NEW ORLEANS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

PRESENTS

LES CENELLES

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA
AUGUST 25 AND 26, 2023

MUSICIANS

Violin I
Yuki Tanaka
Zorica Dimova
Elizabeth Overweg

Violin II
Hayoung Cho
Milena Rusanova
Christian Aldridge

Viola
Bruce Owen
Kenny Wang

Cello
Jee Yeoun Ko
Rachel Hsieh

Bass
Doug Therrien

Flute
Sarah Schettler

Oboe
Phillip Larroque

Clarinet
Roy Park

Bassoon
Mark Williams

Horn
Lauren Bravo

Trombone
Austin Richardson

Percussion
Aaron Smith

MUSIC DIRECTORS

Phillip Larroque
Maxim Samarov

The **New Orleans Chamber Orchestra** *is committed to enriching our musical community by presenting concerts of the highest quality featuring the area's finest musicians in works of local interest, including those of New Orleans composers. We are committed to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our activities.*

Founded by Phillip Larroque and Maxim Samarov, the New Orleans Chamber Orchestra debuted in the summer of 2016.

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — Adagio and Fugue in C minor for Strings K. 546

Anton Arensky — Variations on the Theme by Tchaikovsky
Phillip Larroque, conductor

Trevor Weston — Aurorean Air (world premiere)

Michel Augustus Burke
Lyrics by James Riopelle
Orch. by Paul Mauffray
A Prayer from Malta
Betsy Uschkrat, soprano

Ryan Harrison — Les Cenelles

1. Au Printemps (L. Boise)
2. L'Orphelin des Tombeaux (BO…RS)
3. Le Songe (Armand Lanusse)
4. Parle Toujours (Camille Thierry)

Sakinah Davis, soprano
Ivan Griffin, bass-baritone
Maxim Samarov, conductor

The New Orleans Chamber Orchestra gives special thanks to Dr. Sakinah Davis and the Music Department of Xavier University for their generosity and assistance in presenting this program. We also thank Lisa Hooper for her tireless ongoing support.

We also thank the many donors who contributed towards making this concert possible. You can find our more and support this and future programs at NOLACHAMBERORCH.COM

Michael Augustus Burke was born in 1937 in Detroit, Michigan. Improvising and 'creating out of the moment' on the keyboard came naturally to him after practicing his assigned piano pieces. Michael went on to study music theory, composition, and organ at St. Joseph's University in Rensselaer, Indiana where he earned a degree in Liturgical Music. A year after Hurricane Katrina, in 2006, Michael moved to New Orleans and met Dr. James Riopelle, MD, lyricist; they began collaborating and have written **"Talba minn Malta, 1972"** ("A Prayer from Malta"), celebrating the healing of leprosy on the Island of Malta in 1972. Composed in 2018, the orchestral version of this work arranged by Paul Mauffray is receiving its world premiere by the New Orleans Chamber Orchestra in 2023. Michael Burke's album "About Time" is available on Amazon.com.

Ryan Harrison, a New Orleans native, is a graduate student in Duke University's music composition program. His artistic output, be it musical or through other mediums, seeks to communicate or evoke sentiments and emotions universal to the human condition: e.g., loss, triumph, dread, hope. Through the years, he has been fortunate to learn under composers and educators such as Jerry Sieg, Barbara Jazwinski, Edward Dulaney, Rick Snow, Scott Lindroth, John Supko, and Stephen Jaffe. He has collaborated with a variety of ensembles and performers, including JACK Quartet, Mivos Quartet, Lunar Ensemble, the New Orleans Chamber Orchestra, Horszowski Trio, and members of the Louisiana Philharmonic. He holds degrees in music composition from the University of New Orleans (Bachelor of Arts), Tulane University (Master of Fine Arts), Duke University (Master of Arts), and is currently working towards obtaining a Ph.D. in composition from Duke University.

(Composer's note)

First published in 1845, *Les Cenelles* stands as the first anthology of poetry published by African Americans. The poets of *Les Cenelles* called New Orleans their birthplace and chose to symbolize the fruits of their labor—and the Créole cultural milieux which shaped them—with *les cenelles*, at type of mayhaw fruit native to southeastern regions of the United States. Young men would traverse the swampy, gator-infested waters of Louisiana to collect the fruit to present to their mothers, darlings, and other special women in their lives, who would further boil and strain the mayhaws into scrumptious jellies. The poet's offering of literary "fruits" to their sweethearts sought to preserve their culture via the exaltation of this courtly tradition.

Each of the four songs of the *Les Cenelles* song cycle contains elements of blues, jazz, and opera, musical genres which played foundational roles in New Orleans' artistic heritage. The bluesy/jazzy elements influence the entire gamut of the song cycle, from the embedding of twelve-bar blues progressions within each song, the usage of twangy syncopations and swinging rhythms, and through the emphasis on blue notes and other melodic frameworks characteristic of blues and jazz genres. Operatic influences are expressed through inflections of arias and recitative, two prominent and contrasting singing deliveries within the genre.

Additionally, the song cycle hopes to proliferate a social message. Many of the poets of *Les Cenelles* played vital roles in contributing to the cultural and intellectual development of New Orleans. Armand Lanusse, the chief contributor and editor of *Les Cenelles*, managed schools for black youths, hoping to ensure better futures of African Americans through education. Lanusse and the poets of *Les Cenelles* sought to expand the range of liberty, citizenship, and humanity not just for those within their time and place, but for all human beings across time through advocacy and publication. "In a city, country, and world overwhelmed by brokenness and unrest, such a message of love and peace is sorely needed." (I Corinthians 13).

TEXT/TRANSLATIONS

Talbaminn Malta (A Prayer from Malta): 1972*

SETTING: Late December, 1972; a chapel in Malta: the chapel's bells are ringing as a veiled young lady quietly enters the western door, then walks slowly eastward up the central aisle toward the altar. Reaching the second row of chairs, she reverently genuflects while crossing herself, then takes the first (aisle) seat. She pauses, kneels, then carefully clasps her hands. Timidly lifting her eyes toward the altar, she begins her prayer which is, at first, inaudible. Chapel bells fade and the music continues their motif as she continues …

As time went by I knew that I could feel the hope inside me dying.
Through lonely years I hid my fears, but deep inside my heart was crying.
From anywhere a frightened stare, averted gaze—
my feelings blaze then sink, crushed by "the word." …

Stains on my skin that feels no pin—cruel malady nerves to my hands assailing;
this dream I'd cling to through the sting of treatments endless, painful, unavailing:
sometime, some place—feel sweet embrace, a smoother face; a happy bride to be,
and my own children one day see.
She draws back her veil.
And, oh!—six months ago: at last an answer to my prayer:
Now I can see, sustaining me, through every heartache *You* were there bringing this thought to science—a multi-drug alliance in a pill can cure what no injection will.
How grand! May this blessing like a beacon, from our islands, outward shine to every land!

Though daylight fades toward night my hopes are bright:
repulsed an ancient bane more feared than shell or knife.
This lesson learned as fate has turned: how great a blessing is a normal life!
And may this time in Malta be forgotten never quite whenever are unfurled her red and white.

… Her prayer of thanksgiving completed, the young lady returns to a sitting position. With eyes still uncovered her gaze again risesto the altar. She stands, steps into the chapel's central aisle, then turns to face the altar one last time. She pauses, crosses herself as she genuflects, rises, then turns to walk down the chapel's central aisle. Reaching the western door, she opens it, then exits as inconspicuously as she entered.

Les Cenelles text translations

Au printemps/To spring (L. Boise)
Tender Spring, render to Nature
Her treasures and her enchanting lures.
To glorify you, sitting on the greenery,
The minstrels will extol your kindness.

Under beds of roses and myrtles,
Charmed by your return, you will hear me,
Whispering sweet words to my Cloé;
You will see me radiant with love.
All the lovers, with their new songs,
Will greet you under trees, fresh and green;
In the groves, the loyal birds
Will gather to praise you in melody.
Come then, hurry, Nature is suffering
From dismal Winter's myriad hardships.
She sighs, yearns for your survival.
She is moaning—do you not here her voice?

L'orphelin des tombeaux/The Orphan of the Tombs (BO...RS)
Not long ago an orphan, with plaintive voice,
In a field sown with crosses poured out his sorrows;
He sang, and a bird, hidden under the leaves,
Seemed to stop its singing to listen to him;
He sang, and the breath of the winds died down,
The sad murmur of the waters gently faded away;
He sang, and my heart, touched to the point of tears,
Melted at the recital of his myriad troubles;
He sang, and at the times his funeral tones
Caused a shiver to travel suddenly down my spine!
The echo bounced back his orphan's lament;
And his arms crossed on his young chest,
Dreamily, he fell asleep while looking at the heavens,
The sparkle of whose flames silvered his hair;
And when the birds sang the breaking of dawn,
In the same position he was sleeping still,
Yes, but of that sleep whose lugubrious aspect
Prints in our hears eternal regret!—

Le songe/The Dream (Armand Lanusse) To Mademoiselle C***
Poet with exhausted soul, Enemy of all disquiet, On my broke lyre
I had fallen asleep.
But yesterday in a dream A friend appeared to me Saying: "Poet, think About
paying your dues."

From every creole bard
A young beauty
Demands a song
Frivolous or sad, no matter.
And, in my aroused soul, Diffusing a perfume,
A fairy to my eyes Opened a rich album.
My poetic fiber
Ardently vibrated;
With an angelic voice The fairy then said to me:
"My name is C— Sleeper, wake up;
I am young and pretty, You must sing for me."
Filled anew with energy Suddenly, I awoke Then, mending my lyre For her I sang.

Parle toujour/Speak Always (Camille Thierry)
Speak always, childish virgin,
Not unlike a power divine
Pull from the bleeding heart of mine
The thorn
And then you will see the poor child
Laughing.

Speak always and let the tempest
Which goes along spoiling my youth
Stop and shunt far away from me
Its rage
As soon as you tell me: "You have
My word."

Speak always, and let your word,
Creole angel with eyes of black,
Make me of your joyous heart the,
Idol,
And let me finally see the skies
All blue!

Speak always, I love to hear you,
Your soft voice makes me understand
That I may happiness
Still seek,
For, to chase away the pain, I have
Your heart.