



THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC PRESENTS

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Wednesday, May 5, 2021, 7:00 P.M.
University Theatre

Diego Piedra, conductor

PROGRAM

Spring Song, Op. 16

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

Dreams (World Premiere) (2021)

Diego Piedra
(b. 1980)

Brief Intermission

Sigurd Jorsalfar, Op. 56

Edward Grieg
(1843-1907)

PROGRAM NOTES

Spring Song, Op. 16

Jean Sibelius

Jean Sibelius was born in Finland, on December 8th, 1865. An accomplished violinist since childhood, he also took an interest in composition early in his life. After briefly studying Law at the Imperial Alexander University in Finland, he ultimately decided to quit and study music at the Helsinki Music Institute, today called the Sibelius Academy. There, he studied composition and met new professors and mentors who became close friends with him.

Sibelius is known today as Finland's greatest composer. He wrote seven symphonies, which are regularly performed internationally. The quality of his music is recognized to have helped his country to develop a national identity during its struggle for independence from Russia. Some of his most famous works are the Violin concerto, Valse Triste, and many tone poems such as *Finlandia*.

Spring Song is a tone poem, a composition typically cast as a single movement which draws its inspiration from a poem, painting, landscape, story, or any other extra musical event. Sibelius' writing makes frequent use of the brass instruments of the orchestra, a clear influence from Anton Bruckner, whom he admired, and the style of the tone poem comes as an inspiration from the music of Franz Liszt, who revolutionized music and influenced so many composers after him. *Spring Song* is filled with beautiful melodies across all instruments, and it sounds heroic, charming, positive, melancholy, and looking forward to the future.

***Dreams* (2021) "World Premiere"**

Luis Diego Piedra

Dreams is a piece composed between January- March 2021 that came into existence out of a combination of factors: the current times of Covid-19 which has had a devastating effect on the whole world on virtually every level; the particular instrumentation of the Valparaiso University Symphony Orchestra as a direct result of the pandemic, and from my part the love, admiration and wish to be creative and do something for the students that is meaningful and uplifting for them.

The composition does not follow a story or a poem, but it does suggest feelings of longing for peace, tranquility, passion, loss and hope for a better tomorrow. The most valuable feature about this piece is that it was conceived for and tailored to the students currently playing in the VUSO. It is meant to challenge them as well as give them an opportunity to shine and show what they are capable of.

Dreams is dedicated to the students of the Valparaiso University Symphony Orchestra.

Sigurd Jorsalfar, Op. 56

Edvard Grieg

Edward Grieg is considered today a prominent Norwegian composer. He infused his music with Norwegian folk music to the point that according to his own words "it tastes like cod." Grieg, a romantic, wrote beautiful music. Some of his best known works are the incidental music *Peer Gynt*, the Piano Concerto in A minor and *Holberg Suite*.

Sigurd Jorsalfar -written by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910)- tells the tale of the rivalries and reconciliation of two brother kings. Øjstejn and Sigurd ruled jointly during the 12th century. The first one remained in Norway

and ruled with wisdom and justice, built roads, harbors and churches, while the other went on crusades. Grieg's Op. 56 is divided in three movements:

- I. Prelude: "In the King's Hall" represents the scene in which the kings enumerate their achievements and compare their personal merits as men and rulers. It was originally titled as "At the Matching Game" and it was intended as the introduction of the of Act II of the drama.
- II. Intermezzo: "Borghild's Dream" is the music for the scene in Act I where Borghild awakes from troubled dreams in her father's house. She is friends with Øjstejn and this gives rise to gossip as Sigurd also loves her, which contributes to the brothers ill-feelings between them. Grieg depicts her waking up, then walking over red-hot iron (something she agreed to do in order to prove her innocence).
- III. "Homage March:" This is the most well known part of the suite. It depicts the scene in which the Kings are reconciled, and this occurs in Act III in the play. The music begins with a trumpet fanfare sounding as the two brothers walk hand in hand after they have made peace with each other. Then, the march begins and during this music they announce their reconciliation.

-Program Notes by Dr. Piedra

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Diego Piedra is the Orchestra Director at Valparaiso University. A strongly driven performer and educator, Dr. Piedra feels at home working on the podium with student and professional orchestras. Recent professional conducting engagements have included the Music Directorship and Conducting of Spectrum Orchestra, visiting orchestral positions at Luther College and the University of Toledo, and guest conducting appearances with the Oakland Symphony Orchestra in Michigan, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, and the Municipal Orchestra of Cartago. In Costa Rica Dr. Piedra was in high demand as the orchestral conducting professor at the University of Costa Rica as well as a guest teacher and performer in Venezuela, Honduras and Guatemala. He founded the national youth orchestra called Manuel María Gutiérrez at SINEM (the Costa Rican version of Venezuela's El Sistema), and was its Music Director and Conductor from 2009-2011. Since 2014, Dr. Piedra has been Music Director at the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra's Summer String Camp, working as a conductor, violinist and composer. As a professional violinist he has been a member of the prestigious New World Symphony in Miami, South Bend Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Oakland Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica and Concertmaster of the Orquesta de Cámara de Costa Rica. Dr. Piedra participated as violinist and assistant conductor in the tour and recording of the University Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan (winner of four Grammy awards in 2006), which culminated at Carnegie Hall, New York. At Michigan, Dr. Piedra was the Music Director of The Campus Symphony Orchestra and the Campus Philharmonia Orchestra, and he conducted two full opera productions and numerous symphonic concerts. In the summer of 2017 Dr. Piedra was awarded an honorary mention at a conducting competition in London, England. Dr. Piedra holds a DMA in Orchestral Conducting, two Master's degrees from the University of Michigan, and a BM from Baylor University. He lives in Valparaiso with his wife Maria and daughter Clara. He studied violin with Yehonatan Berick, and conducting with Kenneth Kiesler and participated in master classes with Simon Rattle, Carl St. Clair, Giancarlo Guerrero and Miguel Harth-Bedoya.

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin 1

+Mark Sweeney, Warrenville, Ill. (meteorology)

Violin 2

^Jeremy Freed, Three Rivers, Mich. (meteorology)

Olivia Maass, Fishers, Ind. (exploratory)

Viola

^Anton Pham, Goshen, Ind. (meteorology)

Reiana Thomas, Portage, Ind. (music)

Drew Fleming, Western Springs, Ill. (computer science) ♪

Keelie Cantwell, Demotte, Ind. (biochemistry)

Cello

^Nick Evans, Crown Point, Ind. (bioengineering) ♪

Hallie Wolf, Kenosha, Wis. (astronomy)

Thomas Paul, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. (biology) ♪

Evee Curtis, Mishawaka, Ind. (music education)

Cassi Niemeyer, Grand Rapids, Mich. (biochemistry) ♪

Ben Hamilton, Wheaton, Ill. (psychology) ♪

Bass

^Jakob Wiegand, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. (civil engineering)

Flute

^Genevieve Brown, Williamston, Mich. (music performance)

Shelby Stinson, Craigsville, Ind. (music education)

Clarinet

^Alex Appel, Valparaiso, Ind. (computer engineering)

Camille Ancevicus, Homer Glen, Ill. (nursing)

Max Ehlers, Milwaukee, Wis. (biology/chemistry)

Bassoon

^Nicholas Sanchez, Hobart, Ind. (music education)

Joel Stoppenhagen, Ossian, Ind. (music education)

Horn

^Maiah Deogracias, Fort Wayne, Ind. (art)

Trumpet

^Ryan Gee, Princeton, Ill. (music)

Mary Emma Zimmermann, Saint Charles, Ill. (biology)

Trombone

Matthew Yee, Auburn, Calif. (civil engineering, music)

David Lee, Schererville, Ind. (music education)

Evee Curtis, Mishawaka, Ind. (music education)

Tuba

David Lee, Schererville, Ind. (music education)

Timpani

Ricky Paz, Schererville, Ind. (music education)

Percussion

Alana Swopes, Lorrain, Ohio (music)

Olivia Norris, Franklin, Ind. (civil engineering)

Harp

Alana Swopes, Lorrain, Ohio (music) ♪

Olivia Norris, Franklin, Ind. (civil engineering)

Orchestra Manager

Evee Curtis

+ Denotes concertmaster

^Denotes principal

♪Denotes graduating senior