

“Strings Unleashed”

Program Notes

Peter Warlock (1894 -1930), who was born Philip Heseltine, lived about a hundred years ago but found inspiration for “**Capriol Suite**” (1926) from Renaissance dances. At the British Museum during a period of his unemployment, Warlock had occupied himself in editing and transcribing lute tablature and Elizabethan music, making it accessible for modern instruments. The title of “Capriol Suite” came from a famous book on dancing written in 1589 by Jehan des Preys. In the book, the author converses with a lawyer named Capriol, and together they speak of the rhythms, the steps, and how to play the tabors and pipes for the fifty dances which came at the end of the book. Warlock chose a few of the dances for this Suite. A brief description of each follows:

Basse-Dance – With a stately and dignified gait, the feet were to glide over the floor, not be raised up from it. Historically, this dance faded from use, replaced by the Pavane and Galliard or other dance pairs.

Pavane – This slow, processional dance was originally named Padovana after Padua, a city in northern Italy. It was the slow part of the Pavane/Galliard pair.

Tordion – The name of this dance comes from the French verb *torde*, which means “to twist.” It is very similar to the galliard but quicker and more “showy.”

Bransles – A bransle was originally a pastoral, round dance with singing. As it came into court use, it became incidental music in the Basse-dance and then became almost as animated as the galliard.

Pieds-en-l’air – Literally “feet in the air,” this term describes a sequence of steps or movements from the galliard.

Mattachins – A sword dance of men dressed in gilded cardboard, it is sometimes called Bouffons, indicating darker, satirical versions of a clown or jester.

German composer **Carl Reinecke** (1824-1910) has champion bloodlines with teachers Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and Franz Liszt. Reinecke was technically born in Denmark until his hometown came under German rule in 1864. He led a varied musical life as a conductor, touring pianist, and composer. In 1860, Reinecke was appointed director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and professor of composition and piano at the Leipzig Conservatory. His students are a “who’s who” of accomplished Romantic-leaning composers: Grieg, Sinding, Stanford, Janáček, Bruch, among others. Since Reinecke was an author of books and articles on important musicians, it is hard to overstate the influence he had on the music of his day. After three decades with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, he started to devote more time to composition.

The “**Serenade for Strings**,” written in 1898, was the last composed serenade of nine finished by Reinecke. It displays elegant and refined orchestrations. The first three movements of six are played here today. The “Marcia” sets out with accented rhythmic lines in a minor key. Then it moves into melodies of upward sliding scales to finish with a tapered A section. The “Arioso” begins with warm sonorities, soon turning to an agitated, pot-boiling mid-section, and returns to a restful conclusion. The rollicking hiccups of the Scherzo theme aptly convey the playfulness of its title. The B section pits the upper strings against the low strings, then the fire alarm rings and the race is on.

(over)

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Program Notes (continued)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was born in London. Even at age 21, he was becoming known as a composer. The “Four Novelletten” by Coleridge-Taylor may have been inspired by Robert Schumann’s *Novelletten*, op. 21 (light romantic piano miniatures composed in 1838.) Trills, triangle, and tambourine contribute to the sparkle of his “**Novellette No. 1**” played today. As a violinist himself, Coleridge-Taylor was comfortable writing technical passages for the instrument but made them serve the overall musical flow of the piece.

Based in Portland, Oregon, **Kenji Bunch** (b. 1973) is a Julliard-trained violist and composer. His multi-style approach to writing results in folk and modern layers to his composition. He is Artistic Director of the new music group “Fear No Music” and is passionate about music education in Portland. His piece “**String Circle**” employs an extra viola beyond the traditional two violins, viola, and cello in a string quartet. Adding an extra string instrument gives more possibilities for chords and new mixes or textures of sound. The movements in brief are:

Lowdown – The piece opens with a reflection on Appalachian fiddling, its energy and emotional depth.

Shuffle Step – The close harmonies are a tribute to Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys, with the cello mimicking a string bass.

Ballad – This movement unveils a dramatic, melodic tribute to Johnny Cash with the tune “Poor Wayfarin’ Stranger.”

Porch Pickin’ – The entire movement is plucked strings (pizzicato), evoking banjos and mandolins.

Overdrive – The high-energy finale showcases contemporary fiddling styles.

- Notes by Rhonda Gowen

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