



Department of Music
College of Visual and Performing Arts

PROGRAM NOTES

Winthrop Symphony Orchestra – April 9, 2025

by Elisa Koehler

Grieg: Peer Gynt Suite No. 1

Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg wrote his incidental music for Henrik Ibsen's play, *Peer Gynt*, in 1876. He formed two concert suites from the music, the first of which will be performed this evening. The first movement, "Morning Mood," is the prelude to the fourth act of Ibsen's play while the second movement depicts Peer Gynt's grief over the death of his mother, Åse, in Act Three. This lament scored for muted strings is one of the most compelling evocations of grief in the entire orchestral literature. A touch of exoticism appears with the dance of an Arabian girl, Anitra, in the third movement. The suite concludes with the well-known music from the play's final act which depicts Peer Gynt's fanciful adventures with menacing characters from Norwegian folklore.

Bush: Mother's Petunias

South Carolina native Madison Bush was born in April of 2000. She began writing music at the age of ten and graduated from Winthrop University with a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Composition in 2022. At Winthrop she studied composition with Mark Lewis and violin with Kari Giles and played violin with the Winthrop Symphony Orchestra. Since graduating, she has composed pieces for string and woodwind ensembles, including a commissioned piece for the Burnt Reed Quintet. Madison has also arranged and composed music for the Charlotte Strings Collective, a group with which she also performs as a violinist. Her long-term aspiration is composing music for film. She writes the following about her composition, *Mother's Petunias*, which you will hear this evening:

Mother's Petunias is a representation of the nostalgia I've felt, especially as I've gotten older and had to bear more responsibilities. In the house I grew up in, alongside my mother and grandmother, there was a bathroom situated at the very back, painted a vibrant, mint green, with one singular window, and a door on either side connecting the master bedroom to the guest room. As a child, I spent hours here, staring out of the window, since it had the

best view of our backyard. The large, old oak tree with the swing my uncle installed attached to it, the muscadine trees in the back corner, honeysuckles trellising along the metal fence were all visible from that oddly placed, oddly colored bathroom. When images of the house crept into my dreams, suddenly at the back of the hallway, was a wooden stand and on top of it, a tall bud vase, deep wine in color, with two white petunias inside of it. When I first envisioned this piece, it was with all of these images in mind. Since starting, I've had a hard time settling on what exactly Mother's Petunias meant to me, but every last part reminds me of my family and the time we enjoyed together twenty odd years ago, when things appeared much simpler to a child.

Giazotto: Adagio in G Minor on Themes of Tomaso Albinoni

Nobody could blame the Italian musicologist Remo Giazotto for being a bit chagrined. His most famous composition is popular all over the world, yet he rarely gets the credit for writing it. Popularly known as the “Albinoni Adagio,” his Adagio in G Minor on Themes of Tomaso Albinoni contains only six measures of music from a “Sonata a tre” in G minor without opus number by the Italian Baroque composer who lived between 1671 and 1750. Giazotto discusses his method for creating the piece in his notes from the printed score:

The first move towards the reconstruction of the work was provided by the realization of the figured bass, to which a brief introduction was added. Using this figured bass and the two thematic elements (six bars in all) the whole was pieced together and composed in full accordance with the harmonic tissue suggested by the figured bass. The organ, instead of the harpsichord, has been indicated for the figured bass in consideration of the mystic atmosphere created by it and on the assumption that this might have been a Sonata a tre ‘da chiesa’ and not ‘da camera’.

The “Adagio” doesn’t necessarily transport the listener back to the Baroque era, but rather to a romanticized conception of the period. The poignant pathos of the music may be connected to the discovery of Albinoni’s original manuscript. As the compiler of the thematic index of Albinoni’s works, Giazotto received the six-measure fragment from the State Library of Dresden following the destruction of World War II. Because musicologists deal with the painful frustration of lost masterpieces on a regular basis, it’s hard not to wonder: Did the tantalizing fragment of “what could have been” combined with the cultural devastation of WWII inspire Giazotto to write his elegiac music? We can only speculate.

Schubert: Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, D. 485

Franz Schubert composed his *Fifth Symphony* in 1816 when he was only 19 years old. Designed as a tribute to Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550*, many thematic and structural

features hearken back to Mozart's work. This influence is especially noticeable in the third movement Menuetto which is in the same key and bears a remarkable resemblance to the Menuetto of K. 550 (G minor, the relative minor of B-flat major). The similarities are intentional because Mozart was Schubert's favorite composer. The influence of Joseph Haydn is also evident in the string writing and formal structures of the outer movements. But the luxuriously expansive second movement – the longest section of the symphony – is pure Schubertian lyricism marked by surprising harmonic detours. Although Schubert's dark side seems to have captured the Romantic imagination – especially his song cycles, *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* – it is worth remembering that Schubert died only one year after Beethoven, and he lived his short life of only 31 years during the twilight of the Classical era.

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<https://www.winthrop.edu/cvpa/byrnes-grand-reopening-celebration/>

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