

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Pièces en concert* François Couperin (1668–1733) & Paul Bazelaire (1886–1958)

François Couperin, the most illustrious of the Couperin line of musicians, was born in Paris and spent his entire life in the city and its environs. His father Charles was organist at Saint-Gervais, having assumed this prestigious position in 1661 upon the death of his brother Louis. François must have shown great musical promise as a child, for when Charles himself died in 1679, the post was held open for his son to claim at age 18 “on condition that he receive instruction.” This was financed—from her dowry and sale of household items—by François’ widowed mother, who was permitted to live with her son rent-free in the house the church had provided for Charles.

Named organist at Saint-Gervais in 1689 after a trial period, François secured additional appointments as organist and harpsichord teacher for the Royal Court at Versailles. With the death of Louis XIV in 1715, royal interest in music waned, and François—who had secured a royal pension—turned his attention to writing a treatise on harpsichord technique and to composing and publishing his works.

Paul Bazelaire was born 132 years ago today in Sedan, a French town on the border with Belgium. Introduced to piano and music theory by his mother, he took up cello at age 7. After study at the Paris Conservatory (1896–1905), he enjoyed a successful career as a concert cellist, teacher, and composer. He was professor of cello at the Paris Conservatory from 1918 until his death. His 100 or so original compositions include many for cello, but also works for orchestra, chamber ensemble, voice, and piano.

*Pièces en concert* (Pieces in agreement, 1924) consists of arrangements Bazelaire made for cello and string quartet of five movements from Couperin’s *Les Goûts-réünis ou Nouveaux Concerts* (The styles united or new concerts, 1724). This collection of *concerts*, numbered 5 to 14, supplements the four of *Les Concerts Royaux* (The royal concerts; 1722). Here *concert* refers to a sequence of individual pieces, usually music for dance, constituting an agreeable whole suitable for performance before an audience. Couperin tells us that the music of *Les Concerts Royaux* was composed “for the small chamber concerts for which Louis XIV had me play almost every Sunday of the year [1714–15].” In his preface to the new collection, he observes that “the French style and the Italian style have divided the French Republic of Music for many years” and goes on to suggest that proponents of each style can learn something from the other (as demonstrated by *concerts* in this collection that incorporate elements of both).

Bazelaire’s *pièces* derive—in order—from the opening *Gravement* of the 14th concert, the finale of the 7th, the third and second movements of the 10th, and the penultimate movement of the 6th. It is instructive to compare his arrangements with Couperin’s originals, as you can on YouTube. For the Siciliéne played first by Musica ad Rhenum and then by cellist Simca Heled with the Israel Sinfonietta, go to:

Couperin: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=G94URb4oW-k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G94URb4oW-k) at 10:00

Bazelaire: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXiQtiLCyXg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXiQtiLCyXg) at 2:08

A native of New York, cellist **Kurt Kaufman** received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Juilliard School. He has worked as Principal cellist for the State Opera of Flanders, Belgium, the Sacramento Symphony, and the Portland (Maine) Opera. He has also taught cello and chamber music at the University of California, Davis, and California State University at Chico. Besides his musical activities, he has worked as a computer programmer and networking consultant, and as office manager for his wife’s medical practice. Since 1998 Kurt and his wife have lived in northeastern Connecticut, where they have raised their two daughters. Kurt and his family members are in their 4th season performing with the Willimantic Orchestra.

*Valse-Fantaisie*

Mikhail Glinka (1804–57)

Unlike the other composers represented on this program, the man Piotr Tchaikovsky would in 1892 call “the corner-stone of Russian music” did not enjoy a musical upbringing. Born into landed gentry near Smolensk, Mikhail Glinka was appropriated by his protective grandmother, who confined him to her rooms for six years, so that he heard only folk songs sung by his nurse and dissonant church bells. Things got a bit better when she died. At age 10 he was captivated by music he heard played by a small orchestra maintained by an uncle and began learning violin. While at boarding school in St. Petersburg (1818–22), he was able to hear concerts and take lessons in violin, voice, and piano. After graduation he dutifully bowed to his father’s wish that he enter civil service—light duty that allowed him time for musical diversions, including trying his hand at composition (in which he never had any formal instruction).

In 1830 he left Russia to immerse himself in the musical culture of Western Europe: hearing concerts, meeting composers, studying scores. His fame rests largely on the two operas he wrote after returning home when his father died in 1834. The patriotic extravaganza *A life for the Tsar* (1836) was an immediate hit, while *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842), based on a poem by Alexander Pushkin (who died in a duel before he could help with the libretto), was not, needing more time to be appreciated fully—more time than Glinka had left, unfortunately.

*Valse-Fantaisie* was originally composed for piano in 1839. The version played today is an orchestration made by Glinka in 1856 with (he claimed) “the most studied sophistication and devilish contrivance.” It was among the works played at a memorial concert for the composer in St. Petersburg the following year. An earlier orchestration had helped make Glinka’s reputation abroad when it was performed—as *Scherzo (in the form of a waltz) for large orchestra*—with other works of his at a concert in Paris in 1845. In a review, Hector Berlioz hailed Glinka as a true original, noting that “the Scherzo is fascinating, is executed with a most striking rhythmic coquetry, and is genuinely novel and excellently worked out.”

*Symphony in C*

Georges Bizet (1838–75)

Born in Paris at a time when it rivaled Vienna as the musical capital of Europe, George Bizet—unlike Glinka—was immersed in music from birth. His father gave singing lessons at home, his mother providing piano accompaniment. Musicians were frequent visitors at the nearby home of her brother & his wife, also singers.

Early on, Bizet displayed an exceptional musical talent, being able to reproduce anything he heard on the piano. He was admitted to the Paris Conservatory at age 9 by special dispensation. There he studied piano and composition, winning the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1857, which paid for a two-year fellowship in Rome with minimal duties. After having quite a good time there, Bizet returned to Paris and worked hard at composition. Unfortunately, he didn’t have much luck with the Parisian musical public. Even the reception of his now-famous opera *Carmen* (1874), which premiered shortly before his untimely death from a heart attack, was mixed. Most of his works, if performed at all during his lifetime, enjoyed at best modest success.

Composed in 1855, *Symphony in C* was inspired by Gounod’s *First Symphony* of the same year, which Bizet had arranged for piano four hands. Perhaps because he thought it too derivative, Bizet shelved his symphony (it was discovered only in 1933) and referred to a later symphony in C (*Roma*) as his first. Near the end of his life, he would write to Gounod, “You were the beginning of my life as an artist . . . I can now admit that I was afraid of being absorbed.” Today the situation is quite reversed; the ratio of recordings of these two symphonies is about 20:1 in favor of Bizet.

Notes by S. K. Lehmann

## INSTRUMENTALISTS

### Violin I

Paul Navratil  
Concertmaster  
Jennifer Arel  
Kayla DeCaprio  
Barbara Horn  
Margalit Kaufman  
Joseph Piresson II  
Amelia Strimple  
Sharon Whitehead

### Violin II

Morgan Glasberg  
Cheryl Bayline  
Adeline Bray  
Michael Geigert  
Molly Haynes  
Hannah Kruger  
Hyunmin Lee  
Scott Lehmann  
Elizabeth Neyssen  
Dianne Tewksbury

### Viola

Lindsey Clark  
Dora DeCaprio  
Gale Eberly  
Barbara Gibson  
Barbara Glenister

### Cello

Kurt Kaufman  
Sondra Boyer  
Joanna Churette  
Emily Green  
John Lenard  
Mary Neyssen

### Cello, cont'd

David Vaughan  
Peggy Webbe  
Brenna Whitton  
Carol Williams

### Bass

Liz Davis  
Peter Tomanelli

### Flute

Joan D'Auria  
Sandra Smith Rosado

### Oboe

Emily Ferguson  
Althea Madigan

### Clarinet

Rick Bennett  
Shirley Roe

### Bassoon

Peggy Church  
Holly Valentine

### Horn

Grant Abelson  
Megan Kirwin  
Peter Palmer

### Trumpet

Jeff Kelleher  
David McCabe

### Trombone

Kevin Tracy

### Percussion

Terry Cote  
Brian Girasoli  
Liz Kiebler

# WILLIMANTIC ORCHESTRA

Scott Churette, Conductor

## WINTER CONCERT

3:00 P.M., Sunday, 04 March 2018  
Fine Arts Instructional Center, ECSU  
Willimantic

## PROGRAM

*Pièces en concert*

François Couperin, arr. by Paul Bazelaire

- I. Prélude: Gravement
- II. Siciliéne: Tendrement
- III. La Tromba: Gablement
- IV. Plainte: Douloureusement
- V. Air de diable: Vivement

Kurt Kaufman, cello

*Valse-Fantaisie*

Mikhail Glinka

## INTERMISSION

*Symphony in C*

Georges Bizet

- I. Allegro vivo
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro vivace
- IV. Allegro vivace