CSU SINFONIA CONCERT

Classical SPEAKING

CONDUCTED BY WES KENNEY

WITH MICHELLE STANLEY, FLUTE, AND KATHRYN HARMS, HARP

OCTOBER 19, 7:30 P.M. | GRIFFIN CONCERT HALL

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

Today's concert brings to fore a demonstration of why each of these composers are still part of today's repertoire. Louise Farrenc may have lacked the opportunity of male composers, but the support system surrounding her kept her flame alive. Recently, a few publishers and conductors have created new editions that have made performing her orchestra music more accessible. Her harmonic language points towards the 19th century as does her inclusion of trombones and four horns, in parallel with the instrumentation of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. The additions lend power to her the orchestral sound and yet there is no evidence that she had a pseudonym, or anyone tried to pass off her music tied to a more famous name. Still, one wonders if her social status at the time moved Farrenc to be more conservative in the style and form with the hope of getting her music performed. To this director, the symphonies now beckon . . .

Mozart's double concerto and the Saint-Saëns symphony have charm in their character. For the former, the composer's longevity likely stems from the ways he did *not* follow the current norms in composition. This is particularly true in the phrasing where the periodicity of the Classic period is constantly—and deftly! — broken with an additional bar, or a 3 to 5 bar phrase. It may have confounded his contemporaries, but it is one of the many reasons that we still listen to this genius today. Additionally, the lovely melodies in the middle movement and the interesting and extensive formal approach to the final Rondo makes the piece more unique than just his only harp work.

Similar to Mozart, Saint-Saëns wrote complete works at a very young age. It is interesting to compare this early symphony by the French composer with his more mature output such as the Symphony No. 3, "Organ." Only pairs of woodwinds, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, and timpani as opposed to the rather extensive instrumentation of what was to come. Still, the symphony in A major at times presents a view of the composer's future in its drama and wit. It is clear Saint-Saëns is on a path that would make him one of the saviors of French symphonic music and still a darling of classical music lovers today.

— Wes Kenney

CSU SINFONIA

Wes Kenney, Conductor
Rob Stahley, Graduate Teaching Assistant
Michele Stanley, Flute
Kathryn Harms, Harp

Louise Farrenc
(1804-1875)

Overture No. 1 in E minor op. 23 (1834)

Conducted by Rob Stahly

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Concerto in C major for Flute and Harp KV 299 (297c) (1778)

I. Allegro
II. Andantino
III. Rondeau: Allegro

Dr. Stanley
Prof. Harms

INTERMISSION

Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)

Symphony in A (1850)

I. Poco Adagio - Allegro Vivace
II. Larghetto
III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
IV. Finale: Allegro molto – Presto

PROGRAM NOTES

Louise Farrenc / Overture No. 1 in E Minor, op. 23

Louise Farrenc (1804–1875) was born in Paris, France in the same year that Napoleon was crowned emperor. Her family members included well-known, open-minded painters and sculptors who encouraged her growth and self-expression in music, in spite of the fact she was a woman. This kind of support was unusually progressive for the time. She was such a talented pianist that she was admitted to the Paris Conservatory at the age of fifteen to study piano and musical composition. Later in her career, she was offered a faculty position at the conservatory, making her the only female music professor to serve there in the nineteenth century. While she was a student, she met her soon-to-be husband, Aristide Farrenc. They married when she was seventeen and he was twenty-seven. Aristide's music company published several of her piano and chamber works, a primary reason they are still known today.

One of her piano pieces, a set of variations called *Air russe varié*, was lauded by Schumann in 1836 as "so sure in outline, so logical in development … that one must fall under their charm, especially since a subtle aroma of romanticism hovers over them." Farrenc also made important contributions to the chamber music repertoire of the time, including two piano quintets and two piano trios. Her Nonet, written in 1850, was premiered by star violinist Joseph Joachim and was a huge hit, earning her significant critical acclaim. Farrenc was an avid scholar of music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and a proponent of early music performance practice. She and her students performed early music works at gatherings called *séances historiques*.

Farrenc wrote three symphonies in the 1840s. Unfortunately, neither her symphonies nor her overtures were published in her lifetime. They were, however, performed in Paris, Copenhagen, Brussels, and Geneva. Her symphonies might be seen as successors to those of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, whose works she championed. Her use of counterpoint and fugue is particularly impressive. Her two overtures, both written in 1834, are somewhat lighter fare than her symphonies, and reminiscent of an older style akin to Beethoven, who died when she was 23. **Overture No. 1 in E minor,** op. 23, is in a typical sonata form with a slow introduction. The piece is given the label of E minor, but it starts and ends in E major, with several key changes along the way. Despite frequent changes in key that could be jarring if not handled well, Farrenc makes transitions between key areas relatively seamless.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart / Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299/297c

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was born in Salzburg, Austria to a musical family, but he stood out as a genius, even among his family members. He was a child prodigy, playing the piano at age three and starting to compose at age five. His sister, Maria Anna, and his father, Leopold, were also accomplished musicians. Together the family toured all over Europe, visiting several important courts such as Louis XV's Versailles.

Mozart's **Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major** is an example of a *Symphonie Concertante*, an eighteenth-century concerto form for two or more solo instruments and orchestra that was especially popular in France at the time. By the nineteenth century—the time of Farrenc and later Saint-Saëns—the form had largely gone out of style. This work is somewhat unique as Mozart's only composition for harp. The concerto was written in April 1778, almost three months before the death of Mozart's mother, which affected him greatly, leading to a lull in his compositional output. In the months leading up to her death, she traveled around Europe with him as he sought employment apart from the Archbishop of Salzburg. Mozart and his mother arrived in Paris in March of 1778. She fell ill in June and died soon after on July 3. When his father Leopold heard the terrible news, he sent a concerned letter to his son. In subsequent letters, however, he accused Amadeus for not taking sufficient care of his mother, implying that he was responsible for her death.

— notes by Ethan Buell

Camille Saint-Saëns / Symphony in A Major

The father of Parisian born Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) died three months after he was born. He was raised by his mother, Clémence Francoise, and his aunt, Charlotte Masson, who taught him how to play the piano. Like Mozart, Saint-Saëns was a music prodigy. At age two and a half he had perfect pitch. He composed his first piece for piano, dated 22 March 1839, at age three. At five, he was studying Mozart's operas, particularly *Don Giovanni.* He played Mozart's and Beethoven's piano pieces at such a young age that his aunt wondered what he would be playing by the age of twenty. His mother responded, "his own." He gave his first recital in 1846, where both the audience and the press celebrated Saint-Saëns as a new Mozart.

In 1848, Saint-Saëns entered the Paris Conservatory, where he studied the organ with François Benoist and composition with J. F. Halévy. **Symphony in A Major** was composed

in 1850, perhaps even before he joined Halévy's class. In 1852, he submitted this piece in the competition Prix de Rome, but lost. This symphony, Saint-Saëns's second, is a very formal example of the genre and his musical language is generally conservative. Traces of earlier composers' techniques quickly become apparent. The work is Haydnesque in style and scale, and reminiscent of early Schubert. The *Adagio* introduction ends with a Beethovian chord. The finale turns unexpectedly into a rumbustious conclusion like the one in Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony.* And he also incorporates cyclic procedures, just as Schumann did in his symphonies.

Symphony in A major is composed in the standard four movements: "Poco adagio. Allegro vivace," "Andantino," "Scherzo vivace," and "Finale. Allegro molto." The wind instruments used have evolved drastically since the piece was composed. In 1850, flutes were made from caucus wood or rosewood. Oboes were boxwood, unlike today's that are made of blackwood. Clarinets during the period were known as chalumeau and did not have the upper range of altissimo notes that today's clarinetists use. Saint-Saëns also called for two saxhorns, a valued brass instrument invented by Adolph Sax (more famously known for inventing the saxophone), which now must be played by modern brass instruments.

— notes by Alfredo Ramirez

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Stephen Dombrowski
Percussion
Eric Hollenbeck
Shilo Stroman
Harp
Kathryn Harms

Piano
Bryan Wallick
Organ
Joel Bacon
Voice
Nicole Asel
Tiffany Blake

Wes Kenney is celebrating his 20th season as Music Director of the Fort Collins (Colorado) Symphony and Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University. At the latter, he was just named a University Distinguished Professor, the highest honor the university can award. The 2007 Grand Prize Winner of the Varna (Bulgaria) International Conducting Competition, a 2020 Honored Artist from the American Prize, a winner of the American Prize for programming in 2020, a winner of the Ernst Bacon Memorial Prize for excellence in performance of American Music, and the 2020 American Prize Winner for best orchestral performance in the Professional Orchestra Division, Wes Kenney will also be in his 10th season with Denver Young Artist Orchestra—the premier youth orchestra in the state of Colorado. DYAO has been recognized by the city of Denver for outreach and as an ambassador for Colorado. He has led that orchestra on two European tours and anchored two festivals at Carnegie Hall. Next summer he will lead that orchestra on tour to Southern California where they will play at Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Mr. Kenney's guest conducting activities include the Acadiana Symphony (LA), Alabama Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Colorado Symphony, Dubuque Symphony, Lafayette (IN) Symphony, Long Beach Symphony, New Mexico Symphony, Richmond Symphony, Riverside Symphonia, Savannah Symphony, and the Virginia Symphony. International guest conducting includes performances with the Liev (Ukraine) Philharmonic, Changwon (South Korea) Philharmonic, Vietnam National Symphony (Hanoi), Vidin State Philharmonic, Stara Zagora Opera Company in Bulgaria as well as the Edinburgh (Scotland) Music Festival.

Mr. Kenney has also enjoyed success directing opera, ballet and musical theater. Previous positions include Music Director of Opera Fort Collins, Music Director of the Virginia Ballet Theater, Co-Principal Conductor of the Oakland Lyric Opera, and Guest Conductor with Universal Ballet Korea. Since 2004 he has conducted productions of *Carmen, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Sweeney Todd, Turn of the Screw, Barber of Seville*, *Madama Butterfly, Cenerentola, Rigoletto, Tosca, Otello, Die Zauberflote, Die Fledermaus, La Traviata, Il Trovatore, Street Scene, La Boheme, Orfeo, Pagliacci, Cavelleria Rusticana, Falstaff, Turandot, Marriage of Figaro*, *Serse*, *The Merry Widow, Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Tenderland.* In addition he has conducted over two hundred performances of *The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, The Firebird,* and many other dance works.

In six seasons as the Virginia Symphony's Associate Conductor, Mr. Kenney appeared more than 350 times with that orchestra where he was responsible for programming and conducting Pops, Family and Young People's Concerts. During his tenure with the Virginia Symphony, he was also invited to guest conduct the Williamsburg Symphonia, Virginia Chorale, Norfolk Chamber Consort and Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival.

Named Educator of the Year by the Colorado Chapter of the American String Teachers Association in 2008, Mr. Kenney enjoys working with talented young people in his position as Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and has served as Guest Conductor with the Alabama, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Virginia All-State Orchestras. Awarded the prestigious Carmen Dragon Conducting Prize in 1992, Wes Kenney is a founder of the CSU Summer Master of Music Education with an emphasis in conducting program, now in its 12th year.

He was recently a guest lecturer at the Conductor's Institute held at Bard College in upstate New York, teaching alongside the late Harold Farberman and American Symphony Orchestra Music Director Leon Botstein.

Mr. Kenney is a past president of the Conductors Guild, a 2000-member service organization to the conducting profession. He currently is on the Guild's advisory board. He is a graduate of the University of Southern California and San Francisco State University. Additional studies include three years as a fellow at the Conductors Institute, several American Symphony Orchestra League and Conductors Guild Workshops, and the Sandpoint Festival. His teachers include Harold Farberman, Hans Beer, Gunther Schuller, Hans Swarovsky and Miltiardes Carides.

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Robert Stahly is an adept and adaptive Northern Colorado based musician. During his 13 years as Director of Orchestras at Longmont High School he grew the orchestra program to over triple its size while at the same time increasing the quality and diversity of the ensembles. Active as a performer, Robert was the Associate Principal Cellist with the Longmont Symphony Orchestra and is the cellist for the Elevation String Quartet. He is currently the director for the Denver Young Artists Orchestra String Ensemble. Robert is attending Colorado State University to pursue a Masters Degree in Orchestral Conducting, studying under Wes Kenney.

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY SINFONIA

WES KENNEY, Conductor
Robert Stahly, Graduate Teaching Assistant

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concertmaster
Isabella Ulate
asst. concertmaster
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Rhea Chan
Mary Fox
Grant Johnson+

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