

**Steven Schick, Music Director**  
**David Chase, Choral Director**  
**Thomas Nee, Music Director Emeritus**

**Mandeville Auditorium**  
**Saturday, March 15, 2008, 8 P.M.**  
**Sunday, March 16, 2008, 3 P.M.**

**CRAWFORD SEEGER**     **Andante for Strings**

**UNG**     **Inner Voices**

**SCHUBERT**     **Symphony No. 6 in C Major, D.589**  
*Adagio; Allegro*  
*Andante*  
*Scherzo: Presto*  
*Allegro moderato*

INTERMISSION

**STRAVINSKY**     **Symphony of Psalms**  
*Part I*  
*Part II*  
*Part III*

## **Andante for Strings**

RUTH CRAWFORD SEEGER

Born July 3, 1901, East Liverpool, Ohio

Died November 18, 1953, Chevy Chase, Maryland

Ruth Crawford studied at the American Conservatory in Chicago from 1920 to 1924, and her talents attracted the interest of many composers, including Henry Cowell, Dane Rudhyar, and Edgard Varèse; she also became close friends with poet Carl Sandburg. The first woman ever to win a Guggenheim Fellowship, Crawford studied composition with Charles Seeger in New York City, and in 1930-31 she studied in Europe, where she met Hindemith, Berg, and Bartók. On her return to the United States, she married Seeger (who was, by a previous marriage, the father of Pete Seeger, the folk singer) and continued to compose.

The Depression had a profound impact on Crawford Seeger and her entire family. Her politics moved far to the left, and she turned her music to social causes and protest. Perhaps naturally, this led to an interest in American folk music, and here she was encouraged by Sandburg's passion for folk song—she collected over 3000 folk songs and wrote piano accompaniments for many of them. Her interest in folk music and the demands of raising four children kept her from composing much new music of her own, and she left behind a comparatively small catalog of works when she died at age 52 of cancer.

Crawford Seeger's *Andante for Strings* was originally the third movement of her *String Quartet*. Composed in 1931 while she was studying in Europe, the quartet was first performed on November 13, 1933, in New York City, and its striking third movement was recorded in 1934, a rare accolade for new music, particularly during the Depression. This *Andante*—heard at this concert in an arrangement for a full string section—consists of terraced chords rather than clearly-defined thematic material and abandons almost entirely the notion of rhythm: the music's variety comes from its shifting dynamics and accents. The composer called this “a counterpoint of dynamics,” stressing that “the crescendi and diminuendi should be exactly timed, and no instrument should reach the high or low point at the same time as any other. As for the melodic line—as in the second movement, it travels from instrument to instrument; there is only one line.”

## **Inner Voices**

CHINARY UNG

Born November 24, 1942, Takeo, Cambodia

Chinary Ung was a professor of composition at the University of Pennsylvania from 1984 until 1987, and early in his tenure there the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Pennsylvania State Arts Council commissioned an orchestral work from him. Ung completed *Inner Voices* in August 1986, and Dennis Russell Davies led the premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The music was an immediate success: *Inner Voices* received the Grawemeyer Award, given annually by the University of Louisville for the outstanding composition of that year, and it has been recorded by the American Composers Orchestra with Dennis Russell Davies conducting. Ung dedicated the score to his own composition teacher at Columbia, Chou Wen-Chung.

The composer has cited a specific inspiration for this music. When he was a boy in Cambodia, his family would visit an aged woman who collected scraps of cloth of many colors and shapes, and she would eventually transform those scraps—of different colors, textures, and materials—into one large quilt. As he took up the commission from the Philadelphia Orchestra commission, Ung decided to employ a similar technique, but instead of working with material, he worked with orchestral sound. And instead of creating a work of art like a quilt, which can be seen all at one time, he conceived his piece as a series of “color” incidents spread over a twenty-minute span.

*Inner Voices* is scored for a huge orchestra, one that includes such unusual instruments as alto flute, contrabassoon, E-flat clarinet, and many others not usually part of orchestral textures. But the really distinctive thing about the orchestration of *Inner Voices* is Ung’s deployment of a vast percussion section, which gives the music much of its distinctive character and coloring. Among the many percussion instruments here are temple bells, wind chimes, gongs, and bell tree; at moments these instruments can generate huge cascades of sound, but more often they are used subtly as part of the overall orchestral palette.

Ung has described his method in *Inner Voices* as using “groups of ensembles to produce overlapping colors.” The work is structured around several principal musical ideas, which weave

in and out in various shapes throughout the piece, but *Inner Voices* should not be thought of as a set of variations. Instead, it is a set of evolving episodes, each with its own character and distinct color. Ung does not employ any specifically Cambodian musical material here, but all listeners quickly sense an “Asian” character to *Inner Voices*, even as they may not be able to explain what that means.

While the music can seem episodic—and it *does* consist of a sequence of musical incidents—listeners might best approach *Inner Voices* by following its multiplicity of ideas, sounds, colors, and textures, much as the eye takes its time to decipher the interweaving of colors and fabrics in a quilt. The final episode is given to the solo violin, which sings above a shifting orchestral accompaniment. Ung’s own description of this concluding section is worth quoting at length: “The violin solo with the strings underneath is like glittering drops of water on a lotus leaf caught in a sunbeam. The surface of the pond is moving slightly, it looks like mercury.”

### **Symphony No. 6 in C Major, D.589**

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Born January 31, 1797, Vienna

Died November 19, 1828, Vienna

Schubert composed his *Sixth Symphony* between October 1817 and February 1818, just as he turned 21, but that traditional moment of independence found Schubert anything but free. His effort to move out of the family home the previous year and establish himself as a composer had met with failure, and in the summer of 1817—somewhat glumly—he had had to move back in with his family and assist his father, an elementary teacher, in the classroom. This particular moment found Schubert at a peculiar point as a composer. He was already a superb composer of lieder—earlier in 1817 he had composed such songs as *Die Forelle* (“The Trout”), *Der Tod und das Mädchen* (“Death and the Maiden”), and *Ganymed*—but as a composer of symphonic music he was still struggling to find his own voice. His *Fourth* and *Fifth Symphonies*, both composed in 1816, show the influence of Beethoven and Mozart respectively. The *Sixth* shows a new—and surprising—influence.

The operas of Gioacchino Rossini had made a profound impact on Viennese audiences during the second decade of the century, and Schubert was among the enamored. In November

1817, Schubert took time off from his *Sixth Symphony* to write two overtures, both tellingly named *Overture in the Italian Style*. All these works show the influence of the Italian master—rhythmic vitality, a bright tunefulness, repeated melodic patterns, light textures, and a preference for the sound of solo woodwinds in orchestral textures—and Schubert’s *Sixth Symphony* is an agreeable fusion of two quite different musical styles: Rossini’s *opera buffa* manner and Viennese symphonic music (there are many echoes of Beethoven here as well).

Schubert’s *Sixth* is sometimes known as “The Little C-Major”—to distinguish it from his *Ninth*, “The Great C-Major”—yet this is not really a “little” symphony at all. It stretches out to nearly half an hour, Schubert employs a full classical orchestra (pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, plus timpani and strings), and this symphony can make a splendid sound, as it does in its powerful opening measures. Yet its true character appears immediately: Schubert follows these grand gestures with lighter woodwind tunes, which almost consciously deflate the grand manner of the beginning. The music rushes ahead at the *Allegro* as a solo flute sounds the exposition’s smooth main theme, full of chirping gracenotes. Woodwinds also have the nicely-syncopated second subject, and the development contrasts grand orchestral sonorities with the woodwinds’ attractive tunefulness.

The *Andante* alternates two themes, the violins’ melting *pianissimo* melody at the opening and a triplet-driven second subject; both themes are richly embellished as they reappear. If the spirit of Rossini hovers over this symphony, another influence can be felt in the *Scherzo*, which countless observers have felt (with very good reason) to be a conscious echo of the scherzo of Beethoven’s *First Symphony*; the extended trio section again features the sound of solo woodwinds.

Schubert specifies that the finale should be *Allegro moderato*—he clearly does not want it to go too fast—and this movement takes its character from the violins’ fluid and graceful opening theme. One senses a great deal of amiable energy not headed in any particular direction in this movement: it moves from one good-spirited episode to the next, and then Schubert builds the coda into music of unexpected power. It is a surprising conclusion to a symphony that has to this point been characterized by wit, energy, and a deliberately light manner.

## **Symphony of Psalms**

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Born June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum

Died April 6, 1971, New York City

For the Boston Symphony Orchestra's fiftieth anniversary in 1930, Serge Koussevitsky commissioned a series of new works to be performed in celebration of that season. That set of commissions turned out to be the most impressive in the history of music: it included Hindemith's *Concert Music for Brass and Strings*, Roussel's *Third Symphony*, Prokofiev's *Fourth Symphony*, Hanson's *Second Symphony*, Copland's *Symphonic Ode*, and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (the other the works commissioned that year are seldom heard today: Honegger's *First Symphony*, Respighi's *Metamorphosen*, and Edward Burlingame Hill's *Ode for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra*).

Koussevitsky asked these composers for a symphonic work, but specified that each was free to write for whatever combination of performers he preferred. When this commission arrived, Stravinsky had been thinking for some time of composing a large-scale instrumental and vocal work. Raised in the Russian Orthodox church, he had fallen away from its practice, but in 1926—at the age of 44—he rejoined the church, and in response to Koussevitsky's commission he composed the *Symphony of Psalms*. This setting, however, should not be considered a statement of Stravinsky's particular beliefs; rather, it is a generalized expression of religious faith.

For the *Symphony of Psalms*, composed between January and August 1930, Stravinsky turned to the Old Testament, taking excerpts from two Psalms and using one Psalm complete, and presented them in an order that suggests three different relations with God: separation from God, strength derived from God, and praise of God. The title "symphony" may seem a strange one for what is essentially a setting of three texts without the conscious drama one associates with symphonic form; Stravinsky explained that "I wanted to create an organic whole without conforming to the various models adopted by custom, but still retaining the periodic order by which the symphony is distinguished from the suite, the latter being simply a succession of pieces varying in character." Stravinsky wished to give equal prominence to the chorus and the orchestra, but he made some unusual decisions about instrumentation, and these give the *Symphony of*

*Psalms* its unique sound. First, Stravinsky eliminates violins, violas, and clarinets from the orchestra, and the absence of the bright, resonant upper strings and the smooth sonority of the clarinets helps intensify the music's consciously "archaic" sound. Second, Stravinsky includes two pianos and a harp in the orchestra and then uses them percussively—their "strikes" of sound give this music its characteristic pointillistic sonority. Finally, Stravinsky tries to underline the "ancient" sound he wanted in this music by specifying that the soprano and alto parts should be sung by boys rather than women, as was the practice in early church music (this is almost never done, and in his own recording Stravinsky used women rather than boys).

Stravinsky's initial musical idea was the repeated six-note sequence in the final movement, and he composed that section first, then wrote the opening movements. None of the movements has an Italian tempo indication; instead, Stravinsky specifies only a metronome marking. The first movement (quarter-note=92; Psalm 39, 12-13)—which Stravinsky said was composed "in a state of religious and musical ebullience"—opens with a crack of sound generated in large part by the two pianos, and the chorus quickly enters with its plea to be heard. The second movement (eighth-note=60; Psalm 40, 1-3) is a complex double fugue, first for woodwinds, then for voices, and then for combinations of them. The final movement (quarter-note=48; Psalm 90) is the most varied. It opens with the chorus' *Alleluia*, but instead of being festive, the phrase is somber, imbued with an almost funereal splendor. The original six-note germ pulses quietly, then explodes to life at the *Laudate Dominum*. At the close, the music moves steadily forward on a pulsing four-note ostinato. Stravinsky himself noted that this "final hymn of praise must be thought of as issuing from the skies, and agitation is followed by the 'calm of praise.'"