La Jolla Civic-University Symphony Orchestra and Chorus Association

1987-88 **SEASON**



Thomas NeeMusic Director



David Chase Choral Conductor

The La Jolla Civic-University Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

Peter Nicoloff, Founder

Thomas Nee, Music Director
David Chase, Choral Conductor

Mandeville Auditorium
Saturday, November 21, 1987 Sunday, November 22, 1987

PROGRAM

The Unanswered Question

Charles Ives

Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda

Gustav Holst

Battle Hymn Hymn to the Dawn Hymn to the Unknown God Hymn of the Travelers Funeral March

Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24

Richard Strauss

INTERMISSION

Prometheus, The Poem of Fire, Op. 60 Cecil Lytle, Piano

Alexander Scriabin

Lee Ray, *Director/Designer*John Forkner, *Tympanum Luminorum*Alan Johnson, *Lighting Designer*Ron Ranson, *Design Advisor*

PROGRAM NOTES

by Eric Bromberger

Charles Ives

The Unanswered Question

Born October 29, 1874, Danbury, Connecticut Died May 19, 1954, New York City

Ives led one of those split lives that seem quintessentially American. In his workday routine, he was a shrewd Yankee businessman (at the time of his retirement, Ives & Myrick was the largest insurance firm in the country), but the private Ives was a visionary who created soundscapes never before imagined: he planned—but never completed—Universe Symphony for orchestras and choruses stationed on mountaintops and in valleys. Assailed by critics and hissed by audiences, Ives kept to his own course, even if it meant that his music was largely ignored—his Second Symphony, completed in 1902, was not performed until 1951. An uncompromising champion of new music, Ives once stood up before an audience that was balking at a new work and ripped into them with the famous exhortation: "Sit up and use your ears like a man!" Today, a third of a century after his death, Ives is recognized as a great innovator and a composer of profound vision.

The Unanswered Question, which dates from 1906, has two subtitles, both pure lves: "A Contemplation of a Serious Matter" and "A Cosmic Landscape." lves divides his forces into three groups—muted strings, a solo trumpet, and four flutes—and asks that these be separated physically. The strings' nearly featureless music seems to flow past quietly, almost outside time, while against it lves sets the offstage trumpet and the four flutes. The composer makes his intentions clear in a note in the score:

The strings play *ppp* throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent "The Silences of the Druids—Who Know, See and Hear Nothing." The trumpet intones "The Perennial Question of Existence," and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for "The Invisible Answer" undertaken by the flutes and other human beings, becomes gradually more active, faster and louder through an *animando* to a *con fuoco*. This part need not be played in the exact time position indicated. It is played in somewhat of an impromptu way; if there be no conductor, one of the flute players may direct their playing. "The Fighting Answerers," as the time goes on, and after a "secret conference," seem to realize a futility, and begin to mock "The Question"—the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, "The Question" is asked for the last time, and "The Silences" are heard beyond in "Undisturbed Solitude."

Gustav Holst

Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda

Born September 21, 1874, Cheltenham Died May 25, 1934, London

In his early twenties, Holst became interested in Hindu literature and philosophy and enrolled in Sanskrit courses at University College in London so that he might make his own translations from the *Mahabharata* and the *Rig Veda*. The influence of Hindu thought is strong in his compositions from the first decade of this century: the operas *Sita* (1906) and *Savitri* (1908) and four sets of choral hymns on Holst's own translations of texts from the *Rig Veda* (1908-12). The Sanskrit interest appears to have been passionate but transitory: shortly after completing these works, Holst

became fascinated by English folk music—which exerted quite a different influence on his work—and began composition of the piece that would make him famous, the orchestral suite *The Planets*.

The five hymns sung at these concerts have been drawn from the total of fourteen hymns for chorus and orchestra that Holst composed on texts from the *Rig Veda* (there are also settings for voice and piano of nine others). *Battle Hymn, Hymn to the Unknown God,* and *Funeral March* are scored for mixed chorus and full orchestra, while *Hymn to the Dawn* and *Hymn of the Travellers* are for women's chorus and harp. Particularly impressive are the many original touches: strange harmonies, surprising rhythms, unusual instrumental colors and combinations. The idea of using a 5/4 rhythm for the opening of *Battle Hymn* must have appealed strongly to Holst, for he used it again for the *Mars* movement of *The Planets*, also battle music.

Richard Strauss

Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24

Born June 11, 1864, Munich

Died September 8, 1949, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Richard Strauss achieved almost instant international fame with the series of brilliant tone-poems for orchestra he began composing in the 1880's. Strauss had borrowed the conception of the tone-poem from Liszt, but unlike Liszt—whose compositions sometimes bore only the vaguest relationships to their titles—Strauss aimed for an exact musical representation of events: he once said that his highest aim was to write fork music that could never be mistaken for a spoon. One need think only of his depiction of the rogue riding his horse through the marketplace in *Till Eulenspiegel*, the windmill and the blatting sheep of *Don Quixote*, the snarling enemies of *Ein Heldenleben*, or the storm of *An Alpine Symphony* to see how brilliantly he succeeded. Strauss completed the score for *Death and Transfiguration* in November 1889, and conducted the first performance in Eisenach on June 21, 1890, a few days after his twenty-sixth birthday.

In 1894 the composer described the events of Death and Transfiguration:

It was six years ago that it occurred to me to present in the form of a tone poem the dying hours of a man who had striven towards the highest idealistic aims, maybe indeed those of an artist. The sick man lies in bed, asleep, with heavy irregular breathing; friendly dreams conjure a smile on the features of the deeply suffering man; he wakes up; he is once more racked with horrible agonies; his limbs shake with fever—as the attack passes and the pains leave off, his thoughts wander through his past life; his childhood passes before him, the time of his youth with its strivings and passions and then, as the pains already begin to return, there appears to him the fruit of his life's path, the conception, the ideal which he has sought to realize, to present artistically, but which he has not been able to complete, since it is not for man to be able to accomplish such things. The hour of death approaches, the soul leaves the body in order to find gloriously achieved in everlasting space those things which could not be fulfilled here below.

It is worth noting that at exactly the time Strauss wrote *Death and Transfiguration*, his friend and colleague Gustav Mahler was composing his own "Resurrection" Symphony, based on this same death-and-resurrection theme.

Strauss builds *Death and Transfiguration* on a series of brief themes or motifs that depict different aspects of his drama. The music begins with the man on his deathbed: quiet, halting figures for strings and timpani suggest the irregular beat of his heart,

while violins sigh softly. A soaring oboe melody over harp accompaniment recalls the man's childhood, but these fond memories are cut short: his suffering is suddenly renewed as death—a sinuous, surging figure for low strings and winds—makes a dramatic entrance, while the suffering man's resolve to fight back is heard in huge, heroic chords for full orchestra. Soon the theme that depicts the artist's ideals is heard in the brass. This striving, climbing figure will later become the transformation theme, but now it serves as part of a violent development that combines the motifs of death, struggle, childhood memories, aspirations, and love. These build to a climax, and at this point death triumphs, eerily depicted by a ghostly upward glissando, like a final breath. In death's aftermath—Strauss uses soft strokes on the tam-tam to stunning effect here—the transformation theme is heard and gradually grows in strength to become the triumphant affirmation of the man's ideals.

As part of the visual effects of PROMETHEUS, we shall be using colored vapor on stage. This is a non-toxic vapor widely used in theatres and opera houses throughout the world and should cause no problems. However, a closed-circuit TV will project sound and vision directly into the East Room behind the Auditorium and anyone with respiratory or allergy problems may wish to enjoy the performance there.

Alexander Scriabin

Prometheus, The Poem of Fire, Op. 60

Born January 6, 1872, Moscow Died April 27, 1915, Moscow

In the first decade of this century the Russian pianist-composer Alexander Scriabin fell under the spell of Nietzsche and the Russian spiritualist medium Madam Blavatsky and came to believe that his music had the power to bring unity to a fragmented world. Scriabin's extraordinary egocentrism (he was raised by adoring aunts and a grandmother) and the fact that on the old-style calendar his birthday fell on Christmas Day contributed to this sense of Messianic mission and his belief that *he* would be the artist to transform the world.

Scriabin laid out a program of four symphonic poems that would lead to this transformation: *The Divine Poem* (1905), *The Poem of Ecstasy* (1908), *Prometheus, The Poem of Fire* (1909-10), and *Mysterium*, planned but never written. *Mysterium*, the culmination of the sequence, was to bring about the actual transformation: Scriabin envisioned a performance in India in which the audience and performers would be garbed in white, all the arts (including the art of perfume) would be fused, and in the course of the performance mankind would be transformed. It is a measure of Scriabin's ego that he welcomed World War I because he believed it furthered the chaos that his art would heal.

In *The Poem of Fire,* Scriabin amended the Greek myth of Prometheus for his own purposes. Scriabin's *Prometheus* brings not fire but human consciousness (symbolized by light), which leads to creative power and the capacity for good and evil. *Prometheus* opens with Scriabin's famous "mystical chord," depicting the formlessness that preceded human consciousness. Harmonically, the music remains vague and non-specific—the hazy, blurred tonality is a part of Scriabin's mystical vision—and the score is littered with subjective, non-musical instructions (all written in French): players are asked to make the music sound "charming," "sparkling," "voluptuous," "smoky," "suave," "misty." Varius instruments are assigned roles—the piano represents man,

the trumpet the Creative Will—and Scriabin uses different themes to portray specific events, such as human love and the dawning of consciousness. At the close, the music rises to a triumphant, ecstatic climax that includes a wordless chorus and the full resources of the orchestra.

Long interested in fusing the arts, Scriabin devised a theory of correspondences between individual notes and colors. For *Prometheus* he envisages a "color organ" that would beam lights on a screen behind the orchestra. Scriabin himself never saw a performance of *Prometheus* with lights and authorized performances without them. The color organ Scriabin wrote for was, by modern standards, crude and ineffective, and early performances were failures. Those attempting a performance of *Prometheus* with lights today must make some creative decisions of their own, and the present concerts make use of technology never dreamed of in Scriabin's day. The composer, however, would probably have hailed such inventions for making possible exactly what he was trying to achieve. Derided for years as the last gasp of decadent romanticism, Scriabin's music and theories of fusing the arts have attracted new attention and respect in an era of multi-media performance and technology worthy of his vision.

Lighting *Prometheus* by Lee Ray

To stage a performance of the *Prometheus* which tries to be faithful to the spirit of Scriabin's score and to what is known of his intentions requires that the audience be engaged as if by a drama. The "actors"—conductor, soloists and musicians, deliver the "play"—a conflation of musical sounds, luminous images, and strong scents. The purpose of a Scriabin dramaturgy is to foment aesthetic intoxication in the audience by means of sensual ravishment.

Scriabin's conception of light as an element fully as important as music was a private vision, a succession of phosphenes and mental images linked to sounds in a uniquely individual way. But a practical plan can render the information given by Scriabin into commands for modern-day scenic resources. Some examples: lights will be arrayed throughout the orchestra in such a way that featured instruments or groups of instruments will be literally "highlighted" at appropriate times in the score; different size screens will be used as projection surfaces; certain sections of the orchestra will be raised up on platforms.

Just as the pianist Cecil Lytle is the preeminent soloist in the music of *Prometheus* so this production will feature the work of artist John Forkner. Using his *tympanum luminorum*, an optical image synthesizer, Mr. Forkner can control shape, color and movement within multiple layers of complex images entirely in performance. Educated in mechanical engineering and physics, Mr. Forkner has worked for 20 years in the aerospace industry. His parallel interest in art and technology has resulted in works which have been performed and displayed at the Los Angeles Art Museum's *Art and Technology* project, EXPO '70 in Osaka, Japan, and at the Center for Music Experiment where he was a Fellow. Mr. Forkner has appeared with his *luminorum* as a soloist with the Glendale Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

The La Jolla Civic Orchestra production of *Prometheus* has been directed by Lee Ray. Mr. Ray, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California in San Diego, has composed film scores, computer music, music for stage productions and pieces for small ensembles. He performs as part of the duo *Black Noise* with violinist Janos Negyesy.

Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda

BATTLE HYMN

(Chorus and Orchestra)

INDRA is the god of sky and storm.
The MARUTS are his attendant storm-clouds.

King of the earth and ruler of heav'n, Greatest of helpers, fearfullest of foes. Indra and Maruts fight for us!

Lord of all heroes, Great God of war, Chief of the strong ones, terrible in wrath! Indra and Maruts fight for us!

Ye too, O storm-clouds, follow his path, Comrades in glory, Conquerors in fight! Indra and Maruts fight for us!

Now to our aid he rides like the wind, Chariot and horses thunder on their way. Indra and Maruts fight for us!

Glory and strength like his were never known, Roaring in rage he rushes on the foe. Indra and Maruts fight for us!

Hark to his voice that rings through the sky, See how the earth doth tremble at the sound. Indra and Maruts fight for us!

And in reply our war-song we raise, Lips of a thousand warriors now cry Indra and Maruts fight for us!

HYMN TO THE DAWN

(Women's Chorus and Harp)

Hear our hymn, O Goddess, Rich in wealth and wisdom, Ever young yet ancient, True to Law Eternal.

Wak'ner of the song-birds, Ensign of th' Eternal, Draw thou near, O Fair One, In thy radiant Chariot.

Bring to her your off'ring, Humbly bow before her, Raise your songs of welcome, As she comes in splendour.

HYMN TO THE UNKNOWN GOD

(Chorus and Orchstra)

He, the Primal one, Begetter of the Universe, Begotten in mystery, Lord of created things, Lord of heav'n and earth.

Who is He? How shall we name Him when we offer sacrifice? He, through whom are the Primeval water Which were before aught else. From their depths arose Fire, the source of Life.

Who is He?
How shall we name Him when we offer sacrifice?
He, upholder of earth and sea, of snow-clad heights,
Encompassing the wide regions of air,
Ruling the sky and realms of light.

He whose word is eternal, Giver of breath and life and power. Sole ruler of the Universe, Dwelling alone in his grandeur: To whom the gods bow.

Lord of Death, Whose path is life immortal! Who is He? How shall we name him when we offer sacrifice? Thou alone canst fathem Thy mystery, There is none beside Thee.

HYMN OF THE TRAVELLERS

(Women's Chorus and Harp)

(The God invoked in this hymn is the Guide of travellers along the roads of this world and along that leading to the next.)
80 thou on before us,
Guide us on our way,
Mighty One.
Make our journey pleasant,
Never let us stray.
Wonder-worker, hearken,
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

Trample on the wicked,
All who would oppose,
Mighty One.
Drive away the robber,
Drive away our foes.
Wonder-worker hearken,
Come in thy splenour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

As we journey onward,
Songs to thee we raise,
Mighty One.
Thou didst aid our father,
Guard us all our days.
Wonder-worker hearken,
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

Feed us and inspire us,
Keep us in thy care,
Mighty One.
Lead us past pursuers
Unto meadows fair.
Wonder-worker hearken,
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

FUNERAL HYMN

(Chorus and Orchestra)

Away O Death—thy work is ended now, Far from us on thy lonely path go thou, The Path on which no other God may tread, This mound we raise doth part us from the dead.

Now may the grat Ordainer hear our chant, May He accept our sacrifice and grant That in due course each treads th' eternal way, As through the ages day doth follow day.

O woman, Thou whose eyes with tears are dim, Who liest there upon the ground with him Who once did love thee, once did call thee wife,—Arise and join again the world of life.

Mother of all, A child to thee we bring:
Earth, holy source whence all our life doth spring,
Hee is one who yearns for thee again.
Sleeping so calmly on thy loving breast,
Wrapt in thy robe, O Mother may he rest:
Knowing nought of sorrow, tears and pain.

Then forward O thou soul upon the road That leadeth thee unto thy new abode, Where waits the dreadful Judge whom thou must face,

Where dwell the ancient Fathers of our race, There where in th' eternal waters play, Lit by beams of everalasting day.

Then go forward O thou soul again we cry, Go forth O happy one, beyond the sky. Go forth! Go forth! Go tread the path on which our Fathers trod That leads unto their Fellowship with God.

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The annual *Messiah* Sing-Along will take place on Saturday, December 12 in St. James-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, 743 Prospect Street, La Jolla. There will be two performances: 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are \$6 general admission, \$4 Students and Seniors, available by mail from the Association Office or at the door. Scores may also be purchased at the door (\$7.50 each). For information on group rates, please call the Association Office at 534-4637.

The La Jolla Symphony Chorus will be making a tour of European Cathedrals in July 1988 and will be holding a fund-raising dinner/party in late January, 1988. Those interested in helping support expense of the tour may send contributions to:

La Jolla Symphony Association (European Tour) Q-038 UCSD La Jolla, CA 92093

Auditions for the 1988 Young Artist Competition will be held on Saturday, April 9 and Sunday, April 10, 1988 in the Mandeville Recital Hall. Prizes (A cash award plus performance with the La Jolla Symphony at the Young Artist Concert on June 5) will be awarded in four categories: voice, piano, woodwind and strings. Application forms and audition information can be obtained from the Association Office at 534-4637.

The La Jolla Symphony Association would like to express gratitude and appreciation to the following for their help in making possible the performance of Prometheus:

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1987-88 SEASON

THOMAS NEE'S 20th ANNIVERSARY

Haydn at Esterhazy Michael Staehle, Cellist Thomas Nee, Conductor David Chase, Conductor Sat. Oct. 3, 1987 8:00 pm Sun. Oct. 4, 1987 3:00 pm

Mystical Music
Cecil Lytle, Pianist
Thomas Nee, Conductor
David Chase, Conductor
Sat. Nov. 21, 1987 8:00 pm
Sun. Nov. 22, 1987 3:00 pm

Messiah Sing-Along Thomas Nee, Conductor David Chase, Conductor Sat. Dec. 12, 1987 1:00 and 4:00

American Choral Music

David Chase, Conductor Sat. Jan. 23, 1988 8:00 pm Sun. Jan. 24, 1988 3:00 pm

Magnificent Mahler Frank Almond, Violinist Thomas Nee, Conductor Sat. March 5, 1988 8:00 pm Sun. March 6, 1988 3:00 pm

Trench Music
Thomas Nee, Conductor
David Chase, Conductor
Sat. May 14, 1988, 8:00 pm
Sun. May 15, 1988 3:00 pm

Young Artists Concert Thomas Nee, Conductor Sun. June 5, 1988 3:00 pm

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