

## CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

“So, Sameer, what do you want to conduct?”

This is how my conversation with Steve Schick began over coffee back in December 2016. I took a deep breath, summoning the courage to say the two words that have sent marketing executives, orchestra managers, and audiences into a fit of anxiety for the past 100 years:

“Arnold Schoenberg.”

He didn't flinch. So I took it a step further.

“And I'd really love to perform some of the composers I've always admired but have never had the opportunity to conduct...Messiaen, Takemitsu...”

“Well, that sounds great,” Steve said.

This is one of the many reasons why I love Steve. Not only is he an incredible artist, but he's also a generous colleague who has taught me so much. And there was indeed an underlying lesson in that simple affirmation, one I've heard from him on countless occasions: that you should never underestimate your audience. This sense of imagination and courage is something I've enjoyed whenever I've attended a La Jolla Symphony and Chorus performance, and it's why I knew disclosing my aspirations wouldn't fall on deaf ears.

Over the next several weeks, Steve and I shot several emails back and forth, carefully crafting the program you're experiencing today. It's bookended with the music of two mavericks, Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, who set the music world ablaze with their distinct musical language. While Schoenberg's music from fin-de-siècle Vienna calls forth the expressivity and angst of Europe before the outbreak of World War One, Stravinsky's music from the 1940s has a distinctly cosmopolitan flavor, with a melting pot of influences from jazz and rumba to Hollywood and the horrors of the world at war around him.

Schoenberg and Stravinsky's influence continued deep into the future, with the other three composers on this program continuing this exploration of sonority and movement. In Olivier Messiaen's final orchestral work, *Un Sourire*, he melds classical form with birdsong and humor. The Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu considered Messiaen his spiritual mentor, and in his *A Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden* we fall into a dreamlike world that melds east and west. And we have a work by a living composer, Hannah Lash, whose piece, *Eating Flowers*, was inspired by the great symphonic colorists that came before her and naturally propels the conversation of sonic exploration into our own time.

In closing, I want to thank Steve, Diane Salisbury, and the curious and passionate musicians of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus for the opportunity to delve into this music together.

Sameer Patel