

San Antonio Symphony  
 Sebastian Lang-Lessing, Music Director  
 The Tobin Endowment Music Director Chair

## SUSAN GRAHAM: AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

May 12 & 13, 2017, 8:00 p.m.

H-E-B Performance Hall at The Tobin Center for the Performing Arts

Sebastian Lang-Lessing, *conductor*  
 Susan Graham, *mezzo-soprano*

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RAVEL	<i>Le Tombeau de Couperin</i> Prélude Forlane Menuet Rigaudon
BERLIOZ	<i>La Mort de Cléopâtre</i> C'en est donc fait! Ah! qu'ils sont loin ces jours Méditation: Grand Pharaons Non! ... non, de vos demeures funèbres Dieux du Nil

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### INTERMISSION

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OFFENBACH, ARR. DORATI	<i>La Vie parisienne</i>
SIMONS	"C'est ça la vie, c'est ça l'amour" from <i>Toi c'est moi</i>
MESSENGER	"J'ai deux amants" from <i>L'Amour masqué</i>
LOUIGUY/PIAF, ARR. HARMON	"La Vie en rose"
GERSHWIN	<i>An American in Paris</i>
GERSHWIN, ARR. COUGHLIN/THOMAS	"Fascinating Rhythm" from <i>Lady Be Good</i>
GERSHWIN, ARR. WARNER	"Someone to watch over me" from <i>Oh, Kay!</i>

RUSSEL HILL ROGERS FUND FOR THE ARTS CELEBRATED ARTIST SERIES

## MOÏSES SIMONS (1889-1945)

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"C'est ça la vie, c'est ça l'amour"  
 from *Toi c'est moi*

C'est ça la vie,  
 C'est ça l'amour!  
 Voilà les p'tits embarras  
 Où l'on se fourr'.  
 On s'aime un soir,  
 On s'quitte un jour.  
 C'est ça la vie,  
 C'est ça l'amour!

Carmencita la Gitana  
 Aimait le bel Escamillo:  
 Ell' se donna pour toujours au torero.  
 Mais tous les homm's sont comme ça  
 De ses baisers il se lassa,  
 Il la trompa,  
 Ell' lui reprocha,  
 Il la plaqua!

C'est ça la vie,  
 C'est ça l'amour!  
 Voilà les p'tits embarras  
 Où l'on se fourr'.  
 On aime un soir,  
 On tue un jour.  
 C'est ça la vie,  
 C'est ça l'amour!

Carmencita la Gitana  
 Retrouva son toréador.  
 Ell' pardonna  
 Voulant qu'il la réador'.  
 Mais tous les homm's sont comme ça,  
 Escamillo la retrompa,

La Gitana  
 Prit sa navaja  
 Et le tua!

### "That's Life"

That's life  
 That's love!  
 The scrapes  
 One gets into!  
 One falls in love of an evening,  
 The next day its goodbye.  
 That's life  
 That's love!

Carmen the Gypsy  
 Loves handsome Escamillo;  
 She swore to love the bull-fighter forever,  
 But all men are the same:  
 He tired of her kisses,  
 He deceived her,  
 She reproached him,  
 He left her!

That's life,  
 That's love!  
 The scrapes  
 One gets into!  
 One falls in love of an evening,  
 The next day its goodbye.  
 That's life,  
 That's love!

Carmen the Gypsy  
 Found her bull-fighter once more,  
 She forgave him,  
 Wanting him to adore her again.  
 But all men are the same:  
 Escamillo deceived her again,  
 The Gypsy  
 Seized his dagger  
 And killed him!

## ANDRÉ MESSAGER (1853-1929)

"J'ai deux amants"  
from L'Amour Masqué

J'ai deux amants c'est beaucoup mieux,  
Car je fais croire à chacun d'eux  
Que l'autre est le monsieur sérieux.

Mon Dieu, que c'est bête les homes!  
Ils me donnent la même somme  
Exactement par mois,  
Et je fais croire à chacun d'eux  
Que l'autre m'a donne la double chaque fois  
Et me foi,  
Ils me croient,  
Ils me croient tous les deux.

Je ne sais pas comment nous sommes,  
Mais, mon Dieu! Que c'est bête un homme!  
Alors... vous pensez... deux!

Un seul amant, c'est ennuyeux  
C'est monotone et soupconneux,  
Tandis que deux c'est vraiment mieux.  
Mon Dieu! Que les hommes sont bêtes!  
On les fait marcher sur la tête

Facilement, je crois,  
Si par malheur ils n'avaient pas  
À cet endroit précis des ramures de bois  
Qui leur vont!  
Et leur font  
Un beau front ombrageux!

Je ne sais pas comment nous sommes,  
Mais, mon Dieu, que c'est bête un homme!  
Alors...vous pensez...deux!

"I've two lovers"

I've two lovers, it's so much better,  
For I make each one believe  
The other is the serious one.

My God! How stupid men are!  
Each month they give me  
Exactly the same amount  
And I make each of them believe  
The other gives me twice as much each Time,  
and my word  
They believe me,  
They both believe me.

I don't know what women are,  
But men! By God, they're stupid!  
And then... just think... two!

To have just one lover is tedious,  
Monotonous and suspicious,  
While two is truly better.  
My God! How stupid men are!  
One could easily get them, I think,

To walk on their heads,  
If they did not have the misfortune to have,  
Exactly there, antlers of wood  
That suit them so,  
And create  
Such delightful shade!

I don't know what women are,  
But men! By God, they're stupid!  
And then...just think...two!

## LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN

Maurice Ravel (1875—1937)

Written: 1914–1919  
Movements: Four  
Style: Neo-classical  
Duration: 17 minutes

World War I was just getting started when Maurice Ravel began work on the set of six piano pieces that he eventually called *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. As an adult Ravel was small and frail, so he was exempt from military service. By the time the war started, he was thirty-nine. Neither size nor age prevented him from signing up as a nurse's aide. Eventually he became a truck driver and served on the front. A serious bout of dysentery sent him to a military hospital in 1916. A year later, Ravel received his discharge from the army. While he was recuperating from the war, he got back to work on those piano pieces. However, his wartime experiences caused him to change direction.

Originally, he intended the work to be a sort of musical memorial—a *tombeau*—of eighteenth-century French classical music in general, and of the great French composer François Couperin in particular. Now, he dedicated each of the six movements to friends of his who died in the war. One of them was the musicologist Joseph de Marliave whose widow, Margeurite Long, gave the first performance of *Le Tombeau* in 1919. Shortly after that performance, Ravel chose four of the six movements and reworked them for orchestra.

*Le Tombeau de Couperin* is something like the old Baroque dance suites: simply a collection of stylized dances. Instead of the typical overture, there is a light and lively *prelude*. The *forlana*—a dance with Venetian origins—is even more sprightly in character. The *menuet* has a gentle, subdued quality. The final movement, a *ridaudo*, begins and ends with a bang, but has a peaceful and reflective central section.

Knowing the sad beginnings of this piece, and the tender dedications to fallen friends, you may find the overall character of *Le Tombeau de Couperin* surprisingly light and joyful. When criticized for this, Ravel simply replied, "The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence."

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## LA MORT DE CLÉOPÂTRE

Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

Written: 1829

Movements: Five

Style: Romantic

Duration: 22 minutes

When the twenty-one-year-old Hector Berlioz arrived in Paris from the provincial town of La Côte, he was as starry-eyed as any young man newly arrived in the big city. He was grudgingly following in his father's footsteps to become a doctor—until he went to his first opera. "The pomp and brilliance of the spectacle, the sheer weight and richness of sound produced by the combined chorus and orchestra . . . excited and disturbed me to an extent which I will not attempt to describe," he wrote in his *Memoirs*. "I hardly slept that night, and the anatomy lesson next morning suffered accordingly."

Then Berlioz discovered that the music library of the Conservatory was open to the public. "It was the death-blow to my medical career. The dissecting-room was abandoned for good." Even though he tried to pursue his own musical education, largely outside of the established schools, he needed to justify his decision to his parents by winning the coveted Prix de Rome. He came close on his second attempt by winning the second prize. On his third attempt, people were saying that he was a shoo-in. Berlioz confessed his own hubris in his *Memoirs*:

I reasoned . . . that since they had already decided to give me the prize, there was no point in cramping my style as I had done the year before and writing their kind of music. Why not let myself go and write my own kind—something from the heart? I would take my task seriously and compose a really good cantata.

Berlioz chose the subject of Cleopatra: "The Queen of Egypt clasps the asp to her bosom and dies in convulsions . . . she demands to know if she, a queen of crimes and dissipations, may hope to enter those mighty vaults erected to the shades of monarchs distinguished for their fame and virtue." He wrote what he believed was an imposing piece, "the rhythm strikingly original, the enharmonic progressions creating a rich and somber effect, and the melody unfolding slowly and dramatically in a long sustained crescendo." He didn't win. The jury didn't want to encourage a composer who "displayed such dangerous tendencies."

When Berlioz accosted one of the jurors, he told him that he had done his best. "That is exactly what we have against you," the juror replied. "You should not have done your best. Your best is the enemy of the good. How can I be expected to approve of such things when you know that what I like most is soothing music?" Berlioz's reply, as is most of his writing in his *Memoirs*, is priceless:

Sir, it's a little difficult to write soothing music for an Egyptian queen who has been bitten by a poisonous snake and is dying a painful death in an agony of remorse. . . . Gladiators could die gracefully, but not Cleopatra. She hadn't the knack—it was not her way. Besides, she wasn't dying in public.

Berlioz goes on to disparage what the Parisian public wanted:

Soothing music, even in the most violent situations; music that was not too dramatic but lucid, rather colorless, safely predictable . . . modest in its demands on the intelligence and concentration of performer and listener alike: a "French gentleman's" art, dressed in tights and top boots, never carried away, always correct, lively urbane, chivalrous, pleasure-loving, Parisian.

That is precisely what you do not hear in Berlioz's *Mort de Cléopâtre*. An intense orchestra introduction leads to Cleopatra's first recitative, lamenting her capture by Octavian. She then laments her past and her defeat by Mark Anthony, and she blames herself for Egypt's defeat. Cleopatra realizes that "by her death she is once more worthy of Caesar!

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LA VIE PARISIENNE  
"C'EST ÇA LA VIE, C'EST ÇA L'AMOUR"  
FROM TOI C'EST MOI  
"J'AI DEUX AMANTS"  
FROM L'AMOUR MASQUÉ  
"LA VIE EN ROSE"

Jacques Offenbach (1819—1880)

Moisés Simons (1889–1945)

André Messager (1853–1929)

Édith Piaf (1915–1963)

Style: Romantic

Duration: 5, 4, 3, &amp; 4 minutes

After a tragic fire at a Viennese performance of *The Tales of Hoffman* where hundreds in the audience died, Richard Wagner commented, "It leaves me cold and scarcely moved when members of an audience perish while listening to an Offenbach operetta, which contains not one iota of moral worth." That wasn't an unusual opinion about Offenbach's music. George Bernard Shaw wrote, "Offenbach's music is wicked. It is abandoned stuff; every accent is a snap of the fingers in the face of moral responsibility." The New York Times said that his music "is simply the sexual instinct expressed in melody." In spite of what the critics thought of Offenbach's music, the public loved it. We still do.

Jacques Offenbach was born in Cologne, Germany. Showing exceptional musical talent on the cello as a child, his father moved the family to Paris so Jacques could attend the conservatory there. Academic life did not suit him, so he quit after only a year. He worked his way into the fashionable Parisian salons and eventually toured France, Germany and England. After his return to Paris, he opened up his own theater, the "Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens." At first, his productions were very small—the government mandated a cast of only three—but they were popular with the public. When the government lifted its restriction, Offenbach's first full-length operetta was *Orpheus in the Underworld*. The success of that work established his reputation as the composer of "some of the most exhilaratingly gay and tuneful music ever written." The public loved the political and social satire as well as the sexual naughtiness.

*La Vie parisienne*, was Offenbach's first operetta that dealt with contemporary Parisian life. As Offenbach's biographer Elisabeth Kracauer put it:

It was a kind of dionysiac orgy, no longer based, as it had been in *Orpheus*, on the bourgeois craving for a narcotic, but on the exiting feeling that a new day was dawning . . . it was awakened by the birth of democracy conceived in Paris, great, cosmopolitan Paris, in which the shape of things to come was already being revealed. Servants, artisans, a society man, and a distinguished foreigner all fraternally drink each other's health . . . *La Vie parisienne* held up a mirror to the life they were actually leading.

The Cuban composer Moisés Simons wrote the French operetta *Toi c'est moi*. Born in Havana, Cuba, Simons he is most remembered for his song El Manisero (the Peanut Vendor), considered by many to be the most famous piece of Cuban music. Simons wrote *Toi c'est moi* while he was living in Paris in the 1930s.

André Messager was a prominent operetta composer in the generation that followed Offenbach. He was a student of Gabriel Fauré and Camille Saint-Saëns. *L'Amour masqué*, written in 1923, comes near the end of his more than thirty operettas. It was originally called *J'ai deux amants*, the title of the song sung by the leading lady in the first act.

*La Vie en rose*, is the signature song of the great French cabaret singer Édith Piaf. At the time that she wrote the melody and lyrics for *La Vie en rose*, she did not have the proper credentials to be registered with the French copyright and royalty agency, so the credit for writing the song went to Louis Guglielmi, better known as Louiguy.

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AN AMERICAN IN PARIS  
 “FASCINATING RHYTHM” FROM LADY BE GOOD  
 “SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME” FROM OH, KAY!

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)

Written: 1928, 1924, 1926  
 Movements: Five, One, One  
 Style: American Contemporary  
 Duration: 16, 4, & 3 minutes

George Gershwin was the original “crossover” composer. His rag *Rialto Ripples*, written in 1917, and the hit song of 1919, *Swanee*, eventually led to the great Broadway shows *Lady Be Good*, *Oh Kay*, *Funny Face*, *Strike Up the Band*, *Show Girl*, *Girl Crazy* and *Of Thee I Sing*. He wedged his foot into the “classical” tent in 1924 at a concert by the Paul Whiteman Orchestra called “An Experiment in Modern Music.” The hit of the evening was Gershwin’s contribution: *Rhapsody in Blue*. Walter Damrosch, the conductor of the New York Symphony Society (later called the New York Philharmonic), was in the audience. He was so impressed, the next day he contacted Gershwin and asked him to write a concerto for piano and orchestra. Gershwin immediately agreed and, in his own words, promptly went out and got “four or five books on musical structure to find out exactly what the concerto form really was!”

After the success of the *Concerto in F*, he started to study composition in earnest with “classical” musicians. He asked Maurice Ravel if he could take orchestration lessons from him. Ravel replied, “You would only lose the spontaneous quality of your melody, and end by writing bad Ravel.” One of Gershwin’s tennis buddies in Hollywood was none other than the arch-modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg. When Gershwin suggested studying composition with him, Schoenberg demurred. Gershwin’s yearly income of nearly \$200,000 (in 1920’s dollars!) made it so that Schoenberg wanted lessons from Gershwin!

Damrosch commissioned a second work from Gershwin. It was during several trips to Paris (where he bought authentic Parisian taxi horns) that Gershwin got the idea of writing “An

American in Paris.” He finished the piano version of it in August 1928, and it had its orchestral premiere that December. Gershwin collaborated with his friend Deems Taylor to write the program notes for the premiere performance. They are quite extensive and a little *too* detailed, leaving almost nothing for the musical imagination. However, in an interview for the music magazine *Musical America*, Gershwin described it more succinctly:

This new piece, really a rhapsodic ballet, is written very freely and is the most modern music I’ve yet attempted. The opening part will be developed in typical French style, in the manner of Debussy and the Six [a group of composers made up of Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger among others], though all the themes are original. My purpose is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris, as he strolls about the city and listens to various street noises and absorbs the French atmosphere.

As in my other orchestral compositions, I’ve not endeavored to represent any definite scenes in this music. The rhapsody is programmatic only in a general impressionistic way . . .

The opening gay section is followed by a rich blues with a strong rhythmic undercurrent. Our American friend, perhaps after strolling into a café and having a couple of drinks, has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness. The harmony here is both more intense and simpler than in the preceding pages. This blues rises to a climax, followed by a coda in which the spirit of the music returns to the vivacity and bubbling exuberance of the opening part with its impression of Paris. Apparently the homesick American, having left the café and reached the open air, has disowned his spell of the blues and once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life. At the conclusion, the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant.

*Lady, Be Good!*, from 1924, was the first musical for Broadway that George wrote with his brother Ira as lyricist. It featured the brother/sister dance team of Fred and Adele Astaire. The plot involves Dick and Susie Trevor, siblings who are out of money and are eager to help each other. The duo sings *Fascinating Rhythm* in the latter part of the first act.

George and Ira wrote *Oh, Kay!* two years later. This time the featured artist was Gertrude Lawrence. *Someone to Watch Over Me* comes in the second act. George recalled that at the premiere

. . . somewhat to the surprise of the management, Miss Lawrence sang the song to a doll. This doll was a strange looking object I found in a Philadelphia toy store and gave to Miss Lawrence with the suggestion that she use it in the number. That doll stayed in the show for the entire run.

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SUSAN GRAHAM | mezzo-soprano

Susan Graham – hailed as “an artist to treasure” by *The New York Times* – rose to the highest echelon of international performers within just a few years of her professional debut, mastering an astonishing range of repertoire along the way. Her operatic roles range from Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* to Sister Helen Prejean in Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*, which was written especially for her. *Gramophone* magazine has dubbed her “America’s favorite mezzo.”



To launch the 2016–17 season, Graham joined Renée Fleming and Michael Tilson Thomas at the San Francisco Symphony’s opening-night gala, before stepping in to play Dido in Lyric Opera of Chicago’s new, premiere staging of Berlioz’s epic *Les Troyens*. Having created the role of Sister Helen Prejean in the world premiere production of *Dead Man Walking*, she makes her role debut as the convict’s mother in Washington National Opera’s revival of the work. She returns to Santa Fe Opera as Prince Orlofsky in the company’s first new production of Johann Strauss II’s *Die Fledermaus* in 25 years, and sings Erika in Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa* with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. She sang Mahler’s “Resurrection” Symphony at Spain’s majestic Catedral de Toledo with the orchestra and choir of the Teatro Real, and joins the MET Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen at Carnegie Hall for selections from Mahler’s *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*; sings Octavian in Richard Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Boston Symphony and Andris Nelsons; performs songs from Canteloube’s *Chants d’Auvergne* with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin; reprises Berlioz’s *La mort de Cléopâtre* in these performances with the San Antonio Symphony; and sings Ravel’s *Shéhérazade* and Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 with the Sydney Symphony under David Robertson. In recital, she joins regular partner Malcolm Martineau for accounts of “Frauenliebe und -leben Variations,” her wide-ranging program inspired by Schumann’s iconic song cycle, in Santa Barbara, Baltimore, and Portland, Oregon.

Graham’s earliest operatic successes were in such trouser roles as Cherubino in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*. Her technical expertise soon brought mastery of Mozart’s more virtuosic roles, like Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito*, *Idamante in Idomeneo* and *Cecilio in Lucio Silla*, as well as the title roles of Handel’s *Ariodante* and *Xerxes*. She went on to triumph in two iconic Richard Strauss mezzo roles, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* and the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.