Beethoven Meets Frankenstein

Christopher Costanza, Music Director
Stephen M. Sano, Conductor

WHEN: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3
VENUE: 7:30 PM
BING STUDIO
Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827):
Sonata in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2 (1815)
Allegro con brio
Adagio con molto sentiment d'affetto—attacca:
Allegro—Allegro fugato

Christopher Costanza, cello
Kevin Sun, piano

HK Gruber (b. 1943):
Frankenstein!!, a Pan-demonium
for Baritone Chansonnier and Ensemble
after Children's Rhymes (1976–77)
Fanfare—Prologue
Ia. Dedication
Ib. Miss Dracula
Iia. Goldfinger and Bond
Iib. John Wayne
Ilc. Monster
III. A Mi Ma Monsterlet
IV. Fanfare—intermezzo, “Werewolf’s Serenade”
V. Frankenstein
VI. Rat Song and Crusoe Song
VII. Mr. Superman
VIII. Finale
Villa. The Green-haired Man
Villb. Batman and Robin
Villc. Monsters in the Park
Villd. Litany
Villl. Hello, hello, Herr Frankenstein
Villlf. Grete Muller’s Adieu
Fanfare—Epilogue

Stephen M. Sano, conductor
Tyler Duncan, chansonnier
Erika Switzer, piano
Dustin Donahue, percussion
Debra Fong, violin
Michiko Theurer, violin
Andrew Lan, viola
Christopher Costanza, cello
Bruce Moyer, bass
Adrian Sanborn, flute and piccolo
Mark Brandenburg, clarinet
Lee Duan, bassoon
Guy Clark, trumpet
Jeffrey Chang, horn

This program is presented in partnership with Stanford’s Medicine and the Muse program.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE: Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.
About the Program

Viennese composer H. K. Gruber. Gruber's Frankenstein!! is a brilliantly humorous and entertaining work, combining absurdist, slightly twisted children's poetry —performed by a "chansonnier," a singer who produces both distinct pitches and lyrically spoken text—with music that seamlessly merges features of pop, jazz, neo-classicism, and Viennese cabaret.

So how to construct a program around this one-of-a-kind work? Beethoven to the rescue! Both Gruber and Beethoven are universally accepted as great musical innovators in their respective eras. Beethoven was at the height of his powers when Frankenstein was published, and by programming several of Beethoven's works composed in or around the year 1818, we mark the bicentennial of Mary Shelley's profound opus. And as a bonus, we honor Mary Shelley's home country through our presentation of Beethoven's beautiful arrangements of folksongs native to the British Isles.

—Christopher Costanza

From the Composer

The origins of this ‘pan-demonium’ go back to the Frankenstein Suite of 1971—a sequence of songs and dances written for the Vienna ‘MOB art and tone ART Ensemble’, which was then active in the field of instrumental theatre. Although the Suite was a success, I was unhappy about its improvisatory structure, and also needed the resources of a full orchestra. So in 1976/77 I completely recomposed the work in its present form. It was first performed on 25 November 1978 by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Simon Rattle, with myself as soloist. For the 1979 Berlin Festival I wrote an alternative version for soloist and 12 players (first performed that year by the Vienna ensemble ‘die reihe’ under Kurt Schwertsik, again with myself as soloist). Since then, the two versions have happily co-existed; and in 1983, at the Espace Cardin in Paris, Frankenstein!! entered the theatre for the first time—an unforeseen development, but one that proved suited to Artmann's multi-layered fantasy.

The title of the volume from which I took the poems of Frankenstein!! — Allerleirausch, neue schöne kinderreime (Noises, noises, all around—lovely new children's rhymes)—promises something innocuous; but Artmann himself has described the poems as being, among other things, 'covert political statements.' Typically he refused to explain what he meant. But his reticence is eloquent: the monsters of political life have always tried to hide their true faces, and all too often succeed in doing so. One of the dubious figures in the pandemonium is the unfortunate scientist who makes so surprising an entry at mid-point. Frankenstein—or whoever we choose to identify with that name—is not the protagonist, but the figure behind the scenes whom we forget at our peril. Hence the exclamation marks.

Artmann's demystification of heroic villains or villainous heroes finds a musical parallel in, for instance, the persistent alienation of conventional orchestral sound by resorting to a cupboard-full of toy instruments. However picturesque or amusing the visual effect of the toys, their primary role is musical rather than playful—even howling plastic horses have their motivic / harmonic function. In order to do justice to the true significance of the texts it would be enough to provide some extra exercises in structural complexity. By analogy with Artmann's diction, my aim was a broad palette combining traditional musical idioms with newer and more popular ones, and thus remaining true to the deceptive simplicity of texts whose forms at first glance suggest a naive and innocently cheerful atmosphere.

—HK Gruber
Beethoven Song Texts

The kiss, dear maid! thy lip has left

The kiss, dear maid! thy lip has left
Shall never part from mine,
Till happier hours restore the gift
Untainted back to thine.

Thy parting glance, which fondly beams,
An equal love may see:
The tear that from thine eyelid streams
Can weep no change in me.

I ask no pledge to make me blest
In gazing when alone;
Nor one memorial for a breast,
Whose thoughts are all thine own.

By day or night, in weal or woe,
That heart, no longer free,
Must bear the love it cannot show,
And silent ache for thee."

Farewell, farewell, thou noisy town

Farewell, farewell, thou noisy town,
Thou scene of restless glare;
Thine hours no real pleasures crown,
No peace, no love is there.
How dull thy splendid ev’nings close!
How sad thy joys to me!
Thy hollow smiles, thy rival shows,
And all thy misery.

But welcome to my longing eyes,
Dear objects ever new,
My rural cot, you varying skies,
Streams, woods, amid mountains blue!
With these my humble spirits finds
Health, liberty, and rest,
The silent joys of simple minds,
And leisure to be blest.

To the Blackbird

Sweet warbler of a strain divine,
What woodland note can equal thine?
No hermit’s matins hail the day
More pure than fine from yonder spray.
Thy glossy plumes of sable hue,
Retiring from the searching view,
Protect the like, the leafy screen
Beneath whose shade
thou sing’st unseen.

Thou to the poet art allied,
Be then thy minstrelsy my pride:
Thy poet then, thy song I’ll praise,
To future lovers shall proclaim
Thy worth, thy beauty, and thy fame,
And when they hear thee in the grove,
They’ll own thee for the bird of love.

Come fill, fill, my good fellow!

Come fill, fill, my good fellow!
Fill high, high, my good Fellow,
And let us have one bottle more.
When warm the heart is flowing,
And bright the fancy glowing,
Oh, shame on the dolt would be going,
Nor tarry for one bottle more!

So now, here’s to the Lasses!
See, see, while the toast passes,
How it lights up beaming glasses!
Encore to the Lasses, encore.
We’ll toast the welcome greeting
Of hearts in union beating.
And oh! For our next merry meeting,
Huzza! Then for one bottle more!