is also the Carol F. Spinelli Conducting Fellow. Westminster Kantorei, an award-winning early-music ensemble, recently released its first commercial recording, *Lumina*, on the Westminster Choir College label, distributed by Naxos.



Lawrence Bowdler

**Omer Ben Seadia** (Stage Director) worked for the Israeli Opera for over a decade before moving to the United States in 2012 to begin her international directing career. In addition to making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut, current season productions include Mozart's *Idomeneo* at Wolf Trap Opera, *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* with Atlanta Opera, Puccini's *La bohème* at Opera Santa Barbara, and a double bill of Tom Cipullo's *Josephine* and *After Life* at Opera Colorado. She is also developing the world premiere of Nkeiru Okoye's *Home of My Ancestors* for HGOco, the community and education arm of Houston Grand Opera. Previous productions include the world premiere of Gerald Cohen's *Steal a Pencil for Me* at Opera Colorado, a revival of John Caird's production of Puccini's *Tosca* at Houston Grand Opera, and the 2017 Apprentice Scenes Program at Santa Fe Opera. Deeply committed to the training of young artists, she has been on staff for the Studio and Young Artist Vocal Academy at Houston Grand Opera, the Merola Opera Program, and the International Vocal Arts Institute. In 2018 she joined the faculty at the Aspen Music Festival.

# Framing the Program

## Parallel Events

**1937**

**Walton**

*Crown Imperial*

**Music**

Shostakovich  
Symphony No. 5

**Literature**

Steinbeck  
*Of Mice and Men*

**Art**

Picasso  
*Guernica*

**History**

Japan invades  
China

**1945**

**Britten**

*Young Person's  
Guide to the  
Orchestra*

**Music**

Kodály  
Missa brevis

**Literature**

Orwell  
*Animal Farm*

**Art**

Moore  
*Family Group*

**History**

World War II  
ends

**1951**

**Menotti**

*Amahl and the  
Night Visitors*

**Music**

Persichetti  
Symphony No. 4

**Literature**

Salinger  
*The Catcher in  
the Rye*

**Art**

Wyeth  
*Trodden Weed*

**History**

Color TV first  
introduced in  
the US

The program this evening gets off to a festive start with William Walton's *Crown Imperial*, a coronation march composed for the crowning of George VI—the father of the present queen, Elizabeth II—in May 1937 at Westminster Abbey. Walton modeled the piece on Edward Elgar's famous *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, framing it with brilliant, extroverted, and martial sections that contrast with a stately and lyrical middle part.

The marvelous piece we hear by Benjamin Britten has two incarnations. As *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell* it is one of the great orchestral variation sets of the last century. As *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, presented with narration, it serves as a wonderful introduction for listeners of all ages to the instruments of the orchestra. In either guise, this masterful tour-de-force offers the instrumentalists of The Philadelphia Orchestra a chance to shine.

Gian Carlo Menotti composed *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for a nationwide television broadcast on Christmas Eve in 1951. The one-act opera tells the Christmas story through a poor, crippled shepherd boy's encounter with the three Magi as they journey to meet a miraculous newborn child.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 6 PM.



# The Music

## *Crown Imperial* (Coronation March)



**William Walton**  
**Born in Oldham,**  
**Lancashire, March 29, 1902**  
**Died in Forio, on the**  
**island of Ischia, Italy,**  
**March 8, 1983**

In his autobiography, the British author Basil Maine recalled that Edward Elgar detested William Walton's *Viola Concerto* when he heard it in Gloucester Cathedral at the Three Choirs Festival on September 8, 1932. Elgar, whose choral work *To the Fallen* (1916) was on the same concert, paced restlessly back and forth behind the orchestra gallery as the great violist Lionel Tertis played Walton's score, "deploring that such music should be thought fit for a stringed instrument." Elgar probably did not much care either for Walton's *Portsmouth Point* Overture that was on the same program, and which must have sounded cacophonous when its rhythmic complexity met the echoing acoustics of the Cathedral.

**Walton as Elgar's Successor** It is ironic, then, that Walton came to be seen as Elgar's successor after the latter's death in 1934. Unlike Elgar, Walton was never Master of the King's Musick, nor did he seek it. Even so, Walton took on that ceremonial role in all but name, producing music for two coronations. Aside from their one brief encounter during the 1932 Three Choirs Festival, the two composers did not know one another; Elgar may have had some animus against Walton, who was known as an *enfant terrible* after the 1922 premiere of the wild first version of *Façade* for speaker and chamber ensemble. This is a pity, for the two men had several things in common, including their shared humble origins: Elgar was the son of a piano tuner and tradesman in Worcester, while Walton's father worked as a clerk for a mine in Oldham, an industrial town in Lancashire. Both men rose socially and economically through their musical talent.

For his part, Walton displayed a keen and lasting admiration for Elgar's music. In an interview that appeared in the *Yorkshire Observer* on December 21, 1942, Walton declared, "I have unbounded admiration for Elgar ... I even like *Salut d'amour*." He continued enthusiastically, "There's no other English composer to touch him. ... He's becoming bigger all the time." Such opinions were extremely unfashionable during the 1940s and '50s. Walton's position as Elgar's successor was sealed in November 1947 when the latter's daughter, Carice, gave him a club tie that had belonged to her father.

*Crown Imperial* was composed in 1937 and was revised in 1963.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's only previous performances of the work were on two Children's Concerts, in March 1964 and January 1981; both were conducted by William Smith.

The score calls for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, gong, snare drum, tenor drum, triangle), harp, organ, and strings.

Performance time is approximately seven minutes.

**The Coronation March** By the late 1930s, most British musicians conceded that Walton was the leading composer of his generation, so it is unsurprising that in 1936 the BBC sought to commission him for a short choral piece to celebrate the coronation of Edward VIII. Walton was cool to such a proposition, suggesting a different composition altogether. BBC staff member Kenneth Wright wrote to a superior, "Walton tells me that he would love to be commissioned by the Corporation to write a really fine Symphonic Coronation March." In December of that year, in the middle of the crisis created by Edward VIII's abdication—he famously renounced the throne to marry an American socialite—it was reported, "the Walton suggestion of a March is definite."

Recalling the Shakespearian origin of the title of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, Walton drew the title of his march, *Crown Imperial*, from a passage in *Henry V*. He wryly remarked that Henry V's speech in Act IV, Scene I, had "a whole list of titles for Coronation Marches": "I am a king that find thee, and I know / 'Tis not the balm, the scepter and the ball, / The sword, the mace, the crown imperial, / The intertissued robe of gold and pearl / The farced title running 'fore the king, / ... Not all these, laid in bed majestical, / Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave. ..." By the time Walton completed the piece in March 1937, Edward VIII's younger brother was to be crowned George VI—the father of the present queen, Elizabeth II. Adrian Boult recorded *Crown Imperial* with the BBC Symphony on April 16, 1937, and conducted the march in Westminster Abbey for the Coronation on May 12. *Crown Imperial* garnered enormous success, rightly taking its place beside Elgar's magnificent *Pomp and Circumstance* marches.

**A Closer Look** For *Crown Imperial*, Walton followed the formal design of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches. A vigorous, extroverted, and martial opening section is contrasted with a stately and lyrical trio. As in Elgar's symphonic marches, Walton foreshadows the trio melody in the march's opening bars and the music features unexpected harmonic turns as well as coruscating orchestration. He brings back the melody of the trio near the end of *Crown Imperial*, a gesture that provides a stirring climax before the exalted coda.

—Byron Adams

# The Music

## *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*



**Benjamin Britten**  
**Born in Lowestoft, England,**  
**November 22, 1913**  
**Died in Aldeburgh,**  
**December 4, 1976**

There could hardly be a more ideal medium for a set of variations than the symphony orchestra. Where else do we find so many opportunities for richness of texture and for variety of color—qualities that are, after all, the very essence of “variation”? For more than two centuries composers have delighted in exploiting this. Already in 1792 Haydn was showcasing various sections of the expanded London orchestra he relished at his disposal in the famous “Surprise” movement of his Symphony No. 94, which is a set of variations. A decade later Beethoven created one of his most original orchestral pieces as the last movement of the “Eroica” Symphony, which is a set of variations on an original theme that he also used in his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* and for a set of keyboard variations. Brahms perhaps had his eye on Beethoven’s example when he crafted the finale of his Fourth Symphony, a magnificent set of variations on the ground bass of a Bach chorale. He also pioneered the idea of free-standing variations for orchestra, in his richly hued “Haydn” Variations, highly influential for 20th-century composers.

**Orchestral Variations in the 20th Century** Among the first to take up Brahms’s example in the next century was Arnold Schoenberg, whose densely serialist Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31, was only one of a number of pieces he based on variation techniques. Other composers took up the procedure as well, including Ralph Vaughan Williams (Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis), Max Reger (who wrote a series of elaborate variations sets on themes by Mozart, Beethoven, and Johann Adam Hiller), Anton Webern (Passacaglia, Op. 1), Luigi Dallapiccola (Variations), Paul Hindemith (*The Four Temperaments*, for piano and orchestra), and Igor Stravinsky (Octet for Winds, *Variations in Memoriam Aldous Huxley*, and other compositions).

But perhaps the most playfully colorful set from the 20th century is Benjamin Britten’s Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, best known under the title *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*. This is an unusual piece serving dual purposes in the orchestral repertory: Under the serious formal name it falls in with the illustrious tradition of symphonic variations, while as the *Young*

Britten composed the Young Person's Guide in 1945.

In December 1947 The Philadelphia Orchestra presented the US premiere of the work, in the version without narration, on a Children's Concert with Eugene Ormandy conducting. The Orchestra's first performance with a narrator occurred in November 1952, on a Student Concert with Ormandy and Harl McDonald. The work's most recent appearance on subscription concerts was with Yannick Nézet-Séguin in October 2013, in its version without a narrator. These current performances are the first on subscription that include the narration.

The Orchestra recorded the work twice, both times in its version without narration: in 1957 with Ormandy for CBS and in 1974 with Ormandy for RCA.

The score calls for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, castanets, Chinese blocks, cymbals, gong, side drum, tambourine, triangle, whip, and xylophone), harp, strings, and optional narrator.

Performance time is approximately 17 minutes.

*Person's Guide*, with narration, it serves as a marvelous introduction for listeners of all ages to the instruments of the orchestra.

This was not Britten's first or only excursion into the idea of variations for orchestra—in fact it was something of a fascination for him, as attested by the Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, the Passacaglia from his opera *Peter Grimes*, and the Diversions for Piano (Left Hand) and Orchestra. But none of these is as extravagant in its use of the orchestra as the Purcell Variations, the piece that one writer has characterized as being “at once a tour of the forces and a *tour de force*.”

**A Closer Look** *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* began as a commission from the British Ministry of Education, which asked Britten in 1945 to compose music for *Instruments of the Orchestra*, a film designed to acquaint young people with the various “choirs” of the modern orchestra. Using a theme from Henry Purcell's incidental music to a 1695 play called *Abdelazer, or The Moor's Revenge*, Britten wrote an instructional “excursion” of the orchestra that also functioned as an independent piece. In the original version, the piece included the spoken text provided by the poet Eric Crozier (who later served as librettist for several of Britten's operas), and in this guise the work received its concert premiere in October 1946 in Liverpool, several weeks before the film appeared in London.

Before the variations even begin, Purcell's theme is presented as a sort of orchestral showcase of its own, given first to full orchestra, then winds, brass, strings, and finally the percussion section. Thirteen variations follow, which show not only a great variety of instrumental color but of tempo and mood as well. First the flutes and piccolos are highlighted, then oboes, clarinets, bassoons, violins, violas, cellos, double basses, harp, horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba, and finally the listener is treated to a display of percussion. The xylophone leads into the brilliant concluding fugue, in which the orchestra is “reassembled” instrument by instrument, until the final bars—in which Purcell's theme (heard in the brass) joins the fugue (in the strings and woodwinds) for a rich and extroverted tutti.

—Paul J. Horsley

# The Music

## *Amahl and the Night Visitors*



**Gian Carlo Menotti**  
**Born in Cadegliano-**  
**Viconago, Italy, July 7, 1911**  
**Died in Monte Carlo,**  
**Monaco, February 1, 2007**

Gian Carlo Menotti's one-act opera about a poor crippled boy and his mother visited by three Magi is rooted in the "happy Christmas seasons" of the composer's youth, in which gifts were brought by kings, rather than Santa Claus. Born into an affluent family in Cadegliano-Viconago in Italy's Lombardy region, Menotti was immersed in music from an early age, beginning piano at age four and composing songs by age six.

Menotti studied at the Milan Conservatory and came to America in 1928 to enroll in Philadelphia's newly established Curtis Institute of Music. His first mature opera, *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, was initially staged by Curtis and subsequently at the Metropolitan Opera, bringing Menotti to the attention of Samuel Chotzinoff, general music director of the National Broadcasting Company. Chotzinoff first commissioned Menotti for an opera broadcast on NBC Radio, and in 1949 turned to the composer for an unprecedented commission of an opera for television.

**A Daring Artistic Experiment** In the 1940s NBC was enjoying a reputation as the most successful television company in America. Capitalizing on its lucrative parent company, RCA, to establish affiliates nationwide, NBC by 1950 owned the majority of TV stations in the country. Chotzinoff's plan was to present Menotti's new piece in prime time on Christmas Eve 1951 in a one-hour coast-to-coast broadcast, but throughout that fall Menotti struggled with a subject for the opera. A late November day found the composer wandering through New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he came upon *The Adoration of the Magi* by early-Netherlandish-painter Hieronymous Bosch. Memories of Italian Christmases past brought back by the painting supplied Menotti with the inspiration for what became *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Menotti composed the music and libretto to his opera classic in a matter of weeks, with performers receiving new pages of music daily. Up to this time, lead operatic characters who were boys had been played by soubrette females, but Menotti was adamant that Amahl be played by a boy to convey "a little devil." For the first *Amahl*, Menotti turned to the Columbus (later American) Boychoir School, recently moved from Ohio to Princeton, New

Amahl and the Night Visitors  
was composed in 1951.

*These are the first complete performances of the opera by The Philadelphia Orchestra. The ensemble performed the Shepherds' Dance on a 1955 Children's Concert, with Samuel Antek conducting; the Introduction, March, and Shepherds' Dance on a 1961 Senior Student Concert, with William Smith conducting; and the Shepherds' Chorus and Shepherds' Dance on the 2002 Holiday Concerts, with Raymond Harvey and the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia.*

*The score calls for flute (doubling piccolo), two oboes, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, timpani, percussion (snare drum, suspended cymbal, tambourine, triangle), harp, piano, strings, and boy soprano, soprano (or mezzo-soprano), tenor, baritone, two basses, and mixed chorus.*

*Amahl runs approximately 50 minutes in performance.*

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Jersey. Chet Allen, a seventh-grader from Columbus, Ohio, was selected as Amahl, joining well-known mezzo-soprano Rosemary Kuhlmann playing Amahl's mother and a principal cast of three kings and a page.

With performers working feverishly to the last minute with Menotti's revisions, *Amahl* was ready for broadcast on December 24, 1951, from NBC's Studio 8-H, the largest TV studio in America at the time and the future home of *Saturday Night Live*. The live black-and-white production was broadcast over 35 stations throughout the East, South, and Midwest and dominated the airwaves, with enthusiastic viewers reportedly inundating NBC's switchboard for hours after the performance. The premiere performance of *Amahl* was 46 minutes long, leaving room for an introduction and 10 minutes at the end for commercial sponsorship and carol-singing by the Columbus Boychoir. With Hallmark as the initial sponsor, *Amahl* became the cornerstone of the still-running Hallmark Hall of Fame anthology. The production was repeated the following Easter and presented seven more times on NBC, with Menotti returning to the Columbus Boychoir "Amahl factory" as treble voices changed.

**A Closer Look** Despite more than 60 years of performance, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* has remained remarkably free of alteration since its inception. Taking place over one evening in real time, the opera is constructed as a single scene divided between the stark interior of Amahl's hut and the surrounding countryside, alive with stars. A 12-measure prelude paints the winter sky and the star of the East—complete with flaming tail. The music of Amahl's shepherd's pipe suggests the bagpipe-like *cornamusa*, and in almost continuous recitative style, Menotti creates a musical palette in which the story is perceived from a child's imagination.

The role of Amahl requires both impeccable tuning and operative vocal power and stamina, as the boy's voice often soars over that of the Mother. Audiences will hear Menotti's musical charm in the King's March and the character of Kaspar, and a haunting duet between the Mother and the kings poignantly describes the Christ Child. A pair of oboes depicts primitive folk dancing in the Shepherds' Dance, and as Amahl joins the Magi on their journey to the Christ Child, the opera closes in Christmas promise. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* remains a staple of holiday programming worldwide, reaffirming that ever since the work's premiere, Gian Carlo Menotti has taken over Christmas as his day.

—Nancy Plum

# Musical Terms

## GENERAL TERMS

**Cadence:** The conclusion to a phrase, movement, or piece based on a recognizable melodic formula, harmonic progression, or dissonance resolution

**Chorale:** A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

**Chord:** The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

**Chromatic:** Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

**Coda:** A concluding section added in order to confirm the impression of finality

**Cornamusa:** A wind-cap instrument (an instrument on which the reed, usually a double reed, is enclosed within a rigid cap normally of wood and that is related to the bagpipe) of the 16th and early 17th centuries, more or less restricted to Italy

**Dissonance:** A combination of two or more tones requiring resolution

**Fugue:** A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

**Ground bass:** A continually repeated bass phrase of four or eight measures

**Harmonic:** Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

**Harmony:** The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

**Legato:** Smooth, even, without any break between notes

**Meter:** The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

**Op.:** Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

**Ostinato:** A steady bass accompaniment, repeated over and over

**Passacaglia:** In 19th- and 20th-century music, a set of ground-bass or ostinato variations, usually of a serious character

**Recitative:** Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

**Scale:** The series of

tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

**Serialism:** Music constructed according to the principle pioneered by Schoenberg in the early 1920s, whereby the 12 notes of the scale are arranged in a particular order, forming a series of pitches that serves as the basis of the composition and a source from which the musical material is derived

**Soubrette:** A type of operatic soprano voice that is light and bright with a tessitura in the mid-range, most often cast in a secondary role in a comic opera

**Tessitura:** A term used to describe the part of a vocal (or less often instrumental) compass in which a piece of music lies—whether high or low, etc. The tessitura of a piece is not decided by the extremes of its range, but rather by which part of the range is most used.

**Timbre:** Tone color or tone quality

**Tonic:** The keynote of a scale

**Trio:** A division set between the first theme and its repetition, and contrasting with it by a more tranquil movement and style

**Tutti:** All; full orchestra

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