3-4-2003

Concert: Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra - Ireland Tour

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Jeffrey Grogan

Cayenna Ponchione

Micheal O Suilleabhain

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Ithaca College
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
featuring Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin

A collaboration with the Irish World Music Centre of the University of Limerick

Ireland Tour
March 2003
ITHACA COLLEGE
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

IRELAND TOUR

March 2003

Jeffrey Grogan, conductor
Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, piano soloist
Cayenna Ponchione, graduate conductor

4 March, 8:15 pm
Ford Hall, Ithaca College

9 March, 8 pm
St. Nicholas Collegiate Church, Galway

11 March, 8 pm
Augustinian Church, Limerick

13 March, 8 pm
National Concert Hall, Dublin
Concert repertoire to be selected from the following:

National Anthem of Ireland, “The Soldier’s Song” (“Amhrán na bhFiann”)
National Anthem of the United States, “The Star-Spangled Banner”

Down a Country Lane  
Cayenna Ponchione, graduate conductor

American Frontiers  
arr. Calvin Custer

The Entertainer  
arr. by Gunther Schuller

Overture to *Così fan tutte*  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Galanta Dances  
Zoltán Kodály

Dance at Monticello  
Dana Wilson

from the opera *The Wolf by the Ears*

Works by Micheál Ó Súilleabáin, pianist and composer, to be selected from the following:

Aisling Geal  
Bean Dubh An Ghleanna  
Between Worlds  
Crispy  
Irish Destiny  
—Overture  
—Flowan  
Letting Go  
Oiche Nollag  
The Parting Glass  
So Merrily Dance  
Templum
Down A Country Lane

Originally composed for piano in 1962, Copland arranged the piece for orchestra in 1965. At the time of the composition he was residing in Peekskill, New York and was undoubtedly influenced by the large maple and oak trees that overhang the quaint winding dirt roads of our backcountry. A delightfully simple yet colorful work, it is easy to be swept away by its aural illusions to a pastoral country scene.

American Frontiers

America has often been called the cultural "melting pot," embracing a wide variety of ethnic populations. Its folk song heritage reflects this diversity as immigrants have brought with them elements of their native cultures. Often new words would be placed with an existing tune or a new tune would be paired with an older poem, crossing invisible cultural lines and creating a uniquely American sound. Calvin Custer's orchestral arrangement of several of these traditional songs allows them to be celebrated in the concert halls as they were around the campfires and in the fields.

American Frontiers begins with a brief introduction of "America the Beautiful" which Custer quickly leaves and returns to at the end of the piece. He begins the medley with a setting of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," a tune whose origins have gained some debate. Some say that it was known in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and was played whenever the soldiers left for battle. Others assert that it was known in America as a popular fife tune called "Brighten Camp," that had been imported from England by 1650. We do know that it was published in Dublin in 1791 under two different titles, "The Rambling Laborer" and the "Sailpin Fanach." The most commonly associated text for this song came from a Dublin periodical called The Charms of Melody published between 1795 and 1810. The same tune however has been used to set the lyrics of an Irish drinking song, "Waxie's Dargle."

"Chester," the next song to be incorporated into Custer's work, dates from the antebellum period of American history, after the Revolutionary war and before the Civil war. The tune and the text written by American composer William Billings (1746-1800) are a patriotic hymn that achieved widespread popularity and was published in his New England Psalm-Singer (1770), the first collection of music entirely by an American composer. The first stanza reads:
Let tyrants Shake their Iron rod  
And slav’ry Clank her galling Chains  
We fear them not, we trust in God  
New England’s God forever reigns.

Another American original, "Shenandoah’s" popularity has been maintained over the years and is still commonly heard around 21st-century campfires. Incorporating both Irish and African-American elements, this type of shanty was used by sailors when doing long repetitive tasks that required continuous effort. The song, which speaks often of the wide Missouri, is named for an Indian chief that lived on the river’s banks.

The rich melody that finishes Custer's medley derives its text from the poem "America the Beautiful" written in 1893 by Katharine Lee Bates (1859-1929) after an inspiring trip to the top of Pikes Peak. She recounts the experience in the following way:

One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse.

The melody, which currently accompanies the poem, is taken from a song dating from 1882 entitled "Materna," by Samuel A. Ward. The poem did not settle with this music until 1926, and prior to that had been sung to any popular folk tune that matched the lyrics, most notably "Auld Lang Syne." "America the Beautiful" has become an important addition to American patriotism and is cherished deeply by many of the country’s citizens who share its majestic view of the land.

The Entertainer
Over the past century the African-American culture has profoundly influenced the development of both popular and classical music in the United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century, several styles emerged fusing both European and African musical elements. While both jazz and blues have continued to be developed, ragtime music made its way to the forefront of popular culture in the first decade of the 1900’s only to be unseated by the jazz idiom in the 1920’s. Ragtime’s vibrant energy permeated concert halls and dance halls, as it
was suited to orchestras, solo pianos, and banjos alike. At the time of its invention, ragtime music was revolutionary in its incorporation of African rhythms’ continual offbeat syncopation into popular songs and marches.

The most famous of the ragtime composers, Scott Joplin (1868–1917), known as the "King of Ragtime Writers," was born to a former slave and a free-born black woman in the town of Texarkana on the Texas-Arkansas border. He made his living as a traveling musician and by the publication of some thirty piano rags including the well known Maple Leaf Rag (1899) and The Entertainer (1902), which was made popular in our time by its use in the motion picture The Sting. Joplin, unlike many of his contemporaries, viewed his works as ‘classic rags,’ emphasizing the care and skill with which he created his compositions. He also completed several works for the stage including a ballet The Ragtime Dance, and several operas, A Guest of Honor and Treemonisha. Joplin’s contribution can hardly be quantified, but his music withstands the test of time as it continues to delight audiences with its memorable melodies and insatiable rhythm.

Galánta Dances
From his birth Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was immersed in the music and culture of the Hungarian countryside. His father worked for the Hungarian State railways in Galánta Hungary, an area that is now part of southwestern Slovakia, but found time to spend at his violin ensuring that music occurred in the home where Kodály spent his first eighteen years. A brilliant student, young Kodály tutored himself in piano, violin, viola, and cello, sang in the church choir, and began to compose of his own accord. Despite his incredible affinity for music, his highest marks in school were found in the areas of language and literature, an emphasis that pervaded and directed much of his life’s work.

His passion for language led him to Budapest University in 1900 where he studied Hungarian and German while involved in extra-curricular activities at the Music Academy there. It was at the Academy that Kodály began his lifelong friendship and collaboration with Béla Bartók who shared his intense desire to preserve Hungarian folk music and to educate the populace in music literacy. Kodály is most well known for his work in this area. His educational methods are renowned and utilized the world over.

Kodály’s commitment to Hungarian nationalism can best be expressed by Bartók’s sentiments:
If I were to name a composer whose works are the most perfect embodiment of the Hungarian spirit, I answer, Kodály. His works prove his faith in the Hungarian spirit. The obvious explanation is that all Kodály’s composing activity is rooted only in Hungarian soil, but the deep inner reason is his unshakable faith and trust in the constructive power and future of his people.

*Galánta tánco*k “Dances of Galánta) derives its melodic material from 18th-century *verbunkos* (‘recruiting’) music. Before the Austro-Hungarian imperial army instituted conscription in 1849, recruiting presentations involving music were used in order to fill the ranks with Hungarian village recruits. The display of physical prowess beginning by slow dignified figures and culminating in virtuostic leaps by the youngest members of the cavalry was accompanied by a band of Gypsy musicians. Although sometimes considered Gypsy music, it was actually Hungarian, often derived ultimately from the song repertory, but played in a fashion characteristic of the Gypsy tradition.

*Overture to Cosi fan tutte*

As the genius son of Leopold Mozart, composer and Deputy Kapellmeister to the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Wolfgang Amadeus spent his youth traveling throughout Europe displaying his phenomenal talents to the aristocracy. On these long tours Mozart was exposed to many genres of music, not the least of which was opera. By age eight he was said to have been able to play the piano and sing mock arias in various styles of anger and tenderness. This connection between drama and music continued throughout his life resulting in the composition of 14 operas. His success in the contrasting styles of *opera seria*, *opera buffa*, and *Singspiel* can be partly attributed to his ability to marry musical integrity to dramatic expressiveness. In a letter to his father Mozart writes:

“...passions, whether violent or not, must never be expressed to the point of exciting disgust, and as music, even in the most terrible situations, must never offend the ear, but must please the listener, or in other words must never cease to be music...”

*Cosi fan tutte*, or *La scuola degli amanti* (All Women do the Same or The School for Lovers) is an *opera buffa*, or comic opera in two acts. Written in 1789 directly after the success of another opera buffa, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, it finds its humor in comic relationships and the supposed fickle constancy of women. Successful from the onset, *Cosi fan tutte* continues to be a staple of the standard operatic canon. In fact,
Mozart is the first opera composer whose work as a whole has never had to be revived, but has maintained its prominence in theatres throughout the course of its existence.

_Dance At Monticello_

The works of Ithaca College professor Dana Wilson have been commissioned and performed by such diverse ensembles as the Chicago Chamber Musicians, Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Buffalo Philharmonic, Memphis Symphony, Washington military bands, Voices of Change, Netherlands Wind Ensemble, Syracuse Symphony, and Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra. He has received grants from, among others, the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, Arts Midwest, and Meet the Composer. His compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Europe, and East Asia. They have received several awards, including the International Trumpet Guild First Prize, the Sudler International Composition Prize, and the Ostwald Composition Prize, and can be heard on Klavier, Albany, Summit, Open Loop, Mark, Redwood, Musical Heritage Society, and Kosei Recordings.

Dana Wilson holds a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music, and is currently Charles A. Dana Professor of Music in the School of Music at Ithaca College. He is co-author of Contemporary Choral Arranging, published by Prentice Hall/Simon and Schuster, and has written articles on diverse musical subjects. He has been a Yaddo Fellow (at Yaddo, the artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York), a Wye Fellow at the Aspen Institute, a Charles A. Dana Fellow, and a Fellow at the Society for Humanities, Cornell University.

_Dance at Monticello_ is the music that opens the final scene of an opera-in-progress _The Wolf by the Ears_, composed in collaboration with librettist J. Robert Lennon. In this scene, Thomas Jefferson is giving a party for his aristocratic friends. The music attempts to create a veneer of the "classical style" popular in aristocratic European circles of that time, while displaying a certain rough, early American rambunctiousness—as well as being clear, of course, that it was composed recently.

Jefferson was a flamboyant and grand entertainer, despite an opposite tendency toward shyness and reclusion. He was also a rather accomplished violinist, and so in the midst of the music he picks up the instrument and begins to show off a bit with an extended solo influenced by American fiddle music.

Notes by Cayenna Ponchione
Irish Destiny Overture
A silent movie entitled Irish Destiny was made in Ireland in 1925. A love story set against the backdrop of the Irish War of Independence, it is a classic of Irish film history. After its initial success the film went missing for over 60 years. The only surviving copy turned up in the Smithsonian museum in Washington, and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin was commissioned to write a new score for the live screen of the film at the National Concert Hall in Dublin, December 1993. The music of the Overture is a deconstructed version of the Irish National Anthem and captures the intense romanticism of the film as well as the national undertow of the film.

So Merrily Dance
A composition based upon a set dance tune from West Cork which came into Ireland in the 18th century, and which is still played for country dances.

Letting Go
Using the tune of a Donegal song of unrequited love, this piece is a gentle reminder of how all things pass in their own time. The original love song is entitled Brid Og Ni Mhaille (Young Brigid O'Malley)

Crispy
Co-composed by Micheál Ó Súilleabháin and Mel Mercier, this piece is based on Indian drum rhythms. It started life as a bodhran composition by Mel Mercier and was developed into the current piece by Micheál Ó Súilleabháin. It is an exercise in rhythm concentration.

Oiche Nollag
Based on a traditional reel tune, this piece captures the exuberant aspects of Irish tradition with its mix of jazz and traditional against a classical orchestration.

Notes by Micheál Ó Súilleabháin
Jeffrey Grogan comes to Ithaca College from Baylor University where he was on the faculty conducting the wind ensemble and teaching courses in conducting and music education. Mr. Grogan recently traveled to Europe where he conducted the Bohuslava Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra of Zlin, Czech Republic. During that time he studied with several prominent conductors including Mariusz Smolij (Houston Symphony), Tomáš Koutník (Prague Conservatory), Johannes Schlaefli (Musik-Hochschule Winterthur Zürich), and Kirk Trevor (Knoxville Symphony and the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra.)

In addition to his duties at Baylor, Grogan was assistant conductor and pre-concert lecturer for the Waco Symphony Orchestra and co-conductor of the Waco Symphony Youth Orchestra. Prior to joining the Baylor faculty, he was a member of the faculty at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and taught in the public schools of the DeSoto Independent School District in DeSoto, Texas. Grogan's degrees are from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (b. Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland, 10th December, 1950). Irish composer, performer, and academic. After local training on piano and varied performing experience in popular-music groups, he studied classical music in the National University of Ireland, Cork (BMus 1972, MA 1973). Appointed lecturer in music there in 1975, he has had parallel careers in the academic and performance worlds, with a concentration on Irish traditional music. In Cork he worked towards the integration of classical and traditional musicians in a shared curriculum and in the context of the study of ethnomusicology. The traditional fiddle player, Tommie Potts, was the subject of his PhD dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 1987). In 1994 Ó Súilleabháin was appointed first Professor of music in the University of Limerick, where he created a postgraduate research centre, the Irish World Music Centre, and initiated a group of nine taught interactive MA programmes across a highly innovative mix of disciplines, both academic and performance. In January 2000, the Irish World Music Centre was honoured by being named as the primary postgraduate energy within an Irish Academy of Performing Arts announced by the Irish government. The Centre also operates artists-in-residence as well as innovative community outreach programmes. In 1990 he was Visiting Professor at Boston College where he established the Irish Music Programme, as well as founding an archive for Irish traditional music in America, which is housed in the Burns Library.
Ó Súilleabháin’s numerous popular compositions, often for radio, television and film, are tonal in the main. As a solo or lead performer on piano and other keyboards, he has developed an Irish piano style and has been recording commercially since 1975, playing his own compositions or his arrangements of Irish traditional music, frequently with the Irish Chamber Orchestra. In 1993 he founded the ensemble Hiberno-Jazz, and in 1995 wrote and presented A River of Sound, a television series on Irish traditional music.


Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

The Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra is an auditioned group of the finest wind, string, and percussion students at Ithaca College. All members also perform with the full Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra or the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble. They perform four concerts per year with the Chamber Orchestra in addition to the several performances given by their other ensembles. Dedicated to performing orchestral repertoire not suited to the full symphony, their recent concerts have included such virtuosic works as Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony, Stravinsky’s Song of the Nightingale, and Ginastera’s Variaciones Concertantes.

Ithaca College School Of Music

Ithaca College's School of Music, housed in the James J. Whalen Center for Music, enjoys a distinguished reputation among institutions for professional music study in the United States. A celebrated faculty teaches some 475 undergraduate music majors each year, maintaining the conservatory tradition within a comprehensive college setting. The School of Music is home to specialists in virtually every orchestra and band instrument; in voice, piano, organ, and guitar; and in music
education, jazz, composition, theory, history, and conducting. Ithaca's music professors perform regularly on campus and throughout the country in recitals and concerts, contribute to publications and professional organizations, and make presentations at numerous conferences and workshops every year.

What really sets apart the Ithaca College School of Music is the faculty's combination of impressive credentials and dedication to teaching students, to fostering students' learning, developing their talent and transforming them into trained professionals ready to participate in the strongest school systems, the best graduate schools, and the finest orchestras, opera companies, and other arts organizations. Students who enroll in the School of Music are already dedicated musicians who want to study with the best. From Ithaca's unique environment, students emerge prepared to make the most of their abilities.

**Ithaca College-Irish World Music Centre Scholarship and Performance Exchange Program**

This tour by the Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra, like Ithaca College Choir's 2002 tour, is part of an exchange program between the College and the Irish World Music Centre of the University of Limerick. In addition to such concert tours, the multifaceted program also sees individual Ithaca College students studying at the IWMC, during both the year and summer sessions. Additionally, IWMC students travel each spring semester for residencies at Ithaca College, and in March 2001, the IWMC faculty presented workshops and performances in Ithaca.

The Irish World Music Centre is a graduate school offering performance and academic courses in music and dance, and has a special interest in research and innovation in Irish and Irish-related music worldwide. Programs of study there include traditional Irish music and dance, classical string performance, chant and ritual song, and ethnomusicology.

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* Denotes principal.
Personnel listed in alphabetical order to emphasize each member’s contribution.