

SASO OPENING CONCERT INCLUDES SHOWPIECES BY LISZT AND SMETANA

Punch Howarth

On Saturday October 8, the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra will perform the opening concert of the 2011-2012 season. Galindo's Sones de Mariachi (Mariachi Songs) opens the program. Gareth Johnson will next be soloist in the popular Violin Concerto in E minor by Mendelssohn. The second half of the program includes March Past of the Kitchen Utensils by Vaughn-Williams, Smetana's The Moldau and Les Preludes of Liszt.

The last two selections are by well known Eastern European composers, Bedrich Smetana and Franz Liszt. Smetana along with Dvorak were Bohemian Nationalist composers of what was to become the Czech Republic. Smetana lived in an Austrian controlled Bohemia at a time when feelings of independence were growing. A work of intense pride about Bohemian nationalism is Smetana's Ma Vlast (My Country). The work is a series of six tone poems relating to visions of Bohemia. The second, Vltava (River Moldau) that flows past Prague, is the work being performed. It opens with ripples of the river's birth, followed by a hunt, nymphs swimming in lunar illumination, a village wedding, shimmering reflections of ruined castles, rapids, and final rush to the sea.

Smetana's music is basically Germanic due to his training and was a disciple and friend of Liszt. He develops a Czech musical tradition in mid life that includes folk music and dances, operas based upon Czech life i.e. The Bartered Bride, and becomes the Slavic focal point for those who follow.

Hungarian Franz Liszt, also a product of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, experienced three periods of his musical life. Early on he was a profound piano virtuoso with very large hands. Secondly he

became a conductor of orchestra and opera, and following this he became a composer. His compositions reflect a change away from traditional symphonic works to a new tone poem form that leads to Wagner and Richard Strauss. A major influence on his composing were the descriptive works of Berlioz.

Les Preludes is the second of twelve symphonic tone poems by Liszt and is the best known and most popular. The Lone Ranger and Tonto loved it as it was used as theme music for the long running radio and TV show along with the William tell Overture. The work was inspired by poems of Joseph Autran, Les Quatre Elements and Nouvelles meditations poetiques by Lamartine. The work opens with a long developing quiet introduction followed by a military fanfare. In areas to follow are pastoral, warlike, dreamy and indecisive sections. The fanfare returns much enlarged for an expected big ending.

This concert will be presented in SaddleBrooke at the Desert View Performing Arts Auditorium on Saturday October 8 at 7:30 PM and again on Sunday October 9 at 3:00 PM at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Oro Valley. For tickets and other information go to www.sasomusic.org