

FSO, March!

Saturday, March 9th, 2019

In September 2004, archeologists working in Tintignac, France found a massive deposit of over 500 fragments from iron and bronze objects dating to the first century BC. Among their find was a particularly robust collection of objects related to warfare including swords and scabbards, spearheads, shields, helmets and the like. Also included among these objects was the first nearly complete example of a carnyx, an elongated S-shaped trumpet typically cast in bronze that was used in battle by a variety of Celtic tribes of the era. We have written records of the carnyx in histories by Ancient Greek and Roman sources, but a complete example had not been found until this discovery less than 15 years ago. This archeological treasure trove shows us that for millenia, the waging of war coordination of troops requires three forms of equipment: weapons, armor, and musical instruments.

Tonight, you'll hear music connected to marching in a wide variety of different ways. There are exemplars of the rich military band traditions of both the United States and Great Britain through the selections from John Philip Sousa and Gustav Holst. In fact, Holst's two suites for military band were such an impressive feat that they seem to have single-handedly convinced his fellow composers Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacobs that they should try their hand at writing for military band. There are songs written to commemorate and memorialize combat experiences. Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* celebrates the Russian defeat of Napoleon's invading forces during the bitter winter months of 1812. And Irving Berlin's *God Bless America* was conceived as a hymn to honor those serving in the First World War and written while Berlin himself was serving in the Army at Camp Upton. There is music written for fictionalized accounts of combat including selections from the 2000 Revolutionary War film *The Patriot* and the World War II video game franchise *Medal of Honor*. And there is even music written for the marching of fictional characters, including Wagner's famous music for the cadre of female warriors known as the Valkyries and Copland's music for the fictional cowboys of his *Rodeo* ballet.

Tonight's program also contains Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, perhaps most famous for its use to accompany the tragic march of 25th Infantry Division in the 1986 Vietnam War film *Platoon*. However, according to his own sketches, Barber's inspiration for the piece came from a different kind of relentless march: the constant building and crashing of waves in the ocean. Inspired by a passage from the third book of Virgil's *Georgics*, Barber originally wrote the piece as the middle movement of his 1936 *String Quartet*, but re-arranged it for a full string orchestra less than two years later at the behest of famed conductor Arturo Toscanini. According to legend, at the conclusion of the first rehearsal of the *Adagio for Strings*, Toscanini summed up the work in three words: "semplice e bella." Simple and beautiful.

For tonight's concert, we are also thrilled to be joined by so many wonderful young musicians including the FYSO, the FYSO Band, and the winner of the 2019 FSO Concerto Competition. Onward, march!