



John Knowles
PAINE
(1839-1906)

Symphony No. 2 'In the Spring'
Oedipus Tyrannus – Prelude • Poseidon and Amphitrite
Ulster Orchestra • JoAnn Falletta



John Knowles Paine (1839-1906): Symphony No. 2 'In the Spring' Oedipus Tyrannus – Prelude • Poseidon and Amphitrite – An Ocean Fantasy

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed unprecedented musical growth in the United States. Although the music composed during that time by native-born Americans (mostly trained in Europe) was almost entirely based on European models, important seeds were sown that led to an authentic American voice in the next century. It is hard to imagine a Copland, an Ives – or even a Gershwin – without the pioneering groundwork of the so-called 'Boston Six': Arthur Foote, George Chadwick, Amy H. Beach, Edward MacDowell, Horatio Parker – and the most senior of the group, John Knowles Paine.

Paine was born into a musical family on January 9, 1839, in the coastal city of Portland, Maine. His father, Jacob, an instrument-maker and music-store owner, played a significant rôle in Portland's musical life. The young Paine studied organ, piano, harmony and counterpoint with Hermann Kotzschmar, a German immigrant and itinerant musician who had settled in Portland. In 1858 Paine went to Germany for formal music study. There he began to build a reputation as an outstanding organist (attracting the attention of Clara Schumann, who asked the young American to play some of his compositions for her). Within a year of returning home in 1861, he began teaching organ at Harvard University – and it was there that he made his most significant contribution to the development of American music.

During the early 1870s, Paine started to develop what would become the first university music curriculum in the United States. He felt passionately that *all* musicians – performers as well as composers – should be knowledgeable in music history and theory, but his position was not universally held in America at the time. In advocating his ideas Paine wrote: "When American musicians are conscious of having studied liberally with the high aim of becoming *masters* in every sense, they will have more self-respect; then all narrow and ignorant prejudices against their profession – sometimes held by quasi-cultivated men of other walks of life – will vanish, and all true lovers of art and science will recognize this worth." Today Harvard honours his legacy with the John Knowles Paine Concert Hall, a 437-seat recital venue built in 1914 and renovated in 2011.

Paine's second symphony, *In the Spring*, was a significant step forward in his development as a composer. He began work on the piece sometime before

January 1877 and had hoped to premiere it in Berlin while visiting there during the summer of 1879 – but, to his disappointment, the Germans programmed his first symphony instead. The première eventually took place in Boston on March 10, 1880, at the first concert presented by the Boston Philharmonic, with a repeat performance given the following afternoon under the auspices of the Harvard Musical Association. As the result of a successful subscription effort, Arthur P. Schmidt of Boston published the symphony, making it the first American orchestral work to appear in print.

Early audiences were enthusiastic. In one local critic's assessment, "The symphony is delightfully clear from beginning to end. Its learning, which is great, is unobtrusive, and properly falls into its place as a means and not an end." At least eight more performances followed during the next two decades; it entered the repertoire of the newly formed Boston Symphony Orchestra and appeared in concerts by the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Chicago Orchestra under Theodore Thomas. A *Tribune* review following the New York première declared Paine "easily foremost of American composers" and described the symphony as "a serious, important and totally beautiful work".

The *Spring Symphony* was reportedly Paine's favourite among his own works. Whereas the shadow of Beethoven loomed large over his first symphony, in his second Paine created a work that was more firmly rooted in the nineteenth century – with nods to Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt – and even the young Brahms. But the influences are well-absorbed, resulting in a symphony that is no mere compilation of borrowed or recycled ideas but very much a reflection of its composer's freshness and originality.

Although Paine never commented on the programmatic aspects of the symphony – perhaps wishing it to be appreciated for its considerable musical sophistication without reference to any extra-musical ideas – a discussion of the work published in 1889 gave suggestive subtitles to each of the movements:

- I. Introduction: *Adagio sostenuto* –
Allegro ma non troppo
(Departure of Winter – Awakening of Nature)
- II. Scherzo: *Allegro* (May-Night Fantasy)
- III. *Adagio* (A Romance of Springtime)
- IV. *Allegro gioioso* (The Glory of Nature)

In the first movement, the bleak opening for violas and cellos contrasts with the more ebullient, joyous opening theme of the exposition, yet variants of the 'winter' motif return repeatedly throughout the *Allegro*. Nature as reflected by Paine's quicksilver technique is capricious and unpredictable. The *Scherzo*, in traditional ABA form, was thought by some to be the symphony's finest movement; it was performed as a separate work at the Music Teachers National Association convention in 1887. Paine presents the yearning melody at the heart of the *Adagio* primarily on strings, with furtive, sighing accompaniment figures. Woodwinds come more into their own in a minor-mode central episode which begins with oboes in thirds and ends with a transitional passage for clarinet and two bassoons. When the opening idea returns, it emanates from the cello section, with the sighing idea taken over by first violins.

The symphony's finale contrasts an irrepressible, playful opening theme in cut time with a broad, chorale-like paean in triple meter which one contemporary critic likened to "the introduction to the *Meistersingers*". The opening idea is subjected to a great deal of motivic interplay throughout the movement.

In the fall of 1880, students at Harvard initiated a project that would become one of the most exciting campus events of the year: a full production, in Greek, of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Tyrannus*. By the time it opened the following May, public excitement was at such a fever pitch that all three scheduled performances, plus a dress rehearsal and an added fourth performance, were sold out. Response was so positive that a touring version of the show was created for audiences in Boston and New York. Much of the critical approbation centred on the incidental music composed by John Knowles Paine. Consisting of a prelude, six choruses for male voices and a postlude, the music was performed by an onstage Greek chorus of 15 (augmented by another 60 voices off stage) and an orchestra of about 35 players.

Although the choruses have faded into history, Paine's orchestral prelude was an immediate hit and has continued, along with his second symphony, to be his most popular work. In an article written while the production was still in rehearsal, one of Paine's students summarised the nature of the opening movement: "In the prelude the attempt is made to epitomise the play, to show the spirit and essential life of the whole tragedy in utmost concentration; to make a reflection in miniature of the whole work. ... The prelude ... foreshadows that powerful contrast which is the very marrow of the tragedy – that between the fair appearance and the horrid reality in the condition of Oedipus."

After a stormy and mercurial introduction, Paine develops a single theme in a series of transformations worthy of Liszt. First heard on violins and clarinet after an unexpected shift from C minor to B major, the principal idea shifts rhythmic emphasis, intervallic relationships and orchestral registers with facility, speed and inexorable musical logic. The prelude concludes with a sombre coda Paine composed especially for the concert version, of which he conducted the first performance with the Boston Symphony on March 11, 1882.

Poseidon and Amphitrite, begun during the mid-1880s and completed in April 1888, was Paine's last orchestral work. The composer's original title was *An Island Fantasy*, and in a note supplied before the Boston première, he wrote, "The subject of the *Island Fantasy* was suggested by two beautiful paintings of summer island scenes by Mr. J. Appleton Brown, to whom the work is inscribed. The title *Fantasy* should be taken in its literary rather than its musical sense. ... Indeed the principal section of the work is one of the simpler 'rondo' forms, containing two varied statements of the principal theme, two elaborate episodes and a coda. To this is prefixed an introduction in which fragments of the themes, elaborated later on, are used as the foundation of music which depicts in masterly manner the summer sunshine and calm and the summer storm, which are the contrasted subjects of Mr. Brown's paintings."

When the piece was played at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, a more general note that did not mention the paintings appeared, and by the time the work was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1907 (as *Poseidon and Amphitrite* – *An Ocean Fantasy*), the dedication to the painter was omitted. Perhaps the composer preferred the universality of the myth surrounding the Greek god and goddess of the sea to the specificity of Brown's artwork.

Paine's catalogue of works includes keyboard music, chamber pieces, songs, choruses, and an un-staged opera. With this second volume of his music (the first is available on Naxos 8.559747) Naxos has recorded all of his published orchestral works. Together, the six pieces on these two recordings comprise an important and vital transitional period in American music. Paine's music is expertly crafted and deeply felt; it bears no trace of provincialism. His successors may have moved in far different directions, but they could not have gone their pioneering ways had John Knowles Paine not opened the doors for them.

Frank K. DeWald

Ulster Orchestra



The Ulster Orchestra's mission is to enrich life through music and since its beginnings in 1966, it has brought people from all backgrounds and walks of life through an exciting and diverse musical journey. Northern Ireland's only professional symphony orchestra performs in front of more than 100,000 people every year averaging eighty to ninety performances, including more than forty main season concerts, lunch-time concerts, BBC invitation concerts and performances at venues across Great Britain. JoAnn Falletta was the first woman and the first American in the rôle of Principal Conductor and was appointed in May 2011, followed in 2014 by Rafael Payare as Chief Conductor. The Hungarian-born violinist, Tamás Kocsis, leads the Orchestra. For many decades the Ulster Orchestra has been an integral part of the local community, and continues to expand its education and outreach activities every year. It is grateful for the significant support of its principal funder, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the BBC, Belfast City Council, and that of various corporate and philanthropic funders.

JoAnn Falletta



JoAnn Falletta serves as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony and is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Brevard Music Center of North Carolina. She has guest conducted over a hundred orchestras in North America, and many of the most prominent orchestras in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. She served as Principal Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra from 2011 to 2014, with whom she made her début at London's prestigious Proms with the orchestra and recorded music of Gustav Holst, E.J. Moeran and John Knowles Paine. Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and the Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, Falletta has also received twelve ASCAP awards and served on the U.S. National Council on the Arts. A champion of American music, she has presented over five hundred works by American composers including 110 world premières. Her Naxos recordings include the double GRAMMY® Award-winning disc of works by John Corigliano and GRAMMY® nominated discs of works by Tyberg, Dohnányi, Fuchs, Schubert, Respighi, Gershwin, Hailstork and Holst.
www.joannfalletta.com

John Knowles
PAINE
(1839-1906)

Orchestral Works • 2

**Symphony No. 2 in A Major, Op. 34,
'In the Spring' (1879) 47:58**

- ❶ **I. Introduction: Adagio sostenuto – Allegro ma non troppo
(Departure of Winter – Awakening of Nature) 14:33**
- ❷ **II. Scherzo: Allegro (May-Night Fantasy) 10:04**
- ❸ **III. Adagio (A Romance of Springtime) 12:10**
- ❹ **IV. Allegro giojoso (The Glory of Nature) 11:11**

❺ **Oedipus Tyrannus, Op. 35 –
Prelude (1880-81) 7:52**

❻ **Poseidon and Amphitrite –
An Ocean Fantasy, Op. 44 (c. 1888)* 12:14**

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

**Ulster Orchestra
JoAnn Falletta**

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on 1st and 2nd March, 2014

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Cover: *A Song of Springtime*
by John William Waterhouse (1849-1917)



AMERICAN CLASSICS

The late 19th century witnessed unprecedented musical growth in the United States, and it is impossible to imagine a Copland, an Ives or even a Gershwin without the pioneering groundwork of the 'Boston Six', of whom John Knowles Paine was the senior member. Favorite among his own works, Paine's *Second Symphony* was described on its New York première as "a serious, important and totally beautiful work." His *Prelude* to the tragic play *Oedipus Tyrannus* was an immediate hit, while *An Ocean Fantasy* was his last orchestral piece. The first of this set of two volumes of Paine's complete published orchestral works is available on 8.559747.



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Playing
Time:
68:04