



Appalachian Spring & Les Préludes
Wednesday, July 19th, 2023
7PM – DCR Hatch Memorial Shell

Appalachian Spring & Les Préludes

Boston Landmarks Orchestra | Christopher Wilkins, Music Director

Christopher Wilkins, conductor

The Creatures of Prometheus: Overture Op. 43

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

On a Spring Morning

Lili Boulanger
(1893-1918)

Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

INTERMISSION

On the Cliffs of Cornwall

Ethel Smyth
(1858-1944)

Upon Daybreak

Brian Raphael Nabors
(b. 1991)

Les Préludes

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Run Time

The total run time of this concert is approximately **2 hours**, with one 15-minute intermission. The concert will end approximately at 9pm.

About Boston Landmarks Orchestra



CHRISTOPHER WILKINS was appointed Music Director of the Boston Landmarks Orchestra in the spring of 2011. Since then, he has expanded the orchestra's mission of making great music accessible to the whole community. He has also helped develop the orchestra's Breaking Down Barriers initiative, making accessibility a priority in all aspects of the orchestra's activities.

Mr. Wilkins also serves as Music Director of the Akron Symphony. As a guest conductor, Mr. Wilkins has appeared with many of the leading orchestras of the United States, including those of Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco. Previously, Mr. Wilkins served as Music Director of the Orlando Philharmonic, the San Antonio Symphony, and the Colorado Springs Symphony.

He has served as associate conductor of the Utah Symphony, assisting Joseph Silverstein; assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra under Christoph von Dohnányi; conducting assistant with the Oregon Symphony under James DePreist; and was a conducting fellow at Tanglewood. He was winner of the Seaver/NEA Award in 1992.

Born in Boston, Mr. Wilkins earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard College in 1978. He received his master of music degree at Yale University in 1981, and in 1979 attended the Hochschule der Künste in West Berlin as a recipient of the John Knowles Paine traveling fellowship. As an oboist, he performed with many ensembles in the Boston area, including the Berkshire Music Center Orchestra at Tanglewood, and the Boston Philharmonic under Benjamin Zander.

First Violin

Gregory Vitale, *CONCERTMASTER*

Christine Vitale

Heidi Braun-Hill

Zoya Tsvetkova

Omar Chen-Guey

Stacey Alden

Susan Jensen

Yonah Zur

Lisa Brooke

Second Violin

Paula Oakes, *PRINCIPAL*

Rose Drucker

Aleksandra Labinska

Robert Curtis

Lilit Hartunian

David Rubin

Piotr Buczek

Sheila Vitale

Viola

Kenneth Stalberg, *PRINCIPAL*

Abigail Cross

Clarinet

Rane Moore, *PRINCIPAL*

Nicholas Brown

Bass Clarinet

Hunter Bennett

Bassoon

Katia Osorio, *ACTING PRINCIPAL*

Gregory Newton

Contrabassoon

Margaret Phillips

Horn

Whitacre Hill, *ACTING PRINCIPAL*

Jane Sebring

Sarah Sutherland

Nancy Hudgins

Trumpet

Dana Oakes, *PRINCIPAL*

Jesse Levine

Don Krishnaswami

Noriko Futagami

Sharon Bielik

Willine Thoe

Samuel Kelder

Cello

Aron Zelkowicz, *PRINCIPAL*

Melanie Dyball

Patrick Owen

Miriam Eckelhoef

Kevin Crudder

Eleanor Blake

Bass

Robert Lynam, *PRINCIPAL*

Barry Boettger

Kevin Green

Joseph Holt

Flute

Lisa Hennessey, *PRINCIPAL*

Matthew Lee

Rachel Braude

Piccolo

Rachel Braude

Oboe

Andrew Price, *PRINCIPAL*

Benjamin Fox

English Horn

Alessandro Cirafici

Trombone

Robert Couture, *Principal*

Hans Bohn

Donald Robinson

Tuba

Donald Rankin, *PRINCIPAL*

Timpani

Jeffrey Fischer, *PRINCIPAL*

Percussion

Craig McNutt, *ACTING PRINCIPAL*

Mike Williams

Dylan Barber

Harp

Ina Zdorovetchi, *PRINCIPAL*

Piano

Vytas Baksys

Personnel Manager

Christopher Ruigomez

Librarian

Ashton Bush

Assistant Librarian

Sage Sile

Green Concert Partners



The Emerald Necklace Conservancy connects people and parks and conserves the Emerald Necklace through projects and programs that enrich the visitor experience and restore and renew the landscape, waterways and parkways. To steward the Emerald Necklace's 1,100 acres of parkland extending from Boston's Back Bay through Brookline and Jamaica Plain to Franklin Park in Dorchester, the Conservancy collaborates with its partners on advocacy, maintenance and restoration, education and access and promoting park stewardship through volunteer and youth programs. You can learn more about them at www.emeraldnecklace.org (<https://www.emeraldnecklace.org/>).



ESS specializes in placing qualified staff in daily, long-term, and permanent K-12 school district positions including substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school support staff. Over the last 23 years, they have innovated education staffing to provide dynamic solutions to school districts and professional opportunities to passionate educators. Their team serves over 5 million students with a pool of 92,000 substitute and permanent employees throughout 34 states. Internally, the ESS team is comprised of 650 individuals with a passion for education working together to ensure our 900 partner districts experience valuable education every day. You can learn more about them at ess.com (<https://ess.com/>).

About our Ambassador Program

Started in 2022, the Ambassador Program aims to seasonally employ enthusiastic, music-loving folks from a variety of backgrounds, representing the diversity of Boston's neighborhoods. With 54% of our Ambassadors speaking more than one language—including Spanish, Portuguese, and French—they help spread the word of Boston Landmarks Orchestra to a vast number of Boston communities, including Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, East Boston and more. From promoting our concerts in their own neighborhoods, to helping patrons both new and familiar navigate the Esplanade, our Ambassadors are here to engage as many people as possible, promoting Boston Landmarks Orchestra's mission of building community through great music.

Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven owned and liked a portrait of himself made by the German painter Joseph Willibrord Mähler. It shows the composer sitting in a field. His left hand holds a lyre; he extends his right hand across the horizon, seeming to connect earth to heaven. In the distance is the temple of Apollo, Greek god of music. The portrait is a representation of Enlightenment ideals: that great art mirrors nature, and that a great artist, in emulating nature's perfection, can bring humanity closer to godliness.

The Greek god Beethoven seems to have identified with most closely was Prometheus, the last of the Titans, who shared the secrets of fire with human beings. With fire also came illumination, science, technology, and the arts. "Beethoven saw himself as such a figure," writes music historian Alexander Lawlor, "and sought through his music to expose his listeners to higher emotions and higher ideals: freedom, human rights, and an appreciation of the wonder, beauty, and joy of the world."

Beethoven's **Overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus*** begins with powerful chords separated by long silences. No other composer before Sibelius used extended silence to such powerful effect. These pauses support great expanses within Beethoven's opening phrase, as if creating space between pillars at the entrance to his musical temple. At the Hatch Shell, these silences may also support collaboration: from motorcycles, emergency vehicle sirens, boat horns, seagulls... we never know, but inclusion is our hallmark.

The overture is immediately recognizable as Beethovenian, with its sudden dynamic changes and disruptive accents. A noble and expansive theme at the beginning—in oboes, horns, and strings—is of a type that Maynard Solomon has characterized as "absolute melody." It is the kind of broad, singing melody that Beethoven created throughout his life, including in his setting of Schiller's "Ode to Joy." When the main fast section begins, it is all Promethean fire, with crackling rhythms and surging scales that leap up in the strings. The contrasting second section begins with arpeggios—broken chords—in the winds, conveying the dancing, artful, civilizing aspect of Prometheus's gift to humanity. The overture is compact, with no real development section—the middle section of a movement where a composer might create new variants of existing themes. Yet there is plenty of variety; the material is constantly changing energy and shape, as fire does.

Parisian composer **Lili Boulanger** died so young—she was just twenty-four—that she had no opportunity to create an extensive body of work. And yet, her two dozen or so compositions include works of astonishing quality, in an array of genres: piano pieces, chamber music, choral works, a choral-orchestral cantata, an advanced draft of an opera, and orchestral and vocal-orchestral works. Mozart died at the age of thirty-five; Bizet at thirty-six; Gershwin at thirty-eight. But at least we have the *Jupiter Symphony*, *Carmen Suite*, and *An American in Paris*. In Boulanger's case, we have only two short orchestral tone poems, including tonight's work.

She originally scored *D'un Matin de Printemps (On a Spring Morning)* in the spring of 1917 for violin and piano. Soon afterward, she made a new version for piano trio. The following year—her last—she dictated the orchestral version we perform tonight. By this time, she was completely bedridden, suffering from Crohn's disease. The manuscripts to all three versions of *On a Spring Morning* are in the hand of her sister, Nadia, who served as her amanuensis. Nadia would go on to become the most renowned composition teacher of the twentieth century, mentor to Aaron Copland, Elliot Carter, and so many others.

On a Spring Morning is six minutes in length. Made up of two equal halves, it moves between two contrasting moods: one quick and playful, the other languid and sensuous. Boulanger's imaginative handling of orchestral color is evident from the beginning. Color itself is part of Boulanger's subject, as it often was for Debussy, a major influence. But she also uses instruments as if characters in a story. In this she resembles her contemporary Manuel de Falla, who was creating his masterpieces *El amor brujo* and the *Three-Cornered Hat* at exactly the same time.

The work opens with bright repeated chords in the upper strings and woodwinds, with bell-like highlights in the triangle and celeste. Soon the sparkling main theme launches. The scoring is upside down: the tune is below the range of the accompaniment, even though the instrument playing it is among the highest-sounding instruments in the orchestra, the flute. When the melody recurs, upward running scales in the woodwind accompany it. The scales are borrowed from the third bar of the main theme, so in essence the tune accompanies itself. The harp carries the melody now, shadowed by solo cello, in a reversal of their usual roles. The third statement of the theme blends the sound of bassoon with that of the piccolo, another unusual choice. The two main components of the theme repeat several times in different instrumental hues, with gentle gusts of rhythmic motion, suggesting the work's subject matter. If all of this weren't so finely rendered, so natural sounding, we would be distracted by its constant ingenuity.

A sense of urgency grows from the prodding of horns and trumpets, before the music settles into a momentarily calm state. The indication in the score here is "mysterious, sustained." The intensity builds again until the opening music returns: this is the beginning of the work's second half. Now solo instruments take the lead: woodwinds, brass, violin, and viola. Another subdued passage follows, with characteristics of the earlier "mysterious" music, but there are now two new melodies in counterpoint, one in the solo flute and the other in the violas. When the repeated chords of the opening return once again, they are here to stay. The opening theme reappears, inviting enthusiastic participation throughout the orchestra. The final phrase is built out of an upward surge from the strings, a quick descending flourish in the harp, and a final exclamation mark incited by the tuba.

Many Americans feel that in celebrating the music of **Aaron Copland**, we celebrate all America. His heroes are American heroes—Abraham Lincoln, John Henry, the Common Man; his music speaks of disparate American peoples—Shakers, Mexicans, Cubans, cowboys, frontier people; and his collaborators were national icons—Martha Graham, Benny Goodman, William Warfield, and Leonard Bernstein. Moreover, he practically invented an American musical "accent"—the Copland Sound—which is by now a part of the national musical idiom.

But history is told by the storytellers, and today, some tell a different story. Joseph Horowitz argues that the American composers who emerged as leaders after World War I failed to embrace the diverse vernacular styles that define Americanism. Crucially, they ignored Antonín Dvořák's advice that an American national style should be built on the legacy of the "Negro melodies of America," where Dvořák found "all that is needed for a great and noble school of music." In his influential 2022 book, *Dvořák's Prophecy*, Horowitz asserts that it is not Copland and his colleagues, but a different group of twentieth-century composers who accurately reflected "America's past in their music, shaping a truer version of our present. Composers like Lou Harrison, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and John Adams embody American confluence, drawing on vernacular and popular sources as far afield as Javanese gamelan, West African drumming, Indian ragas, and the Benny Goodman Band."

Next week, the Boston Landmarks Orchestra performs music embodying "American confluence." ***Seen/Unseen***, our July 26 program with **Terri Lyne Carrington**, is made up entirely of works composed by Black American women. The near-complete absence of music by Black composers until recently on programs by American orchestras—and the shutting out of music by Black women specifically—has narrowed our understanding of who has contributed to our art form. It has diminished the variety, relevance, and listenability of our concerts by excluding many works that have shaped a "truer version" of ourselves. Next week's program includes a range of extraordinary works—tiny samplings to be sure—pointing to what we've been missing.

Compared to music more closely tied to the American vernacular, Copland's works display a relatively active composer's hand. They are shaped by invention, ingenuity, and constant devising. They have been described as characteristically French, reflecting the influence that Nadia Boulanger had on him. But to support Horowitz's point, the Copland works that invoke popular styles most directly have caught on best. None of this, of course, changes what his compositions are. Many are core repertoire for American orchestras—they are attractive, captivating, and inspired.

The American public has always loved the music of ***Appalachian Spring***. No words express that affection better than those of his co-creator—choreographer and principal dancer in the original production—Martha Graham. In a letter to Copland in October 1944, she wrote, "I have been listening to your music. It is so beautiful and wonderfully made. I have become obsessed by it; it is so well knit, and of a completeness that it takes you in very strong hands and leads you into its world. And there I am. I also know that "The Gift to be Simple" will stay with people and give them great joy. I hope I can do well with it, Aaron. No idea as to name yet, so we must get together on that."

In the end, the “name” came from Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*, an epic poem about America:

*O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends
And northward reaches in that violet wedge
Of Adirondacks!—wisped of azure wands.*

Crane’s “spring” is a water source, not a season. But that doesn’t matter any more than the fact that there never were any Shakers in the hills of Pennsylvania. Graham chose the title because she liked the sound of the words. In a 1981 [interview with artist Paul Jenkins \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_LcjNe9fMQ\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_LcjNe9fMQ), Copland said, “I’ve often been amused because, after a performance someone has come up to me and said, more than one once: ‘When I hear your music and see that ballet, I can just see the Appalachians and feel spring!’ And the odd thing is that when I wrote the music... it had no title. I had no idea it was going to be called *Appalachian Spring*. I was really putting Martha to music.”

Though he learned it only after completing the score, Copland described Graham’s scenario as: “a celebration in spring around a newly built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the [19th] century. The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, their new partnership invites. An older neighbor suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end, the couple are left quiet and strong and their new house.”

Appalachian Spring was a wartime commission, supported by philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Copland had to think how to make best use of the limited space available in the pit of Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress, where the work premiered. In the end, he settled on thirteen instruments: flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, and strings. A year later, he made the full-orchestra suite we perform tonight, leaving out ten minutes of the original ballet score.

The music begins with three repeated notes in the second violins and violas. The pitch is an an A—the note the orchestra tunes to, the first letter of the alphabet, a note that symbolizes beginnings. Then, a solo clarinet outlines an A-major chord, which Copland indicates should be played “simply” and with a “white tone.” Two chords grow at a leisurely pace in the strings, opening upward like flowers: A-major then E-major. When the final note of the second chord sounds, it is a G-sharp, lending a minor cast to the first chord, turning A-major to C-sharp minor. A low octave in the harp reinforces the tonality of A; the opening pattern repeats in a new variant, introducing the bright sonority of a muted trumpet. A broad descending line unfolds in the solo violin and flute; its wide intervals express Copland’s idea of long vistas and the American landscape.

Suddenly a new figure leaps forth from the upper strings, piano, and xylophone, ending with a thud in the long drum. Copland characterized this section of the work as “elated and religious.” The ascending arpeggios return, but now they are rapid, nimble, and full of abandon. A noble hymn tune emerges with the first entrance of the trombones—instruments of sacred music by tradition—giving voice to Copland’s “religious” sentiment. This hymn is the first of two tunes that form the heart of *Appalachian Spring*, and it appears throughout the work. The other, “Simple Gifts,” comes only toward the end.

A slow accompanying dance rhythm in the brass and bassoons creates an intimate moment for the Bride and Groom. Simple short motives in the clarinet grow in length and depth of feeling, as the contentment of the couple becomes tinged with anxious thoughts. Solo oboe and woodwinds introduce the fourth section, featuring the Revivalist and his Followers. They kick off a country dance, led by the fiddles, in music that is playful, even giddy. Every member of the orchestra has a chance to shine, as do the dancers in the ballet version. There is little premonition of the Revivalist’s stern warnings that come later in the ballet version, set to music that Copland excised in creating the orchestral suite. A stirring phrase in Copland’s oratorical voice concludes the dance of the Revivalist—Merce Cunningham in the original production—leading to the fifth section, an extended solo for the Bride, Martha Graham’s character.

The Bride expresses her hopes and fears. Rather than any specific idea of an impending wedding, or the building of a new home on the frontier, Copland said he was “really putting Martha to music... She’s so proud, so very much herself... And she’s unquestionably very American: there’s something prim and restrained, simple yet strong...” The vigor and angularity of the rhythms convey another important, different aspect of Martha Graham’s dancing persona.

A new slower section begins with a tune in the solo violin and oboe, built from the earlier “religious” hymn-tune. The nostalgic music of the ballet’s opening returns, leading to the variations on a Shaker tune. In later years, Copland couldn’t recall how he got ahold of Edward Deming Andrews’s 1940 book, *The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers*. But his use of the previously unknown “Simple Gifts” made the song instantly popular throughout the country. Its lyric reflected Copland’s stylistic leanings at the time: “I felt that it was worthwhile to see if I couldn’t say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms.” And its constantly turning melodic shape—whether intentionally or serendipitously—reflects a key aspect of Graham technique, which Diana Hart-Johnson has described as “the ‘spiraling’ of the torso around the axis of the spine.”

At the conclusion of the “Simple Gifts” variations, the strings, quietly and with mutes on, escort the Bride into the couple’s new farmhouse. Moving twice toward a final landing spot, the strings arrive instead on inconclusive chords. Woodwinds offer an alternative; the strings rejoin again, this time marked “sonorously,” and on the third attempt, strings and winds together arrive on a chord that somehow achieves perfect stillness. We rest in the key of C-major, the key with no sharps or flats, the key

purity. The solo flute gently sings the “religious” hymn-tune in a phrase filled with love and prayer. The work concludes as it began: with a “white tone” broken chord in the clarinet, and three single pitches, this time in the blended color of glockenspiel and harp harmonics. The purity and serenity of Copland’s scoring seems to stand for nothing less than a shared hope for America itself. On May 8, 1945, right beneath the headline, “*THE WAR IN EUROPE IS ENDED!*” was another headline: “*Pulitzer Awards for 1944 Announced.*” *Appalachian Spring* had become part of American history.

Today, British composer **Ethyl Smyth’s** 1906 opera, *The Wreckers*, enjoys international success, finally. The Boston Landmarks Orchestra performed the overture on Opening Night a year ago. The opera has been produced recently at Glyndebourne, BBC Proms, Houston Grand Opera, and at Bard College’s SummerScape, where it received its US premiere in 2015. The 2020 Landmarks season included an account of the colorful life of Ethel Smyth, delivered by guest artist Grace Kelly. She spoke from the Charles Street Jail (aka Liberty Hotel), telling the story of Smyth’s incarceration for throwing rocks through the British Home Secretary’s window, retaliating against him for being what we would now call a “male chauvinist pig.”

Smyth (rhymes with “writhe”) struggled to find an opera house willing to present *The Wreckers*. She made attempts in four different countries, preparing versions of the opera in three different languages: French, German, and English. In the end, the premiere was given in Leipzig, with the title *Standrecht*, in a performance she was unhappy with. Three years later, Thomas Beecham led *The Wreckers* at His Majesty’s Theatre, London, and again at Covent Garden the following season. Gustav Mahler contemplated scheduling it at the Vienna State Opera. When that production failed to materialize, Smyth rued the missed opportunity: “He was far and away the finest conductor I ever knew, with the most all-embracing musical instinct, and it is one of the small tragedies of my life that just when he was considering *The Wreckers* at Vienna, they drove him from office.”

Smyth found the setting and subject for *The Wreckers* on a walking tour of coastal Cornwall and the Scilly Isles in 1886. Her libretto, written in collaboration with Henry Bennet Brewster, expands on local reports of 19th century villagers luring passing ships onto the rocks by moving or removing lights placed on the cliffs on stormy nights. The residents would then board the wrecked ships, kill everyone on board, and loot their possessions. She said she was “haunted by impressions of that strange world of more than a hundred years ago... the relentless murder of [the ships’] crews; and with it all the ingrained religiosity of the Celtic population of that barren promontory...”

“**On the Cliffs of Cornwall,**” the Prelude to Act II, was published as an independent concert work in 1909, three years after the opera’s premiere. The music leads into the scene that follows, which takes place at the base of steep cliffs, where Mark, a young fisherman, has been placing torches at night to warn passing ships of dangerous rocks below. These secretive acts thwart the treacherous and murderous intentions of his fellow villagers.

The opening sounds of the Prelude open up a vast expanse between lowest strings and a high pitch in piccolo, flute, and first violins. The space is filled by an uprush in the harp, which rises to meet a two-note motive in clarinets and muted trumpets. This pregnant melodic fragment is the type of concentrated material that Britten used to similar psychological effect forty years later in *Peter Grimes*. Three horns introduce a darkly foreboding theme in the lower strings, whose haunting melody comes to rest on an ambiguous unison A-natural, supported by a timpani roll. Clarinets and flutes look skyward. The cry of a gull alternates with the two-note motive. Rolling waves in the horns provoke growing power. The wave action continues, but it is gentler now, sounding in the violas, as oboes and violins sing a melody of deep sadness. Long lines unfold with a mounting feeling of uncertainty. The gull motive, rolling waves, skyward music, and snippets of the sad romantic tune all intermingle. Toward the conclusion of the prelude’s eight minutes, a strange processional sets out in the lowest reaches of the orchestra: basses, bass clarinet, low harp, and percussion. The quiet sound of gong and rolling snare drum, joined by plucked strings, warns of the action to come. Once again, an upward swoop in the harp leads to sustained pitches in high woodwinds and basses—and we are back, more or less, where we began.

Upon Daybreak for Orchestra by **Brian Raphael Nabors** is the result of a project led by New Music USA, with whom the Boston Landmarks Orchestra collaborated in a 2015, in commissioning composer Clarice Assad to write *Cirandadas*. *Upon Daybreak* is the result of a commission between Landmarks and four other orchestras: the Berkeley Symphony (lead orchestra in the consortium); the Seattle Symphony; Detroit Symphony; and the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. New Music USA’s *Amplifying Voices* program launched in 2020 to foster “collaboration and collective action between US orchestras and composers toward racial and gender equity in classical music.” More than forty-five orchestras now participate in the program. *Amplifying Voices* is powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund, with additional support from ASCAP, the Sorel Organization, and Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.

Brian Raphael Nabors writes, “For many years I’ve sat and contemplated what music in a world without hatred or malice would sound like. I imagine this picturesque utopia with sound that engulfs the listener with abundant joy; an everlasting serenade; an ode of triumph.

“This work is deeply inspired by the rapturous words of Dr. Maya Angelou in her poem “A Brave and Startling Truth.” I am filled with great awe at the thought of finally arriving at the great “day of peacemaking” in which she describes so beautifully. What a glorious day that will be “when we come to it.”

"A lot of my music is about human connection... how can I tell the same story a billion different ways, so that everyone has a relationship to the music in some way. I've been in love with this poem for years, and I was looking for a way to sonically set it."

There was a time when ***Les Préludes*** appeared frequently on programs of American orchestras. The third of Franz Liszt's thirteen symphonic poems, it is one of many popular works that seem to fall in the cracks nowadays: Strauss Waltzes, Suppé Overtures, the music of Arthur Sullivan and Victor Herbert. Many consider these pieces too popular for classical programs, and too classical for pops programs. But a Landmarks concert is a perfect setting for such pieces, especially one with the allure of *Les Préludes*.

Liszt's published score begins with a question: "What else is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown Hymn, the first and solemn note of which is intoned by death?" The attribution of the quotation is vague. The title page says: *After Lamartine's "Méditation Poétiques."* But the text is not by the French writer Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine; it is by Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, a writer and Polish noblewoman who was in a decades-long relationship with Liszt.

In fact, the music was already drafted—and virtually complete—before Liszt had any thought of Lamartine. *Les Préludes* originally served as the overture to Liszt's choral setting of a cycle of four poems by the French poet Joseph Autran, called *The Four Elements*. The four poems' titles are: *The Earth*; *The North Winds*; *The Waves*; and *The Stars*. For unknown reasons, in the final version of *Les Préludes*, Liszt went to considerable length to obscure the connection to *The Four Elements*. There may have been copyright complications with some of the Autran poems that were still unpublished. But it also may have been the preference of his companion, Carolyne Wittgenstein, to associate the work with a favorite poet and statesman.

Tracing the work's origins to Autran's nature poems leads us to extra-musical associations that are a far cry from those spelled out in the score. The opening two pizzicatos in the strings, for example, have nothing to do with "the first and solemn note of... death." They introduce instead the main theme of *The Stars*. The rising melodic lines have a questioning quality, music for contemplation of the heavens. After the trombones lead a powerful variant of these lines, the music arrives at an expanse of generous melody-making, with two separate themes expressing love, in music adapted from his choral setting of *The Earth*. The earlier "Stars" music hovers in bassoons and basses. A storm at sea approaches, with winds of change first blowing in the cellos. A raging tempest erupts in Romantic-age variants of time-honored musical devices, similar to those Rossini used in the *William Tell* Overture. The storm music is adapted from Liszt's *The North Winds* and *The Waves*. Like Rossini—like Beethoven in the *Pastoral Symphony*—Liszt creates a gentle transition leading to bucolic music for a pastoral scene. Solo horn introduces a new rustic theme, which soon joins up with the love music. Trumpets bring fresh reinforcements, and soon love is triumphant. Trombones recall the music of *The Stars*, returning us, in the end, to the music of the opening.

Richard Taruskin has noted that the separate sections of *Les Préludes* create an overall structure similar to a classical symphony. The indebtedness to Beethoven may be most obvious. The idea is consistent with Liszt's characterization of his newly invented form as a Symphonic Poem. I imagine Liszt would have been pleased to see *The Creatures of Prometheus* Overture as tonight's concert opener, as he himself preferred to program *Les Préludes* alongside Beethoven's most famous nature piece, the *Pastoral Symphony*.

THANK YOU
to our many donors and supporters.

[Click here for current list of donors](https://www.landmarksorchestra.org/donate/2022-2023-donors/) (<https://www.landmarksorchestra.org/donate/2022-2023-donors/>).

Special thanks to Directors, Advisors, Musicians and Staff who make our work possible.

[Click here for a list of Board Members](https://www.landmarksorchestra.org/about/trustees-and-advisors/) (<https://www.landmarksorchestra.org/about/trustees-and-advisors/>).

Share With Us!

Tag us @LandmarksOrch

Use the hashtags #LandmarksOrchestra #Landmarks2023