

# Orchestra welcomes the spring with music

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Spring is here! On Sunday afternoon The Warren Philharmonic Orchestra celebrates the release from winter's icy grip with "Spring Fever!," a program of favorites to capture the season in all its many moods.

Highlights include Beethoven's glorious Pastoral Symphony, Handel's sparkling Water Music, Delius's poignant "On Hearing the First Cuckoo of Spring" and Strauss's "Voices of Spring Waltz" and boisterous "Thunder and Lightning Polka."

The prize-winning Howland High School A Cappella Choir will join the orchestra as special guests for two of Copland's "Old American Songs." The A Cappella Choir, under the direction of Anjanette DePoy, has competed throughout the East Coast, sung the national anthem for the Cleveland Cavaliers, performed on the WFMJ Morning Show and just this past December sang with Debby Boone at Packard Music Hall.

Two things particularly excite me about this concert. First is how deftly the orchestra musicians become magicians - playing hornpipes, fanfares, cuckoos, thunderstorms, babbling brooks, heart-throbbing pastoral depictions, nightingales, village bands, Viennese dances and American down-home folk songs and revival hymns.

Second is the music's unique ability to express feelings that go beyond even the most poetic words. Perhaps poet Heinrich Heine put it best, "When words leave off, music begins."

Sunday's concert is not just music about spring and outside things. Its music takes us inside feelings of renewal and rejuvenation, impressions, emotions, reminiscences and a sense of fun. And just as the experiences of each composer are filtered through a unique sensibility, so our own responses and thoughts will belong to us alone. I find it thrilling that we can enter visions together that are so richly personal.

Here's a quick look behind the scenes.

Handel's 1717 "Water Music" starts us off. With bright fanfares for trumpets, chortling horns, oboes, bassoons and strings, it truly is music fit for a king, and in fact it is. It was written for King George I, and 50 musicians performed it while crammed together on barge floating down the river Thames - hence the name. It was an instant hit in 1717 and has been ever since.

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony No. 6 comes next. This is not the ferocious, frowning, wild-eyed genius we picture from portraits and his Fifth Symphony (which he was writing at the same time). This is the dynamic opposite - the Beethoven who wrote "No one can love the country as much as I do," and spent hours every day out

walking, stopping only to make musical sketches in his hand-stitched notebook.

The Pastoral is filled with warmth, humor, fun and the magic of following a stream into woods to hear a nightingale and cuckoo exchange calls. And, of course, there is the famous, ominous, wildly dramatic thunderstorm that interrupts the villagers' merry making. After the storm passes the ending music glows, giving us a sense that its composer is at peace with himself and with a God who made such a beautiful world.

After intermission, three adventures remain. The Howland Choir will sing "Prayer of the Children" and then will join the orchestra for two of Copland's Old American Songs, the rousing revival hymn "Zion's Walls" and "I Bought Me a Cat."

The orchestra then will play Frederick Delius's best-known work, "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring" - a miniature pastoral tone poem that threads the distant sound of a cuckoo through its loving, lush, dreamy and gorgeous harmonies. We never quite know if the cuckoo is real or a trick of memory triggered by nostalgia and reminiscence.

Finally, Johann Strauss Jr., known as "the waltz king," sends us out on our dancing feet with his famous "Voices of Spring Waltz" and "Thunder and Lightning Polka." The wild, crazy polka with its rumbles, crashes and sis-boom-bas certainly creates a different feeling from Beethoven's earlier thunderstorm. It does remind us, however, that Nature and Spring are always unpredictable.

There is a reception after the concert in the Parish Hall to which all are invited.

Wyner is the music director and conductor for the Warren Philharmonic Orchestra.