

## Program Notes for the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra

By Beth L. Buelow, ©2011

### Faure Requiem

7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 31, 2012  
*First Presbyterian Church*

### Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)

#### Requiem for two solo voices, chorus, organ and orchestra, Op. 48 (1887-1900)

- I. **Introit et Kyrie**
- II. **Offertoire**
- III. **Sanctus**
- IV. **Pie Jesu**
- V. **Agnus Dei**
- VI. **Libera me**
- VII. **In Paradisum**

Psalm 100	Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)
Pater Noster	Jacob Handl (1550-1591)
Echo Song	Orlande de Lassus (1532-1594)
Sure on this Shining Night	Morten Lauridsen (1943- )
Waternight	Eric Whitacre (1970- )
Lord Make Me an Instrument	Mary McDonald (1956)
Shenandoah	James Erb (1926)

While many of his musical influences and contemporaries viewed the Requiem as a Mass of Death, Faure held a different perspective. An interview conducted in July, 1902, revealed Faure's thoughts on his Requiem and death:

"It has been said that my *Requiem* does not express the fear of death and someone has called it a lullaby of death. But it is thus that I see death: as a happy deliverance, an aspiration towards happiness above, rather than as a painful experience. The music of Gounod has been criticized for its over-inclination towards human tenderness. But his nature predisposed him to feel this way: religious emotion took this form inside him. Is it not necessary to accept the artist's nature? As to my *Requiem*, perhaps I have also instinctively sought to escape from what is thought right and proper, after all the years of accompanying burial services on the organ! I know it all by heart. I wanted to write something different."

(The above excerpt on the *Requiem* was originally published in *Comoedia* (1954, p. 6). The English translation is taken from Robert Orledge's biography)

His words give us insight as to why Faure took a subdued, reflective approach to the form, which stands in contrast to other composer's more lavish, dramatic interpretations. He intentionally distanced himself from the Germanic style that ruled the day, but he also drew inspiration from the masters, particularly in his decision to edit the standard sacred Latin text. Faure not only took liberties with the text; he also significantly altered the order of the movement. He included two new sections, the ethereal, spine-tinglingly beautiful *Pie Jesu* and the soaring *In*

*Paradisum*. Notable omissions include the *Dies Irae* and *Tuba Mirum*, often regarded as an opportunity for composers to leverage the full power of large choral and orchestral ensembles. The result is that the entire work – described frequently as a Requiem without the Last Judgment – has an overall mood of contemplation and peace.

Tonight's performance concludes with selections from Schutz, Lassus and Handl that take us back in time to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The choir will then surround the audience and fast-forward through musical time, bringing us squarely into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with pieces by Eric Whitacre and other noted contemporary composers. The evening comes to a beautiful close with the choral world's most beloved setting of *Shenandoah*, by James Erb.