

O V E R T U R E !

The Newsletter of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra

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December 2004

Barlow '05 to perform saxophone concerto

by Erin Arai

Who's fun, friendly, talented, and sporting a million dollar smile? It's the Renaissance man LaMont Barlow '05, winner of the annual Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra concerto competition. Barlow blew us away the judges with a fabulous rendition of Ibert's Concertina for alto saxophone and chamber orchestra and will perform the piece with the HRO at the December 3rd concert.

Barlow currently juggles a bio-chemistry concentration, medical school applications, three to four hours of practice every day, and attending HRO rehearsals as this year's assistant conductor. Aside from the ability to accomplish all of that, the next most amazing thing about Barlow is that alto saxophone is not even his main instrument. In fact, this competition marks the first time since high school that he has focused on the saxophone at all.

Growing up, Barlow considered piano to be his primary instrument. He is still a talented pianist and accompanied a fellow competitor at

the concerto competition. He ultimately took up bassoon, saxophone and harp at various times during his academic and musical career.

Barlow is highly accomplished on every instrument, as he proved while attending the Interlochen Arts Camp in Interlochen, Michigan. In 1999 he won the Interlochen concerto competition on bassoon, and in 2000, while attending the camp on a governor's scholarship, he won the same competition on piano.

As a result of this unbelievable feat, Barlow was flown to Arizona to play in an event for financial supporters of Interlochen hosted by the radio show "From the Top." So, Barlow has won the top prize at concerto competitions on three out of the four instruments he plays.

Regarding his most recent accomplishment at the annual HRO competition, the musician said that he is "really excited" about the opportunity to perform the Ibert, which is one of the most prominent pieces in alto saxophone literature. He said he has "always wanted to play" this concerto.

Barlow explained that he first looked at the music when he was in high school, but at that point he was unable to completely absorb all the music's complexities. Now he breezes through the piece, looking relaxed and composed, with his rich, lush tone gliding over and through the orchestral part. "Sax is such an indulgent instrument," Barlow reflected, "sort of like the chocolate of music."

When asked how he manages to fit so many accomplishments into his life, Barlow looked thoughtful for a moment and then said "I guess I go into modes...this fall I was in music major mode, practicing three to four hours a day for this competition. Right after the competition, I



LaMont Barlow '05, the winner of the HRO's annual concerto competition, serves as a bassoonist and the assistant conductor of the orchestra. He also plays the harp and the piano. Barlow will perform the Ibert Concertina for alto saxophone and chamber orchestra on December 3rd.

switched to 'apply for med-school' mode. If I'm going to do something, I do it hardcore."

Barlow is also a proficient competitive ballroom dancer but has taken this year off from dancing to focus on music and applications. When not practicing one of his many instruments or attending an HRO rehearsal, Barlow is currently keeping up his school work and flying around the country to look at the various medical schools he is considering.

The orchestra looks forward to performing the saxophone concerto on December 3rd: the Ibert is a fun and upbeat piece of music, and Barlow is as charismatic in performance as he is in person.

THE HARVARD-RADCLIFFE ORCHESTRA

James Yannatos, Music Director

Second Subscription Series Concert

Yannatos:

Symphony Brevis

Ibert:

Concertina for Alto Saxophone

Bartok:

Concerto for Orchestra

**Friday, December 3, 2004
8:00 PM Sanders Theatre**

Yannatos symphony on concert program

Orchestra to premiere revised 1987 Symphony Brevis at December concert



Here, Dr. Yannatos conducts the HRO. Yannatos serves as a professor in the Harvard Music Department, conducts the HRO, and composes. *Symphony Brevis* is one of seven symphonies he has completed.

by Catherine Powell

As part of the program for the December 3rd concert, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra will perform *Symphony Brevis*, "one of seven symphonies composed by conductor Dr. James Yannatos.

Though most members of the HRO know Dr. Yannatos for his formidable conducting talents, composition was in fact his original focus. He began composing at the age of 11, writing short pieces for violin, his primary instrument. While,

in his own words, "I was no Mozart," he developed his compositional skills to the point where, as a high school student, he composed a work for chorus and orchestra. This composition introduced him to conducting when he led his high school orchestra in the first performance of this work.

Symphony Brevis has its origins in an earlier symphony Yannatos composed while studying in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. While he later discarded this symphony, ideas from it inspired

the first movement of *Symphony Brevis*. For the latter, which he completed in 1987, Yannatos also drew on material from his second string quartet, written after the death of John F. Kennedy, and a composition for solo horn. Yannatos conducted a reading of the work soon after its completion and subsequently revised it. On December 3rd, the HRO will perform the revised version.

Yannatos has great affection for *Symphony Brevis*, calling it a quirky piece that is serious, yet doesn't take itself too seriously. The piece employs a unique blend of 20th century and romantic ideas, with lyrical, dramatic gestures that are also short and succinct. The first movement utilizes a 12-tone row, yet Yannatos stresses that this is in no way a serial composition; rather, it is a "song and dance" piece that "catches the variety of American existence." The offbeat, edgy rhythms give the work a uniquely American feel, reflecting Yannatos' vision of *Symphony Brevis* as an expression of the polarities of American life and the richness of being American.

Members of the HRO have enjoyed working under Yannatos on his own composition and have been affected by the piece's modern feel. Trombonist Alex Wolitzky '07 explained, "It's really nice to play a piece that has a contrasting style to most of the other pieces we play."

Since composing *Symphony Brevis*, Yannatos has continued to lead a very active compositional life, completing six more symphonies, bass, piano and violin concertos, and a mass, which is his personal favorite. He is currently at work on a cello concerto, which he hopes to eventually premiere with the HRO.



Dr. James Yannatos is in his 41st year as conductor of the HRO. The HRO will perform the Yannatos *Symphony Brevis* at the December 3rd concert.



The HRO and Dr. Yannatos last toured East Asia in 1985. Twenty years later, the opportunity arises again. See related story, opposite.

HRO considers summer 2005 tour to China

Harvard pianist Yin Ma '08 invites the HRO to accompany Chen premiere

by Rachel Nolan

After a successful trip to Montreal and Quebec City in June 2004, the last thing that current Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra members expected was to be offered another chance to go on tour this summer. However, when piano prodigy Yin Ma '08 was offered the opportunity to tour throughout her native China in June 2005 with top Chinese orchestras, she turned down the chance and decided to inviting the HRO to join her instead.

Ma, who is widely recognized for her musical talent, moved to America at an early age. Her distinctions include top prizes at the First International Music Festival Piano Concerto Competition in Italy, the Bartok-Kabalevsky Competition in Virginia, and the World Piano Competition in Ohio. Her career as a soloist continues while she's enrolled as an undergraduate at Harvard.

The centerpiece of Ma's China tour will be the premiere of Chinese composer Chen Gang's Butterfly Lovers Piano Concerto. Chen's piece is an adaptation of his Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto, originally written in cooperation with He Zhanhao when they were both students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in the 1950s.

Arguably the most famous Chinese work featuring Western instruments, the concerto is based on an ancient story from the Jin Dynasty (265-420 AD). The HRO would be able to choose the repertoire to fill up the remainder of each concert.

The tour, tentatively slated for June 12th-29th, 2005, would span five of China's largest cities, Beijing, Shanghai, Changsha, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, as well as Hong Kong. The HRO would perform in five of China's most celebrated venues, including the Shanghai Grand Theatre, the largest performance hall in Asia, the Beijing People's Concert Hall, the Shenzhen Grand Theatre, the Hong Kong Conference Hall, and the Hunan Grand Hall.

The itinerary for the possible tour would include much more than the concert, however. Upon arrival, members of the HRO might participate in a press conference at the Beijing People's Concert Hall.

The trip would include sightseeing visits to China's most famous national landmarks, such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Ming tombs, the Summer Palace, and Tiananmen Square. The orchestra would see the East Grand Pearl Tower in Shanghai, the tallest tower in Asia. In Shaoshan, the orchestra would tour Maozedong's birthplace and museum. In Changsha, the tentative itinerary includes a trip to the Miraculous Zhang Jia Jie, which ranks among the most famous forest and park in China. The tour would end in Hong Kong, where the HRO musicians would visit Victoria Peak and Repulse Bay.

Members of the HRO would have the chance to engage in cultural exchange discussions with students from Beijing University, Xinghua University, and the Central Conservatory in

Beijing and students from Fudan University, Shanghai University, and the Shanghai Conservatory in Shanghai. In Changsha, the orchestra would interact with students from Hunan University and Chong-non University. Before heading home, the HRO musicians would also meet students from Zhongshan and Shenzhen Universities.

Throughout last year, cellist Ian Mok '05 and violinist Matthew Kan '07 began trying to plan a tour to Asia, but the financial obstacles seemed insurmountable. However, through Ma, the HRO has initiated a partnership with the China Record Corporation (CRC), China's oldest and largest state-level audio and video publishing group.

China Records has agreed to be responsible for all venue rental fees, mainland China travel, and hotel costs, estimated to be approximately \$800,000. The HRO would not be monetarily compensated for any of the concerts in China and would be responsible for the costs of U.S.-China round-trip air tickets, and passport, and visa fees, estimated to be \$100,000 for a group of 80 people.

Kan, who is spearheading the effort to make the tour a reality, said that the chances that HRO will go to China are very good. He explained, "Infrastructure in China is good enough so that I can safely say that if we can get ourselves there, it will be an amazing trip."



News Briefs

Pierian Sodality plans fundraising campaign

To celebrate the upcoming 200th anniversary of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Pierian Sodality is planning a major fundraising campaign to help support the orchestra's activities.

The Pierian Sodality consists of HRO alumni and friends. Pierian Sodality president Norman Letvin will head the effort. Letvin, an HRO alum whose daughter, Andrea Letvin '05, currently plays violin in the orchestra, is a professor at Harvard Medical School.

The Pierians will hire an orchestra member to help organize the fundraising campaign and update information on all HRO alumni.

Current fundraising goals include supporting the possible June 2005 China tour with Yin Ma, but a long-term plan looks to create a solid financial base for the orchestra. At this point, the HRO relies on ticket sales for funding and initiates fundraising efforts for specific needs, like tours. This year, the Pierians are covering the orchestra's recording costs, which had taken up a significant portion of the orchestra's budget.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra is the oldest continuously-running orchestra in the United States. The HRO was founded in 1808.

Operations Committee initiates new publicity efforts

The Operations Committee of the HRO, headed by president Stephanie Hurder '06, has delegated publicity efforts to a new committee. Violinist Victor Lee will lead the new effort to increase awareness about the HRO and upcoming concerts.

The publicity committee will contact radio stations, newspapers, and other periodicals in Cambridge and Boston, hoping to attract potential audience members. HRO concerts may be broadcast on Harvard's student-run radio station.

In anticipation of the first subscription series concert in October, HRO's brass section drew audience members by performing on the balcony of Annenberg, the freshmen dining hall. This publicity idea began last year and was inspired by trumpet player Chrix Finne '07.

Comments or suggestions? Please send us e-mail at hro@hcs.harvard.edu. Your feedback is always welcome.

Overture!

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