Valor & Remembrance  
Saturday, November 3, 2018 • 7:30 p.m.  
First Free Methodist Church

**Orchestra Seattle**  
**Seattle Chamber Singers**  
**William White**, conductor

**Lili Boulanger** (1893–1918)  
*Pour les funérailles d’un soldat*

- Charles Robert Stephens, baritone

**Paul Hindemith** (1895–1963)  
String Quartet No. 2 in F minor, Op. 10

- I. Sehr lebhaft, straff im Rhythmus

  - Stephen Provine, violin  
  - Fritz Klein, violin  
  - Katherine McWilliams, viola  
  - Matthew Wyant, cello

**Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937)  
Piano Concerto for the Left Hand

- Dana Brown, piano

— intermission —

**Gustav Holst** (1874–1934)  
*Ode to Death*, Op. 38

**Hubert Parry** (1848–1918)  
“There Is an Old Belief” from *Songs of Farewell*

**Maurice Ravel**  
*La Valse* (Poème chorégraphique pour orchestre)

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

OSSCS musicians will perform the Hindemith String Quartet No. 2 in its entirety at MOHAI on Tuesday, December 4. Please visit [www.mohai.org/dissent-patriotism-or-treason](http://www.mohai.org/dissent-patriotism-or-treason) for details.

Special thanks to First Free Methodist Church and Ron Haight for all of their assistance in making OSSCS’s 49th season possible.

Refreshments will be available in the Fine Center during intermission.

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**Orchestra Seattle • Seattle Chamber Singers**  
William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder  
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Maestro’s Prelude

This evening we reflect on World War I, a conflict that ended 100 years ago but continues to shape and define our modern world. We begin with music written by two members of the young generation, Lili Boulanger and Paul Hindemith.

For Lili Boulanger, the war offered her certain professional opportunities she otherwise might have lacked. Composer Vincent d’Indy, a major gatekeeper in early-20th-century Paris, had criticized her music for being too “feminine” before the war, but was all too eager to embrace it for being truly “French” during the conflict. Hindemith, having been conscripted into the Prussian army, used his talents to keep him away from the battlefield until the war’s final weeks, allowing him to compose one of his earliest masterpieces, the second string quartet.

Maurice Ravel and Gustav Holst were aged 40 and 41, respectively, when the war broke out. Both wished desperately to serve their countries, but were initially rejected. Ravel eventually found his way into the war as an ambulance and supply-truck driver, even working as an auto mechanic (his father, a Swiss engineer, had done important work that paved the way for the invention of the gas-powered motor). Holst would compose his magnum opus, *The Planets*, during the war, but in 1918 finally found an opportunity to volunteer, directing a music therapy program for the English branch of the YMCA in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Holst composed his *Ode to Death* as a memorial to friends he had lost during the war. Many of them had been students of the eldest composer on our program, Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, one of the foremost figures in the “Second English Renaissance.” Parry enjoyed a dual career as a composer and educator, serving for decades as head of the Royal College of Music, where he taught students such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Frank Bridge — and Gustav Holst. Alas, few of the youngest generation of Parry’s students survived the war: their loss helped inspire his *Songs of Farewell*, the fourth of which we will hear this evening.

There is one more musician whose presence looms large over tonight’s concert. Although not a composer himself, Paul Wittgenstein was a Viennese pianist who lost his right arm in combat near the Ukrainian border. He later used his family’s considerable industrial fortune to commission some of the finest contemporary composers to write him concerti and chamber music to be played by the left hand alone, Ravel’s masterpiece being the outstanding example.

This concerto was far from Ravel’s only work influenced in some way by the war. In *La Valse*, the elegant Straussian waltz may be seen as a metaphor for the pre-war opulence that came crashing down between 1914 and 1918. The work is a potent mix of nostalgia and foreboding, an appropriate symbol for a war that juxtaposed officers on horseback with soldiers in tanks.

Solo Artists

Pianist Dana Brown has been heard at the Tanglewood Festival, the Ravinia Festival, and many times on WFMT Radio as a soloist collaborator, in addition to performances with WTTW’s Chicago Tonight, Light Opera Works of Evanston, L’Opera Piccola, the Chicago Cultural Center and the Chicago Humanities Festival.

As a coach, he has served on the faculty of Northwestern University, the Intermezzo Young Artists Program, the Opera and Music Festival of Lucca, Italy, and most recently the Taos Opera Institute in Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico. As a solo pianist, he is a past national winner of the National Federation of Music Clubs Young Artist Competition, and has been the featured soloist in concerti of Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Gershwin across the Midwest. A graduate of the University of Michigan, where he studied with renowned accompanist Martin Katz, he is currently associate professor of Opera and Vocal Coaching at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, where he has taught and coached since 2001. At CCPA he musically directs opera, coaches graduate and undergraduates in the vocal performance programs, and teaches singer-specific classes in diction, art song literature and business practices. He is also co-artistic director of a new summer program for emerging singers, the Up North Vocal Institute, held in Boyne, Michigan, and a staff pianist for the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he has played in the lessons and masterclasses of Marilyn Horne, Renata Scotto and Renée Fleming. In 2013 he had the great honor of playing at the 80th birthday celebration of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Supreme Court Building.

Baritone Charles Robert Stephens has been hailed by The New York Times as “a baritone of smooth distinction.” In his two decades in New York City, he sang several roles with the New York City Opera and on numerous occasions at Carnegie Hall. Now based in Seattle, Mr. Stephens has frequently appeared as a soloist with the Seattle Symphony and is very active with ensembles throughout the Pacific Northwest, including the orchestras of Tacoma, Spokane, Bellingham, Walla Walla and Yakima. He currently serves on the voice faculty at Pacific Lutheran University and teaches privately in Seattle.
OSSCS 2018–2019 Season Focus: The Music of Lili Boulanger

by Mary Moran

This season, OSSCS examines the works of Lili Boulanger, a French composer whose music has received little attention in the 100 years since her death at age 24. One of Boulanger’s works will appear on each of five concerts, paired with music of composers who influenced her, were influenced by her, or who wrote upon similar themes.

During the course of her short but prominent career, the composer Lili Boulanger (1893–1918) was an icon of the entrance of women into French professional society in the early part of the 20th century. The Boulanger family was something like musical aristocracy in 19th-century Paris. Lili Boulanger’s grandfather taught at the famed Paris Conservatory, and her father Ernest was a well-known opera composer in his time, as well as a winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome for composition—a competition also won by numerous other luminaries of the French classical-music world, including Hector Berlioz, Georges Bizet and Claude Debussy.

Lili Boulanger and her older sister Nadia both studied composition at the Paris Conservatory, a rare and notable undertaking for women at the time. In their careers, both sisters struggled against the constraints of gender expectations of the era. Nadia competed unsuccessfully for the Prix de Rome several times, but favoritism and noted misogyny of the judges thwarted her efforts. Lili later won the competition in 1913, the first woman to do so in the category of music composition. During the month-long competition and in subsequent press coverage, she took pains to present herself in a specifically feminine and non-threatening, even childlike, manner. This image, cultivated from the archetype of the femme fragile popular in art and literature of the time, would follow Boulanger through her short career, and be reinforced by music critics after her death in 1918 from complications of Crohn’s Disease.

The legacy of Lili Boulanger is intertwined deeply with her sister’s. Nadia herself gave up composing in 1922, but through her long career of teaching composition she arguably shaped the future of classical music more than any single person during the 20th century. Nadia was directly responsible for the performance and publication of her younger sister’s compositions. She edited and occasionally transcribed manuscripts, and oversaw recordings of Lili’s music, sharing her sister’s work with the hundreds of composition students she taught until her death in 1979—and with the larger public through annual concerts she organized in remembrance of Lili.

Boulanger’s official portrait as winner of the 1913 Prix de Rome

Lili Boulanger composed predominantly for voice or choir, either with piano accompaniment or full orchestra, and she preferred the combination of vocal and instrumental forces over writing for orchestra alone. In much the same way that Mozart’s music is frequently described as “operatic,” Boulanger’s music has a decidedly vocal quality to it, even the instrumental pieces. Boulanger was devoutly Catholic, but notably interested in other religions and spiritualism in general. She frequently chose to set biblical or religiously oriented texts, as well as texts by French symbolist writers that reflect themes of sadness and loss, and the inexpressible mysteries of the universe and of the human soul. Her music is thus both intimate and immense, centered in the physical world but also transcendent of it.

Boulanger deftly employed avant-garde techniques to capture the ineffable qualities of religious rites through music in a way that few of her contemporaries did. Grounded in Catholic choral traditions, Boulanger often set text in a style similar to Gregorian chant, and her musical language is comparable to Claude Debussy’s, through her preference for traditional church modes over major or minor scale tones, voices moving in parallel motion, unresolved chords, and frequently repeated melodic and rhythmic motives. Boulanger was a masterful orchestrator, combining vocal and instrumental lines to create ethereal and otherworldly tone colors. Her music never sounds atonal. Instead, she elicited a deeply felt religious sentiment, timeless and tinged with mysticism, a spiritual contrast to — and enhancement of — the symbolist aesthetic of her era.

The appeal of Boulanger’s music, 100 years after her death, is still manifest. Her compositions hint at different possibilities for the future of classical music, beyond the coldly rational rigors of serialism and atonality that reigned for much of the 20th century. Her musical evocations of spiritual anxiety and uncertainty speak to the disconnection and dissonance of our modern world as much as they resonated in the decade of the First World War. The scope of her compositions is remarkable, demonstrating substantial skill and insight beyond the 24 years she lived.

Mary Moran is author of The Choral Psalm Settings of Lili Boulanger: A Cultural and Historical Perspective of Psaumes 24, 129 and 130.

For more information about the life and music of Lili Boulanger, please visit: www.osscs.org/lili
**Program Notes**

**Lili Boulanger**

*Pour les funérailles d’un soldat*

Marie-Juliette Olga ("Lili") Boulanger was born August 21, 1893, in Paris, and died at Mèzy-sur-Seine on March 15, 1918. She composed this work from August through October of 1912, completing the orchestration just before its premiere at the Paris Conservatoire on February 11, 1913. In addition to chorus and solo baritone, the score calls for pairs of woodwinds (plus English horn, bass clarinet and contrabassoon), 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, 2 harps and strings.

In a 1921 biographical essay about Lili Boulanger for *La Revue Musicale*, Camille Mauclair deemed *Pour les funérailles d’un soldat* "the noblest inspiration that has been revealed to us since the Funeral March of [Beethoven’s] Eroica Symphony." High praise indeed for a composition that began as a mere homework assignment to set a text from Alfred de Musset’s five-act 1831 dramatic poem La coupe et les lèvres, with Boulanger adjusting lines from their original context to meet musical requirements.

Although Boulanger composed *Pour les funérailles* prior to the Great War, it "remains her only composition that dealt unambiguously with the wartime suffering of soldiers,” notes Anya Holland-Barry. Her “frequent use of text-painting depicts a battle scene, the death of a soldier, and his ascent to heaven.” It was also her only choral-orchestral work she would hear performed during her lifetime. After a student reading at the Paris Conservatoire, the Société des Concerts Colonne-Lamoureux performed it on benefit concerts in November 1914 and November 1915. When the New York Philharmonic presented the first American performance in October 1918, a *New York Times* review praised Boulanger’s “effective use of antique ecclesiastical modes.”

The work opens with the trappings of a funeral march, with percussion dropping out at the opening line, “Qu’on voie les tambours”; the word-painting continues at ‘Qu’on dise devant nous la prière des morts” when Boulanger quotes the opening phrase of the Dies Irae, the Gregorian plainchant for the dead.

**Paul Hindemith**

*String Quartet No. 2 in F minor, Op. 10*

Hindemith was born November 16, 1895, near Frankfurt, where he died on December 28, 1963. He composed this quartet in Alsace, France, during the first four months of 1918. The Rebner Quartet gave the first performance on June 6, 1919, in Frankfurt.

By the time he turned 20, Paul Hindemith had become second violinist in the Rebner Quartet and been hired by the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra (where he soon became concertmaster). In 1916 he won a substantial prize for his Op. 2 string quartet (unpublished during his lifetime).

Hindemith was conscripted into the German army in August 1917, undergoing basic training near his home in Frankfurt. Ordered to France in early 1918, he steered clear of combat duty by ingratiating himself to music-loving commanding officers, organizing quartet performances and benefitting from an assignment to a military band, where he played bass drum. ("I am told that never before has this instrument been handled here with such rhythmic precision.")

In January 1918 he began composing a quartet for his dear friends Emmy and Hans Ronnefeldt on the occasion of their silver wedding anniversary. "I wish I could send you a really nice present," he wrote to Emmy, "but out here I’m as poor as a church mouse.” A note accompanying the score read: “My dearest wish is to give you . . . real pleasure with it. Not just with the dedication — which is after all just something one writes on the title page. You can rest assured that the very first note of it was written for you, and everything that is in it now is yours entirely. If you enjoy listening to it, as I hope, the work will have fulfilled its purpose.”

As the armistice approached, Hindemith served as a sentry near the front at Flanders. “You have no idea how sick I am of this life,” he wrote to Emmy Ronnefeldt. “Will these stupid idiots of men never put an end to this fiendish war?” During the last week of the conflict, he survived a grenade attack “by a miracle.”

Giselher Schubert describes the first movement of Hindemith’s F-minor quartet as “a concise sonata [form] with thematic material that is pithy and which never gets out of control or is too insistent.” A fugato episode in the development (marked “completely listlessly, numb”) “maintains the identity of the fugal subject which is derived from the main theme, not just breaking it up or fragmenting it.”

**Maurice Ravel**

*Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*

Joseph Maurice Ravel was born March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, and died in Paris on December 28, 1937. He composed this concerto during 1929 and 1930. Paul Wittgenstein gave the premiere in Vienna on January 5, 1932, accompanied by the Vienna Symphony under the direction of Robert Heger. The accompaniment requires 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, Eb clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

Had Paul Wittgenstein not been shot in the elbow during the opening months of World War I, necessitating the amputation of his right arm, history would likely remember him as the older brother of famed philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. But after time in a Siberian POW camp, Paul Wittgenstein returned home to Austria in 1916 and began rebuilding his career as a solo pianist.

To supplement a meager supply of existing left-hand exercises and some arrangements of his own, Wittgenstein commissioned music from several composers, among them: Josef Labor (a family friend), Paul Hindemith, Richard Strauss, Franz Schmidt, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Sergei Prokofiev and Benjamin Britten. But the resulting works were often at odds with the pianist’s conservative musical tastes (or their technical demands proved insurmountable), so he never ended up performing many of them.

Maurice Ravel first encountered Wittgenstein during a “stay in Vienna, which was occupied by rehearsals at
which are indefinitely repeated but constantly varied in Albert Coates. The choral accompaniment requires pairs of woodwind instruments, harp and strings.

Maurice Ravel composed La Valse (Poème chorégraphique pour orchestre) from December 1919 through March 1920. Camille Chevillard led the Lamoureux Orchestra in the premiere of the orchestra version on December 12, 1920, in Paris. The score calls for triple woodwinds (including piccolo, Eng...
glish horn, bass clarinet and contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, 2 harps and strings.

The beginnings of La valse date from 1906, when Ravel began sketching Wien, a tribute to to the music of Johann Strauss Jr. He set the work aside for some time, returning to it at the request of ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev. Ravel intended to create “a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, with which is mingled in my mind the idea of the fantastic whirl of destiny” and devised his own scenario, set in “an imperial court” around 1855:

“Swirling clouds afford glimpses, through rifts, of waltzing couples. The clouds scatter little by little; one can distinguish an immense hall with a whirling crowd. The scene grows progressively brighter. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo.”

Diaghilev found the result undanceable. “It’s a masterpiece, but it’s not a ballet,” he said. “It’s the portrait of a ballet, a painting of a ballet.” This caused a permanent rift with Ravel, who premiered La Valse as an orchestral work (although Ida Rubinstein would choreograph it in 1926).

In 2009 musicologist David Lamaze proposed that the motivic figure E–B–A (omnipresent in La Valse, but found in many other Ravel compositions), or mi–si–la in French, represented Misia Sert, a close friend of Ravel’s and the woman to whom he dedicated La Valse.

“Some people have discovered in it an intention of parody, even of caricature, while others plainly have seen a tragic allusion — end of the Second Empire, state of Vienna after the war, etc.” Ravel wrote to a friend. “Tragic, yes, it can be that like any expression — pleasure, happiness — which is pushed to extremes. You should see in it only what comes from the music: a mounting volume of sound.” Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine La Valse would have been the same had Ravel written it prior to World War I rather than during its immediate aftermath.

— Jeff Eldridge

Vocal Texts and Translations

Pour les funérailles d’un soldat
Qu’on voile les tambours, que le prêtre s’avance. 
A genoux, compagnons, tête nue et silence. 
Qu’on dise devant nous la prière des morts. 
Nous voulons au tombeau porter le capitaine. 
Il est mort en soldat, sur la terre chrétienne. 
L’âme appartient à Dieu; l’armée aura le corps. 
Si ces rideaux de pourpre et ces ardents nuages, 
Que chasse dans l’éther le souffle des orages, 
Sont des guerriers couchés dans leurs armures d’or, 
Pence-toi, noble cœur, sur ces vertes collines, 
Et vois tes compagnons briser leurs javelins 
Sur cette froide terre, où ton corps est resté!
— Alfred de Musset (1810–1857)

Ode to Death
Come lovely and soothing death, 
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving, 
In the day, in the night, to all, to each, 
Sooner or later delicate death. 
Prais’d be the fathomless universe, 
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious, 
And for love, sweet love — but praise! praise! praise! 
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet, 
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome? 
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all, 
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, 
Come unalteringly. 

Approach strong deliveress, 
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead, 
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee, 
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death. 

From me to thee glad serenades, 
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee,… 
And the sights of the open landscape 
—and the high-spread sky are fitting, 
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

For the Funeral of a Soldier
Let the drums be enshrouded, let the priest step forth. 
Upon your knees, comrades, bare your heads and keep silence. 
Let the prayer of the dead be said before us. 
We wish to the tomb to take the captain. 
He has died a soldier, upon Christian ground. 
The soul belongs to God; the army shall have the body. 
If these purple drapes and these menacing clouds, 
Which hunt in the ether the breath of storms, 
Are warriors laid out in their golden armor, 
Inclinest thou, noble heart, upon these green hills, 
And see your companions break their javelins 
Upon this cold earth, where your body now rests!
Translation: William White

The night in silence under many a star, 
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know, 
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil’d death, 
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee. 
Over the tree-tops I float thee a song, 
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields 
—and the prairies wide, 
Over the dense-pack’d cities all and the teeming wharves and ways, 
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death. 
— Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

There Is an Old Belief
There is an old belief, 
That on some solemn shore, 
Beyond the sphere of grief 
Dear friends shall meet once more. 
Beyond the sphere of Time and Sin 
And Fate’s control, 
Serene in changeless prime 
Of body and of soul. 
That creed I fain would keep 
That hope I’ll ne’er forgo, 
Eternal be the sleep, 
If not to waken so. 
— John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854)
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