

Musical Treasure Chest #38

Over the last ten months one of the beacons that has helped keep me on track and optimistic has been developing some tangential creative projects for Musicians of Ma'alwyck. Those forays have included a wonderful CD project at Hyde Hall (a stunning historic house near Cooperstown) and "shorts" (little videos) that we have posted monthly on our YouTube channel. Different than our normal concert fare, but yet keeping to our mission of combining history and music and other artistic media, these projects have been fun and offered a chance to explore some other sides of our ensemble persona. And, in a "normal" concert season we would never have the time or resources to delve into producing online content of this nature.

Making the CD was only possible because Glimmerglass Opera was on pause because of COVID. Hyde Hall has some wonderful music archives and, in combination with other repertory we had from the 1830s, we pulled together a delightful set of pieces all devoted to instrumental opera transcriptions, including some well-known (works of Rossini and Bellini) and some undeservedly forgotten (pieces of Auber and Meyerbeer) materials. We are finishing up the editing on the CD and are happy to announce that we will be hosting a CD release party on February 26th at Caffè Lena in Saratoga (which will be on-line). **Within this eblast you will see our proposed titles for the CD, and we hope you will weigh in with your thoughts on it.**

The last month was punctuated on one side by the making of our December short, which was a creative Beethoven 250th Birthday celebration, and on the other by a 12th Night Minuet for the Schuyler Mansion's 12th Night festivities. (You can find both of these up on our YouTube channel). Our next short, and I do not want to reveal too much, will be about Martin Van Buren and will be available on January 20th. I mention these shorts, not only because I hope you will watch them, but also because they have allowed me to include some repertory we might not normally program within a standard concert program. And learning the *minuet* allowed me to share one of my other passions, which is dance.

Composers have turned to dance forms throughout the ages for inspiration and musical structure. Some compositions are meant to be functional, such as the waltzes of the Strauss family or the court music of Lully; others are meant to be artistic but referring back to the original dance forms, such as the Bach movements in his solo violin works and the landler in Haydn symphonies. Filming the minuet reminded me how much I enjoy listening to music based on dance forms and brought to mind one of my favorite pieces, which is the **Classical Symphony (Symphony No 1) of Sergei Prokofiev**. This 1917 work, in which the Russian composer cut his teeth on the symphonic form, is modeled on Mozart and orchestrated for a classical size ensemble (so no huge brass or percussion sections). The third movement is a *Gavotte*. There is nothing ponderous or dark about any aspect of this piece.

For those of you who know my musical predilections, you know that I have a "thing" for Prokofiev. I consider the composer to be one of the musical giants of the 20th century, whose works in all genres reach the highest artistic levels. I first heard the Classical Symphony when I was a junior in high school, and, as one is prone to do at that age, I listened to it a lot; I know every turn of phrase and musical nuance of the piece. I think I have mentioned in past MTCs that as a teenager I belonged to the Columbia Record House Club. Every month I would order one record, and an LP with the Prokofiev played by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Bernstein was one of those selections. I loved the exuberant energy of the performance, the propulsion of the musical line (Bernstein takes some breakneck tempi) and the incredible joy of the piece. To this day, hearing this symphony brings a smile and great memories.

I found that original Bernstein/New York Philharmonic recording on YouTube for you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lifyuHFsfGY>