University of North Texas
Concert Orchestra

Clay Couturiaux, conductor
with
Molly Fillmore, soprano

Wednesday, November 30, 2022
7:30 pm
Winspear Hall
Murchison Performing Arts Center
   I. Introduction (Harvest)
   II. Song (Reminiscences of a Song from Childhood)
   III. Lullaby
   IV. Dance No. 1 (Love Song)
   V. Interlude (The Bells Rang Out Good Morning)
   VI. Dance No. 2 (Allegro spiritoso)
   VII. Finale

Knoxville: Summer of 1915,
   Molly Fillmore, soprano

   --Intermission--

Andante Moderato from String Quartet
   in G Major (1929) .................................................Florence Price (1887–1953)

An American in Paris (1928) ...............................George Gershwin (1898–1937)
Richard Yardumian (1917–1985)
Armenian Suite (1937/1954)

Richard Yardumian was an American composer with Armenian ancestry. Although he studied music independently and composed his first piece at the age of fourteen, he did not acquire formal training until relatively late, when he was in his early twenties. His personal composition style drew from the influences of the classical repertoire, Armenian folk music, and Appalachian ballads. He also created his own twelve-tone system, based on superimposed thirds. Still, much of his music maintains a tonal sensibility, in contrast to the extreme chromaticism of Schoenberg and his other contemporaries.

Many of these elements are portrayed in his Armenian Suite from 1937. The suite began as a piece for piano which Yardumian expanded into an orchestral version. He originally intended for the suite to have six movements, adding the seventh almost twenty years later in 1954. Each of the seven movements is short and reflects a relatively singular character musically: a jovial dance, a soothing lullaby, or even a fanfaric announcement.

The first movement, Introduction (Harvest), takes on the latter, beginning with a bright trumpet fanfare. The melody is repeated by various sections of the orchestra before ending quickly, staying true to its title as an exciting introduction for what is to come. The second movement, Song (Reminiscences of a Song from Childhood), contrasts the first with a calm and serene atmosphere. The oboe begins with a wandering melody that constantly works its way downward. The line is taken up by other members of the orchestra under shimmer strings, evoking a combination of sadness and nostalgia. The next movement, Lullaby, follows the same downward melodic style, but this time the feeling is more optimistic and soothing. Underneath the upper-woodwind melody, the strings and woodwinds provide lush harmonies that recall Yardumian’s Armenian folk music influences.

Dance No. 1 (Love Song) changes the mood quickly with a Stravinsky-esque “dance” of fast-paced repeated notes and a clarinet melody that is very bright and frantic. This melody is repeated several times as it is passed around the orchestra, becoming louder and stronger as it progresses until it reaches a final exciting climax. Movement five, Interlude (The Bells Rang Out Good Morning), brings back the lush, soothing atmosphere of previous movements, but with a melancholic twinge. The strings and woodwinds trade lush, full sections with the brass until the low brass enter to finish the movement with a sinister tone.
The sixth movement, Dance No. 2 (Allegro spiritoso), was originally the final movement of the suite and as such, offers a relatively more complex ABA form. The first section features a bright, hopping melody with a light repeated-note accompaniment that is passed around various sections of the orchestra. It ends with a brief foray into the minor mode with the low brass and woodwinds. The B section is a short interlude with a rocking, dark melody begun by the oboe and echoed by the orchestra. Then, the A section returns, this time first in the low brass, and instead of allowing itself it move into the minor mode, it teases us with an orchestral flourish and a brief, final sounding, pause. But the horns softly play the repeated-note accompaniment, and the oboe gives one last iteration of the melody before the movement truly ends.

The last movement, Finale, was added by Yardumian in 1954 at the request of conductor Eugene Ormandy, who felt that the Allegro spiritoso was not an effective finale for the suite. The new Finale is by far the longest of the seven at just over four minutes and contains three distinct sections. The first section begins with a trumpet fanfare, reminiscent of the opening movement in its style and character. Other brass join in, creating a fugue-like counterpoint to the original melody, and the section ends as hints of an exotic melody appear in the background. The second section is another short interlude much like the one in movement six. It contrasts the first section with a soothing slow melody led by the English horn that recalls the theme from movement two, Song. Finally, a hoppy melody in the woodwinds begins the final section, with an underlying accompaniment of repeated notes reminiscent of the dance from movement four. This melody builds with excitement, becoming faster and more intense until it breaks into an explosive dance and ends in a loud orchestral flourish.

**Samuel Barber (1910–1981)**
**Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Opus 24 (1947)**

Samuel Barber was celebrated as one of the most frequently performed American composers, both in America and in Europe, during the middle of the twentieth century. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, and returned later from 1939–1942 to teach composition. During World War II he served in the U.S. Army Airforce, who also commissioned his Second Symphony. In the next decade he was chosen to represent the United States at an international music festival in Prague, served as the vice-president of the International Music Council, and won the first of two Pulitzer Prizes for his opera Vanessa. At least two-thirds of his output was songs, helped by his experience as a singer and his inclination towards expressive vocal lines.
Barber wrote *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* as a commissioned work for soprano Eleanor Steber. For the text, he chose a prose poem by James Agee that was published in the preface to Agee’s novel *A Death in the Family* (1957). The poem is written from the perspective of a young child, describing a typical summer evening in Knoxville, Tennessee. It does not tell a story, but rather sets a scene as told through a child’s eyes. Barber himself explained that he enjoyed this particular poem because of its similarities to his own life, saying, “I had always admired Mr. Agee’s writing and this prose-poem particularly struck me because the summer evening he describes in his native southern town reminded me so much of similar evenings, when I was a child at home.” Barber did not use the entire poem, but instead took sections that best embodied the imagery of the scene and yielded itself to musical depiction:

> It has become the time of evening
> when people sit on their porches,
> rocking gently and talking gently
> and watching the street
> and the standing up
> into their sphere of possession of the trees,
> of birds’ hung havens, hangers.

> People go by; things go by.
> A horse, drawing a buggy,
> breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt;
> a loud auto; a quiet auto;
> people in pairs, not in a hurry,
> scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually,
> the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and
> starched milk,
> the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in
> hueless amber.

> A streetcar raising its iron moan:
> stopping, belling and starting; stertorous;
> rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan
> and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past,
> the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit
> set to dog its tracks;
> the iron whine rises on rising speed;
> still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell
> rises again, still fainter, fainter, lifting, lifts, fainty fain: forgotten.

> Now is the night one blue dew.
> Now is the night one blue dew,
> my father has drained,
> he has coiled the hose.
> Low on the length of lawns,
> a frailing of fire who breathes...
Parents on porches: rock and rock.
From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.
The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants
my eardrums.
On the rough wet grass of the backyard my father and mother have
spread quilts.
We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am
lying there...
They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet,
of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all.
The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great
sweetness, and they seem very near.

All my people are larger bodies than mine,...
with voices gentle and meaningless like the voice of sleeping birds.
One is an artist, he is living at home.
One is a musician, she is living at home.
One is my mother who is good to me.
One is my father who is good to me.

By some chance, here they are, all on this earth;
and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth,
lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of
the night.
May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father,
oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble;
and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed.
Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her:
and those receive me, who quietly treat me,
as one familiar and well-beloved in that home:
but will not, no, will not, not now, not ever;
but will not ever tell me who I am.

The piece itself unfolds in a broad ABA form, with serene opening and closing
sections bookending a middle agitated one. Throughout, Barber evokes specific
imagery in the text with instrumental techniques and sounds. As scholar Barbara
B. Heyman describes, “it is a palpable evocation of folklore in a quasi-pastoral
style, with frequent word-painting, hints of the blues, rich orchestral colour and
freely varied metre.”
A short introduction sets the scene with a subdued, wandering melody in the English horn and clarinet, with a bassoon countermelody underneath. Then, a rocking melodic line in the flutes begins to accompany the vocalist’s entrance, underscoring the opening scene where “people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently.” At the mention of automobiles, a French horn obliges with a three-note interjection. The middle section is announced by frantic twitters from the upper woodwinds and sharp, grainy notes in the horns. The mood shifts to accentuate the calm scene being interrupted by “a streetcar raising its iron moan” with fast-paced runs throughout the orchestra. The trumpet joins the vocalist to depict “the bleak spark crackling and cursing” and a distant triangle rings the “faint stinging bell” before the whole episode slowly dissipates and calms. The singer brings back the serene atmosphere of the beginning, announcing “now is the night one blue dew...” The scene returns to the rocking on porches as the child prays for blessings and drifts off to sleep.

**Florence Price (1887–1953)**

**Andante moderato from String Quartet in G Major (1929)**

As an African American women born one generation removed from the Civil War, Florence Price definitely had an uphill battle to climb to achieve her goals—a battle that she won time and again throughout her life. At the age of fourteen she was accepted into the New England Conservatory of Music, and after graduation spent several years teaching in her hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas and then at Clark University in Atlanta. In 1932 she won the top composition prize from the Wannamaker Foundation for her First Symphony, which brought her to the attention of the Chicago Symphony’s music director, Friedrich Stock. She then became the first African American woman composer to have her music performed by a major American orchestra, with the premiere of her *Symphony in E minor* by the Chicago Symphony in 1933. Her music gained popular appeal due to its conservative nature and her blend of romantic nationalist stylings with spirituals and dance music.

Price was a celebrated composer during her lifetime, but after her death in 1953 her works seemed to fall into obscurity, with only a few performers and musicologists championing her music. However, a chance discovery has reignited interest in her works. In 2009 a family clearing out an old house in Illinois that they had recently bought discovered a box of manuscripts amongst the long-forgotten items. This box turned out to contain many unpublished pieces by Florence Price. The house had been hers after she moved to the Chicago area in the late 1920s.
The Andante Moderato – Allegretto is the second movement of Price’s String Quartet in G Major from 1929, following a fast-paced and quirky Allegro movement. The piece encompasses a palindrome form of ABCBA, where the A sections are the andante moderato and the allegretto’s BCB section is a set of dances. The Andante moderato is a fully romantic, emotional journey with a sweeping main theme that is repeated and modified throughout the section. Each section takes turns with the melodic line while the others provide lush harmonies. The A section ends with a brief pause, and then the piece jumps into the dances.

The allegretto’s first dance (Section B) is led by the viola with a slithering melody that is simultaneously mellow and folksy. The accompaniment is played pizzicato (plucked) by the violins and cello. Some back-and-forth with the melody, and the pizzicato texture occurs before the entire dance is repeated. The second dance (Section C) is short. It contains a quick and hopping theme led by the violins that contrasts with the mellowness of the previous dance. The allegretto ends with the return of section B’s dance, but this time the violin embellishes the ending while low cello chords sound underneath. The Andante moderato (Section A) returns in its entirety after another pause. A brief coda brings the piece to an end and, after a final sighing pause, settles on a subdued, final chord.

George Gershwin (1898–1937)
An American in Paris (1928)

George Gershwin was born in Brooklyn, New York to Russian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century. At the age of fifteen he began his professional career in music as a song plugger in Tin Pan Alley and by his twentieth birthday was already working as a composer for Broadway. He then quickly made a name for himself on the concert stage and by his thirties was considered one of America’s most famous composers of concert music and as a songwriter.

Gershwin did not grow up with a strict classical training, but instead learned from neighborhood teachers before being taken under the wing of Charles Hambitzer. The piano teacher assigned him pieces by composers such as Chopin and Liszt, and frequently took him to concerts where Gershwin was able to absorb much of the concert scene and playing styles. Additionally, once he took the job of a song plugger—which meant performing new pieces to prospective buyers and performers—his abilities at the keyboard greatly improved from the required hours of constant playing.
His compositions held enthusiastic appeal with the audiences of his time. Instead of following the classical art music styles, he incorporated the popular sounds of Broadway and the newly emerging styles of blues and jazz into his writing. As such, his music was immediately approachable, catchy, and coherent to even an inexperienced ear. Such is the case for his 1928 piece An American in Paris, with its blues melodies, jazzy undertones, and lush harmonies. The piece was contrived during Gershwin’s trip to Europe, where he felt immense inspiration while traveling through Paris’ city streets. As he described later, “My purpose here is to portray the impressions of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city, listens to the various street noises, and absorbs the French atmosphere.”

Gershwin’s tone poem is meant to take us on a journey. It begins immediately with a jaunty melody, lighthearted and carefree. Gershwin uses the timbres of the instruments in the orchestra to great effect as we are taken into a busy street scene. Honking car horns, frantic pedestrians, and martial drums take center stage. Suddenly the flurry of motion is halted with a statement from the bass clarinet. The motto is taken up by a smattering of voices in the orchestra and the street scene continues, this time with a bluesy flair. Just as some exciting glissandi in the horns and strings threaten to take the scene up to a frantic pace, the flutes interrupt with a calming rendition of the strolling theme. The calm is short-lived, however, and the excitement breaks through again, beginning a pattern of alternating scenic atmospheres.

An arpeggio in the shimmering celeste followed by brief solos in the violin and English horn signal the transition to a new scene: one that spotlights the trumpet in a sauntering, bluesy theme. The franticness of the previous accompaniment is now transformed into lush harmonies and sweeping melodies reminiscent of romantic evening walks. The atmosphere soon loses its carefree tone as the orchestra builds in excitement, eventually culminating in an agitated race of sixteenth notes and a grand statement of the blues theme. As the chaos rescinds, a solo violin emerges with a wandering melody.

Suddenly the trumpet appears refreshed, bringing us back to the jaunty pace of the beginning and our stroll through the busy streets of Paris resumes. An exciting blend of previous themes occurs, sweeping us along for the ride. A passage for the unusual pairing of violin and tuba gives a brief interlude before the pace builds and the piece ends in an animated conclusion of the opening melody.—Emily Hicks under the direction of Peter Mondelli
Described by Gramophone as “a compelling interpreter”, Molly Fillmore made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Helmwige in their production of Der Ring der Nibelungen. She returned to the Met to sing a principal role in Satyagraha by Philip Glass. Both of these productions were shown live in movie theaters around the world as part of the Met’s Live in HD series as well as on PBS stations nationwide as part of their Great Performances series. She can be heard and seen on the Grammy-winning Deutsche Grammophon CD and DVD/Blu-Ray of Die Walküre from The Metropolitan Opera under the musical direction of James Levine and Fabio Luisi, as well as on the recently released (2021) DVD and CD of the Metropolitan Opera’s production of Satyagraha.

Her newly released album, Bold Beauty – Songs of Juliana Hall, with faculty colleague Elvia Puccinelli, features a song cycle (Cameos) for which Ms. Fillmore wrote the poems, called “vivid glances” by Gramophone.

She made her soprano debut in the title role of Salome at San Francisco Opera, a role which she also sang for Arizona Opera, and covered at The Metropolitan Opera. She sang the role of Ortlinde in Francesca Zambello’s San Francisco Opera production of Die Walküre, conducted by Donald Runnicles. Other American opera appearances as a soloist include Seattle Opera, Spoleto Festival, and Washington National Opera. She made her role debut as Marietta/Marie in Die tote Stadt with Theater St. Gallen, Switzerland and sang the title role of Turandot with the University of North Texas Symphony.

Before her switch to dramatic soprano repertoire, Molly Fillmore had an international career as a mezzo-soprano, including five seasons as a principal soloist in the ensemble of Oper der Stadt Köln (Cologne Opera), where she appeared in over twenty roles, including Cherubino in Le nozze di Figaro, Romeo in I Capuleti e I Montecchi, Don Ramiro in La finta giardiniera, Mercedes in Carmen, Wellgunde in Das Rheingold, and Waltraute in Die Walküre. Other mezzo-soprano appearances included the roles Orfeo in Orfeo ed Euridice, and Margret in Wozzeck.
On the concert stage, Molly Fillmore has appeared as a soloist in an operatic concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, the Mozart Requiem and Handel’s Messiah with the Detroit Symphony, La damnation de Faust with Utah Symphony, Vaughan Williams’ Magnificat and an opera gala with the Choral Arts Society of Washington, the Mozart Requiem at Carnegie Hall, a Gershwin celebration and Mozart Requiem at Lincoln Center, Isolde’s “Liebestod” at the Interlochen Arts Festival, Stravinsky’s Les Noces at the Great Lakes Chamber Festival, and in the Saint-Saëns Oratorio de Noël, broadcast on DeustchlandFunk Radio. She appeared opposite baritone Mark Delavan in Mendelssohn’s Elijah, which she also sang with the UNT Symphony Orchestra. Molly Fillmore recently debuted Samuel Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915 and the Bachianas Brasileiras of Villa-Lobos for the Sherman Symphony, and she has sung both the soprano and mezzo-soprano parts of a favorite work, the Verdi Requiem, multiple times on professional stages.

An active recitalist, she studied German art song at the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Baden-bei-Wien. She gave a joint recital with tenor Ernst Haefliger at the International Beethoven Festival in Bonn and has been heard in recital in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, China and various cities in the United States.

Molly Fillmore made her solo operatic debut with the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center Opera House while a sophomore at American University. By the time she had completed her Master of Music degree, she had appeared in seven solo roles (including a leading role in the zarzuela El Gato Montes) with the Washington National Opera and as a soloist in numerous concerts at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall.

A native of northeast Ohio, she graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in music from American University in Washington, D.C., and is the recipient of the university’s Evelyn Swarthout Hayes award, given to the student who has contributed most to the Washington, D.C. performing arts scene while maintaining a high grade point average. She holds a Master of Music degree from The University of Maryland. She taught voice at Michigan State University for ten years and, in 2014, joined the faculty at the University of North Texas, where she holds the position of Professor of Voice and Chair of the Division of Vocal Studies. She has given numerous master classes both in the United States and in China, and she has former students who now serve on the faculty of secondary music institutions. She regularly produces abridged summer opera productions for her studio members and others in the Division of Vocal Studies in order to provide role performance opportunities.
Clay Couturiaux is the Assistant Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of North Texas where he currently teaches orchestral conducting and is conductor of the UNT Concert Orchestra. The 2022–23 season marks Couturiaux’s eleventh season as Music Director and Conductor of the Richardson Symphony Orchestra. Following a distinguished 16-year tenure, he was named conductor laureate of the Monroe Symphony Orchestra in May 2020. He has also served on the faculty of the UNT Summer Strings Institute since 2015.

Maestro Couturiaux has accumulated over two decades of experience conducting professional symphony orchestras and teaching at the university level. His career has taken him across the United States, Europe, and Asia including concerts with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra, Ho Chi Minh City Symphony Orchestra, Milano Classica Orchestra da Camera, and National Taiwan Normal University Symphony Orchestra. Other professional conducting engagements include performances with the Abilene Philharmonic, Arkansas Symphony, Austin Symphony, Metropolitan Classical Ballet, East Texas Symphony Orchestra, Texas Chamber Orchestra, and Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra.

Further highlights include conducting the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra in concert for an audience of 37,000 at Cowboys Stadium in a major collaboration with the North Texas XLV Super Bowl Host Committee, NFL Films, and Tim McGraw. He has also recorded with the UNT Chamber Orchestra on the Crystal Records label. In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Couturiaux regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with several Texas All-Region Honors Orchestras.

In March 2013 the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council named Maestro Couturiaux the recipient of the Edmund Williamson Artist of the Year Award. The award is presented to an artist who the selection committee feels has made the most significant contribution to the improvement of the quality of life for Northeast Louisiana.

Dr. Couturiaux began his musical studies at the age of eight in violoncello and piano. He holds degrees in both conducting and violoncello performance from the University of North Texas. In addition, he developed his conducting skills at the world-renowned Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians in Maine and at the National Arts Centre Conductors Programme in Ottawa, Canada. The long list of distinguished conductors with whom Couturiaux studied includes Anshel Brusilow, Jorma Panula, Michael Jinbo, Hugh Wolff, Neal Gittleman, Carl Topilow, and Harold Farberman.
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Camilo Vasquez

Deohanz Buenafe YPG
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Noah Norried G
Rachael Levine G
Ethan Gaskin G
Ashton Gonzales G
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Connor Rury*

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Anna Ferrari** Abby Isley
Charlotte MacDonald^ Kyle Norberg

Alto Saxophone
Rico Allen

Tenor Saxophone
Benjamin Facundo

Baritone Saxophone
Maxwell Borah

Bassoon
Georgia Clement^ Aaron Lukenbill**
Donovan Neal
Omari Wiseman

Horn
Sam Himes^** Sarah Ismail
Nicole Keller
Benjamin Ruiz
Rebecca Yang

Trumpet
Remy Gilboe
Justin Henke
Jacqueline Hritzo
Tyler Sarver**+

Trombone
Tyler Coffman^+ Kyle Husby
Kyle Roberts

Tuba
Ji-Woong Hyun

Timpani
Hayden Rackley

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Jase Ballard
Ryan Blankenship
Alex Coronado
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Caleb Price

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Celesta
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^ Principal on Yardumian
* Principal on Barber
+ Principals on Gershwin
YPG Yardumian, Price, & Gershwin only
YP Yardumian & Price only
G Gershwin only
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Nikola Ružević, cello
Jeffrey Bradetich, double bass
Gudrun Raschen, double bass
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Elizabeth McNutt, flute
*James Scott, flute
Terri Sundberg, flute
Jung Choi, oboe
Daryl Coad, clarinet
Deb Fabian, clarinet
Kimberly Cole Luevano, clarinet
Phillip Pagliaongia, clarinet
*Gregory Raden, clarinet
Darrel Hale, bassoon
Eric Nestler, saxophone
John Holt, trumpet
Caleb Hudson, trumpet
Raquel Rodríguez Samayoa, trumpet
Stacie Mickens, horn
*Natalie Young, horn
Tony Baker, trombone
Natalie Mannix, trombone
Steven Menard, trombone
David Childs, euphonium
*Matthew Good, tuba
Don Little, tuba
*Stephen Barnes, drumset
Quincy Davis, drumset
Mark Ford, percussion
David Hall, percussion
Paul Rennick, percussion
*Sandi Rennick, percussion
*Liudmila Georgievskaya, piano
Steven Harlos, piano
Pamela Mia Paul, piano
Elvia Puccinelli, collaborative piano
Gustavo Romero, piano
Vladimir Viardo, piano
Adam Wodnicki, piano
Jesse Eschbach, organ

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