Massachusetts native Krysten Keches has been called an “excellent young soloist” by the *Boston Globe*. She began harp lessons at age four with Elizabeth Morse and has since appeared as a solo, chamber, and orchestral musician at venues throughout the United States and overseas, including Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Royal Albert Hall, the Berlin Philharmonie, Teatro alla Scala, Shostakovich Hall, Harvard’s Sanders Theatre, and Boston’s Symphony Hall.

As the winner of the 2013 Boston Modern Orchestra Project concerto competition, Ms. Keches performed Alberto Ginastera’s Harp Concerto at Jordan Hall. She has also appeared as a soloist with the New England String Ensemble, Mistral Chamber Players, the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Australian National University School of Music Orchestra, and the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Ms. Keches has been a prizewinner in the Boston Symphony Orchestra, New England Philharmonic, and New England Conservatory concerto competitions, and she was invited to play alongside Yo-Yo Ma and members of the Silk Road Ensemble to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

An avid orchestral musician, Ms. Keches has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Odyssey Opera, and Miami’s New World Symphony. In 2015 she served as second harpist on the Boston Symphony’s tours to New York and Europe. She has played under conductors Sir Andrew Davis, Charles Dutoit, Bernard Haitink, Andris Nelsons, Robert Spano, Osmo Vänskä, and Hugh Wolff. In recent summers Ms. Keches has attended the Castleton, Aspen, and Bowdoin music festivals, studying with harpists Nancy Allen, Deborah Hoffman, and June Han.

In 2010, Ms. Keches won a U.S. Fulbright Scholarship to study with renowned harpist Alice Giles at the Australian National University School of Music, where she earned a Graduate Diploma with high distinction. While in Australia, she performed as a soloist at Canberra’s Llewellyn Hall and was also broadcast in recital on ArtSound FM.
Ms. Keches graduated *cum laude* with a B.A. in art history from Harvard University, where she continued her training with Elizabeth Morse. A recipient of the Scovell Family Scholarship, Ms. Keches recently completed her M.M. at New England Conservatory, where she studied with Boston Symphony Orchestra harpist Jessica Zhou.

**~Program Notes~**

*Berkshire Symphony Orchestra*  
*November 18, 2016*

**Aaron Copland**  
**Three Latin American Sketches**

Just as French composers of the twentieth century were fascinated by Spanish music and rhythms, their American counterparts were fascinated by those from south of the border.

In 1959 Aaron Copland promised composer Gian Carlo Menotti to write a piece for the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. After a visit to Mexico, Copland was stimulated by his surroundings to compose “Danza de Jalisco,” (Dance from Jalisco) which was performed at the Festival, and “Paisaje mexicano,” (Mexican countryside) which was not. The two were performed together for the first time in 1965. In 1971, Copland composed “Estribillo” (refrain), derived from Venezuelan music, for pops conductor André Kostelanetz, adding it to the two earlier pieces to create *Three Latin-American Sketches*.

The vigorous “Estribillo” is highly syncopated with complex cross rhythms, featuring trumpet and percussion. Copland spices up the Mexican folk tune with bitonal harmonies. He also takes his time revealing the melody, giving little hints of it in an introduction of elaborate cross rhythms.

In “Paisaje mexicano” solo clarinet, oboe and trumpet introduce a languid melody with a limping rhythm. The composer sets up considerable tension by only giving the first phrase of the melody, but never resolving it to the tonic. He even strays off into another key.

The bouncy ascending and descending scales sounding like a jazzy five-finger exercise introduce “Danza de Jalisco” in alternating meters of 6/8 and 3/4. Although Copland works with two folk melodies, he never finishes them, as in “Paisaje mexicano.”

Underlying the salsa, however, listeners familiar with Copland’s American ballets will surely recognize the composer’s musical signature in many of the rhythms and open harmonies.

* - *Elizabeth and Joseph Kahn*

**Ginastera (1916-1983)**  
**Harp Concerto, Opus 25**

Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera showed precocious musical gifts and began to take piano lessons at the age of seven; by fourteen he was composing, though he eventually destroyed most of his juvenilia. He graduated with highest honors from the National Conservatory of Buenos Aires in 1938. Even before graduation he attracted widespread attention with the ballet score Panambi (1936), following it up a few years later with Estancia (1941); both works dealt with Argentine life and had a strong element of musical folklore enlivened by a brilliant ear for orchestral color and a strong sense of rhythm. World War II caused him to postpone accepting a Guggenheim grant to study in the United States, but by 1945, as a result of Peron's rise to power, he was dismissed from his position at the national military academy.
He spent the next several years in the United States, including a summer studying in Aaron Copland's class at Tanglewood. Though Ginastera returned to Argentina and worked at reforming the musical life of his native country, he spent most of his last years abroad, in the United States and Europe, owing to continuing political unrest at home. By the late 1950s he had established an international reputation, and many of his later works were commissioned by organizations north of the Rio Grande (two of his three operas, for example, had their first performances in Washington).

The Harp Concerto was commissioned in 1956 by Edna Phillips (then first harpist of the Philadelphia Orchestra) and her husband Samuel R. Rosenbaum, with the intention that it receive its premiere during the 1958 Interamerican Music Festival in Washington, D.C. But, as the composer later noted, when he accepted the commission, "I could hardly dream that it was going to be the most difficult work I have ever written, and that it would take several years to see the light." The first sketches for the work are dated 1956; the last measures of the completed score were written in the last weeks of 1964. By that time, Edna Phillips had retired from the Philadelphia Orchestra, so the world premiere was given by Nicanor Zabaleta on February 18, 1965, with Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Still, despite her undoubted disappointment at not being able to perform the work, Edna Phillips (who was a mentor to the BSO’s principal harpist Ann Hobson Pilot) declared that this was the best of the many works for harp that she and her husband commissioned.

Ginastera began with an outright nationalistic style, drawing upon folk melodies and dances for his early ballets and other works, while modeling his style on the music of such masters of musical folklore as Bartok and Stravinsky. By the late '40s the early nationalism had come to be presented more often in abstract musical genres rather than folk ballets, and expanded by musical elements current in the international scene. His later music tended toward twelve-tone constructional techniques, though it never lost the coloristic imagination that had first captured the world's attention.

The difficulty that he found in writing so extensively for the harp was the inherent conflict between his highly chromatic musical style and the simple fact that the harp is inherently a diatonic instrument. It can play all the notes of the chromatic scale, but can be set to play only seven of those different pitches at a time. Thus the composer found writing for the harp "a harder task than writing for piano, violin, or clarinet," particularly since he was determined to create a real virtuoso showpiece that put the instrument through its paces.

And that he certainly did. The first movement is laid out as a kind of sonata form that exploits with great energy the metrical game of alternating or simultaneous 3/4 and 6/8 time that plays such a characteristic role in Argentine (and other Latin and South American) music. The slow movement is shaped simply in a chain of musical ideas, each reveling in semitone harmonies or decorations of a main pitch in the melody, with sonorities ranging from the dark colors of the low strings at the opening to the shimmering tones of the celesta, glockenspiel, and suspended cymbals in a slowly unfolding play of color. The harp introduces the finale with a long cadenza that ends on the downbeat of the lively Rondo. The Rondo's main theme is a simple pentatonic figure of marked folkloric character tossed back and forth between the solo harp and the woodwinds. This alternates with two other sectional passages, all of which drive forward with tremendous rhythmic propulsion.

- Steven Ledbetter

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Rhapsody Espagnole

Maurice Ravel was born to a Basque mother in the Pyranees only a few miles from the Spanish border. He grew up hearing Spanish rhythms and Basque lullabies, so it is hardly surprising that he should have introduced Spanish elements as exotic and coloristic touches in a number of major works, among
them the Rapsodie espagnole and the short opera L'Heure espagnole, which were composed at almost the same time and played a part in the establishment of his early reputation. This is not to say that Ravel was unknown before he wrote them. His Pavane pour une Infante defunte had already set out on the triumphant march to the popular success it has never lost. A piano piece called Jeux d'eau revealed new possibilities in post-Lisztian keyboard virtuosity. And his string quartet in F established itself firmly in the repertoire almost at once.

In 1907, Ravel embarked upon a period of very fruitful composition, including his first opera and his first major orchestral score. For the orchestral work, which became Rapsodie espagnole, Ravel went back to a two-piano Habanera he had composed in 1895. It became the first movement of Sites auriculaires, which had its first (and almost last) performance in 1898; the two pianists didn't manage to stay together very well, and the only person to evince any real interest was Claude Debussy, who borrowed the score from Ravel. It was a perceptive choice: Habanera is probably the most characteristic piece the twenty-year-old Ravel had written at that time, as indicated by the fact that, when he went back to it a dozen years later, he made remarkably few changes in the process of orchestrating it as the third section of his Iberian orchestral suite. For all that the Rapsodie espagnole was his first large orchestral work (not counting an overture called Sheherazade, performed in 1898 and promptly withdrawn by the composer). Ravel seems to have written it in a remarkably short time. When he found it hard to work out the new piece in the clamor of his Paris apartment, which he was sharing with his parents and his brother, he accepted an invitation from a Polish couple, Ida and Cipa Godebski, to live on their yacht, where he could avoid unnecessary interruptions. He stayed the month of August 1907, during which time he composed the bulk of the Rapsodie. (This was not, incidentally, a sea voyage; the yacht was moored at the dock the whole time and became simply a kind of floating hotel for the composer.)

The Rapsodie espagnole is a collection of four movements, the first of which, Prelude a la nuit, is largely color and atmosphere, with the soft ostinato descent of the four-note theme — F, E, D, C-sharp — projected in duple cross-rhythms against the triple meter. It is night music that is controlled and spare in its lushness. The spirit of the dance breaks in with the Malaguena, based on a dance style from Malaga (though Ravel treats it with considerable freedom); its characteristic rhythm has been employed by many composers to suggest Spain. A reference to the descending four-note theme of the Prelude reappears as a unifying element at the end of the section. The Habanera, too, is a dance with a characteristic rhythm that marks it at once as Spanish (as Bizet had already recognized in Carmen). It has been suggested that this movement goes back to a song sung to Ravel in childhood by his mother, which would explain his continuing fondness for it, even to the point of his picking up an old piano work for orchestral treatment. The last movement, Feria, depicts a festival with a variety of tunes all in popular styles, castanets for local color, and a brilliant climax with materials piled up in sonorous confusion.

When the Rapsodie espagnole had its first performance, about half a year after its composition, the hall was filled in the usual social strata — the boxes and seats on the floor with the wealthy and socially prominent, the galleries with artists, musicians, and students. Upstairs everyone was prepared to cheer Ravel's new work; down-stairs the reaction was, at the least, unenthusiastic. The enthusiasts in the gallery demanded an encore of the Malaguena, and the stentorian voice of composer Florent Schmitt bellowed, "Play it once more for those down below who haven't understood it!" It wasn't long, though, before even the holders of the highest-priced tickets came to regard the work as an endearing showpiece by one of the real masters of the orchestral palette.

- Steven Ledbetter