

ASU orchestras

present

Of Titans



Alejandro Gómez Guillén

ASU Symphony Orchestra, Conductor & Music Director

Tuesday, April 29, 2024

7:30 p.m.

ASU Gammage

School of Music, Dance and Theatre

ASU Herberger Institute for
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Arizona State University

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Program

Momentum (1998)

Chen Yi

Born and raised in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, Chen Yi is the daughter of two classical-music-loving medical doctors who made sure she was exposed to as much Western and Chinese culture as possible. Besides her study of Western music via the violin, she steeped herself in European novels and other literature, and, of course, the Chinese classics. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1977), Chen Yi labored in the countryside, all the while playing revolutionary songs on the violin. It was in the fields that she found her roots, her motherland, and an appreciation and commonality with farmers and other non-intellectuals.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977, Chen Yi became a student at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she studied Western classical and traditional Chinese music. She then attended Columbia University in New York, where she earned her DMA in 1993.

“Since I speak naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language. Although I have studied Western music extensively and deeply since my childhood, and I write for all available instruments and voices, I think that my musical language is a unique combination and natural hybrid of all influences from my background.” These elements are aurally evident in *Momentum*.

Program

In Momentum sections of calm, transparent lyricism contrast with explosive, highly energized rhythmic patterns that drive the music forward. Importantly, elements of Chinese folksong are juxtaposed with advanced Western compositional techniques. In the preface to her score, Chen Yi clearly states the inspiration for this composition as “the power of ancient totems, the tension of the breathing lava (before it breaks up to flow), and the gesture of the exaggerated dancing lines in Chinese Calligraphy.”

Momentum opens with a folk-like tune played by piccolo accompanied by bongos. The volume builds as other woodwinds enter to create a tutti polyrhythmic section of primal power. This is followed by a solo violin cadenza that leads to a return of the folk material that is now varied and of greater intensity. Following this, the polyrhythmic music returns in an expanded version that eventually dissipates into a reprise of the opening folksong that is closer to its original setting. A coda for full orchestra brings the music to a close.

Momentum was commissioned by the Peabody Conservatory of Music in 1997. It was premiered at the Peabody Symphony Orchestra’s New York debut concert at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall on May 2, 1998.

Note by Steve Lacoste

Program

Symphony No. 1 in D Major (1888)

Gustav Mahler

I. Langsam, schleppend: wie ein Naturlaut

(Slow, dragging: as if spoken by nature)

II. Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

(With powerful movement, but not too fast)

III. Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen—Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise

(Solemn and measured, without dragging—Very simple, like a folk tune)—

IV. Stürmisch bewegt—Energisch

(Agitated in storm—Energetic)

During his lifetime, a majority of Mahler's fame and fortune came from his great skill as a conductor. Following a few short years of apprenticeship among the provincial opera houses of Europe, he quickly emerged as one of the foremost conductors of his time—and eventually became music director of the Vienna State Opera and conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, and then chief conductor in New York at the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic.

It took the world far longer to accept Mahler's genius as a composer. Indeed, a number of his late works were not premiered until after his death—and it was well into the second half of the 20th century before his symphonies became standard fare at concerts throughout the world.

Program

The First Symphony is a product of Mahler's "wandering years" as a young composer. Like the hero of his first great song cycle, *Songs of a Wayfarer*, he could be considered a wayfarer in the 1880s, moving from city to city and from conducting job to conducting job until, finally, in 1888, he landed his first important post as director of the Royal Opera in Budapest at the age of 28.

Mahler's outward success as a conductor, however, did not translate into understanding for his First Symphony, which was especially poorly received at its early performances. Audiences in Budapest (1889), Hamburg and Weimar (1893), and Vienna (1900) were equally bewildered by what they heard as total musical chaos and an unacceptable mixture of conflicting emotions and ideas. This might surprise us today, given the great popularity of Mahler's music in our time, but 100 years ago, Mahler's departures from classical form were too great— or too unexpected—for his contemporaries to grasp hold of immediately.

Other composers had written masterpieces in their 20s, but few had exercised such independence from their models as Mahler. As the composer himself once remarked, Beethoven had started out as a Mozartian composer, and Wagner as a follower of Weber and Meyerbeer; but he, Mahler, "had been condemned by a cruel fate to being himself from the start." To Mahler— as to Beethoven before him—the symphony was a form of drama. In later years, he would speak about the universality of the symphony and the necessity for it "to embrace everything." This heaven-storming attitude is already evident in the First Symphony. It accounts in no small part

Program

for the difficulties encountered by Mahler during the work's genesis, both before and after the Budapest premiere in 1889.

The first performance of this work was given under the title "Symphonic Poem in Two Parts" (with five movements grouped together into two halves). This title alluded to the existence of a literary or dramatic inspiration, but Mahler did not reveal the source. When the symphony was performed again in 1893, Mahler gave it a new title, "Titan," after a novel by a German Romantic writer named Jean Paul (1763–1825). After 1896, however, he removed the title, eliminated one movement, and arranged the others as we know them today.

Mahler also withdrew the story-like explanations of the symphony's program that he had written—and subsequently disavowed all such programmatic discussions of his later symphonies. Mahler was all too aware of the dangers inherent in such commentaries, for they rarely do justice to the music and can even create a false impression that they actually explain what is happening during the symphony's music. The so-called programs he did write can perhaps best be understood as attempts on Mahler's part to verbalize, often after the fact, the kinds of emotional sensibilities that the music evoked in his mind while composing. The real story of this symphony is how far Mahler went in expanding conventional forms to produce a complex and monumental work.

Program

The symphony's first movement utilizes the basic melody of one of Mahler's early songs, from his Songs of a Wayfarer group. This song, *Ging heut' morgen über's Feld* (I Walked This Morning Through the Field), depicts a happy summer morning with flowers blooming and birds singing. We understand that the entire movement can be seen to describe the gradual awakening of spring. We hear the musical interval of a perfect fourth (Mahler called it "a sound of nature" in the score)—and everything grows out of this one interval, like a tree from a small seed. Even the call of the cuckoo bird, evoked by the clarinet, is a perfect fourth (although real cuckoos sing an interval closer to a third).

The second movement is based on the Austrian country dance called the *Ländler* and is one of many Mahlerian movements inspired by this type of dance. A simple, rather unassuming tune, it is played with great rhythmic energy and is soon taken up by the full orchestra, with a large brass section comprising seven horns and four trumpets, and with the tempo marking "Wild."

Mahler called the third movement by several different titles, including "*À la pompes funèbres*" (In the Manner of a Funeral March) and "Funeral March in Callot's Manner" (in honor of 17th-century French engraver Jacques Callot whose satirical etchings anticipate those of Goya by a century). The immediate inspiration came from a popular woodcut by Moritz von Schwind (whom Mahler likely mistook for Callot) called *The Hunter's Funeral*

Program

Procession, in which the hunter is buried by the animals of the forest. The first audiences had much trouble with this movement's somewhat odd structure and form, but they certainly recognized the popular "Frère Jacques" melody. The alienation of this familiar tune played here in the minor mode yields an eerie mixture of humor, tragedy, mystery, and irony.

This grotesque funeral march evolves into an openly parodistic section whose unabashedly schmaltzy themes, played by oboes and trumpets, are reminiscent of Eastern European Jewish klezmer folk music. The melodies of two more of Mahler's Wayfarer songs (By the Road Stands a Linden Tree and My Sweetheart's Two Blue Eyes) are juxtaposed against this material, creating an interesting atmosphere of contrast that is at times painfully nostalgic. A more subdued recapitulation of the "Frère Jacques" tune and the klezmer material ends this unusual movement.

The finale, which follows the funeral march without a pause, is the longest and most complex movement in the symphony. Like the last movements of many earlier symphonies, it represents a progression from tragedy to triumph, but here the contrasts among the various emotions are exceptionally polarized. The fabric of this movement includes a lyrical second theme that—as in several of Mahler's later symphonies—seems to introduce us to a completely different world. There are also exuberant climaxes followed by relapses into despair, plus numerous recurrences of materials from the first movement. Finally, the work ends in a radiant D-major

ASU Symphony Orchestra

Program




coda coda proclaiming a final victory.

Note by Peter Laki



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ASU Symphony Orchestra
Conductor & Music Director
Alejandro Gómez Guillén

Assistant Conductor
Kara Piatt

CHEN YI

Flute
Dani Peterson+
Molly Olsen
Sam Lupe

Trumpet
Americo Zapata+
Brian Boydston
Xinyi Qiao

Oboe
Lauren Glomb+
Adelaide Martinez
Eli Shapiro

Trombone
Hugh Findley+
Kristian Bailes
Wendy Ostaszewski

Clarinet
Daniel Kim+
Rosabelle Zhou
Trisha Bacalso

Tuba
Max Godfrey

Timpani
Nathan Hossenlop

Bassoon
Harrison Cody+
Avi Martinez-Mason
Sonya Viquesney

Percussion
Eric Saroian
Josh Cruz

Horn
Jesse Boyd+
Isabella de Lima^
Bailye Hendley
Patrick Joyce
Brian Allen

Harp
Charles Lynch

+Principal
^Assistant Principal

ASU Symphony Orchestra

CHEN YI

Violin I

Ava Wipff*
Yu Zhuo^
Josh Thai
Yijun Wu
Olivia Bolles
Zoe Chen
Ching-An Hsueh
Le Luo
Chih-Lin Chen
Ramses Cid
Sarah Turner
Yueching Ting
Gisselle Sánchez-Díaz
Susan Dunn

Violin II

Megan Frederick+
Roman Rivera^
Esme Peters
Elizabeth Jones
Ruby Norman
Carlos Gamez
Emma Hill
Luke Stikeleather
Yun Hao
Wei Jhen Chen
Louis Coste
Manxi Xu
Martins Steinblums

Viola

Harriet Cohen+
Zhaojun Cai^
William Gu
Paul Hagge
Mason Haskett
Benjamin Reichler
Ruth Wu
Rui (Iris) Yang
Anika Kang
Maya Mokofisi
Nicole Allen

Cello

Bolin (Giselle) Ye+
Janice Dacoycoy^
Reagan Drewett
Kate Frederick
Noah Yang
Katee Grandil
Daniel Kim
Selina Lo
Matthew Sullivan

Bass

Lauren Burchell+
Sila Kuvanci^
Dominic Pedretti
Tzu-I Yang
Patrick Shambayati
Siqing Zhang

**Concertmaster
+Principal
^Assistant Principal*

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MAHLER

Flute

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Dani Peterson
Ya-Yun Chiang

Oboe

Lauren Glomb+
Eli Shapiro
Adelaide Martinez
Kaylee Hollerbach

Clarinet

Rosabelle Zhou+
Trisha Baclaso
Daniel Kim
Koby Slavin

Bassoon

Cooper Taylor+
Eddie Martinez
Avi Martinez-Mason

Horn

Jesse Boyd+
Isabella de Lima^
Bailye Hendley
Patrick Joyce
Brian Alan
Katherine Phillips
Isabella Kolasinski
Alyssa Herman

Trumpet

Alexander Strawn+
Brian Boydston
Americo Zapata
Leif Atchley
Xinyi Qiao

Trombone

Kristian Bailes+
Hugh Findley
Wendy Ostaszewski
Holden Welch

Tuba

Max Godfrey

Timpani

Nathan Hossenlop
Kevin Chen

Percussion

Kevin Chen
Eric Saroian
Caleb Hupp
Josh Cruz

Harp

Charles Lynch

+Principal
^Assistant Principal

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MAHLER

Violin I

Louis Coste*
Yijun Wu^
Yueching Ting
Chih-Lin Chen
Josh Thai
Sarah Turner
Ching-An Hsueh
Luke Stikeleather
Elizabeth Jones
Manxi Xu
Ruby Norman
Wei Jhen Chen
Tiffany Steinweg
Le Luo

Violin II

Ramses Cid+
Martins Steinblums^
Olivia Bolles
Yu Zhuo
Ava Wipff
Carlos Gamez
Yun Hao
Emma Hill
Gisselle Sánchez-Díaz
Megan Frederick
Roman Rivera
Esme Peters
Zoe Chen
Choimei Lao
Susan Dunn

Viola

William Gu+
Zhaojun Cai^
Benjamin Reichler
Ruth Wu
Rui (Iris) Yang
Mason Haskett
Paul Hagge
Harriet Cohen

Cello

Daniel Kim+
Bolin (Giselle) Ye^
Reagan Drewett
Matthew Sullivan
Janice Dacoycoy
Selina Lo
Kate Frederick
Katee Grandil
Noah Yang

Bass

Tzu-I Yang+
Siqing Zhang^
Lauren Burchell
Patrick Shambayati
Sila Kuvanci (also in
WE through 4/12)
Dominic Pedretti

**Concertmaster
+Principal
^Assistant Principal*

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About the Artists

ASU Symphony Orchestra

A leading orchestral program in the United States, the [ASU Orchestras](#) explore the vast creative range of today's contemporary orchestra and bring its audiences an engaging variety of masterworks, new music, groundbreaking guest artists, multi-media and multi-disciplinary collaborations, and award-winning programming. The ASU Orchestras are creating a new model for professional and pre-professional arts organizations that value the diverse potential of human creativity. The program is thus committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through music and the arts. In addition to numerous recordings and videos available online, the ASU Symphony Orchestra can be heard on Cedille Records with renowned pianist Ursula Oppens in the world premiere recording of Laura Kaminsky's Piano Concerto as well as on Spotify and other online platforms in the world premiere recording of [Carter Pann's Soprano Saxophone Concerto](#) featuring ASU's Christopher Creviston.

Dr. Alejandro Gómez Guillén

Conductor and violinist Alejandro Gómez Guillén approaches music as a space for discovery, collaboration, and storytelling. As Director of Orchestras at Arizona State University—home to one of the nation's leading orchestral programs and the largest public university in the United States—he guides a vibrant community of emerging artists and educators.

Alejandro also serves as Music Director of Sphere Ensemble, a string collective known for its adventurous programming and genre-crossing commissions, including a recent world premiere by GRAMMY-nominated composer Carter Pann.



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Previously, Alejandro spent two seasons as Assistant Conductor of the Omaha Symphony, participating in the Grammy-nominated premiere of Andy Akiho's *Sculptures*, and seven seasons as Artistic Director of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra, where he conducted the Indiana premiere of Florence Price's *Fourth Symphony* and the world premiere of Mickey Tucker's *Spiritual Collage*. During his tenure as Associate Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony, he led community, pops, educational, and bilingual programs, collaborating with artists such as Time for Three and mezzo-soprano Cecilia Duarte.

As a guest conductor, Alejandro has worked with orchestras across the U.S. and abroad, with upcoming engagements including the Orlando Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, West Texas Symphony, Tulsa's Signature Symphony, and Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá. Highlights include performances at the Oregon Bach Festival, in works like the B Minor Mass and St. John Passion, and collaborations with renowned conductors such as Ankush Kumar Bahl, Tito Muñoz, Eric Jacobsen, Robert Spano, and Ruth Reinhardt.

Alejandro combines artistry with education, having led the Omaha Symphony's acclaimed community and education programs, reaching 25,000 students annually. He was previously Assistant Professor of Music at Colorado Mesa University, where he tau As a violinist, Alejandro has served as concertmaster with the Grand Junction Symphony and Junges Stuttgarter Bach Ensemble, performing across Europe at venues like the Rheingau Music Festival and Berlin Philharmonie. He was a returning member of the Oregon Bach Festival's Berwick Academy for Historical Performance and plays in Duo Anthracite and Chaski Quartet with his wife, Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Cranor.

Born in Colombia and a proud U.S. citizen, Alejandro holds a Bachelor's degree in violin performance from Texas Christian University and Master's and Doctoral degrees in conducting and violin from the University of Colorado at Boulder. His research includes a critical edition of Jorge Pinzón's violin concerto and a guide to using Bach's orchestral dances for modern developing

ASU Symphony Orchestra




orchestras. His mentors include Gary Lewis, Helmuth Rilling, Mei-Ann Chen, and Matthew Halls.

When away from the stage, Alejandro can be found trail running, singing, or reveling in a Bach fugue—often with his family and a soundtrack by Ella, Nils Frahm, or Punch Brothers. ght violin, viola, and conducting while leading the university’s orchestras. Additional roles include Music Director of the Colorado Youth Philharmonia, conducting youth and collegiate orchestras, and leading historical performance projects as a violinist and conductor.



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ASU Instrumental and Voice Faculty

Woodwinds

Elizabeth Buck, *flute*
Martin Schuring, *oboe*
Joshua Gardner, *clarinet*
Jeff Anderle, *clarinet*
Albie Micklich, *bassoon*
Christopher Creviston, *saxophone*

Brass

Josef Burgstaller, *trumpet*
Bradley Edwards, *trombone*
John Ericson, *horn*
Deanna Swoboda, *tuba*

Strings

Nancy Buck, *viola*
Danwen Jiang, *violin*
Thomas Landschoot, *cello*
Charles Lynch, *harp*
Martha Masters, *guitar*
Katherine McLin, *violin*
Catalin Rotaru, *bass*
Jonathan Swartz, *violin*

Percussion

Michael Compitello
Simone Mancuso
Dom Moio
Matt Prendergast

Keyboard

Miki Aoki
Cathal Breslin
Andrew Campbell
Hannah Creviston
Kimberly Marshall
Baruch Meir
Caio Pagano

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the 22 tribes who are native to Arizona, and more specifically the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Piipaash or Pee Posh (Maricopa) tribes on whose ancestral homelands ASU's Tempe campus resides.

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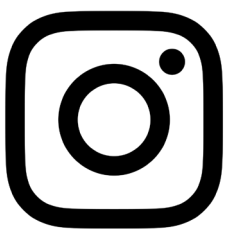
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