



**Ann Arbor
Symphony Orchestra**

April 18, 2009

Michigan Theater

Arie Lipsky, Conductor
Keith Taylor, Narrator
Anthony Elliott, Cello
Katherine Larson, Soprano

This concert is sponsored by

Jim and Millie Irwin

Program

Watershed (World Premiere) Evan Chambers
Dedicated to the memory of Mary Beth Doyle
Keith Taylor, Narrator

Concerto No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra, Dmitri Shostakovich
Op. 107
Allegretto
Moderato
Cadenza
Allegro con moto

Anthony Elliott, Cello

Intermission

Symphony No. 4 in G Major Gustav Mahler
Bedächtig, Nicht eilen
In gemächlicher Bewegung, Ohne Hast
Ruhevoll
Sehr behaglich

Katherine Larson, Soprano

Presentation flowers courtesy of Tom Thompson/Flowers.

*Shar Products Company has sponsored the purchase of tonight's music
for the A²SO's permanent library collection.*

This concert is supported by grants from  *and* 

Program Notes

by Edward Yadzinsky

Watershed

Evan Chambers

Born 1963; Alexandria, Louisiana



Evan Chambers was raised in Dayton, Ohio by parents who were enthusiastic participants in the 1950s American folk music revival. Chambers' compositions bear the stamp of his early exposure to the emotion and immediacy of folk song and community music-making. He is also a traditional Irish fiddler, and he recently appeared as a soloist in Carnegie Hall with the American Composers Orchestra performing his *Concerto for Fiddle and Violin*.

His compositions have been performed by the Cincinnati, Kansas City, Memphis, New Hampshire, and Albany Symphonies among others; awards for his music include first prize in the Cincinnati Symphony Competition, and the Walter Beeler Prize. He has been recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Luigi Russolo Competition, and has been a resident of the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo.

Chambers is currently Chair of the Composition Department at the U-M. His solo chamber music disk *Cold Water, Dry Stone* is available on Albany records, and his orchestral song-cycle *The Old Burying Ground* is due to be released this spring. He can be found most Sundays with his fiddle in a circle of musicians at Conor O'Neill's pub in Ann Arbor.

Chambers writes about his composition:

Watershed—noun: an area defined and connected by a subtle system of waters and their flow downward toward a common goal, emptying out into a body larger than all of its tributaries; a place and time in which things come together, e.g., a watershed moment: a defining moment in which the energy of many currents comes together decisively in such a way as to make underlying energies manifest.

When the Ann Arbor Symphony asked me to write a piece with a local theme, it struck me that the Huron River and its tributary streams form a very real connection between us in southeast Michigan – the river literally flows through all of our veins. The watershed seems like an auspicious metaphor to celebrate the anniversary of an important community arts organization, one that also works toward bringing us together and connecting us.

The Huron River itself flows past my house; I go to look at it every day. It's been polluted, bridged, dammed, and damaged by runoff from residential development as well as industry. I'm told it might be one of the most studied rivers in the U.S., so it's not normally associated with wildness and mystery.

Yet at the swampy headwaters, even with the sound of the highway and the train whistles ringing in from the distance, the world seems to attend to itself. You can feel that it is an old place – the plants are mainly native, the trees venerable, and the feeling of life obeying its own nature is palpable. It's hard to be in the presence of the first gathering of waters without feeling a touch of magic.

Here is where the first pools arise from darkness and come together, each one a little micro-climate with its own shape, color, temperature, depth, and rate of vibration. The connections between them are often invisible, and tiny rivulets that may or may not consolidate the flow twist off quietly in all directions. Once the water has reached the surface, it begins to settle, threading its way down through the muddy places and marshes. The many streams of the watershed all begin to converge, widening the river and making it powerful, slowly dropping in a great curving arc, eventually emptying into Lake Erie.

While it is difficult to describe the ways in which the natural world finds its way into something as abstract as music, the sense of movement and stillness, and the qualities of attention I have experienced in my meditations on the river system are the wet soil that the piece grew out of. The music begins with stylized birdcalls, then begins gently winding around small chordal centers, leaving some questions unanswered. The longing for union that we all carry in our hearts is part of the trajectory as well – as the music begins to flow, gathering strength and direction, its many streams joining together, pushing and yearning toward the rolling blue waters of the great lake beyond.

This piece was commissioned by the A²SO in celebration of its 80th anniversary season. It is dedicated to the memory of Mary Beth Doyle, an inspired and joyous local environmentalist who died tragically soon, and whose life's work was to protect our waters and our land from being poisoned.

Concerto No. 1 for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 107

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906; St. Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975; Moscow



Updates on the life and times of Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich reveal the harsh realities of a composer who lived and worked under the guise of double-agency: one for public view and official consumption (a gesture of obedience to the prevailing Soviet politic); another for the artistic freedom of an individual.

Political problems began for Shostakovich in 1936 when a performance of his early opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was heard by not less (i.e., not worse) than Joseph Stalin. The opera and the composer received such severe official condemnation that the work had to be withdrawn. The next major effort of Shostakovich was his now well-known *Symphony No. 5*, listed by the composer as “A Soviet artist’s reply to just criticism.” The ruse paid off and for the rest of his life the composer was able to keep his political dragons at bay. By the end of his remarkable career the oeuvre of Shostakovich included 15 symphonies and 15 string quartets in addition to volumes of other work.

Shostakovich’s first cello concerto was scored in 1959 for Mstislav Rostropovich, who notes:

Cello Concerto No. 1 was the first work that Shostakovich wrote especially for me. I think that Shostakovich was speaking the truth when he told in an interview for *Sovietskoye Iskusstvo* that he had been inspired by Prokofiev’s *Symphony-Concertante for Cello and Orchestra* when composing his first cello concerto. He loved the Prokofiev work with a passion. He told me that he had played the record of the *Symphony-Concertante* so many times that it was completely worn down and only emitted a kind of hiss when played on his gramophone.

In Shostakovich’s *Cello Concerto No. 1* the composer alludes to Stalin’s favorite song, “Suliko.” These allusions are undoubtedly not accidental, but they are camouflaged so craftily that even I didn’t notice them to begin with. The first time Dmitri Dmitriyevich hummed this passage through to me, he laughed and said, “Slava, have you noticed?” I had not noticed a thing.

Cast in four movements, the music of Op. 107 brims with the verve and angst we have come to identify with Shostakovich. Indeed, we are in for a virtuoso tour in the grand Russian manner – one which transforms from a world of sparkle and gusto into the inscrutable land of lyrical intrigue.

Listeners will note the composer's care to ensure the cello stands out in relief over the orchestral phrases, in part by reducing the instrumentation.

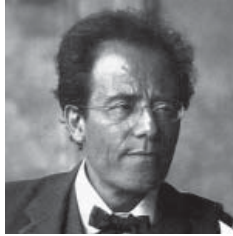
The work begins straightaway with a cryptic motif from the soloist – a melodic kernel formative to the entire piece. Marked *Allegretto*, the first movement is chiseled with nervous energy as a versatile development of the diminutive theme. In the second movement *Moderato*, the very same fragment is plied with a tender mood worthy of the poignant prose of Pushkin – poetic and soulful, beginning even with a brief reflection of the opening of Dvořák's *New World Symphony* (but up a fourth). The liquid phrases are generously extended over the full range of the cello, including a lovely verse on the high wire, some of it well above the high E-string on the violin. The cadenza which follows surely means what it says – a tour de force in every respect. In turn, the last movement *Allegro con moto* recaptures the scene in Shostakovich's high-blown symphonic style. Stunning.

Symphony No. 4 in G Major

Gustav Mahler

Born July 7, 1860; Kaliste, Bohemia

Died May 18, 1911; Vienna, Austria



Gustav Mahler was a certified heavyweight when it came to the meanings of life. His catalog of nearly 11 symphonies and a large collection of songs could be taken as a tonal diary which sought to express every nuance of his introspective nature.

Ever fearful of something, always looking over his shoulder, the composer was forever anxious about the caprice of life – often mistaking bluebirds for ravens and the morning mist for a hail storm. Of course we all do that at times, which is one of the reasons that Mahler's music has such wide appeal. But then again, like most of us, Gustav could also take a moment to lighten up and smell the roses. Such is the tender source of *Symphony No. 4*, completed in 1901 with revisions in 1910. At just under an hour or so in length it is the "briefest" of all of the composer's symphonic statements. However, this is Mahler, and even when travelling light, his guiding star is a whirling nebula. About his fourth symphony, the composer noted:

In the first three movements prevails the serenity of a higher realm, a realm strange to us, oddly frightening, even terrifying. In the *Finale* the child who, in its previous existence belonged to that higher realm, arrives to tell us what it all means.

From the grace notes and sleigh bells at the opening measures, we are immersed in child-like innocence. The tone is unmistakably playful and

colorful. Symphonies usually arrive in formal attire: an introduction followed by main themes, development, recapitulations, etc., i.e., so-called sonata-allegro form. But not here. Instead, Mahler seems to conjure new motifs and harmonies from a deck of tuneful cards, all in colorful play across the full orchestra, with no section overlooked.

Beginning with a solo horn and a sassy melody from the solo violin (detuned to sound like a country fiddle), the second movement seems at first to continue in the same fashion. *En garde..!* Though simple, the tunes are far from innocent. Here Mahler retells the old German-French legend of the devil disguised as a country fiddler named Heim, who lures innocent folks to trade their souls for earthly pleasures. (By coincidence, the old fable had reemerged across Europe near the end of the 19th century – perfect for Mahler who kept his ear tuned to the earthy ground.) With a trace of irony, about midway a trumpet heralds a rustic retreat, which leads to a tender memoir – like a diary of winters untold, summers too few. Mahler's letters from the time are filled with such reference.

For peace and tranquility, an oasis of luxuriant harmony casts a dream from the strings as dawn breaks upon the third movement, too lovely, even for slumber. The music seems to remind us of the old legend about the city of Vienna – one eye smiles, the other hides a tear. But yet another mini-scherzo and a brassy reveille appear mid-stream (with Gustav Mahler, always a dichotomy) before it all blends into evanescent D major at the close.

The composer often relied on an anthology of German folk lore titled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as a source for his songs and symphonic texts. He follows suit here in the fourth movement, including melodic fragments from the preceding movements. The text for the soprano solo is *Was mir das Kind erzählt* (*What the child tells me*). The tune and harmonies are based on a song he had written in 1892 titled *Der Himmel hängt voll Geigen* (*Heaven is filled with violins*). Mahler later described the Finale:

Imagine a heaven of undifferentiated blue. But it darkens sometimes, grows spooky, even terrifying. It is not that heaven itself really dims: on the contrary it shines on and on in its eternal blue. It is only that we sometimes react to it with sudden terror, just as on the most beautiful day, when the woods are drenched in sunlight, one is often gripped by panic and fear.

Vintage Mahler..!

Translation of Was mir das Kind erzählt (What the child tells me)

Wir geniessen die himmlischen, Freuden	We enjoy heaven's delights,
D'rum tun wir das Irdische meiden.	So can dispense with earthly things.
Kein weltlich' Getümmel Hört man nicht im Himmel! Lebt alles in sanftester Ruh'.	No worldly turmoil Is to be heard in heaven: Everything lives in peace and calm.
Wir führen ein englisches Leben, Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben; Wir tanzen und springen, Wir hüpfen und singen. Sanct Peter im Himmel sieht zu.	We lead the life of angels Yet are very gay about it; We jump and dance, We skip and sing. St. Peter in heaven looks on.
Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset, Der Metzger Herodes d'rauf passet. Wir führen ein geduldig's, Unschuldig's, geduldig's, Ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod. Sanct Lucas den Ochsen tät schlachten Ohn'einig's Bedenken und Achten.	St. John lets the lamb go; Herod the butcher marks it well. We lead a patient, Innocent, lovable Little lamb to its death. St. Luke slaughters the ox Without giving it a second thought.
Der Wein kost'kein Heller Im himmlischen Keller; Die Englein, die backen das Brot.	Wine costs not a farthing In heaven's cellars; The angels bake the bread.
Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten, Die wachsen im himmlischen Garten, Gut' Spargel, Fisolen Und was wir nur wollen. Ganze Schüsseln voll sing uns bereit! Gut' Aepfel, gut Birn' und gut' Trauben; Die Gärtner, die alles erlauben.	Tasty vegetables of every kind Grow in heaven's garden: Good asparagus, beans And whatever we want. Whole dishfuls are ready for us! Good apples, pears and grapes; The gardeners let us have anything.
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen, Auf offener Strassen Sie laufen herbei!	If you want deer Or hare on an open spit They come running up!
Sollt' ein Fasttag etwa kommen, Alle Fische gleich mit Freuden angeschwommen!	Should a fast-day occur, All fish gladly swim along!

Dort läuft schon Sanct Peter
Mit Netz und mit Köder
Zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sanct Martha die Köchin muss sein.

St. Peter already hurries,
With his net and bait,
Into the heavenly fishpond.
St. Martha must be the cook.

Kein' Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
Die unsrer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
Zu tanzen sich trauen.
Sanct Ursula selbst dazu lacht.
Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
Sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
Ermuntern die Sinnen,
Dass alles für Freuden erwacht.

There's no music on earth
That can be compared to ours.
Eleven thousand virgins
Set to dancing;
Even St. Ursula laughs to see it.
Cecilia and her kin
Are the splendid Court musicians!
The angelic voices
Gladden our senses,
So that everything awakes to
pleasure.

Events of 1910 (*Symphony No. 4* composed)

- Michigan Central tunnel under Detroit River to Windsor first used by trains
- Department of Special Education organized in Detroit schools; one of first in nation
- NAACP is founded in New York
- Boy Scouts of America is founded by painter "Uncle Dan" Beard
- Camp Fire Girls of America is founded by Luther H. Gulick
- Comiskey Park opens in Chicago
- Glacier National Park opens in Montana
- Penn Station opens in New York
- *The Dance and Music* painted by Matisse
- Animated cartoons appear in films

Keith Taylor

Keith Taylor has published numerous books, most recently, *If the World Becomes So Bright*, and a co-translation from modern Greek: *Battered Guitars: Poetry and Prose of Kostas Karyotakis*. After a couple of decades as a bookseller, he now works as the coordinator of undergraduate creative writing for the University of Michigan, where he also directs the Bear River Writers' Conference. He has published his poetry, short stories, reviews and essays in over 200 periodicals, and has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Michigan Council for the Arts.

Anthony Elliott

Cellist Anthony Elliott is in great demand as a soloist, chamber music performer and teacher. Following his victory in the Emanuel Feuermann International Cello Competition in 1987, *Strad* Magazine wrote of his competition appearance “His emotional communication is often profound, and his glittering, silvery tone captivates the ear.” Following quickly on the heels of his competition victory was a highly successful New York debut recital which received a lengthy standing ovation from a capacity crowd.



Anthony Elliott’s studies were with two legendary figures of the cello, Janos Starker and Frank Miller. Presently he is a Professor of Music at the U-M. He has given master classes at most of America’s leading music programs including Cleveland Institute of Music, Eastman School of Music, the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, Indiana University, Oberlin and Peabody Conservatories and Interlochen Arts Academy. He spends most of his summer teaching and performing at festivals around the world.

A frequent guest soloist with major orchestras, Anthony Elliott has performed most of the standard concerto repertory with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Vancouver Symphony, and the CBC Toronto Orchestra. He has also commissioned new works by such composers as Primous Fountain III, Augustus Hill, James Lee III, and Chad E. Hughes. As a soloist, his performances have been recorded and broadcast on radio and television across the U.S. and Canada.

Also in great demand as a chamber musician, he is a regular guest artist at the Sitka (Alaska) Summer Music Festival, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, the Texas Music Festival, New York’s Bargemusic Chamber Series, Chamber Music International of Dallas, Houston’s DaCamera Series, the Victoria International Festival, and the Gateways Festival. He has also appeared as a member of Quartet Canada, with members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and with members of the Emerson, Juilliard, Cleveland, and Concord String Quartets.

He has appeared in chamber music with the present and former concertmasters of the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Cleveland Orchestra. He performs regularly with the Michigan Chamber Players in Ann Arbor.

This marks Mr. Elliott’s first performance with the A²SO.

Katherine Larson

Katherine's performance highlights include the title role of *Tosca* with both the Lincoln Opera of Chicago and OPERA!Lenawa of Michigan; *Madama Butterfly* with Indiana Opera North; the Verdi *Requiem* for Illinois Symphony and Toledo Symphony, Mendelsohn's *Elijah* with the University Musical Society (and A²SO) and Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and Mahler's transformative *Resurrection Symphony* with the A²SO.



Ms. Larson is the recipient of numerous national and international awards, including the International Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation Competition, the National Friedrich Schorr Memorial Competition, and the National Bel Canto Competition. She was also a finalist in both the Queens Opera Competition in New York and the Lyric Opera of Chicago Center for American Artists competition.

Katherine is also a fine artist, muralist and children's book illustrator. She has done over 150 murals across the United States. She currently has 10 nationally distributed books, but is best known locally for her paintings which have frequently appeared on the cover of the *Ann Arbor Observer*.

This is Katherine Larson's fifth appearance with the A²SO.

Jim and Millie Irwin

From Kerrytown to the concert stage, from the Michigan Marching Band to the University carillons, Jim and Millie Irwin have demonstrated a true love of the performing arts. They were the first to permanently endow a chair in the Ann Arbor Symphony, the Principal Clarinet Chair. They also support the Symphony through sponsorship of concerts, such as this year's Season Finale.

Perhaps it was Jim leading songs as a youth around Boy Scout campfires. Or maybe it was Millie forming an all-girl band in junior high. Whatever it was, something started the Irwins on a lifelong devotion to musical performance, which is shown outright through their local philanthropy.

Music is prominent in the Irwin family. Millie paid her way through college by forming her own all-women orchestra. Their daughters are both pianists and play other instruments as well. Sherilyn, the oldest, played clarinet in the Michigan Marching Band. Karen played oboe in the U-M Concert Band as a non-music major. Both of them played leadership roles at Interlochen School of the Arts.

All the Irwins share a love for the A²SO. "Our Ann Arbor Symphony is a prime source for local civic pride," says Jim, "With great talent, excellent management, and the highest performance standards, our Symphony deserves as much local support as possible. Millie and I are delighted to help in whatever way we can."