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Concert: Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Corey Seapy

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Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Corey Seapy, graduate conductor

Ford Hall
Tuesday April 1st, 2014
8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Suite in B-flat, Op. 4 (1884)
IV. Introduction und Fuge

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)
7'

Colonial Song (1919)

Percy Grainger
(1882-1961)
7'

Emblems (1964)

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)
12'

Intermission

Symphony No. 1, My Hands Are a City
I. Across the groaning continent
II. The Americans
III. My Hands Are a City

Jonathan Newman
(b. 1972)
27'

Program Notes

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was a leading composer during the late Romantic period and well into the 20th century, best known for his operas and orchestral tone poems. He was born in Munich where his father was the principal horn player for the court opera, and began studying composition and orchestration at age eleven. Most of his early works are for voice, solo piano, or chamber ensemble; he shifted his focus to the orchestra in 1885 upon meeting fellow German composer Alexander Ritter, and composed his first tone poem, *Aus Italien*, in 1886.

The **Suite in B-flat, Op. 4** of 1884 was actually composed two years after the well-known Serenade in E-flat, Op. 7, and owes its higher opus number to delayed publication. Conductor Hans von Bülow loved the serenade enough to ask the twenty year-old Strauss to write another piece for the same ensemble of thirteen wind instruments. He suggested a suite in the Baroque style and invited the composer to make his professional conducting debut for its premiere with the Meiningen Court Orchestra. The fourth and final movement begins with a slow, expectant introduction that alternates between mystery and optimism before gaining momentum and foreshadowing a lively fugue, whose subject first rings out in the solo horn. Despite his young age, Strauss demonstrates a striking command of counterpoint and color. One can hear hints of his forthcoming orchestral masterworks in the declamatory tone of the fugue's primary material, its whimsical second theme, and the artful manner in which he combines, develops, and ultimately transforms these melodies in an exuberant coda.

Percy Grainger (1882-1961) is among history's greatest contributors to the wind repertoire. He was born in Australia and began his career as an international concert pianist shortly after moving to Frankfurt with his mother in 1885. Grainger lived a notoriously eccentric life that often overshadows his innovative compositional approach. Among his 400 works (1,000+ if you count his arrangements of them) one finds progressive elements such as irregular rhythms, chance music, and even electronic music before Stravinsky, Ives, and Varèse respectively. His approach to orchestration was also distinctive; he often favored then-uncommon instruments such as soprano saxophone and flugelhorn.

Grainger became interested in folk music around the turn of the century, and began collecting "traditional tunes" in Europe at approximately the same time as Bartók. While many of his well-known works feature settings of acquired folk material, **Colonial Song** is an original composition in folksong style. He wrote it as a Christmas gift for his mother, scoring it initially for two voices, harp, and full orchestra in 1911, then arranging it for military band in 1918, and again in 1919. In the program note, Grainger writes "the composer has wished to express feelings aroused by thoughts of the scenery and people of his native land, Australia." He goes on to describe tendencies of Australian brass band and vocal music, including "a preference for richness and intensity of tone and soulful breadth of phrasing over more subtly and sensitively varied delicacies of expression."

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) is sometimes referred to as the Dean of American music. He grew up in Brooklyn and studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris before returning to New York City, determined to 'make it' as a composer. Drawing upon a myriad of influences including post-Impressionist French music, his musical hero Stravinsky, and Western vernacular genres like folk and jazz, Copland developed a unique and distinctly American compositional style. His so-called populist works of the 1930s and 40s, such as *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring*, earned him great popularity, as did his best-known piece for winds, *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942). These pieces underscore his belief in music that is both accessible to the average listener and artistic. Copland began conducting more and composing less after World War II; his later works reflect a departure from the utilitarian approach and toward the avant-garde.

In 1962 Copland shocked the world of music by writing *Connotations*, a large serial piece for orchestra, to commemorate the opening of Philharmonic Hall (now known as Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center.) The following year, he received a commission from the College Band Directors National Association asking for a piece that "is representative of the composer's best work" and not "written with all sorts of technical or practical limitations." The result was **Emblems**, Copland's only piece written directly for concert band. Since its premiere in 1964 it has occupied an important position in the band repertoire. It includes elements of Copland's earlier style, such as folk and jazz influences, alongside polychords, stark dissonances, and unpredictable shifts that are representative of his later works. He writes the following about the piece:

"The work is in tripartite form: slow-fast-slow, with the return of the first part varied. Embedded in the quiet, slow music the listener may hear a brief quotation of a well-known hymn tune... An emblem stands for something - it is a symbol. I called the work *Emblems* because it seemed to me to suggest musical states of being: noble or aspirational feelings, playful or spirited feelings. The exact nature of these emblematic sounds must be determined for himself by each listener."

Intermission: please enjoy images from "The Americans" by Robert Frank (pub. 1958)

Jonathan Newman (b. 1972) holds degrees from Boston University's School for the Arts and The Juilliard School, where he studied composition with John Corigliano and David Del Tredici. He has composed sixteen works for wind ensemble, many of which reflect the sounds of our American musical tradition. He strives to "marry music that sounds good... with music that is of artistic interest", and often does so using a specific style, such as funk or bebop, as a starting point. Like Grainger did a century ago, Newman frequently includes unconventional instruments in his works for coloristic purposes, such as the electric guitar in ***Symphony No. 1, My Hands Are a City***. He completed the work in 2009 and writes the following about it:

In 2005 I wrote *The Rivers of Bowery*, a short work celebrating a verse from Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. I soon discovered that both the musical and extra-musical themes were much larger than the length allowed, and so I designed this *Symphony* as a complete expansion, both in thematic scope, and in musical material.

In my neighborhood on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the musicians and poets and characters of our mid-Century "Beats" are still very active ghosts. I walk past the tenement where Allen Ginsberg wrote *Howl*, stroll across "Charlie Parker Place", and over the city streets rapturously described in prose and verse, and captured in era photos and film. Surrounded by these spirits, I structured the work in three movements, each taking on a different aspect of the sensory experiences I collected from my months of immersion in the novels, poetry, and photographs of these artists.

Titled after a line from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the first movement opens the *Symphony* with the restlessness and constant drifting of a young generation terrified of stagnation. As a short burst of agitated motion, this *moto perpetuo* reflects Kerouac and his characters "performing our one and noble function of the time, move. And we moved!"

The second movement takes its title from Beat photographer Robert Frank's powerful collection, *The Americans*. In 1955, Frank traveled the country taking extraordinary photos of a nation that is actually many nations. This movement does not "describe" any of the individual photos, but rather is an attempt at an overall musical picture of the paradoxical America Frank saw: diverse, yet uniform; determined, yet lost; sated, yet unsatisfied.

The final movement, *My Hands Are a City*, titled after a 1955 Gregory Corso poem, overflows with mid-Century American vernacular. Altered progressions from bebop tunes, and stretched out, frozen, and suspended solos from Lester Young and Charlie Parker recordings all fill out the work. In its larger scope and breadth, the movement is a summing up of the symphony's themes, both poetic and musical.

In all of it, taking material from *The Rivers of Bowery* happened quite naturally. The process was much like approaching my finished piece as if it was my sketchbook, and using that once-final material as the cells and harmonies to then spin out. But where in the overture I concentrated on capturing Ginsberg's singing of the lost and outcast mobs of his counter-culture, in the expanded work I was intrigued with the ever-present cloud of sadness hanging over much of the work of The Beats. It's a quiet sadness I hear even in the frantic bebop of Bird and Miles, and in my re-reading of the classic literature of the period—perhaps adding a tinge of darkness to the colors of this *Symphony*.

Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

Piccolo

Justine Stephens

Flute

Rachel Auger
Allison Kraus
Sarah Peskanov*

Oboe

Ariel Palau
Elizabeth Schmitt*
Jake Walsh

E-flat Clarinet

Allison Smetana

Clarinet

Jimmy Conte*
Vanessa Davis
Anna Goebel
Katie Hurd
Cara Kinney
Kyle McKay

Bass Clarinet

Laura Hill

Bassoon

Cynthia Becker
Sean Harkin*
Amanda Nauseef

Soprano Saxophone

Alec Staples*

Alto Saxophone

Gregory Sisco

Tenor Saxophone

Kelsey Melvin

Baritone Saxophone

Ian Herbon

Trumpet

Matt Allen
Kaitlyn DeHORITY
Jason Ferguson
Ryenne Flynn*
Jack Storer
Matt Venora

Horn

Alyssa A'Hearn*
Victoria Boell
Grace Demerath
Joshua Jenkins
Aubrey Landsfeld

Trombone

Matt Confer
Tim Taylor*
Chad von Holtz

Bass Trombone

Paul Carter

Euphonium

Peter Best-Hall*
Matthew Della Camera

Tuba

Justin Chervony
Lucas Davey*

Double Bass

Kate Corcoran

Piano

Joshua Condon
Tasha George-Hinnant

Electric Guitar

Mike Caporizzo

Timpani

Aaron Walters

Percussion

Eric Brown
Taylor Katanick
Nick Merrilat
Taylor Newman
Keegan Sheehy*
Tom Smith

Graduate Assistants

Matthew Sadowski
Corey Seapy

*denotes principal player