

Prelude

“Inside Masterworks”



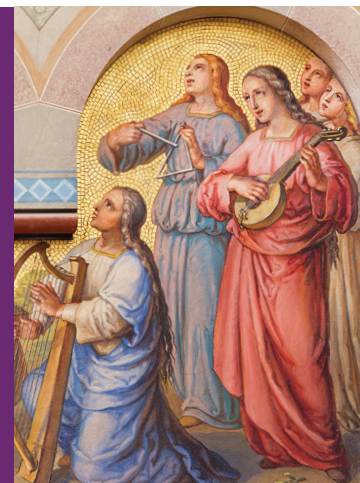
HARTFORD
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LISTENING IN COLOR

JUNE 2017

Masterworks #9: Choral Fantasy and Mystical Songs June 9-11, 2017

“The human voice is really the foundation of all music; and whatever the development of the musical art, however bold the composer’s combinations, however brilliant the virtuoso’s execution, in the end they must always return to the standard set by vocal music.” - Richard Wagner



Primitive humans ‘sang’ their feelings long before they were able to speak their thoughts. Singing, which is the

human production of vocal tones, is so basic to humankind that its origins are lost in antiquity, predating spoken language.ⁱ

But we can use our imaginations, based on the singing styles of present-day primitive peoples, and our best guess is that singing began with simple patterns, based on a few tones. Pitch-matching would have come next, along with call-and-answer phrases.ⁱⁱ

We have proof that music existed in multiple cultures: By the 4th millennium B.C., it was prominent in the social and religious life of Egypt’s Old Kingdom, while drawings showed large choruses and orchestras in Egypt’s New Kingdom (1700-1500 B.C.).ⁱⁱⁱ The Sumerian *Hymn to Creation* dates before 800 B.C., and is the oldest known notated music.^{iv} In Greek culture, singing was associated with all forms of literature and dance: the poetry of Sappho (600 B.C.) was often sung in contests.^v Greek dramas routinely utilized

singers who moved to the rhythm of the music, and by 500 B.C., both choruses and solo voices were being used to enhance dramatic function.^{vi} The oldest surviving choral repertory is from ancient Greece: the 2nd century B.C. Delphic hymns and the 2nd century A.D. hymns of Mesomedes are the most complete.^{vii}

The Psalms of David and the Song of Solomon were sung, and along with the early presence of professional musicians, the Judaic culture has preserved melodies that may date back to 500 B.C.^{viii} But after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., Jewish music became predominantly if not exclusively vocal, as Jews were dispersed, became transient, and learned of the inherent portability of the human voice.^{ix}

Singing was such an important and early part of Christian worship that the rituals and the music developed together, and their evolutions are almost inseparable.^x As the Christian church became more organized, it attempted to suppress secular singing, while advancing itself and its chosen musical style: plainchant, also known as Gregorian chants.^{xi} The Gregorian chants remain as the earliest notated music of Western Europe.^{xii} The first recorded evidence of polyphony (with more than one singer on a part) comes in the Old Hall Manuscript,

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dating from 1420, containing music from the late 14th century, with evidence of *divisi*: one part that divides into two simultaneously sounding notes.^{xiii}

Choral music is based on polyphony (the idea of high and low pitched voices singing simultaneously) which arose in the 9th century A.D.^{xiv} As polyphony developed in complexity, better-educated singers were required. In the 11th century, Guido D'Arezzo created a sight-singing technique, "solmization," which is still in use today.^{xv} As polyphony continued to develop, new harmonies began to appear, and rhythmic notation was introduced in the 14th through 17th centuries.^{xvi} The 14th century and the entire period of the Renaissance saw bolder and more intricate harmonies, wider vocal ranges, and more interesting rhythms, but bar lines (dividing music into measures) would not appear until the late 16th century.^{xvii} Higher voices were needed, but the Church, unable to accept the use of female voices (prohibited in I Corinthians 14:34) used boys with unchanged voices, despite the unfortunate drawback of having exceedingly brief careers after the investment of considerable training.^{xviii} And then, from Spain (where Moorish harem-guard eunuchs were likely models) came the first *castrati*, adult male singers whose testicles had been removed before puberty.^{xix}

Opera evolved in Italy in the late 16th century, and the popularity of the art form spread quickly from Italy to France, Germany and across Europe, with major solo parts sung by famous *castrati*.^{xx} And with the evolution of opera as an art form in the 18th century, sacred choral music "escaped" from the church and found its way to the concert stage with large sacred works unsuitable for church use.^{xxi}

In 1808, Beethoven pioneered the use of chorus as part of symphonic texture with his famous Ninth Symphony and his Choral Fantasia, paving the

way for Gustav Mahler's even larger choral work, Symphony No. 8 in E Flat Major, often referenced as the *Symphony of a Thousand*.^{xxii}



Throat-singing, identified with parts of Central Asia, South Africa and northern Canada, is an impressive vocal skill, in which

the singer can produce two or even more notes simultaneously.^{xxiii} This form of singing, sometimes referred to as "overtone" singing, requires years of training to master, and often involves sophisticated techniques of circular breathing.^{xxiv} It is believed to have originated with the indigenous people in southern Siberia and western Mongolia, and because of its rural and ethnic associations, was considered a "backwards" practice and was initially forbidden by communist regimes during the first half of the 20th century.^{xxv} The art form, also referenced as Tuvan throat-singing, was revived as a national art form in the 1980s and is now taught in schools and cultivated through competitions.^{xxvi}

Choral music and the many variations of music produced by the human voice continue to evolve. While we may all have different preferences, our common vocal heritage was best expressed by 19th century Danish linguist Jens Otto Harry Jespersen: "In the beginning was the voice. Voice is sounding breath, the audible sign of life."

We eagerly invite you to join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra as we highlight the music of Brahms, as well as brilliant choral composers
June 9-11, 2017.

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Wondering How the Music Will Sound?

Please try HSO'S LISTENING GUIDE below, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage!

Two interesting links explain the history of singing:

<https://prezi.com/2nq1rqrkii6b/a-brief-history-of-singing/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/apr/20/a-history-of-singing-review>

To hear samples of throat-singing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MLrWgXAOyo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXlExgh-YcU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2tFPbWiwVo>

We offer two different recordings of the *Academic Festival Overture* by Brahms:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gdcjq08XLzc> – New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pietari Inkinin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0qJ06sPPVA> – Sir Georg Solti, conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

To hear Haydn's *Te Deum for the Empress Maria Therese*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZi0rhV-RS8> – performed at the University of Bologna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kUQPE4iWq0> – featuring the Prague Mixed Choir

Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia* for piano and orchestra in C minor, Op. 80:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIGtWjlHemg> – with Leonard Bernstein conducting and Homero Francesch on piano

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrD1-NhEOyY> – conducted by Marek Klimes, Vladimir Halicek on piano

To hear Ravel's *Ma Mere l'Oye*:

Performed by two astounding pianists, Martha Argerich and Eduardo Delgado:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C832mZzaJqU>

To hear the same piece performed by full orchestra, with Charles Dutoit conducting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pJXm_g58-A

A recording of Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* features the BBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, with baritone Thomas Allen in performance at Royal Albert Hall: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZiMSGq_fOk



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The return of Casey's Classics

Recommended recordings for your listening pleasure!

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program?

Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers the following recommendations for recordings of selections featured on our upcoming Masterworks Concert:

The *Academic Festival Overture* of Brahms is given a suitably joyful performance by Andre Previn and the Royal Philharmonic (TELARC).

Trevor Pinnock and his English Concert and choir (DG) lovingly perform Haydn's *Te Deum* on crisp period instruments.

Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia* is a rarity in the concert hall because of the unusual combination of forces required, but a superb live performance in excellent sound is available from Daniel Barenboim conducting the Berlin Philharmonic and choir from the keyboard (EMI/WARNER).

Ravel's translucent *Mother Goose Suite* receives a classic performance from Carlo Maria Giulini and the Philharmonia Orchestra (EMI/WARNER). Giulini made a specialty of this work throughout his long career, and no one understood its magic as well as he.

Five Mystical Songs has a heavenly and natural interpretation from Sir David Willcocks and the English Chamber Orchestra (EMI/WARNER).

Did you borrow this *Prelude*? Get your own free copy!

Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org. We'll make sure you receive *Prelude* by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!

i <http://www2.lawrence.edu/fast/KOOPMAJO/brief.html>
 ii Ibid
 iii Ibid
 iv Ibid
 v Ibid
 vi Ibid
 vii <https://www.britannica.com/art/choral-music>
 viii <http://www2.lawrence.edu/fast/KOOPMAJO/brief.html>
 ix Ibid
 x Ibid
 xi Ibid
 xii <https://www.britannica.com/art/choral-music>
 xiii Ibid
 xiv <http://www2.lawrence.edu/fast/KOOPMAJO/brief.html>

xv Ibid
 xvi Ibid
 xvii Ibid
 xviii Ibid
 xix Ibid
 xx <http://www.opera-europa.org/en/opera-resources/history>
 xxi <https://www.britannica.com/art/choral-music>
 xxii Ibid
 xxiii http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/05/polyphonic-anna-maria-hefele_n_5934596.html
 xxiv <https://www.britannica.com/art/throat-singing>
 xxv Ibid
 xxvi Ibid