

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN PHILHARMONIC



April

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

Nino Rota

Arnold Irchai, Bassoon

Intermission

Symphony No. 1 (A Sea Symphony)

Ralph Vaughn-Williams

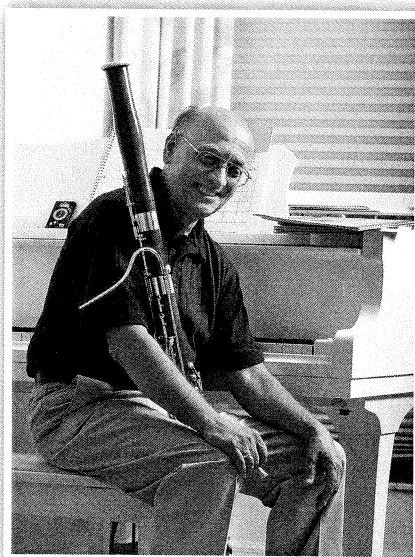
Nova Community Chorus

Dr. Mark Whitmire, Director

April 13, 2008 Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center

April 20, 2008 The Church of the Epiphany

Arnold Irchai: Soloist



Dr. Irchai began studying bassoon at the Leningrad Special Music School for Gifted Children and continued his studies at the State Leningrad Conservatory, USSR. At the Conservatory, he received his masters and doctoral degrees. He has performed with major symphony orchestras since his school years. Throughout his career, he has gained extensive performance and teaching experience. From 1974 to 1990, he was principal bassoonist of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra under such world-renowned conductors as Kiril Kondrashin and Dmitry Kitaenko. Dr. Irchai taught bassoon at the Gnessins Music Pedagogical Institute in Moscow, Russia. Among his awards are the first prize in the All-Russia Music Competition for Woodwind Quintets and the Distinguished Artist of the Russian Federation Award. He has toured Europe, Asia and the Americas with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and other world-class orchestras. Dr. Irchai has been performing solo recitals as well as chamber music recitals throughout the United States and the world for many years. His recent solo performances include appearances at the Lincoln Center, NY; Kennedy Center, Washington, DC; the Lyceum, Alexandria, VA; the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater, Rockville, MD; Strathmore Hall, MD; Lyceum of Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia; Castlenuovo di Garfagnana, Italy; and at other venues. Dr. Irchai's performances have been widely reviewed and featured in local, national, and international mass media. His performances elicited admiring comments that "Irchai ... was impressive not only for flexibility of his performance which audience have come to expect, but also for his tone quality – sweet but not cloying, with an even focused vibrato in the lyrical passages and deep tones that resonated with warmth" and "bassoon at its best" in the Washington Post. Mount Vernon Gazette rightly praises Irchai as "a master of his instrument" having "singing tone and superb technique". Dr. Irchai was a member of the faculty at both the Washington Conservatory of Music in Washington, DC, and Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, MD. He was also

the Program Director of the Mount Vernon Music Festival, VA; the Principal Bassoonist of Arlington Symphony, Arlington; VA, Prince William Symphony, Manassas, VA; and Mount Vernon Orchestra, VA.

Currently, Dr. Irchai is Assistant Professor of Bassoon at the University of Florida, School of Music, the Principal Bassoon of the National Philharmonic, and the Principal Bassoon of the Central Florida Symphony Orchestra. He is a faculty member of the Summit Music Festival, Tarry Town, NY, and International Academy of Music, St. Petersburg, Russia, and Castlenuovo di Garfagnana, Italy. Dr. Irchai's arrangements are published by TrevCo Music.

“PHENOMENAL BASSOONIST”. “HIS PERFORMANCE, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT, ... IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF MASTERSHIP”.

Hudobný Život (Slovakia)

“... UTILIZED SEEMINGLY SUPERHUMAN BREATH CONTROL AND A VIGOROUS PHYSICAL PRESENCE TO LIFT HIS PERFORMANCE TO RARE AND REMARKABLE LEVELS”. “THE GREAT INSTRUMENT, VIRILE AND ROBUST IN ITS NATURE, WAS AS GENTLE AND SMOOTH AS A NEWBORN KITTEN IN IRCHAI'S HANDS.”

The Potomac News

“ARNOLD IRCHAI ... EARNED A GOLD MEDAL, SMOOTHLY SCALING THE TECHNICAL HEIGHTS MOZART DEMANDS WHILE SUSTAINING THE WARM, DARK BEAUTY OF THE BASSOON”.

The Washington Post

Dr. Mark Whitmire, Director Nova Community Chorus

Dr. Mark Whitmire, Director of the NOVA Community Chorus and Professor of Music at NVCC (Alexandria), holds degrees from Abilene Christian University, the University of Texas, and the University of Maryland, where he received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Further studies include Dartmouth College and the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England, where he studied with Sir Peter Pears. Dr. Whitmire has received numerous grants and awards including a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for research and writing on the music of Benjamin Britten. He was named Outstanding Faculty of the Year by the College in 1990. Dr. Whitmire has been a regular guest conductor of the Philharmonic since 1991, and is the music faculty liaison in the College/community partnership that has been established between the college and Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association.



The NOVA Community Chorus

The NOVA Community Chorus, an eighty-voice ensemble directed by Dr. Mark Whitmire, combines singers from the NVCC Music Program and the surrounding community. The chorus has distinguished itself both locally and internationally. It performs regularly at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center with the Alexandria Campus Band, the Alexandria Symphony, and the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic.

Special engagements in recent years have included Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, and the National Theater. The chorus toured Spain and performed at the 1992 World's Fair in Seville. Invited to perform at Gloucester Cathedral's Evensong Services, the chorus traveled to England in 2003. (information taken from <http://www.nvcc.edu/novachorus>)



The Program



Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

Nino Rota

Born December 3, 1911, in Milan, Italy

Died April 10, 1979, in Rome, Italy

This work was first performed in 1977 at the Lanciano Festival in Lanciano, Italy. It is scored for bassoon solo, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, trumpet, piano, celesta, harp, and strings.

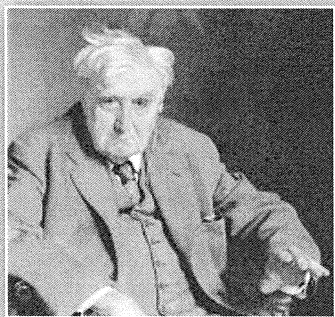
Italian composer Nino Rota's works are usually pigeonholed into the category of film music – a genre that is simultaneously the most popular among musical laypersons and the most reviled by trained musicians. Quite often, film scores are so associated with the action of the screen that their presence is virtually unnoticed. Musicians often fail to understand that this delicate underscoring provides a large part of the emotion felt during a scene. Despite the huge value of movie music, musicians mistakenly judge it as being less artistic than traditional symphonic fare. Unfortunately, a composer can become typecast in the same way as an actor, continually expected to recompose the same music again and again. Because of the wide exposure of film music, it sometimes seems that certain composers write only for movies. However, most of them have also composed a large number of concert works – symphonies, concerti, choral works – independent of their movie music.

Nino Rota built an impressive career with his evocative music for film – including scores for Francis Ford Coppola's first two Godfather movies and all of the films of Federico Fellini. A student at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music in the early 1930s, he studied both composition and conducting. Returning to his native Italy in 1932, Rota composed his first film score soon thereafter. In the next forty-seven years, he wrote the music for about 150 films. Drawn to dramatic subjects, Rota composed a dozen operas, a handful of ballets and incidental music for twenty-three plays. In the field of instrumental music, he left a large number of vocal and chamber works, and numerous orchestral pieces, including three symphonies and eleven concerti.

Rota's Bassoon Concerto opens with a bright wash of orchestration. Described in the score as a toccata (a "touch piece" most often used to teach keyboard articulation), this movement is an exploration of staccato and legato playing styles. Almost immediately, the soloist enters with an

angular staccato melody that is distributed throughout the orchestra, including prominent solo lines for the piano. A contrasting lyrical second theme enters and is inevitably combined with the first melody. The second movement hearkens back to the operatic practice of recitative. This oft-used device presents dialogue as irregular melodies sung by dramatic characters and accompanied by dramatic accompaniment. Rota uses elements of the practice to craft a pensive movement of supreme beauty. Bittersweet and elegant, the theme of the finale sets up a series of variations. Ranging from poignant to puckish, this movement displays the extreme diversity of the bassoon as a solo instrument – a feature that is far too often unexplored. The final measures are a daring test of the soloist's dexterity and flexibility.

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A Sea Symphony (Symphony No. 1)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born August 12, 1872, in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England

Died August 16, 1958, in London, England

This work was first performed on August 12, 1910, in Leeds. It is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, organ, and strings. The vocal contingent consists of soprano and baritone soloists with mixed chorus.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of the first major composers to earn advanced college degrees in music. Education was important to Williams, who received a doctorate from Cambridge in 1901, but he was most satisfied learning from the uneducated. He believed that there was deep wisdom in the songs of British commoners, and he set out in 1905 to collect folk songs in the English countryside. These poignant and tuneful discoveries would form the basis of many of his compositions. An English nationalist in many ways, Vaughan Williams joined the army during World War I – even though he was 42 years old.

His uniquely personal musical style often draws upon the elements of folk-song. Rejecting classical symphonic forms (sonata-allegro, rondo, etc), he reinvented musical structures to fit his needs, all the while sounding quite traditional. Clearly defined melodies are central to Vaughan Williams's music, often using the pentatonic scale found in folk music the world over. His harmonies, although suffused with considerable dissonance, rarely project a grating quality. Central to his music is the use of church modes, favored by many young composers at the time. The

conservative traditions of British music were important to Vaughan Williams, but he found that the boundaries were not completely rigid.

Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*, along with his *Tallis Fantasia* (premiered a few weeks before), was the work that brought him to prominence. As with Brahms, this first symphony was not the product of juvenile precociousness, but was premiered when the composer was a mature adult of thirty-eight years. However, the most impressive qualities of *A Sea Symphony* are the skillful setting of rather difficult poetry and the absolute mastery of orchestration. For the text, the composer chose verses by Walt Whitman, a visionary American transcendentalist poet of the nineteenth century to whom Vaughan Williams would return for his pacifist cantata entitled *Dona Nobis Pacem*.

Unlike Claude Debussy's 1905 depiction of the sea in *La Mer* (with which *A Sea Symphony* bears a striking similarity in its approach), the subject is not revealed in a gradual manner. While not expressly British in intention, the opening movement, "A Song for all Seas, all Ships," bears the hallmarks of much music associated with the Commonwealth. A brief fanfare is followed by the choral exhortation "Behold the sea itself," after which the entire orchestra enters with a grandiose and massive depiction of the ocean in all of its billowing majesty. The baritone solo enters with a shanty in tribute of sailors of all nations. With music that is majestic and decidedly English in character, the soprano soloist enters on the words "Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!" In a meditative section that is typical of Vaughan Williams's lovely sacred anthems, the chorus sings in tribute of those lost at sea and the soul of man that transcends all nationalities. Quietness presides over the final measures.

Somber and almost barren in character, the second movement, "On the Beach at Night Alone," features the baritone soloist and chorus. The simple textures of the first measures of the movement expertly depict the stillness of the nocturnal waters with their reflections of the stars. A central section culminates in an impressive choral climax before returning to music from the opening to conclude the movement.

Acting as a scherzo, the third movement, "The Waves," is cast for chorus and orchestra. This short movement brings back the fanfare from the symphony's opening and quotes two authentic English folk-songs. With rapid-fire declamation, the chorus paints a striking portrait of ships in full sail driven by the wind.

"The Explorers" uses the sea to represent the vast gulf of spiritual awakening – of the soul's journey after death. Vaughan Williams crafts an expressive vision of eternity, full of hope and beauty.

This is music of great power and poignancy, especially in the final measures when the ship of life disappears on the horizon bound for uncharted waters.

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Sea Symphony by Ralph Vaughan-Williams

Text by Walt Whitman

I. A Song for all Seas, all Ships

[from Book XIII: Song of the Exposition verse 8]

Behold, the sea itself,

And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;

See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue,

See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port,

See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

[from Book XIX: Sea-Drift: Song for All Seas, All Ships]

Today a rude brief recitative,

Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal,

Of unnamed heroes in the ships -- of waves spread and spread far as the
eye can reach,

Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,

And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,

Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all intrepid sailors,

Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death
dismay.

Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen by thee,

Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest nations,

Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,

Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!

Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!

But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of man one flag

above all the rest,
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty,
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains young or old,
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave sailors,
All seas, all ships.

II. On the Beach at Night Alone
[from Book XIX: Sea-Drift: On the Beach at Night Alone]
On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the
Universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,
All nations,
All identities that have existed or may exist
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

III. (Scherzo) The Waves
[from Book XIX: Sea-Drift: After the Sea-Ship]
After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves hastening, lifting up their necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with curves,
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the surface,
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearnfully flowing,
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and frolicsome under the sun,
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many fragments,

Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.

IV. The Explorers

[from Book XXVI: Passage to India: verse 5]

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees,
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts,
With that sad incessant refrain, Wherefore unsatisfied soul? and Whither O mocking life?

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who Justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural?
What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without a throb to answer ours, Cold earth,
the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out,
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

[from Book XXVI: Passage to India: from verse 8]

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,

Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul,)
Caroling free, singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.
O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them.
Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth;

[from Book XXVI: Passage to India: from verse 9]
Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers -- haul out -- shake out every sail!
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
Sail forth -- steer for the deep waters only,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!

Program Order

Nino Rota: Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

Arnold Irchai, Bassoon

- I. Tocatta – Allegretto vivace
- II. Recitativo – Lento
- III. Andantino (Theme)
 - Variation 1 - Waltz
 - Variation 2 – Polka
 - Variation 3 – Siciliana
 - Variation 4 – Scherzo
 - Variation 5 – Sarabande
 - Variation 6 - Galop

Intermission

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Symphony No. 1 (A Sea Symphony)

- I. *A Song for all Seas, All Ships*
Jennifer Hughes-Lopez, soprano
Aurelius Gori, baritone
- II. *On the Beach at Night alone*
Dr. Gori, baritone
- III. *(Scherzo) The Waves*
- IV. *The Explorers*
Ms. Hughes-Lopez, soprano
Dr. Gori, baritone

NOVA Community Chorus - Dr. Mark Whitmire, Director

Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic

First Violin

Irina Garkavi, *Concertmaster*,
Concertmaster's chair
supported by George &
Marguerite Chadwick, III
Tim Kidder, *Assistant*
Concertmaster

Joel Ang
Sheyna Burt
Christopher Bruce
Ryan Hsu
Jennifer Ngai
Suzanna Sitomer
Kathleen Triveri

Second Violin

Slavica Ilic, *Principal*
Seong-Hyun Baik
Bach Bui
Rebecca Edelstein
Jennifer Kuo
Larisa Marian
Catherine Prosser
Jane Thell

Viola

Andrea Marlowe, *Principal*

Tiffani Ferrantelli

Carol Gunlicks
Kirsten Snyder
Yashauna Swan

Cello

John Gevorkian, *Principal*
Moya Atkinson
Ryan Bridgland
Jessica Dixon
Rebecca Maxon
Amy Medearis
John Schelleng

Bass

José Ramos, *Principal*
Patrick Cheatham
Warren Davis
David Riggs
Kerri Shelfo

Flute

Susan Brockman, *Principal*
Gina Sexton
Flute/Piccolo
Crystral Safarian

Oboe

Emily Bentgen, *Principal*

Principal Oboist's chair
supported by an
anonymous donation in
memory of Richard White

Nancy Boyce

English Horn

Patricia Beneke

Clarinet

Richard Rubock, *Principal*
Frederick Custer

Bass Clarinet

David Spiegelthal

Bassoon

Dean Woody, *Principal*
Mary Dugan

Contra Bassoon

David Bell

French Horn

Tara Islas, *Principal*
Tiffany Hitz

Jack Hufnagle

Charles Guidry

Trumpet

Philip Scoles, *Principal*
Yaphet Jones

Nathan Clark

Trombone

Barry Bocaner, *Principal*
John Jonas
Michael Okwabi

Tuba

Alex Mueleisen

Timpani

Joanna Dabrowska

Percussion

Rick Puzzo*
Matthew Case
Paul Durning
Nathaniel Stottlemeyer

Harp

Heidi Sturniolo

Piano

Stephen Bertino

Conductor

Ulysses James

Librarian

Nancy James

Recording Engineer

John Reiser

NOVA Community Chorus

Dr. Mark Whitmire, Director

Christine Hagan, Accompanist

Soprano I

Giulia Ambrogio
Louise Billingsley
Sara Dudley Brown
Pat Connors
Megan Conroy
Vanessa Cortez
Lene Jensen
Carol Knowles
Terri LaGoe
Rosemary McKillips
Amanda Price
Colleen Rodgers
Shirley Scalley
Jane Simpson
Lisa Twedt
Kimberly Young
Mary Yee

Soprano 2

Pat Connors
Shellie Grant
Christine Hagan
Margaret Harrison
Sheila Keys
Barbara Lowrey
Marty Maher
Diane McEldowney
Carolyn Miller
Debbie Nash
Jennifer Roystone
Nancy Ruth Wood

Alto 1

Ellie Briscoe
Cathy Brown
Kate Cantrell
Linda Crawford
Leslie Davies
Martha Evans
Holly Hambley
Joyce Lombardi
Angie Moreno
Deborah Peetz
Carol Pelenberg
Vicki Ratcliffe
Jane Roningen
Eva Reid Stern
Judy Wulff

Alto 2

Whitney Armenia
Susan Bilodeau
Arlene Brigida
Diane Drakeley
Nancy Ford-Kohne
Izola Hawkins
Linda Harvey
Ruth Herndon
JoVan Howard
Carmen Mendoza
Annette Reilly
Baiba Seefer
Victoria Simmons
Carol Uri
Barbara Wade
Grace White

Tenor 1

John Bowling
Tom Donlan
Gerald Kavinski
Adam Martinelli
Bill Reilly
Brett Tabot
Luis Torres
Bob Trexler

Tenor 2

Michael Brunner
John Connors
Ray Gavert
Robert Gerbracht
Larry Goldschmidt
David Knepper
Bill Meyer

Bass 1

John Clark
Bernie Cohen
Lock Handley
Delonte Hardy
Jacques Holden
Richard Kennedy
Ray Lombardi
Brian McMahon
Jim Stewart
Alex Thomas
Fred Wulff

Bass 2

Tony Anderson
Rich Ardini
Robert Ardura
Bill Brown
Alan Bunner
Alejandro Fuentes
Nick King
Ken Klocek
Alan Krause
Barry Maguire
Steve Miner
Jim Olivetti
Dan Stevens